

Why South Africa needs chief content officers

I have the good fortune of working with some of the most powerful media groups in South Africa. Within these groups, often there are many business units. Each of these units is mandated to drive creativity and innovation into their markets by telling the stories of their clients to the audiences that consume them. But I find two key factors that may be eroding their efforts:

 By Travis Bussiahn 17 Feb 2014

1. Their focus is often skewed towards focusing on the advertisers on their platforms;
2. While they are pulsing effort into telling the story of the client to the marketplace, there's no one telling the story of the business unit.

My personal philosophy on the first point is simple: If your audience comes first then your advertiser will too. You can unpack that when you've got a moment.

Then to the second point I say that to successfully tell the story of your business to your clients and across your group, you have to get a few things in order which will ultimately give your business the competitive edge in South Africa (because I know there aren't a lot of companies doing it yet so you'll have an edge.)

But to get it right you'll be forced to:

1. Get your internal content audited and amplified - this will make you clean up those dusty filing cabinets and also bring departments together. It will also make you realise that most of your story is written already and is lying dormant like forgotten tome in the back of a library somewhere.
2. Get good at telling your story and vision to your staff - which will give you a better fix on who you are as an organisation (you've got to take good long look into the organisational mirror to get this right) while also making happy and connected staff something that actually exists in your company. This includes staff-driven social media strategy and internal comms flowing into external ambassadorship.
3. Get your internal and external marketing strategy refined for duplication throughout your silos - by focusing on a genuine content distribution and creation strategy you'll start to learn new media tactics that make marketing a weapon of choice and those learnings can be skinned and purposed for each of your units.

Inbound systems will support your sales teams, content marketing will retain clients and conversion marketing will introduce new ways to sell products while profiling users - ultimately increasing sales and lead generation. But only if the content driving on these platforms and channels are spot on (not something you scribble on a notepad between meetings).

I can go on but you get the picture - there's work to be done. A lot of it. But who will do it? You're spending all your time on keeping the core business flowing. That's where the chief content officer comes in. Wikipedia describes the CCO like this

A chief content officer (CCO) is a corporate executive responsible for the digital media creation and multi-channel publication of the organisation's content (text, video, audio, animation, etc.)

In a [broadcasting](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Organisation) [\[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Organisation\]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Organisation), the CCO is generally the highest ranking creative member of the organisation.

The chief content officer is responsible for developing the organisation's content strategy, choosing content development standards and content management systems, and ensuring content is structured and semantically rich so to provide user-

optimised content and support publishing the content on multiple channels and devices (such as computers, smart phones tablets, eBook readers).

The CCO is usually in an [executive](#) role or [senior vice president](#) position.

The CCO typically reports to the [chief executive officer](#) or the [president](#) of the organisation.

While this is a slightly more internally focused description I'd like to add that the CCO works hand-in-hand with the CMO to develop a knock-out marketing plan as well as supporting communications and HR.

South African businesses can no longer ignore the fact that content is the elephant in the room. The greatest challenge lies in finding personnel with the right mix of business acumen, marketing know-how and ultimately the skill set to tell stories that are not superficial across multiple channels.

ABOUT TRAVIS BUSSIAHN

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