

# Personalised Content Experiences.



A TMC White Paper

# Executive Summary.

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As specialists in Strategic Communications, TMC partnered with the Marketing Masterclass Series, Manchester for their second Annual Digital Content Leaders Masterclass. Hosted by agency partners, the sessions were attended by industry leaders from in and around the North West.

The Masterclass sessions provide delegates with a unique learning experience through a series of engaging roundtable sessions that explore the critical importance of content.

Having a direct, strategic link in building brand awareness, online visibility, trust, and customer acquisition; Content Marketing is increasingly important in an ever-changing digital and social age.

TMC led a profiling exercise, which built the foundations for the forthcoming discussions. Centered on creating Personalised Content Marketing Experiences, a total of 48 delegates were asked to select priorities and challenges for their organisation at different points during the discussion.

Concluding the sessions, it was clear that there were common areas of concern across all organisations, whilst delegates initially chose one element as the main concern, after considerable debate the overall consensus towards the end of the sessions shifted.

This document draws a series of observations and subsequent recommendations that should encourage and unite marketing teams to develop stronger customer centric strategies.

## Personalised Content Experiences.

Having a solid content marketing strategy in place creates brand loyalty, assists in acquiring new customers and adding value to a targeted audience. Building this trust directly impacts brand awareness, which in turn, generates business leads.

60% of consumers enjoy reading relevant content from brands, whilst 82% of consumers feel more positive about a company after reading custom content<sup>1</sup>.

An effective content marketing structure can also have positive effects on SEO and Social Media activities. Increasing visibility in organic

search results encourages sharing of the content. In turn this may increase backlinks to a website and also increase brand mentions on social media.

Paid Media and PPC also benefits from relevant, personalised content. By targeting the audience with an indirect sales message creates conversion by brand association. Users increasingly crave conversation, versus traditional methods of being 'sold' to.

By providing relevant, trusted and bespoke information, it is clearly a beneficial way to increase brand awareness at an efficient cost.

<sup>1</sup>Refers to statistics from [www.demandmetric.com/content/content-marketing-infographic](http://www.demandmetric.com/content/content-marketing-infographic)

# The Roundtable Format.

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TMC carried out a total of five, 30-minute roundtable sessions. With ten delegates per table for four of these sessions, and a further eight delegates for one session. There was no discernable difference noted in levels of engagement or quality of discussion with the reduced table number.

The exercise was designed to gauge what participants felt was their priority within digital marketing. It also explored which challenges they felt were most impactful to their specific content marketing activities.

TMC facilitated the discussion by dividing each session in to three waves that generated results on a dedicated content marketing board.

Through a series of interactions from the group inspiring honest debate, not only encouraged delegates to voice their current issues and concerns, but also share their own experiences and knowledge with the table.

The content marketing board was split in to six core elements that contribute to a personalised content marketing experience:

- Curation
- Collaboration
- Change
- Capture
- Context
- Create Personalised Content Experiences

The core elements were also given guide points to assist the delegates in decision making, these remained intentionally broad so that it did not directly influence where delegates placed their counters:

## **Curation**

- Telling your story
- Adding value
- Creating engagement

## **Collaboration**

- Nurturing your community
- Working with external parties
- Internal Knowledge sharing

## **Change**

- Adopting new techniques
- Number of customers
- Growth of team

## **Capture**

- Collecting data
- Using data to move forward
- Attracting relevant users

## **Context**

- Choosing the right platform
- Relevancy to the audience
- Time and day to publish

## **Create Personalised Content Experiences**

- There were deliberately no guide points for this option on the board.

