CONTENT & ALIGNMENT

Choosing and being chosen

# Contents

Good, meaningful content is the cement that enables an organization
to share its story with its internal and external stakeholders.
In this report we explain everything about content: from content
curation to storytelling and content strategy to execution.

1. No story, no glory

Every organisation dreams of having motivated and committed employees. Employees who are 100% committed to achieving the organisation's objectives and are willing to go the extra mile when needed. An *engaged* and *aligned workforce* is the foundation of every successful business.
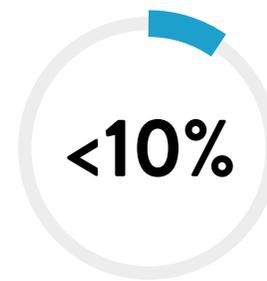
83%
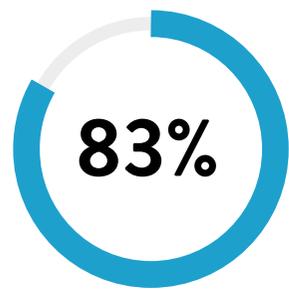
83% of executives say their business strategy is not well understood internally
(Source: Strategy&, 2014)

14%
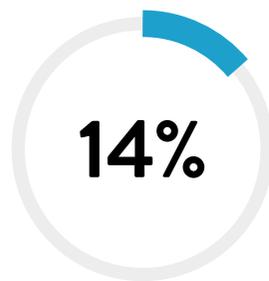
14% of employees understand the organisation's strategy.
(Source: Forbes, 2012)

65%
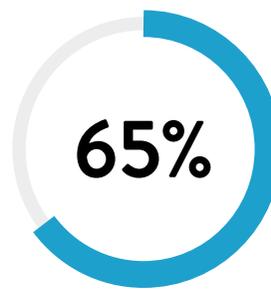
65% of organisations have a strategy.
(Source: Forbes, 2012)

<10%

***Less than 10%** of all organizations successfully execute the strategy*
*(Source: Forbes, 2012)*

OUTSIDE WINS BEGIN WITHIN

Where *engagement* is about whether people feel good in the job they do, *alignment* is about the behaviour needed to achieve an organisation's goals. In his book 'The Alignment Factor', Professor of Corporate Communications Cees van Riel proposes that *alignment* is the most important factor in determining an organisation's reputation. And a good reputation is vital for an organisation as it indicates how stakeholders perceive and value it. Reputation is the measure of the extent to which an organisation delivers on its promises to stakeholders.

Alignment – the most important factor for reputation – always begins internally, both with good products and services, but particularly with the employees themselves. Because if the external promise isn't upheld within an organisation, it won't be believable. In other words: if your organisation does not do what it promises to do, your reputation is thrown into question. Because the world has become more transparent – if you don't keep your promise, you will be publicly lynched and will have to work very hard to restore your good reputation.

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A GOOD STORY IS ESSENTIAL

For an organisation to do what it promises, its employees must understand and embrace its mission, vision and goals. Employees need to know what role they play in achieving an organisation's objectives in order to behave accordingly. A good story helps. A clear corporate story in which the mission, vision and organisational goals come to life, in which people recognize themselves and to which they're prepared to commit to. A story that is upheld internally ensures that an organisation will be successful, because it does what it stands for.

<50%
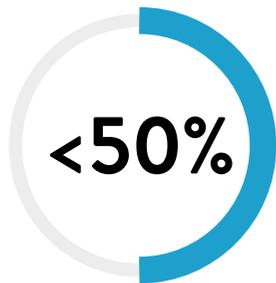
'Fewer than 50% of communicators believe their work is fully aligned with strategy'
(Source: AlignYourOrg, 2014)

FROM EXECUTION TO ENGAGEMENT

Each year PR agency Edelman measures the state of global confidence in the government, business, the media and NGOs, as well as the credibility of their spokespeople. Last year that trust reached an all-time low, prompting CEO Richard Edelman to suggest to all CEOs worldwide that they become Chief Engagement Officers instead of Chief Executive Officers. To focus more on the '*why* and *how*', and less on the 'what'. To focus on *engagement* rather than *execution*. To add value and actually make a difference. Because, Edelman argues:

'Business has to lead the debate for change'

This year, the Edelman Trust Barometer shows that after three years of decline trust in Dutch business has recovered significantly. But despite the increased confidence, they remain sceptical about the leaders of large companies. The Dutch only trust 26% of their own CEOs – the lowest percentage of all countries in the survey. So there remains quite some work to do.

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2. Developments in the field

There are not many professions that have changed so much in such a short time as the communications business. A few of the developments you can't get away from if you're a pro in the business.

1 IT'S ALL ABOUT REPUTATION

'Dutch businesses are very worried about their reputation and their image. They fear that negative publicity could have a catastrophic effect on sales in their own organisation or sector. Image and reputation are at the top of the agenda in 77% of Dutch boardrooms.'

(Source: Berenschot survey Strategy Trends 2015)

The world has become more transparent. Internet and social media have given us the opportunity to compare prices and products, find information and research dubious practices right down to the finest detail. Consumers are more articulate, they no longer allow the wool to be pulled over their eyes by clever marketeers. And if companies try to do so, they'll be singled out and can count on considerable damage to their image. Or worse, they'll earn a bad (unreliable) reputation. A good reputation is what it's all about. Companies that don't do what they promise, don't have a future.

2 INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION MERGE

Credibility, along with an authentic story and honest communication, is the keystone of a good reputation. You need to do what you say you'll do. And doing what you say starts on the inside, with your own employees who take your company's story into the world through blogs, videos or social media. If employees are fully engaged and aligned, then what is said and done within an organisation can be shared externally too. This makes an organisation credible, honest and authentic. And when what happens inside can be shared on the outside, and the borders between internal and external communication departments become blurred.

'Alongside earned, paid and owned media, I see a place for employee media.'

