**Marketing**

**Content Marketing:**

Content marketing is an umbrella term encompassing all marketing formats that involve the creation or sharing of content for the purpose of engaging current and potential consumer bases. Content marketing subscribes to the notion that delivering high-quality, relevant and valuable information to prospects and customers drives profitable consumer action. Content marketing has benefits in terms of retaining reader attention and improving brand loyalty.

The idea of sharing content as a means of persuading decision-making has driven content marketers to make their once-proprietary informational assets available to selected audiences.

Alternatively, many content marketers choose to create new information and share it via any and all media. Content marketing products frequently take the form of custom magazines, print or online newsletters, digital content, Web sites or micro sites, white papers, webcasts/webinars, podcasts, video portals or series, in-person road shows, roundtables, interactive online, email, events. The purpose of this information is not to spout the virtues of the marketer’s own products or services, but to inform target customers and prospects about key industry issues, sometimes involving the marketer’s products. The motivation behind content marketing is the belief that educating the customer results in the brand’s recognition as a thought leader and industry expert.

Marketers may use content marketing as a means of achieving a variety of business goals. These may include: thought leadership, lead generation, increasing direct sales, introducing specific brand language and improving customer retention. The term "content engineer" is being used to describe a new breed of marketer who creates, optimizes, and distributes the different types of content required to engage customers on the social web, based on the data of many analysis tools.

Content marketing is the underlying philosophy driving techniques such as custom media, custom publishing, database marketing, brand marketing, branded entertainment and branded content.

The Value of Content Marketing:  
"The value of content marketing lies in the engagement between the customer and your company. Traditional advertising shouts at prospect customers whereas content marketing talks with them. Essentially, it is about the creation and participation in meaningful conversations and development of relationships. Content marketing can benefit your company by increasing sales leads and positioning your company/brand as a thought leader, in addition to increasing the number of visitors to your website." -[Amanda Maksymiw](http://blog.openviewpartners.com/blog/the-open-marketer)

Beyond the direct benefits of "better, cheaper, lower risk and lasts nearly forever," [David Meerman Scott](http://www.webinknow.com/) notes, "We are now living a revolution wherein we have been 'liberated' from the triple 'tyrannies' of: marketing effectiveness being determined by the size of our wallets, having to interrupt people’s daily lives to try to market to them, and always relying on mainstream media to get our information into the marketplace." ([Inbound Marketing: Get found using Google, Social Media, and Blogs](http://www.inboundmarketingbook.com/) by [Brian Halligan](http://twitter.com/bhalligan) & [Dharmesh Shah](http://twitter.com/dharmesh" \t "_blank), founders of [HubSpot](http://www.hubspot.com/" \o "HubSpot) .)

**Content marketing levels the playing field between the largest, multi-national conglomerates and the smallest, hometown business because it is based on**"***providing value in order to receive value***," that often is easier for the smaller businesses to remember and execute than for the larger corporations who long ago delegated communicating with their customers. Now even the [smallest company](http://www.information-marketing.net/ContentRules_WIley_excerpt.pdf) can become the "thought leader" and the "expert in the field." (Excerpt from "Content Rules: How to Create Killer Blogs, Podcasts, Videos, Ebooks, Webinars (and More) That Engage Customers and Ignite Your Business," by Ann Handley, C.C. Chapman, and David Meerman Scott. Wiley, December 2010.)

Custom Media:  
Custom media is a marketing term referring broadly to the development, production and delivery of media (print, digital, audio, video, events) designed to strengthen the relationship between the sponsor of the medium and the medium's audience. It is also called branded media, customer media, member media, content marketing, and custom publishing in the US; contract publishing and customer publishing in the UK. In-flight magazines, sponsored by airlines, were one of the first custom media and remain typical of the genre. While other channels have had significant success, the customer magazine is the most successful example of the genre.

