

# Content: Skate or fall - it's that simple

By  Catherine Milward-Bridges

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Just about every guru waxes lyrical about how to rise AFTER having fallen.

I once heard someone say that his passion for skateboarding stems from being able to teach kids *how* to fall - or 'bail', in skateboarders' lingo. This piqued my interest.

Creating engaging content is a surefire way to break your fall in business. Though, how does one go about it if your inkwell hasn't even been found, let alone used? Starting and/or growing a business means that you're probably going to have to write - think social media and blog posts, newsletter content, online campaigns.

Best we explore some pointers.

## Evolve

Effective communication - and therefore content creation - drives success in the modern day business.

Let's take a business profile, for example - if it hasn't been written compellingly, using the skill of storytelling, the owner's probably in trouble. Your business profile is often prospective clients' only introduction to your business. Therefore, not capitalising on the opportunity by making your business 'story' engaging would be unfortunate. The same applies to your website copy, and all other relevant platforms for content.



Progressive CEOs and other business leaders - not sparing the introverts - are having to learn to communicate (face-to-face and otherwise) so as to *engage*. Why? Because customers and employees want to be engaged - they no longer respond to merely being 'addressed'.

## Quit the excuses

In skateboarding - just like in any other sport - the more you 'walk through' your manoeuvres in your head, the less likely

you are to be caught off guard.

Everyone can write. While few of us will ever become a J.R.R. Tolkien, J.K. Rowling, or Antjie Krog, we *can* all tell a story - and that's really where it all starts. People like, and respond to stories.

Embrace every opportunity - big and small - to write and interact. This way you'll get to know what's on people's minds, what excites them, what riles them. Then start talking/writing about those things.

In their wisdom, somebody once told me: "Write it as if you're telling it to your grandmother". How apt, with *simple* business communication having now become an imperative.

## It won't come to you

Unlike a piece of information that's been stored in your memory banks, deciding what to write about won't necessarily 'come to you'. So, just start. Draft that blog post - you don't even have to start at the beginning. This is NOT the time to wait until you have the perfect 'plot' before you start - that'll come as the piece takes shape. It's very different when it comes to compiling a 140-character tweet, of course. But that's an article for another day.

Knowing the answers to the following will give you a good head-start:

1. **what** your target audience wants to hear - then your content is more likely to gain traction
2. **who** the industry experts are - they're a great source of information
3. **what** is topical - to make sure your content is relevant.

With your audience's needs as your compass, you'll know what resources to tap into as triggers for producing value-adding content.

## Be authentic

Amongst skateboarders a 'poser' refers to someone who's faking it. This is a label you want to avoid, if you have any hope of garnering respect as a content creator.

Social media has unleashed a wealth of expert information, placing it right at our fingertips. That's great! It makes sense, then to curate some of our content, rather than to create it from scratch. Though, this could dilute our authenticity and declare us 'posers'. So, where do we draw the line?

Ask yourself:

1. how much do I **know about the topic?**
2. is it something I can **talk about passionately and compellingly?**
3. what percentage of the content represents **my own ideas?**

## Be inspired by your competition

There'll ALWAYS be someone better than you - even skateboarders can attest to this. The only way you're going to catch up to, and maybe even accelerate past them, is with practice.

Also, there's nothing wrong with emulating that which works for your competitors - I call it being shrewd. It's definitely smarter than wasting precious time reinventing the wheel.

Applying the pointers above will help you to quickly come into your own with content creation. Then, set up a content calendar to get yourself to:

1. take content creation seriously
2. be disciplined.

The more you write - or skate - the more you'll find yourself 'roaming in your craft'. You may even spot the odd grammatical error on a billboard, or in your favourite restaurant's menu - good practice to learn how to 'bail' when things become precarious.

Happy writing!

## ABOUT CATHERINE MILWARD-BRIDGES

Catherine Milward-Bridges is a passionate communication specialist and founder of [simplyput.co.za](http://simplyput.co.za). Catherine guides her clients in taking their engagement efforts from good to great; and helps them optimise social media with strategic know-how.

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