Simone Versteeg, PR & Corporate Communications Manager at Dell (Source: CommunicatieNU 2015)

The arrival of blogging and video-making employees has brought an end to the holy trinity of paid, owned and earned media. If the trend of personnel

communicating internally and externally about their organisation continues, we will have to add employee media as a fourth category, on a par with paid, owned and earned media.

3   BRANDS BECOME PUBLISHERS

'Have you ever heard Annechien Steenhuizen on the eight o'clock news talking about herself? (...) Ever read a news article or feature in De Volkskrant, NRC or any other national paper, in which journalists go on about their own lives? They provide a service: they give us information. They deliver what their readers want. They don't regard content as king, but as servant.'

Cor Hospes (Source: Frankwatching)

Businesses are very happy to talk about themselves and they do so a lot. For businesses, content is indeed king, not servant, as Hospes wrote in his blog for Frankwatching 'Forget branded content; think as a content brand'. 'They regard content marketing as marketing for themselves or for their product or service. And most people aren't after anything like that.' Hospes therefore believes that businesses should forget branded content and learn to think as a content brand. In other words, brands have to become publishers and start considering things from the recipient's viewpoint. What does the recipient want to know? What does the recipient need? For Hospes, it is not about more content, but about content that does more. Hospes quotes Tom Foremski, who as long ago as 2005 argued that every business would develop into a media business. We haven't come that far yet, but there are examples of businesses behaving as Foremski foresaw. Brands such as Red Bull and Coca-Cola successfully use content as part of their marketing strategy. Not simply by talking about the qualities of their fizzy drinks, but also by responding to their customers' needs.

4   SMALLER BUDGET, FEWER PEOPLE

The accounting scandals and the banking crisis have hit businesses hard. Businesses folded en masse or had to make swingeing cuts. The era when communi-cation departments occupied whole floors has gone. Yet, at the same time, the number of communication channels has gone through the roof. Communication professionals need to find ways of doing more with smaller budgets and fewer people. The new world requires a new organisation; a smaller, more agile communication department, with new roles and specialist communication professionals who know how to respond to their stakeholders' needs.

'I increasingly had the feeling that we needed to get back to the core of the profession, to the specialism of communication – the writing, designing, creating, organising and orchestrating – so that we had a nimble, small department.'

Marianne van de Zwan, Head of Global IT Communications at ING (Source: CommunicatieNU 2015)

Red Bull – Red Bull Gives You Wings... so Red Bull organises events such as the Wings For Life World Run and the Red Bull Soapbox Race.

Coca Cola – Sharing Happiness (The Coke Side of Life) came up with The Open Happiness Project, which enabled customers to share selfies with each other globally via a special Happiness Photobooth.

3. Content of value

Good, meaningful content is the cement that enables an organisation to share its story with its internal and external stakeholders. Good content gives a brand a face. But what do we mean by 'content' and what makes content good content?

EVERYTHING IS CONTENT

The term 'content' actually covers all information (text, illustrations, videos, PDFs, tweets, etc.) that an organisation shares with its stakeholders. In other words, the corporate story and the videos for the advertising campaign, but also the conditions of use and the scripts that define how customers should be treated. In other words, 'content' is a broad concept. In this dossier, the word 'content' is used to describe the information that helps to communicate the corporate story internally and externally.

GOOD CONTENT:

– Tells a story: brings cohesion to the mission, vision and objectives of an organisation
– Links strategy and operations and brings the management's story to the shop floor and to the external stakeholders
– Provides insight and oversight and ensures that people can identify and associate with an organisation
– Is unique: is appropriate for the brand, culture and business vision and gives the organisation a face
– Is inspiring and relevant, not sender-focused but focused on the stakeholders' needs
– Helps and advises and is not therefore abstract or vague, but concrete and practical
– Is authentic and honest: contributes to engagement and alignment
– Is enduring: contributes to long-term relationships.

One might sum up by saying that good content is valuable content. Content that is actually useful to the recipient, that the recipient is enthusiastic about and that gives the recipient something. That is important, because value leads to appreciation as Cor Hospes put it (but in Dutch) in his Contentbijbel (Content Bible). Valuable content is an important and powerful tool for building good relationships and a good reputation.

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4. Seven content trends

① VISUALS RULE!

*Every minute, **72 hours of video** are uploaded to YouTube, **216,000 photos** are posted on Instagram, **3,472 images** are pinned on Pinterest, **8,333 videos** are shared on Vimeo, **347,222 photos** are sent by WhatsApp and **2,460,000 items of content** are shared on Facebook.*

(Source: http://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/ boost-engagement-visual-content)

Images dominate our communications. Indeed, they dominate to the point where their prevalence can hardly be called a trend any more. Nevertheless, recognition that visuals rule is only gradually penetrating sender-focused, text-obsessed business culture. Visuals are expensive, so 'we'll do our own' is all too often the thinking. The results are usually depressing: poor photography, postage-stamp images with long blocks of text, awkward group photos, CEOs talking to the workforce in dull video messages...

It's a huge shame, because we now know that a picture often tells more than a thousand words and that people find visual information easier to take in

and retain. It's only to be expected, therefore, that visual content is increasingly dominant. Just look at the popularity of social platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Pinterest and SnapChat. Businesses that want to engage people with their stories do well to invest in visual content.

STUDIES SHOW THAT PEOPLE REMEMBER

10%
of what they hear

20%
of what they read

80%
of what they see and do

② FROM PRINT TO DIGITAL

Again, one can hardly describe it as a trend any longer. Every business that matters at all shares its story online: via its website, its intranet, LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest... The number of online channels is growing all the time and that makes demands of the content and therefore the content team. It is not simply a matter of content developers needing to learn to write shorter texts. It's about being findable, clever production, knowing how stakeholders use the various channels: for browsing, transaction or obtaining detailed information. Content has to be findable and measurable. Knowledge of CMS, web usability, SEO and web analytics is therefore essential for a content specialist. In recent years, businesses have been obliged to cut costs drastically and find it very hard to keep up with the rapid developments in communication. Communication departments have halved in size, but often continue to operate in the way they always have done. In many businesses, the IT used to support digital communication is ageing. Awareness of social media barely seems to have reached the shop floor. All too often, migration to digital communication is regarded by management as a way of cutting costs, rather than an opportunity to increase interaction and dialogue with stakeholders.