Typically, custom media is sponsored by a single marketer (a company, brand, association or institution) and is designed to reach a tightly focused audience of customers, members, alumni or other constituency. Custom media can be produced "in-house" by such organizations. Over the past two decades, a growing number of specialized publishing and media firms have emerged, called "custom media" or "custom publishing" companies in the US, and "customer publishers'" or '"publishing agencies" in the UK. Like advertising and other marketing services firms, the companies or divisions of traditional media companies, provide professional marketing and communications services to clients for a fee. Such out-sourced services can be limited to design and editorial responsibilities or include the complete production and distribution process. In addition, many of the companies sell advertising space within custom publications to third parties; this subsidizes the cost of publication; creates a more authentic editorial environment; and allows third parties to purchase and publicize an association with the media's sponsor, while reaching that sponsor's customers (eg. food suppliers may purchase advertising space within a supermarket's custom media).

Custom media aims to build a relationship of trust and loyalty with the sponsor's customers, so they regard the sponsor as the vendor of choice when they make purchases. This is accomplished by providing information and, often, advice, that meets the needs and suits the preferences of the sponsor's target market. It serves the interests of the audience, rather than overtly plugging products and services the way ads do.

That's not so different from the way traditional media attracts and retains an audience. But custom media is different from traditional media in very significant ways. The content is carefully edited in order to reflect only the interests, needs and lifestyle of a sponsor's audience, while reinforcing the sponsor's brand values.

Moreover, the distinction between editorial content and marketing/advertising content is less well defined than in traditional media.

Traditional magazine stories, for example, try to canvas many sources and points of view to produce an objective article. Typically, stories in custom media rely on the sponsoring company and its partners as sources of information and don't quote or refer to competitors or critics.

A custom magazine for a car maker might print a story about financing a new car. While the story would likely compare the pros and cons of leasing vs. buying, it would not likely compare the interest rates and other contract terms offered by various car makers, to help the reader find the best deal.

Further, stories in custom publications often contain recommendations for the sponsors' products and services. A custom magazine for a food chain, for instance, might include recipes, nutritional information and tips for packing kids' lunches and entertaining. Typically, each story will suggest the reader use house-brands.

A traditional food magazine might run the same stories, but would likely recommend generic products or a variety of brands.

The challenge for custom media is to maintain credibility comparable to that of traditional media. Readers' perceptions of the value of the information and advice declines when every story in a custom magazine overtly plugs the sponsors' products and services. The magazine will tend to be more successful at creating confidence in and loyalty to the sponsor if readers perceive it to have their best interests at heart than if they regard it as merely a sales vehicle[2].

However, custom magazines and other custom media can be as valuable to their audiences as they are to their sponsors, if well targeted and produced with reader service as a guidepost for content decisions.

Independent research sponsored by the UK industry suggests that custom media commands greater audience attention than alternative media; increases brand loyalty; and drives future sales.

Web Archiving:  
Web archiving is the process of collecting portions of the World Wide Web and ensuring the collection is preserved in an archive, such as an archive site, for future researchers, historians, and the public. Due to the massive size of the Web, web archivists typically employ web crawlers for automated collection. The largest web archiving organization based on a crawling approach is the Internet Archive which strives to maintain an archive of the entire Web. National libraries, national archives and various consortia of organizations are also involved in archiving culturally important Web content. Commercial web archiving software and services are also available to organizations who need to archive their own web content for corporate heritage, regulatory, or legal purposes.

**CONTENT MARKETING**

“IS THE ONLY MARKETING LEFT,” Content Marketing is the use of high-value information instead of interruption-based advertising to accomplish marketing goals.

Giving value to get value – has always been around in one form or another – coupons, discounts, loyalty programs.

