You want ALL your marketers to promote your brand safely

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Brand consistency is so important these days. In our recent survey across 1,500 businesses globally, we asked for the #1 investment area in the brand content management space and top of the list was consolidated management of all content assets, a remarkable 25% more important than in our 2019 survey where it was also #1.

There are now so many communications channels in digital marketing. An inconsistent brand can cause immense damage in both the customer journey and experience, often leading to customer confusion and defection to another vendor who appears more authentic and trustworthy.

Brand content management is now a key process in any marketing department. As well as managing and distributing all their digital content assets effectively, marketers care very much about the usage of their brand messaging across the company, from corporate brand to the individual messaging statements around products. Companies working in a more distributed (sometimes called local) marketing environment must even deploy this process across ecosystems of subsidiaries, and external business partners.

In the (very) old days, the brand used to be just the logo, typeface and Pantone reference, and marketers helped business partners use the right brand by providing binders or books with the printed article. Now, the brand is a combination of purpose, positioning, promise, personality and values: the impression or promise you want to leave behind. It is broadcast through every sentence published in your name, through the tone and vocabulary; ultimately, by all employees of the company.

Historically, Marketing was seen as the brand police (as well as the brochure factory and the sales support team) and they would supervise each content project before publication. But content creation and distribution has been democratized and the days of command-and-control branding are now gone because of the pace of events in digital and social marketing – if a piece of content is identified as "off-brand", it has already been seen by hundreds or thousands of consumers.

THE NEED FOR BRAND CONTENT MANAGEMENT CONSOLIDATION

With so many employees and business partners now able to create content, we need ways to enable all those "brand ambassadors" (appointed formally or not) to live and breathe safely. We need ways to empower our frontline branding and equip marketing people with tools to achieve this.

The survey highlighted and underscored the need for consolidation across the brand and content management stacks. Nearly one quarter of the respondents have more than six different systems in place (note: we asked "vendors", so the number of systems could be even higher).

As well as maintaining a centralized repository of approved brand assets, the platform should be a system that allows marketing teams to develop dynamic workflows and templates that can be customized on-demand by sales teams, channel partners, franchisees, or any other business partner. The partners will

prefer to use the workflows because it saves them time and they should be able to access the templates at any time to update designated content fields to better target their particular audience. This level of customization fully empowers that field team to create brand compliant marketing materials without waiting on the marketing team.

FINDING A BRAND CONTENT MANAGEMENT PLATFORM

But planning to buy software, investigating the vendors and selecting the right solution is not a trivial task for any business professional. While the influence of IT professionals is increasing in the marketing discipline (historically, marketing has often been able to make autonomous decisions about its services and technology procurement), most marketing automation decisions are still finalized in the marketing department. But, as a CMO told me a few months ago: "The thing is, the vendors always know so much more than me, they talk about their solution every day - I only get into this topic occasionally and need to select a vendor partner perhaps once in a decade".

The buyers inform themselves about potential vendors through general internet research, talking to their peers and reading industry analyst research. More and more, they are also using peer reviews websites such as G2 Crown or Capterra. The challenge for buyers is: analysts are mostly focused on the needs of large enterprises, their target clientele; while the peer review websites tend to get quite busy and difficult to align to specific needs.

As you may know, our research methodology addresses those issues. I first survey the business users on how they have automated an important marketing process such as brand content management. I ask them which vendors they've worked with and ask for a rating of the vendor based on specific criteria (criteria aligned to the typical selection criteria used when selecting a software vendor). I then share this "feedback" with the vendors and got briefed by them on their go-to-market strategy and product roadmap.

The highlights of the report are available here.

Always keeping you informed!

Peter O'Neill