That situation is worrying and particularly hard to understand, considering that the generation that grew up with social media and digital communication has now entered the labour market. The old guard is being replaced by digital natives who are used to being online always and everywhere, in dialogue with their contacts and involved in the discussion of important issues. With the prospect of ageing populations and labour market shortages, employers have a strong incentive to attract talent. Businesses recruit from colleges and universities, organise 'battles' and get themselves seen at festivals and events. So you would expect that employers would also make an effort to adapt their infrastructures and internal communication to the new generation of employees that will soon be populating the work-stations. As yet, however, there is (too) little evidence of that happening at a lot of businesses.

③ ONLINE GOES MOBILE

'From the heavy investment in 4G networks, it's clear that the use of fast mobile internet is still growing as quickly as ever,' commented Henk Don, ACM board member. 'As recently as the third quarter of 2012, the Netherlands' total mobile data traffic over the three months was 5.9 Petabytes. Now we are up to 17.6 Petabytes per quarter.'

Henk Don, bestuurslid van ACM
(Source: Netherlands Authority for Consumers and Markets)

A third trend that is set to continue in the years ahead, driven by the rollout of technologies such as 4G, is the migration of online activity to mobile devices. The number of smartphone and laptop users and the number of people who have a tablet is growing steadily, while desktop sales are declining. The rise of 'wearables' – smartwatches, glasses and sports accessories – emphasises that *mobile is booming.*

Businesses need to take this trend into account and optimise their content for mobile. A good mobile website is vital. In their blog for Frankwatching, Peter van Apeldoorn and Steffart Buijs gave a few tips for a good mobile site:

– Be clear about the purpose of your mobile website
  – browsing or transaction – and about its
    relationship to your conventional website.
– Restrict the number of levels: reorganise your
  content – think and make choices from the visitor's
  perspective.
– Remember that the average visit will be short;
  get to the point quickly.
– Use short, interesting headings.
– Make sure copy is scrollable, layered and scannable:
  give the most important information first, with the
  option of reading on. Make everything as easy for
  the user as possible.

Migration to mobile implies doing more than building a mobile website, however. Any business that wants to engage people with its story needs to be able to respond quickly to new developments and make clever, skilful use of the opportunities that mobile communication offers. Businesses need to think about clever apps, experiment with mobile formats, smart devices, location-dependent and social services, and so on.

4 COMMUNICATION IS BECOMING MORE PERSONAL

Nearly nine out of ten Dutch people aged fifteen to thirty-nine use social media.
(Source: National Social Media Survey 2014 by NewCom)

In business and in general, the world has become more communicative and more interactive. New channels and social media are increasing the scope for interaction around the clock. The distinction between marketing and communication is disappearing. Mass communication (broadcasting) is being replaced by one-to-one communication (dialogue) with users, customers and employees. And that represents an extraordinary opportunity for businesses that want to build long-term relationships with their stakeholders.

In one of her blogs for Frankwatching, Social Media Expert Jeanet Bathoorn argued that content needs to become fluid and to follow customer behaviour. In other words, organisations need to be more in tune with and better adapted to the needs of their stakeholders. They need to engage people with their story, ask their opinion, listen to their ideas, and involve them in strategic decision-making. Businesses that do those things well are rewarded, earning their stakeholders' sympathy at worst, and securing their unconditional love and commitment at best.

5 CONTENT CURATION

Continuously providing new, unique content for all channels, communicating with stakeholders on a one-to-one basis, adapting to everyone's needs, reacting quickly and responding to new developments and events… Producing your own content takes a lot of time and a lot of money. Fortunately, we don't have to produce all our content ourselves. In our information society, we are swamped by content. Some of which we can easily reuse for our own purposes. We call that process content curation.

Mostly Media defines content curation as the systematic collection, appraisal, filtering, organisation, labelling and sharing of information (content) for a particular purpose, need or target group. The process may be performed manually by a specialist or on a fully automated basis, by means of algorithms. Mixed forms, in which software pre-selects material and an editor completes the process, are also possible.

Some of the examples given on Vandeinhoud.nl:
– You refer to other people's content in lists and summaries.
– You share other people's content, e.g. by retweeting.
– You gather other people's content and present a coherent overview, e.g. Flipboard, a newsfeed such as Google Alerts or an old-school cuttings journal.
– You incorporate elements of other people's content into your own, e.g. images, data, arguments, facts or quotations.
– You incorporate content or make reference to it and provide your own commentary: explanations, additional information, your own views, other people's views, etc.
– You put other people's content into your own words or translate it into your own language.
– You place other people's content in a new light.
– You adopt a similar style.

As long as a few simple rules are followed, content curation is a useful addition to any communication strategy:
– Don't reuse content indiscriminately; decide in advance what kind of content you are going to curate.
– Make sure that the content you curate is relevant by adding value, and don't hesitate to give your own opinion.
– State clearly what you stand for as an organisation, so that it is clear why you are sharing things.
– And, *last but not least*: don't forget to identify your sources and to credit the content creator, who has helped you with your task.

Content curation is hot, but can't ever rival producing your own unique content – especially not if you want your brand to be an authority or *thought leader* in your field.
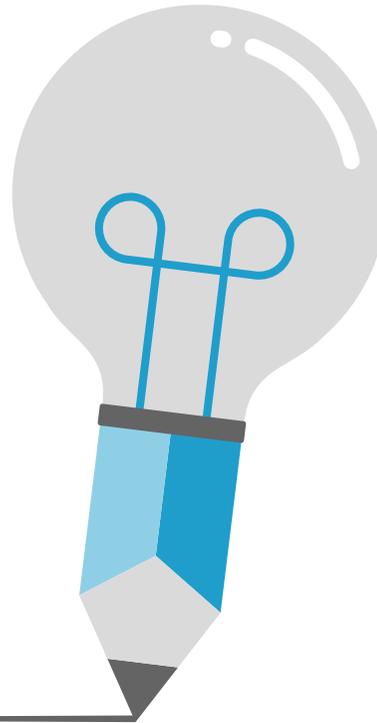
⑥ STORYTELLING

'We've been telling stories for fifty thousand years. People always need a story that they can relate to or identify with. Stories give you something to hang onto, a context for events. An organisation needs a story to provide that context. Without it, people provide their own context. Storytelling hasn't become more important. But recognition of the importance of a good story to an organisation has grown.'

