

The Story of Content: Rise of the New Marketing Documentary Talk Back Discussion Questions

1. Julie Fleischer (06:17) asserts that the first ads were really just content that was connecting with people around value. Soap operas like *The Guiding Light* and *As the World Turns* serve as some of the earliest examples. What do you think caused the advertising industry to move away from this, in favor of product-focused messaging? What factors do you think have led marketing to circle back to a focus on storytelling and entertainment content?
2. Kirk Cheyfitz (12:51) characterizes content marketing as more art than science: “There’s no way around needing to have talent. You have to know a good story when you see one.” How do you recognize a good story? What are its required components? Do these rules change when the story comes from a company, rather than an individual storyteller? If so, how?
3. Roxberry Smoothies owner Holly Jackman (20:00) discussed how, after seeing Blendtec’s “Will It Blend” series of videos, she was inspired to start using Blendtec blenders in her stores. Do you feel that purchase decisions like this are a common result of viewing viral video content, or is this a unique case, and why?
4. David Beebe (34:00) discusses Marriott’s marketing transformation from a traditional brand into a media company and describes the storytelling efforts that Marriott Global Creative and Content Studio produces in partnership with influencers and Hollywood talent — including TV and film projects, animation, and online video.

What other examples can you think of when it comes to brands that do a good job of acting as a media company? Is this a role that you think companies should be playing? What are they doing right, in your mind? What do they need to get better at?

5. In the film, Marcus Sheridan (24:00) shares the story of how he saved his struggling pool business by using content to answer specific customer questions on fiberglass pools. Being known as the “Wikipedia of fiberglass swimming pools” gave River Pools a significant advantage with customers once they were ready to make a purchase. What other businesses opportunities and advantages do you think can arise from content marketing?
6. Do you feel that consumers trust what brands say in traditional advertising, such as on television, in print publications, or on billboards? Does it catch their attention, or influence their decision-making? Does your opinion on this change when it comes to online content marketing? Why (or why not)?
7. Are you more interested, less interested, or just as interested in watching a video or reading an article on extreme sports if it comes from a company like Red Bull than if it comes from *Sports Illustrated* or another professional media outlet? Why do you feel this way?
8. Is there too much content being produced by businesses today? What can marketers do to create content more effectively and strategically, instead of just adding to the noise?