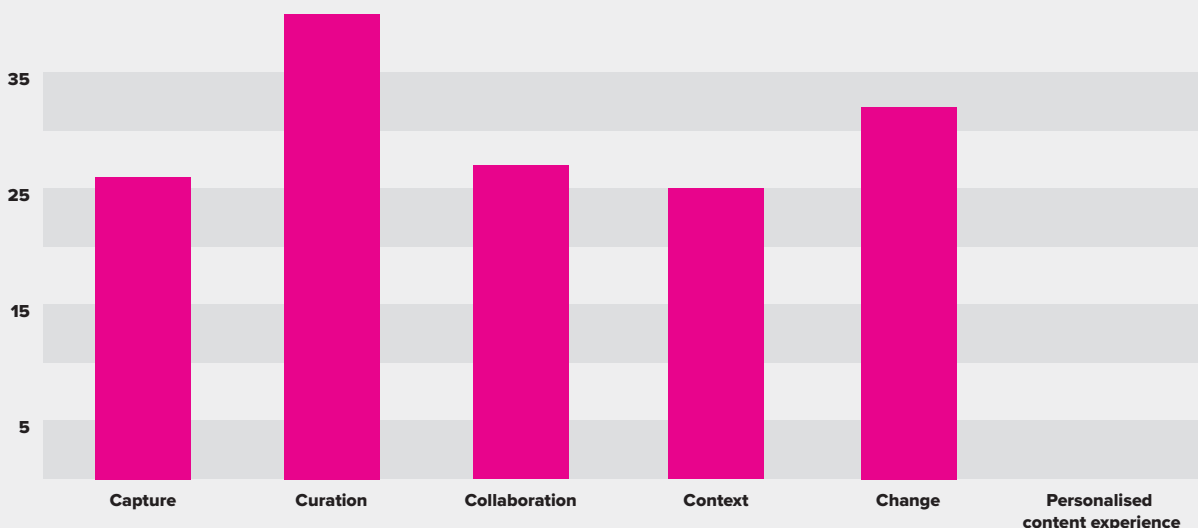


# The First Wave



Delegates were given three pink counters and instructed to place these on what they believed to be their highest priorities or issues within their field or organisation.

## Wave One Results:



After the first wave, where three counters were placed, the delegates discussed the reasoning for their choices.

It is clear that in the first instance, a majority of delegate chose Curation as their main focus, with 28%<sup>2</sup> of all counters being placed on this choice. The lowest choice was Context with 16%, with the other three choices ranging from 17% to 22%. We believe this reflects a balanced view with regards to issues faced by marketing teams.

During the discussion around why Curation was the main focus, it became clear that many internal teams felt that resource and time were directly impacting their content marketing plans. They simply felt that they did not have the time or resource to produce

the levels of content required in a highly competitive online environment. Concluding that better quality and more engaging content and storytelling was needed to be effective. A greater resource and a shift in focus towards individual customer profiling was also required.

Delegates also felt that Change was an important factor to consider, with ever-evolving technologies and innovations being introduced to the digital landscape. This gives a wider choice of channels to communicate with, although it was discussed that this did not always make communication more effective.

As you will notice, no delegates chose the option 'Create Personalised Content Experiences' at this stage.

<sup>2</sup> The results when referred to as percentages have been rounded up or down accordingly to the nearest full number.



**Above:** In wave one, delegates were asked to place three pink counters on to the board. These were indicative of what they felt were their top priorities within their organisations content marketing activities.

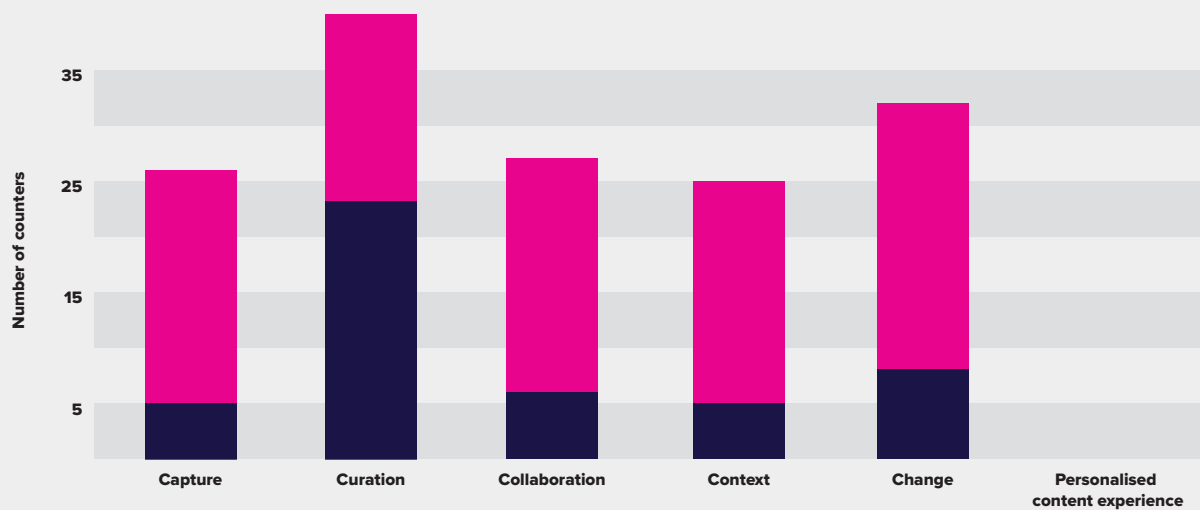
**Left:** Delegates discuss with Terri Lowe of TMC the choices they made across the content marketing activity board.