Ben Wickham, *Creative Director of PROOF*
(in MarketingTribune)

'If content is king, storytelling is queen'. And that's only to be expected, because the communication profession has rediscovered storytelling as a powerful way of getting people to associate with an organisation's strategic principles. Starting with the corporate story: the story of the why, what and how of an organisation... the epic tale of the organisation's purpose, activities, successes and challenges.

However, an organisation doesn't have a single clearly defined story, but multiple interwoven and parallel stories. The personal stories of individual employees; stories of success and disappointment, of collaboration, of change and development. The story of the organisation is in fact that whole collection of stories. Sharing such stories about an organisation is a good way of promoting internal and external engagement and alignment.

The five elements of storytelling:

1. Storytellers – find storytelling ambassadors within the organisation.

2. Subjects – what are the central subjects of the business's story? What should we be telling stories about?

3. Tools – provide everyone within the organisation with the tools they need to gather and tell their stories.

4. Platform – provide a good, attractive platform for sharing stories.

5. Audience – encourage the audience to visit the platform, to read, listen to and look at the stories, and to tell their own stories.

(7) **TECHNOLOGIZATION**

'If it isn't on Google, it doesn't exist'

Jimmy Wales, co-founder of Wikipedia

Anyone who wants to use content to secure people's loyalty must first ensure that their content can be found amidst the sea of content made available every day. To a significant extent, the visibility of your content and its ranking in the online feeds are determined by the algorithms used by Facebook and Google… by the number of likes, shares, tags and pins. Therefore, anyone who produces and distributes content needs to consider the technology behind digital communication. SEO, SEA and web analytics are amongst the essential tools of every content specialist.

However, as Paul Maes rightly cautions in his blog for Businessupdates, it's important that you 'rule the tool, don't let the tool rule you'. Human creativity should not be smothered by the tools that dominate modern-day communications. In other words, don't write for the search machines or the rankings; write for the person performing the search. It's about choosing and being chosen: creating content that meets the needs of the target group and thus secures them to you.

EVERYTHING'S A GAME

Gamification – the use of game-play techniques to motive people and get them to do something – is a popular way of securing a target group. People enjoy being challenged to compete against themselves or each other. The reward may be status or recognition or simply the pleasure of learning something in a playful way. However, gamification isn't simply about incorporating elements of play into your communication. It is also an opportunity to gather and analyse data (customer behaviour information) as a basis for defining future policy. Gamification serves as a powerful tool, which brands can use to increase engagement in the target group and thus increase conversion.

Increasing use of gamification is also being made on the shop floor. Deloitte expects companies to use gamification in 25 per cent of redesigned business processes in 2015. Gamification is regarded not merely as tool 'for engaging employers and customers' but – if used well – as a valuable medium for measuring, analysing and changing people's behaviour. So, for example, gamification could be used for turning an *engaged* workforce into an *aligned* workforce.

5. Producing content is teamwork

The era when communication was the sole preserve of the communication department is well behind us. The classic model based on broadcasting and advertising has been replaced by an approach characterised by dialogue and content that adds value to that dialogue.

Content has become 'fluid'; recipients respond, give their views, pass content on and add their own information. Communication involves everyone. Creating content is teamwork. As a result, the world has become more transparent and more communicative. An inevitable consequence is that the traditional dividing line between internal and external communication is becoming blurred.

CENTRALISED EDITORIAL TEAM
Together, the developments described above have profound implications for the communication department. Whereas the traditional communication department was organised around media and channels, the modern communication department is organised around content. Separate editorial teams for each channel are gone, replaced by a single, centralised editorial team, which produces content for all channels and media. A single, slim-line communication department for internal and external communications, staffed by specialists who can respond quickly and adroitly to events. Communication departments are smaller, therefore, and operate in a communicative, transparent setting where everyone – from the CEO to the lowliest employee – makes an active contribution to communicating the organisation's story.

TRAINING AND COACHING
A good reputation arrives on foot and departs by horse. And, now that the boundary between internal and external communication is becoming blurred, it is the important that everyone inside the organisation has the knowledge and skills to communicate the organisation's story. One of the communication specialist's most important tasks is therefore to make the organisation more communicative by training and coaching management and other staff in writing and other skills.