*Today, content marketing services are a core part of integrated inbound marketing campaigns, and center on helping companies grow faster and smarter by outthinking, not outspending, the competition. Organizations that become their own publishers are realizing the power of generating leads, building brand loyalty and gaining new competitive advantages.*

*Content marketing is a marketing technique of creating and distributing relevant and valuable content to attract, acquire, and engage a clearly defined and understood target audience - with the objective of driving profitable customer action.*

**WHY IS CONTENT MARKETING IMPORTANT?**

Geoff Ramsey CEO/Founder of eMarketer said that nearly three-quarters of US companies with a social media strategy used content marketing in their campaigns, making it the most common type of content used, according to a June 2010 study by King Fish Media, HubSpot and Junta42

Today’s consumers will not allow you to waste their time with random, interruptions of what you think they want to hear. Even with social media you are still trying to interrupt what they are doing with a commercial. PEDIA content marketing enables you to “pull” the consumers with high-value information that is delivered at “the consumer’s point of need.” Which is just a fancy way describing what happens when you provide ‘high-value” information as the Encyclopedia of your market segment.

**WHAT IS THE GOAL OF YOUR CONTENT MARKETING?**

Of course the goal is to sell more stuff, but exactly what is the goal of your CONTENT MARKETING? Despite any additional benefits – the primary goal of your CONTENT MARKETING is to establish your company as the TRUSTED EXPERT (often called the “thought leader”) in your industry. As the TRUSTED EXPERT, your content becomes THE resource that consumers use to answer their questions and more importantly, ask their PRE-sale questions, providing your company with maximum influence over all potential customers.

**Facebook, Twitter, etc. are NOT content marketing platforms**

They are social media platforms that are being used as content marketing platforms because of the traffic. The content marketing is STILL an interruption and marketers must give up control of their messages.

**CONTENT MARKETING SERVICE PROVIDERS**

**CONTENT MARKETING story:**

As advertisers, auto dealers are among the largest in their markets and the Southern California market is the largest and most competitive in the U.S.

Way back in 1986 while working with many of the largest auto dealers in Southern California working on the same old problem of how do you make one Ford dealership stand out from the other dealerships, particularly the other 50 Ford dealerships?

Solution?

Instead of simply more interruption-based advertising or inflatable gorillas on the dealership roof, why not provide consumers with the high-value information they were seeking at exactly the moment they were seeking it, i.e., provide consumers with the “invoice cost” of the vehicle they were interested in buying so they could negotiate from invoice up instead of from “sticker price” down.

The dealers knew they couldn’t simply whip out a piece of paper with the invoice cost printed on it at the dealership – (Though I suspect that many of them had actually tried.) So we created an “independent third-party, higher authority” consumer information company named Consumer Auto Network to distribute the invoice cost to consumer via a computerized, interactive telephone system.

And thus began the entire trend of auto dealers providing more and more information to consumers in order to differentiate themselves from the pack.

**Web Curation:**

Web curation, like any digital curation, entails:

1. Collecting verifiable Web assets.

2. Providing Web asset search and retrieval.

3. Certification of the trustworthiness and integrity of the collection content.

4. Semantic and ontological continuity and comparability of the collection content.

Links:  
1. Content Marketing Institute - A website dedicated to providing instructional articles, samples and case studies to help people put content marketing into practice.

2. Content Marketing Today - a blog with extensive information on content marketing

3. Custom Content Council - U.S. trade association of custom media and content marketing providers. (Formerly, Custom Publishing Council.)

4. Top Content Marketing Blogs - Junta42's updated resource on the industry's top content marketing blogs.

5. Animated explanation of Content Marketing - Vizedu - the visual education provider.

6. Engage - Information, statistics, and opinions on custom media.

7. American Business Media, Custom Media Committee - U.S. trade association of business-to-business media companies providing custom media services.

8. CustomMedia.nl - NL specialized daily refreshed website with the latest news in custom and consumer publishing in the Netherlands and Europe.  
  
Pedia® Web sites - Invented Here "The Firsts":  
For decades, iSi researchers have been developing solutions that apply the fundamental forces of consumer behavior. Inspired by ["Occam's Razor,"](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Occam%27s_razor) and the words of GM's Charles Kettering who said, "The problem when solved will be simple," iSi researchers believe in ***obvious solutions based on fundamental consumer behavior***.