# The Second Wave



In this wave, after clarifying their choices, delegates were then asked to narrow their selection down to just one priority or challenge, using the purple counter. By making a choice of just one, the delegates were forced to focus their broader view on to a single priority.

## Wave Two Results:



Once again, we see that Curation remains a key focus. With the placement of a single counter, the result was that 48% of delegates now felt that Curation was their prime focus (with an uplift of 20%). It was highlighted that telling your story with authentic and engaging content is a clear focus for digital marketers.

Change has now become less of a priority, down from 22% to 17%. This appears to be a direct result of conversations following wave one, where at first Change was seen as a challenge, as opposed to an opportunity. With emerging technologies delegates

understood the important of educating their teams to adopt Change and as a whole and were actively participating in this.

We can also see that Capture (11%), Collaboration (13%) and Context (11%) remain consistent to the first wave of results throughout this stage. Although in percentage terms they dropped by 6%, 5% and 5% compared with the wave one choices.

There were also no counters placed on 'Create Personalised Content Experiences' at this stage.



**Above:** Delegates place a single purple counter on their most important concern or priority during wave two. This was then discussed around the table.

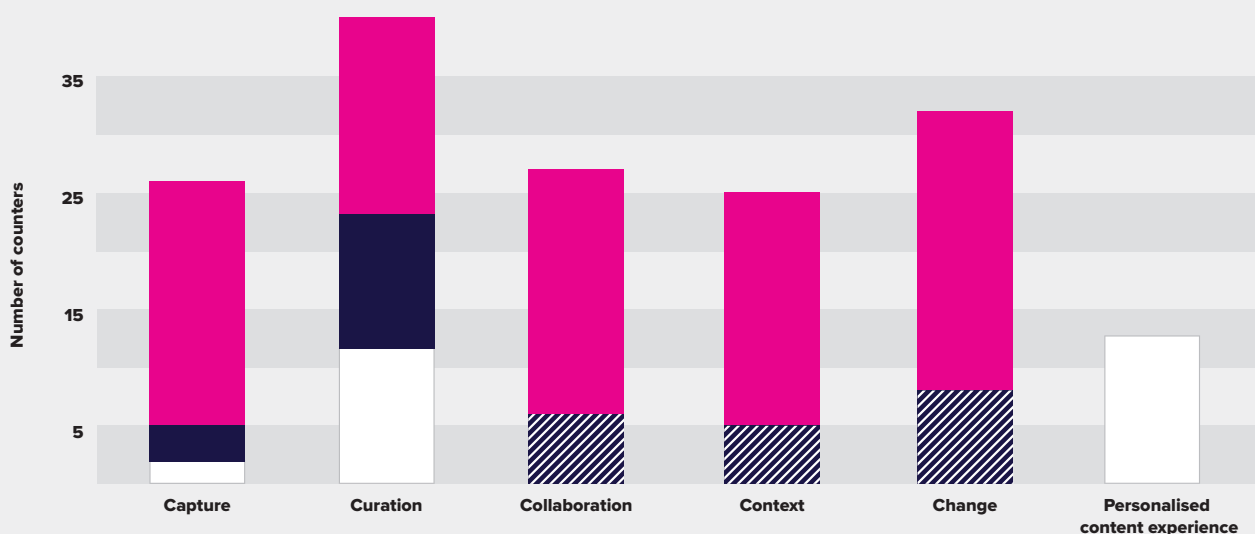
**Left:** Tim McCloud of TMC moderates the discussion around the table with delegates from some of the North West's Digital Marketing leaders.

# The Third Wave



After further discussion and debate based on the current placement of counters, the delegates were then asked to place a single white counter on their most important factor when it comes to content marketing.

## Wave Three Results:



We now notice a significant switch in opinion from delegates, with 29% of individuals choosing the 'Create Personalised Content Experiences' option on the board. All other options now remain much more balanced.

Curation has dropped from 48% down to 25%. This is the area that has had the most significant change in results, yet still remains a hot topic for all digital marketers.