NEW COLLABORATIONS
Communication departments are smaller, yet need to do more. They must produce more content for more channels and communicate with stakeholders in a more personal way. This is only possible if communication departments collaborate intensively with the rest of the organisation. It's not only the distinction between internal and external communication that is disappearing, so too is the distinction between communication and HR, marketing, spokesmanship, sponsorship & events, and so on. HR can help people make the organisation more communicative and involve them in change within the organisation; spokesmanship has an important role to play in making the organisation more transparent, and marketing has the task of ensuring that the needs of external stakeholders are recognised internally.
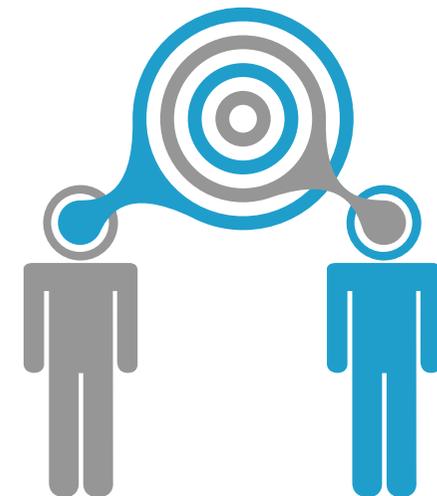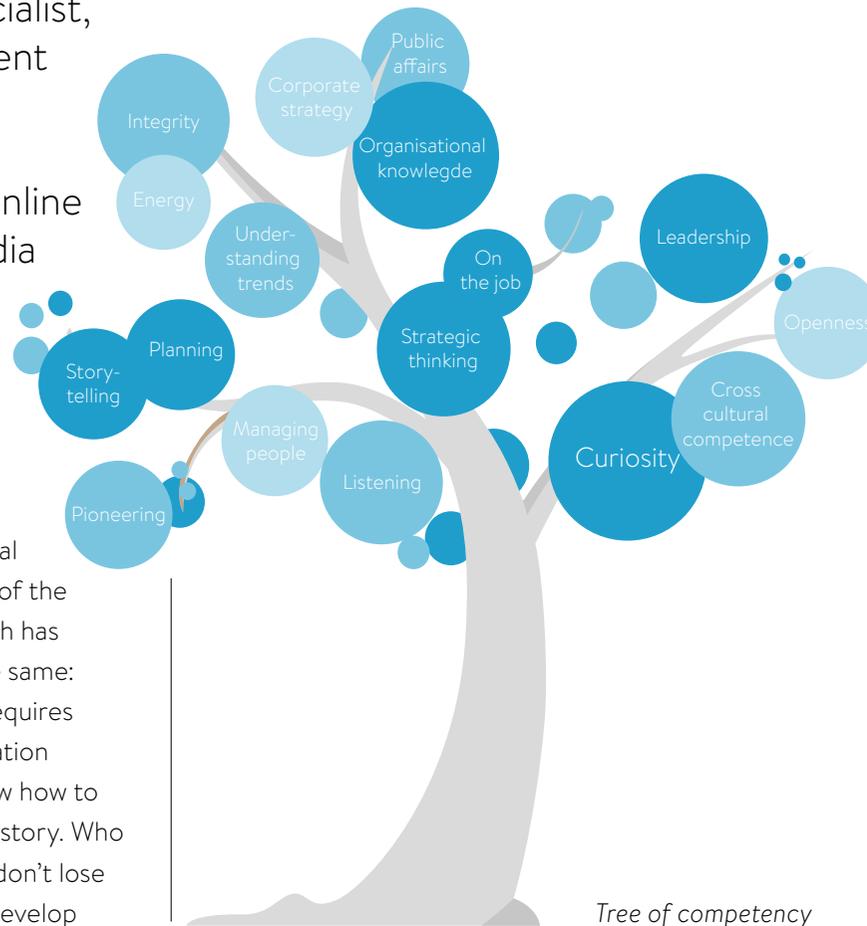
6. New competencies

No profession has changed as quickly as communication. In recent years, countless new roles have emerged: the SEO/SEA specialist, conversation manager, content curator, chief blogger, chief listening officer, stakeholder engagement specialist and online communication & social media specialist, to name but a few. And every new role has its own new competencies.

COMPETENCIES

Ecopsi's Tree of Competency is a neat visual representation of the main competencies of the modern communication professional. Much has changed, but one thing always remains the same: creating good content is an activity that requires expert and passionate people. Communication specialists who are good listeners and know how to carry people along with the organisation's story. Who put systematic communication first. Who don't lose sight of the big picture. Who continue to develop

themselves without letting every new trend divert them from their course.

Tree of competency

Tree labels: Public affairs, Corporate strategy, Integrity, Organisational knowlegde, Energy, Under-standing trends, Leadership, On the job, Planning, Strategic thinking, Story-telling, Openness, Managing people, Cross cultural competence, Listening, Curiosity, Pioneering

A NEW ROLE

The role of the communication specialist has not only changed; it has also become more important. As well as helping to make the organisation more communi-cative, the communication professional is increasingly required to possess strategic qualities, argues Betteke van Ruler, Emeritus Professor of Communication Science at the University of Amsterdam. In her article for CommunicatieNU 2015, Van Ruler cited the European Communication Monitor 2014, in which half of the 2,700-plus respondents indicated that their biggest challenge was the alignment of communication with business strategy. That is a natural consequence of the fact that the world has become more transparent and more communicative and that developments now follow one another with great rapidity. Anyone who doesn't want to live and work like flotsam on the tide of events, must look ahead, see the big picture and keep sight of it. Stakeholder engagement can't be forced; it has to be secured by working on durable relationships over an extended period.

7. Content strategy

Simply feeding the organisation messages doesn't work anymore – people are no longer willing to blindly accept everything they are told. They think things through, ask questions, answer back; they need to be convinced. The question is no longer 'Who do I want to reach and what is my message for them?' but 'Who do I want to engage with my message?' In other words, it is not content that is king, but conversation.
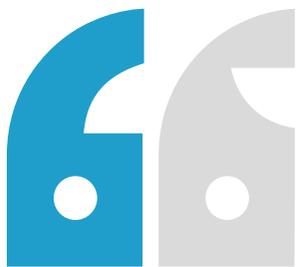
In order to systematically and consistently engage people with your message, a sound content strategy is indispensable. A content strategy describes the content that needs to be produced, how its production should be organised and how it should be distributed. A good content strategy addresses questions such as: What are the key issues within the organisation? Who are the most important stakeholders? What questions do those stakeholders have? What are their needs and expectations? And via which channels and using which media can they best be reached? In short: integrated communication, based on mutually reinforcing media and channels. A good content strategy helps to bring that about.

Having a good content strategy on paper is one thing, implementing that strategy in practice is another. Managing content and measuring its performance are complex processes. A number of good books have been written about content strategy, including Content Organizing in de praktijk (Content Organising in Practice) by Atie de Heer, the Handboek Contentstrategie (Content Strategy Manual) by Patrick Pietersen and Het Strategisch Communicatie Frame (The Strategic Communication Frame) by Betteke van Ruler. Anyone who wants to get straight down to work can read the 6 stappen voor een succesvolle

content strategy (A successful content strategy in six steps), which Steven van Belleghem of B-conversational wrote for Frankwatching.

