

Does the paid, earned owned model account for content marketing?

 By [Kat Scholtz](#)

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The paid, earned and owned (PEO) media model has proven to be a fairly adaptable one. It allows marketers to identify the nature of the different communications tools at their disposal and conceptualise the best combination of them for achieving results.

The model suggests for example, that the easily controlled product page on a website (owned) can be brought to a larger audience through the use of targeted advertising (paid) or coverage by a respected publication (earned). The model highlights and compares the strengths and weaknesses of each category. When applied to branded content, PEO highlights the blurring lines between marketers and publishers and suggests some ways in which we can amend our application of the model.

Shift in owned media space

There has also been a shift in the nature of owned media spaces. People have little tolerance for a piece of content that prioritises the marketing message over being interesting. To counteract this effect on the success of 'traditional' advertising, brands have used online and offline publishing tools to create their own content destinations (from magazines to videos to interactive maps).

Here they can reach targeted audiences while maintaining far more control over what is published. Red Bull is the classic example here, with the brand's website reading far more like a content portal than a company brochure.

Marketers who may traditionally have focused on paid advertising for reaching a certain readership, or earned media for getting their content published by a certain title, can invest in creating their own targeted content destinations as well. This demands an expanded skillset that traditionally lay in the realm of publishing, and explains why many journalists are also describing themselves as content strategists and moving between the media and marketing worlds.

Does this shift mean that brands should or will stop trying to leverage third party publishers? Not at all. Red Bull has its own media house, but still advertises its product through print and TV ads in third party publications. I'd be greatly surprised if an FMCG or retail brand published a title that garners the same respect as The Economist.

PEO categories

The different categories of PEO just overlap somewhat, and require a more nuanced understanding in application. Social

advertising like promoted Facebook posts has blurred the lines between earned and paid for example.

How neatly a tool fits into one of the categories is less important than how its strengths can be matched with your goals in the bigger picture. Perhaps a marketer would find themselves paying for an advert to drive readership to their content portal rather than a product page.

Provided their content is interesting enough to keep the reader engaged, this would enable them to build a longer term relationship with their market than a once off advert would have. There are simply more options and combinations of options for ways to reach your market.

We marketers have a tendency to proclaim a shift as completely revolutionising the way things are done when in reality it is more useful to think about the shifts as nuanced and part of a bigger picture of adaptation.

The focus should be on what effect the shifts have on the ways we can reach people because of how they are engaging with media. We need a framework like PEO for discussing where the ambiguities exist and how we can take advantage of them.

ABOUT KAT SCHOLTZ

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