Capture saw a large decline, down to 4% from an initial score of 17%. This was due to the realisation that data can only be harvested from the interaction of users based upon the quality of the content. Whilst data is extremely valuable, it is a tool for monitoring performance, gathering the evidence in order to adjust planned future activities. Teams must work hard not to use data as a defence which can only create silos within multidisciplinary teams.





**Above:** Following the roundtable discussion, delegates took a single white counter to place on what they then felt was their highest concern or priority.

**Left:** Tim McCloud discusses Personalised Content Marketing Experiences with delegates from J D Williams, AutoTrader and Lloyds Banking Group.

# The Conclusion

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It was apparent from the round table sessions that for a successful content marketing strategy a holistic 'human to human' approach should be adopted.

Whilst many delegates during wave one and wave two saw individual elements as the challenge or priority, during wave three we saw a transition in delegates choosing 'personalised content experiences' as the focus. This highlighted that the solution to their content marketing issues was to develop a truly customer centric strategy.

**“Focus on the customer rather than letting channels or techniques lead a communication strategy.”**

Despite Curation being the most popular choice during the discussions, it quickly became clear that a common issue amongst delegates was communication within their organisation. It was highlighted that internal teams were under pressure for resource, as well as being pressured to evidence

their departments' effectiveness through data. This is not helping to create a joined up customer experience as departments and channels are effectively being forced to compete against each other.

Moving away from focusing on in-house specialisms, and instead reverse engineering the audience journey, allows for marketing experts to talk directly to the target personas and understand how co-operation within/between teams is essential to be effective.

Rather than selling to the audience and viewing them solely as data, we should start to understand their views, wants and needs to efficiently and successfully engage with them in a more positive way.

Consumers are now becoming used to technologies and techniques delivered through competing platforms as part of their daily lives. The responsibility is on brands to empower the audience to make their own choices through relevant content.

As marketers our focus should be on creating personalised content experiences with the underlying belief that marketing activities should have a strong Customer First approach at its core.

*References: TMC Strategic Communications gathered the information in this document direct during the Content Leaders Masterclass, Manchester January 2018.*

# About TMC Strategic Communications

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TMC Strategic Communications are experts in creating the right message, to the right people, in the right way, at the right time.

Working with clients on a global scale, our experience spans across a wide range of sectors. Specialising in connecting audiences through multiple channels and platforms, both online and offline; we use a broad range of innovative and creative processes to deliver tactical, measurable and creative campaigns.

As an integrated marketing agency, we work closely with each of our partners to address their needs and to fulfill their goals. We are an extension of your team, putting relationships first.

We develop and deliver bespoke workshops that bring clarity and clear pathways to effectively reverse engineer blocks within your organisation.

The outcome is improved communications and innovative ways to connect with customers.

Our reputation for commitment to our clients is outstanding. We are in The Drum's Top 100 Independent Agencies 2017 and were awarded the Grand Prix Award for the second year running at the 2017 RAR (Recommend Agency Register) Awards.

Whatever your story, TMC can help you to tell it.

To discover how TMC Strategic Communications can assist your content marketing plans and internal communications initiatives, please visit [wearetmc.co.uk](http://wearetmc.co.uk)

## About the Authors



**Tim McCloud, MCIM, Chartered Marketer, Managing Director at TMC Strategic Communications**

Tim is a passionate marketer with over 20 years experience in the creative, branding and marketing sectors. He has a strategic approach and is a natural problem solver, with the confidence to strip back concepts in an approachable and down to earth style to ensure that the right message, not only engages, but also delivers.



**Terri Lowe, Marketing Manager at TMC Strategic Communications**

Terri has close to a decade of experience in Social Media, Content Marketing and SEO. With a broad range of skills across multiple platforms. Understanding the fast-moving pace of content marketing, influencer relationships and social media, Terri has the natural ability to detect opportunities in the market, whilst cultivating new leads to forge valuable relationships.



**2017**

**The Drum**

- Top 100 Independent Agencies



**2017**

**RAR Awards**

- Client Services
- B2B Marketing
- The Grand Prix Award



**2016**

**RAR Digital Awards**

- Online Creative



**2016**

**RAR Awards**

- Best in Corporate Communications
- Strategic Thinking
- Print Management
- The Grand Prix Award



**2015**

**Northern Marketing Awards**

- Finalists in Corporate Social Responsibility



**2015**

**RAR Awards**

- Best in Corporate Communications



**2014 & 2015**

**East Cheshire Chamber  
of Commerce awards**

- Excellence in Customer Service
- Professional Service Provider
- Chamber Business Partner