Once you have established what content needs to be produced, a content calendar is a usual tool for securing continuity and synchronising content development with special events inside and outside the organisation. A content calendar not only provides an overview but also facilitates the planning and intelligent production of content.
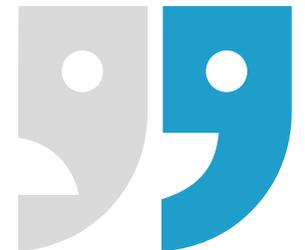
8. Customised content

If an organisation is to engage its stakeholders, the organisation must first decide what it stands for, and what its vision and ambition are.

GOLDEN CIRCLE
To that end, management guru Simon Sinek has developed a simple model: the Golden Circle, which consists of three rings:

1. The inner ring: **Why** (why are we here?)

2. The middle ring: **How** (how do we do that?)

3. The outer ring: **What** (what do we do?)

WHAT

HOW

WHY
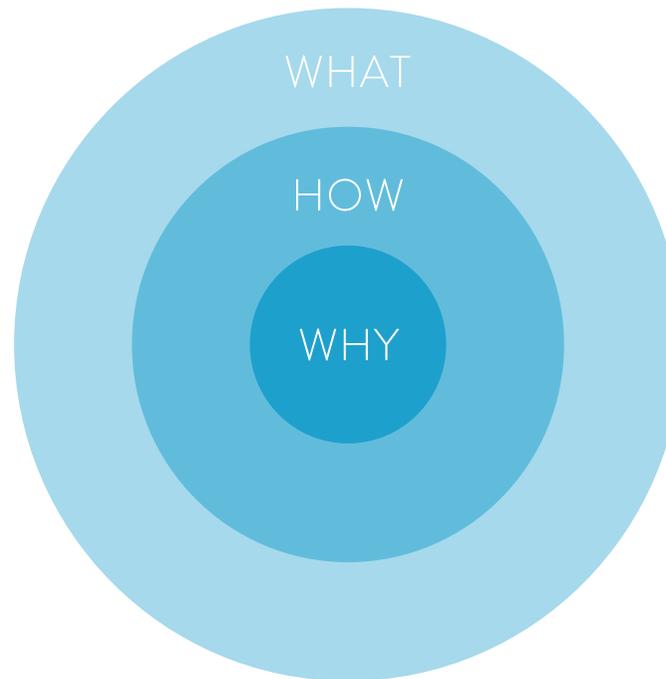
'People do not buy WHAT you do, they buy WHY you do it'
Simon Sinek

Sinek argues that most organisations start at the outside of the circle and work their way in. They can say what they do and usually how they do it as well. But not many can say why. When asked why, an organisation will frequently think in terms of generating as much profit as possible. However, according to Sinek, profit is the result of all business activities, not the reason for the business's existence.

In his famous presentation for TEDx, Sinek takes Apple as an example. Why is Apple so innovative? he wonders. How does Apple manage to come up with trendsetting, ground-breaking products year after year? After all, Apple is just a computer firm, working with the same talent pool, consultants, consumers and media as every other computer firm. Sinek suggests that Apple is so successful because it doesn't approach the Golden Circle from the outside and work its way in, but starts at the centre and works its way out. Everything starts with Why: Challenging the status quo by thinking different. That always has

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been and remains the driving force behind Apple and the reason why Apple is able to deliver innovative products time after time.

CONTENT BEFORE FORM

As an organisation, you need to know what you stand for and what you believe in, before you can do what you promise. That knowledge enables you to ensure that your products and services meet the needs of your stakeholders. Your story will then ring true and you will recognise what content you need to put the organisation's story in the spotlight. Good, meaningful content that meets the needs of internal and external stakeholders. Content must always come before form.

The type of content (web page, blog, infographic, video, whitepaper, etc.) depends not only on what you want to say – do you want to tell a complex story or simply entertain or stimulate people – but also on the channel or platform that you choose for sharing your content. News does well on Twitter and LinkedIn, photos and videos are better suited to Facebook, Pinterest and Instagram. Events and campaigns can be shared on YouTube. A good content strategy helps you decide on the right content and distribute it properly across the various channels and platforms.

CHOOSING AND BEING CHOSEN

Even though a lot of new channels have become available in recent years, the aim shouldn't be to produce as much content as you can. An organisation has to curb its inclination to broadcast and focus on producing carefully selected bespoke content that ensures that the stakeholders – customers, employees, job applicants, suppliers and so on – consciously choose your organisation because your story appeals to them and helps them. It's all about choosing and being chosen.

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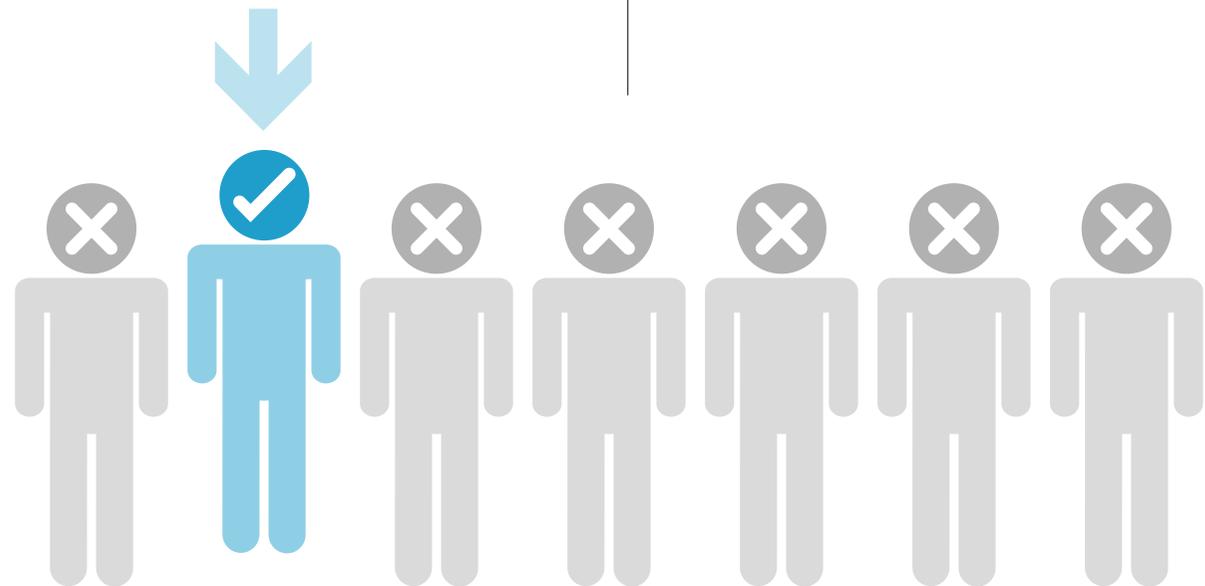
9. Sharing content

