

# Digital content marketing

In the 30th episode of the IAB Insight Series on 16 September 2021, speakers will showcase the opportunity to engage audiences online through digital content marketing.



Brown Bowley, Candice Lee Reeves, and Sarah Browning-de Villiers

Specifically, the speakers will be looking at how digital content marketing helps build first-party databases. There will also be a look at case studies across the digital content marketing opportunity - and attendees will hear from the IAB SA Digital Content Committee on the latest definitions and guidelines.

Speakers included in this episode are Sarah Browning-de Villiers, chief content officer at Machine; Candice Lee Reeves, senior digital copywriter at Everlytic; and Bronwen Bowley, senior content manager at Jellyfish.



## IAB SA launches 'Definition of Digital Content Marketing'

10 Sep 2021



Here, we find out more about what the speakers will focus on during their discussions, and what we can expect from the episode...

### **What is the key theme or message of your talk?**

**Bowley:** My key theme is about return on investment and meeting success metrics. Content marketing is a very effective marketing tool and it should be executed strategically, which is why we use data to help inform us about our strategy, and data to inform us about the content performance relative to its success metrics. That means I'm focusing on producing content that is purposeful, objective-driven and measurable.

**Browning-de Villiers:** Digital content marketing has honestly never been more important or relevant for brands. The days of depending entirely on rented audiences (like those owned by Google or Facebook, for example) are fast fading. Even legislation such as PoPIA is demanding that brands have a good reason to talk to people, and certainly need to work harder in the value exchange of consumer data for an offering or service. That's where content marketing comes in; content marketing delivers the value a consumer is looking for. It's a sustainable, long-term way to build communities that a brand can own and ultimately monetise, whilst building authentic, meaningful relationships with its audience and – really importantly – gaining rich insights about your audience.

**Reeves:** I'm talking about the concept and application of customer-centricity in email marketing. It'll include a look into the role of the hero vs. the guide in storytelling, why customer-centricity is important for impact, and how you can apply the principles to how you write and deliver your email content.

■ ***Talk us through some of the key insights that determined which changes, updates, constants will be happening in the digital advertising industry in 2021?***

**Bowley:** Pay attention to Google's EAT (Expertise, Authoritativeness, and Trustworthiness) Factors. Organic content consumption is the preferred medium in the online landscape and while EAT isn't ranking factors, they do form part of Google's quality rater guidelines especially for those Your-Money-Your-Life websites that deal with health or wealth, for instance.

Take note of Digital Public Relations. It has really gained considerable traction overseas in the US and UK markets, where brands are delivering amazing quality, data-driven, newsworthy content that is being published on high-authority, third-party sites as a link-building tool to improve a site's domain authority, drive organic traffic and increase brand awareness in the top-of-funnel stage of the user journey.

Performance content is going to be the competitive differentiator in the e-commerce industry. Performance content is that high-volume content located pretty low in the funnel, which users engage with when they transact. It plays such a critical role, especially now given the rise in online shopping, as it takes the place of the helpful salesperson or the informative fitting room.

**Browning-de Villiers:** Moving from asset-based, fixed models to sprint-led approaches:

Essentially, advertising cannot be a linear, monolithic, fixed process; it must be as creative in its process and methodology as it is in its outputs.

A shift from short-termism to long-termism:

I'd love to shift from talking with executives about quarterly sales goals or even annual KPIs to the bigger business imperatives or objectives. As Warren Buffett and Jamie Dimon wrote in a WSJ op-ed: "In our experience, quarterly earnings guidance often leads to an unhealthy focus on short-term profits at the expense of long-term strategy, growth and sustainability."

As economic volatility puts pressure on company profitability, the sustainable and meaningful approach is to invest in the long game, even if it's at the cost of short-term sales. Advertising needs to be approached in the same way, yet it is often reduced to the short-term KPIs of the marketing or brand manager. It's a systemic challenge that needs to be tackled by the execs setting the KPIs and ultimately managing shareholder expectations.

**Reeves:** The digital market is flooded and marketers aren't getting the same results from old strategies. Now, more than

ever, you have to genuinely care about your audience. You can't just say it; because marketers talk about this a lot and still don't get it. What I'm saying goes deeper – into the intention of your marketing and the hearts of your marketing team.

I've read about the importance of snackable content many times, and it's still sinking in for me. With platforms like Tiktok coming along, bite-sized value - even in email - gets increasingly more important. Young people – people without marketing experience and qualifications – are sharing snackable content and getting powerful followings.

Video, video, video. It's still getting bigger. Find a way to create more videos and get better at it as you go. It requires courage for many of us to step into the spotlight, but it's a worthwhile step to make for brands.

■ ***What one main call to action would you advise your fellow industry colleagues at this time (in context of your talk) to help companies who are looking to beat the benchmark in digital advertising and create great work (teams, processes etc) that exceeds business goals?***

**Bowley:** Look at your data - it's not as daunting as it may appear. Once you've got your head around it, the opportunities for strategic improvement for your content strategy are endless. It will definitely give you the competitive edge you may be looking for to outperform your contemporaries in the marketplace.

**Browning-de Villiers:** Think about the bigger picture. Are you creating a content marketing ecosystem that will continually deliver a compelling value exchange with your consumers, outside of your immediate product or service offering? What's your long-term play to become a platform player with an owned audience you can get to know and nourish?

**Reeves:** Your business goals are achieved in relationship with your audience. Nurture this relationship with authenticity and care for the other.

■ ***Please share one key learning from 2020 that you have personally (or professionally) taken on board, that you believe will assist others to navigate the future of work as we (are getting to) know it.***

**Bowley:** Following the aftermath of Covid-19, a [report](#) by McKinsey estimated that e-commerce penetration vaulted forward by ten years. Shoppers are turning their attention to online platforms and brands need to meet their expectations in order to drive conversions, be it a contact lead or sales purchase. I would advise investing in an online content strategy that is engaging and prioritises the needs of your customers relative to their position in the funnel.

**Browning-de Villiers:** We succeed because of the relationships we have, first and foremost. Our creativity and work are bettered through relationships and collaboration; our mental health and happiness are bettered through relationships. Even though Covid-19 has allowed us to reimagine how we work and have our relationships – especially with colleagues and clients – the need to invest in relationships remains critical.

**Reeves:** Keep swimming. Keep testing. Keep having fun.

*The IAB SA has taken its Insight Series online to provide 60 - 75 minutes of insights, featuring fellow and future industry leaders, on subjects selected by IAB members and the industry at large to make better digital decisions. Episode 30 is sponsored by Jellyfish and brought to you in partnership with Gumtree, Everlytic, Ornico, and Bizcommunity. The 2021 IAB Insight Series is also approved for 2 CPD points at CMSA-level under marketing, by the Marketing Association of South Africa. To attend this episode on Digital Content Marketing on 16 September 2021, you can register for free [here](#). Episode 30 is free and open to the full industry to attend.*