In 1986, the founder of iSi developed [Information-Marketing™](http://superbrand.net/solution.html) which he defined as "***providing high-value information at the consumer's point of need***" in order to accomplish marketing goals. Like today's "content marketing," the roots of Information-Marketing[™](http://superbrand.net/solution.html) can be traced back to the Michelin Guide's ["marketing as a service,"](http://awurl.com/QKVmfC0Wz) or simply "providing value to receive value."

Here is the list of iSi research "firsts" -

**1986** – Created [Information-Marketing™](http://superbrand.net/solution.html) - where companies (200 of 1,100 Southern CA auto dealers) provided consumers with high-value information (dealer invoice prices) instead of advertising to accomplish marketing goals. Dealers provided invoice cost information to an "independent third-party" ([Consumer Auto Network)](http://information-marketing.net/images/stories/NewWoman_CAN_March1990-1.jpg) which then provided the information to consumers along with the recommendation to go to the dealers that provided the invoice information instead of the dealers that didn't - because there was a big difference in how consumers would be treated at the dealership. Information was provided "at the consumer's point of need," via the then state-of-the-art interactive 976 telephone system of Pacific Bell and expanding nationwide with AT&T's 900 system. Referral success rate: over 90%. [Consumer Auto Network.](http://information-marketing.net/images/stories/NewWoman_CAN_March1990-1.jpg)

**1995** – Created the first online encyclopedia, [AutoPedia® – the Automotive Encyclopedia](http://www.contentmarketingpedia.com/index.php/who-we-are/the-qfirstsq/first-autopedia). [Referenced](http://www.autopedia.com/Reviews.html) in more than 50 books from 1996-2010. AutoPedia®'s Lemon Law directory was recommended by the American Bar Association, AAA, ["Cornell Law Library,"](http://library2.lawschool.cornell.edu/insiteasp/public/display.asp?style=st_search&id=318) The New York Times, [ABC News 20/20](http://www.autopedia.com/Reviews/ABCnews2020.PDF), MSN, CNN, [US Federal Consumer Information Center,](http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov/links/ca7links.htm) and [consumer reporters](http://clarkhoward.com/library/websites.html) on radio and television. AutoPedia® has won awards and recognition dating back to the very beginning of the Internet when in 1998 AutoPedia® was awarded Yahoo Internet Life's 4-star award for the best lemon law coverage on the Internet.

**1999** – Created first “online consumer encyclopedia network platform” of interconnected topic-specific encyclopedia destinations spanning all consumer market segments – “a commercialencyclopedia network” that would provide the optimum content marketing and curation platform for companies to reach and engage consumers.

**2000** – First to incorporate Network Science "brand-based intrinsic credibility as a competitive fitness" in the “online consumer encyclopedia network.” Patent filed for “Method and Apparatus for Internet Marketing and Transactional Development” in December, 2000.(See [Patent Application](http://appft.uspto.gov/netacgi/nph-Parser?Sect1=PTO2&Sect2=HITOFF&p=1&u=%2Fnetahtml%2FPTO%2Fsearch-adv.html&r=1&f=G&l=50&d=PG01&S1=20020082930&OS=20020082930&RS=200) and [2009 iSi Network Science whitepaper](http://information-marketing.net/images/stories/SCIN_whitepaper_rev_040910.pdf))

**2009** – iSi owns the registered trademarks PEDIA®, PEDIANETWORK® and 17 other famous and irrefutable registered marks in the Pedia-brand family spanning over a decade. From the first trademark registration SportsPedia®, filed in 2000 to the latest registered mark, VODKAPEDIA®, July, 2010.

**2010** – Developed PediaNetwork® as the most powerful content marketing and curation brand platform that creates the "**largest consumer information resource in the world**" to provide consumers with faster, easier access to the all the information, products and services they want and companies with faster, easier access to the all the consumers they want. The PediaNetwork® uses the same components that have driven the viral growth of academic information in "wikis" and "social media" while adding Network Science "brand-based credibility as a competitive fitness."

