

What is indigenous content and should it be part of your content strategy?

 By [Claire Butler](#)

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There's a new buzzword doing the rounds in content marketing circles - indigenous content. However, the concept is really nothing new at all.

Indigenous content, also known as user-generated or fan content, is content that quite literally "originates or occurs naturally" within your target audience. Although it goes by many names, it is a tactic that marketers have been employing for quite some time now and has been heralded as one of the biggest content marketing trends for 2014. Why all the fuss?

Marketers already know that in a world where [17 new web pages are published every second](#); [2 million blog items are posted every day](#); and 100 hours of video are uploaded to YouTube every minute, it's hard to stand out. While much of this content 'flood' can be attributed to business's flurry to capitalise on the benefits and returns associated with content marketing, you can't discount the sheer amount of content (particularly social content) that you, your friends and your fans are producing on a daily basis - a.k.a. user-generated content.



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Step into the shoes of your audience

We're living in digitally social times, where our offline lives are embedded into our online lives, and the creating and sharing of our own personal content provides some sort of self-validation and approval that we've become accustomed to craving (a like, share, comment, retweet). We can't visit a restaurant without checking in at our location, instagramming our meal, sharing the photograph on Facebook, tweeting about the bad service, and blogging about the whole experience. But that's just it: as users, as fans, and as brand audiences, we love creating and sharing content...and being acknowledged for it.

Flip back to being a marketer in this content-fuelled digital environment: one of the biggest challenges for content marketers is being able to create enough quality content to really make an impact and drive profitable action. So what if you turned to your customers to create this content for you? Think of the potential to capitalise on and leverage this new digital human desire to create and share content. The content generated by your online community of customers is far more authentic, credible and trusted than anything you as a brand can create.

Social proof is in the pudding

Indigenous or user-generated content is your digital word of mouth. A recent study by Crowdtap and Ipsos Media revealed (not surprisingly) that "Millennials (people born between 1977 and 1997) trust information found in user-generated content 50 percent more than information from traditional media sources and find user-generated content 35 percent more memorable than other sources".

Think about the power in the social proof granted when a customer or prospective customer voluntarily shares a story about your brand (either positive or negative).

Indigenous content: yay or nay?

The question on every content marketers lips then is: "should indigenous content be a part of my content strategy?" Well, as with all marketing, it depends: on the channels you have chosen to use in your strategy, and on the demographics of your target market.

Naturally, most user-generated content campaigns rely on leveraging social media channels and networks, and will appeal more to a digital native than to older less online audiences.

If the answer for you is yes, you'll want to start considering how to actually go about getting your audience to create content for you.

Some starting points:

- **Encourage comments and/or reviews at every chance** - any positive comment will serve as valuable social proof. Plus, you never know what story or experience a fan might share that you can interrogate and use as social proof.
 - **Host contests to incentivise your audience to produce content** - you've seen these contests before: share a photo or video to win...some just want the recognition, personal satisfaction and exposure, and others want a solid prize.
 - **Celebrate customer moments** - make your customer the hero of your brand story. When a customer does organically share a photo or tweets you, make a fuss. Teach your audience that you're willing to give recognition for content.
 - **Embrace crowdsourcing** - empower your audience to make decisions for you, and show them that their opinions really matter.
 - **Call for contributors** - if its additional blog content you want, why not just ask?
 - **Create a space to build a community or curate user-generated content** - for example a tumblr blog or a pinterest board where your fans can upload and share content about your brand or where you can showcase their efforts.
 - **Leverage social media** - if there's one place where sharing content comes naturally for your audience, it's on their social media channels.
 - **Run surveys** - you can use the data or answers to create content.
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- **Ask permission** - before using any content created by your audience, always ask permission, and be specific about how you will be using their content.

Your audience is more than likely already creating and sharing content on their own accord. If you aren't already, start listening online - hear and see what your audience is saying and doing with your brand. If you create the right channels for feedback, or give them the space to create and share, they'll do all the work for you.

ABOUT CLAIRE BUTLER

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