Good content is worthless if it doesn't reach the right target group. The organisation's content strategy should identify the best online and offline channels for sharing the content. Distinction is usually made between owned, paid and earned media.

OWNED MEDIA

The easiest way to share content that you have made is via the organisation's own 'free' channels or media, such as the organisation's own (mobile) website, intranet, publications, social media accounts, YouTube channel, events and so on. When using owned media, the organisation decides the nature of the content and the context in which it is placed. The organisation has full control.

PAID MEDIA

With paid media too, the organisation shares its own content, but instead of doing so via its own channels and media, it does so via channels and media that it pays to use. The content is distributed by buying advertising space, broadcasting time, billboards, clicks and so on. With paid media, the organisation has control over the content, but not over the context in which the content is made available.

EARNED MEDIA

Proactively sharing content via your own online and offline channels and via channels that you pay to use is a must for any organisation that wants to be noticed. However, it's hard to be sure that you will actually reach the people you want to reach. It's much better if you can get other people to distribute your content for you – by sharing or liking it via social media, for example, by reviewing it or talking about it at seminars, and so on. The pinnacle of content sharing is 'going viral': when your content is quickly passed on again and again in an 'epidemic' of online sharing. Other people who think that your content is worth sharing with the world are valuable fans of your brand and ambassadors for your organisation. They are the foundation on which you can build a strong reputation. But never forget that it can work the other way too...

EMPLOYEE MEDIA

Writing in CommunicatieNU 2015, Simone Versteeg, PR & Corporate Communications Manager at Dell, adds a fourth category of media to the traditional trio of earned, paid and owned media: employee media. Communication is no longer the exclusive responsibility of the communication department, but has become the responsibility of everyone in the organisation. Including all the organisation's tweeting, blogging and Facebooking employees. Communication specialists can help the organisation's personnel to perform their new role as well as possible, for example, by providing training and ensuring that content is readily available for sharing in the form of ready-made chunks.

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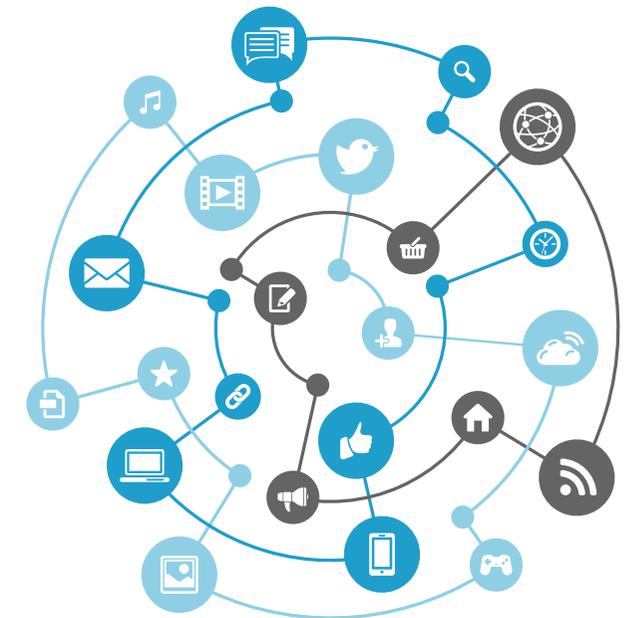
10. Managing and monitoring content

The content strategy sets out what content is to be shared, when, with whom and via what channels.

The content manager is responsible for ensuring that all the necessary content is systematically planned, developed, managed, distributed and evaluated. Which is quite an undertaking. A content management system (CMS) helps, but only works if the content is properly saved, with metadata attached, for example.

Content can be managed and monitored effectively only if:
– there is a **central editorial** team that produces content for all media and channels
– there are **clear guidelines** for producing content
– the workflow is **clearly defined**, so that people know who is responsible for what
– there is a **content strategy** and a content plan or calendar to provide for continuity.

'Exposure and engagement is key when it comes to measuring content marketing ROI. Simply publishing a blog post isn't enough of a success. You have to go deeper and pay attention to things like social share metrics, engagement metrics, and actual conversions that can be tied to the content you're producing'

*Colin Mathews, Co-founder, Content Marketer
(Source: Forbes, Sujan Patel)*

ROI
Customer satisfaction, employee involvement, service quality. Businesses like to keep their finger on the pulse and know what their stakeholders think of them. Once the content machine is running, any commercial organisation wants to know what return it's getting on its investment. Preferably expressed in terms of hard cash. They want to know the Return On Investment (ROI).

KNOW WHAT YOU'RE MEASURING
Anyone who wants to know what has been achieved, must first determine what needs to be measured (KPIs) and define clear goals. What is the content intended to do? What constitutes success? More website traffic, more likes, shares, subscribers or followers, more expertise on the shopfloor, more turnover, shorter processing times? Any of those things may constitute success and it is therefore important to define proper objectives for each medium and channel.

TO MEASURE IS TO KNOW
Once the goals have been defined, you can measure what you have achieved. With digital communication and resources such as Google Analytics, it is possible to find out a great deal about your online channels. Many platforms provide their own tools for measuring the effectiveness of placed content: Facebook Insights, Pinterest Analytics and LinkedIn Analytics and Insights. LinkedIn has also introduced a 'Dynamic Duo' for measuring the influence of content: Content Marketing Score and Trending Content. Metrics has become a discipline in its own right, requiring experts who can not only collect the data, but also interpret them and translate them into practical reports.

'Metrics never tell the whole story, which is why we ask every new blog subscriber and customer how they found us. The data is anecdotal but it gives us a deeper understanding of the customer journey. Two customers rarely follow identical paths so it's always worth asking'

Jimmy Daly, Head of Content, Vero (Source: Forbes, Sujan Patel)

KEEP MONITORING AND LISTENING

It is relatively straightforward to measure whether the number of subscribers has increased or the time taken to process helpdesk enquiries has gone down. But how do you measure engagement and alignment? Engagement, behaviour and culture are 'soft' parameters that cannot be expressed properly in hard statistics. Likes and shares serve as indicators of customer loyalty, but what do they actually say about the customer's appreciation of what you do? The same is true of employee engagement. A questionnaire can provide insight, but the findings are merely a snapshot. It is important to continue monitoring and listening carefully to customers, employees and all other stakeholders who are important to the business.

SEEING IS BELIEVING

In our increasingly transparent world, it is more important than ever to share results and make them visible. Get people – employees, customers – to engage with the organisation. Ask them their opinion, for tips and advice. And show them that you act on their input, that you genuinely value their opinion. Achieving engagement and alignment is a two-way process.

11. Pitfalls

Producing good content that secures engagement and alignment and is distributed in a systematic and consistent way is a major undertaking.

IT IS EASY TO MAKE ANY OR ALL OF THESE MISTAKES:
– **No good story** (*why* confused with *how* and *what*; no vision or too many visions)
– **Tendency to broadcast** (only talking about yourself when no one has asked; emphasis on *what* instead of *why* and *how*)
– **It's Communication's party** (no links with HR, Marketing, rest of the organisation)
– **Thinking in channels and media** (instead of what the audience/target group needs)
– **Too much content** (producing for producing's sake)
– **Too little content** (no plan/strategy, no budget)
– **Amateurism, ignorance** (thinking that everyone can read, write, make videos)
– **Ad hoc production** (going with every new trend; making a video 'because everyone does it').
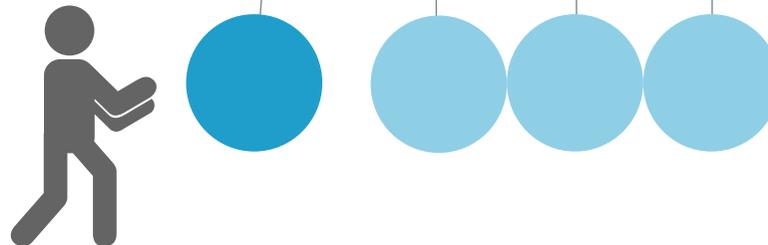
12. Challenges

Producing content with genuine added value is one of the most difficult things for businesses and organisations to do, according to the Content Marketing Institute.

There are various other challenges on the road to content that gets people to engage with the organisation's story:
– Obtaining honest stories from the organisation (no window dressing)
– Consistently and continuously producing content on the basis of a good, practical content strategy
– Producing enough content
– Monitoring and measuring content around the clock
– Securing an adequate communication budget
– Professionalising the communication department (skills, agility, etc.)
– Upgrading the digital infrastructure.

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About PROOF

PROOF helps organisations bring about change and tell a clear 'story', both internally and externally. PROOF believes that stakeholders who feel connected to an organisation's story are more productive, contribute to better results and become enthusiastic ambassadors for the organisation. If everyone 'feels part of' it, then the organisation is stronger, more effective and attractive – both as a brand and as an employer.

Check out our other reports:

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Every organisation's dream

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Driven and committed employees who know exactly how they can help to realise your strategic goals and who go the extra mile to get there. An engaged and aligned workforce is every organisation's dream. In this report, we explain how alignment is achieved. ▶
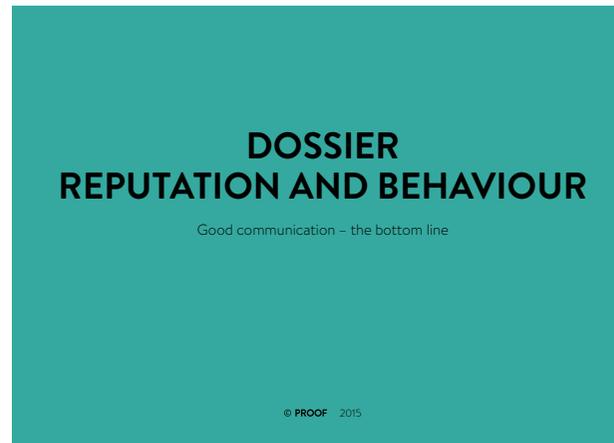
Whatever you want to radiate to the world outside, you first have to live it in your organisation. Working on your reputation therefore starts from within, and a large part of that involves improving your behaviour. This report sets out our vision of the inextricable link between reputation, communication and behaviour. ▶
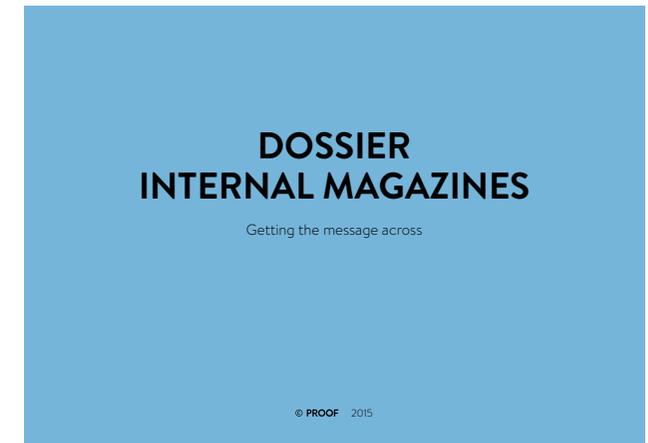
The message and the seduction: this report sets out our vision and includes internal magazine cases. ▶

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*Whatever it takes to
tell a great story*