# In Praise of the Purple Cow:

# For years, marketers have talked about the "five P s" (actually, there are more than five, but everyone picks their favorite handful): product, pricing, promotion, positioning, publicity, packaging, pass along, permission. Sound familiar? This has become the basic marketing checklist, a quick way to make sure that you've done your job. Nothing is guaranteed, of course, but it used to be that if you dotted your I’ s and paid attention to your five P s, then you were more likely than not to succeed.

Top of Form

Bottom of Form

No longer! It's time to add an exceptionally important new P to the list: Purple Cow. Weird? Let me explain.

While driving through France a few years ago, my family and I were enchanted by the hundreds of storybook cows grazing in lovely pastures right next to the road. For dozens of kilometers, we all gazed out the window, marveling at the beauty. Then, within a few minutes, we started ignoring the cows. The new cows were just like the old cows, and what was once amazing was now common. Worse than common: It was boring.

Cows, after you've seen them for a while, are boring. They may be well-bred cows, Six Sigma cows, cows lit by a beautiful light, but they are still boring. A Purple Cow, though: Now, that would really stand out. The essence of the Purple Cow -- the reason it would shine among a crowd of perfectly competent, even undeniably excellent cows -- is that it would be remarkable. Something remarkable is worth talking about, worth paying attention to. Boring stuff quickly becomes invisible.

The world is full of boring stuff -- brown cows -- which is why so few people pay attention. Remarkable marketing is the art of building things worth noticing right into your product or service. Not just slapping on the marketing function as a last-minute add-on, but also understanding from the outset that if your offering itself isn't remarkable, then it's invisible -- no matter how much you spend on well-crafted advertising.

This is an essay about what it takes to create and sell something remarkable. It is a manifesto for marketers who want to make a difference at their company by helping create products and services that are worth marketing in the first place. It is a plea for originality, for passion, guts, and daring. Not just because going through life with passion and guts beats the alternative (which it does), but also because it's the only way to be successful. Today, the one sure way to fail is to be boring. Your one chance for success is to be remarkable.

And that means you have to be a leader. You can't be remarkable by following someone else who's remarkable. One way to figure out a great theory is to look at what's working in the real world and determine what the successes have in common. With marketing, it's puzzling though. What could the Four Seasons and Motel 6 possibly have in common? Other than the fact that both companies have experienced extraordinary success and growth, they couldn't be more different. Or Neiman Marcus and Wal-Mart, both growing during the same decade? Or Nokia (bringing out new hardware every 30 days or so) and Nintendo (marketing the same Game Boy for 14 years in a row)?

It's like trying to drive looking in the rearview mirror. Sure, those things worked. But do they help us predict what will work tomorrow? The thing that all of those companies have in common is that they have nothing in common. They are outliers. They're on the fringes. Superfast, or superslow. Very exclusive, or very cheap. Extremely big, or extremely small.

The reason it's so hard to follow the leader is this: The leader is the leader precisely because he did something remarkable. And that remarkable thing is now taken -- so it's no longer remarkable when you decide to do it.

**Stand Out from the Herd I: Going Up!**   
Elevators aren't a typical consumer product. They can easily cost more than a million dollars, they generally get installed when a building is first constructed, and they're not much use unless the building is more than three or four stories tall.

How, then, does an elevator company compete? Until recently, selling involved a lot of golf, dinners, and long-term relationships with key purchasing agents at major real-estate developers. No doubt that continues, but Schindler Elevator Corporation has radically changed the game by developing a remarkable Purple Cow.

Every elevator ride is basically a local one. The elevator stops 5, 10, 15 times on the way to your floor. This is a hassle for you, but it's a huge, expensive problem for the building. While your elevator is busy stopping at every floor, the folks in the lobby are getting more and more frustrated. The building needs more elevators, but there's no money to buy them and no room to put them. Walk into the Times Square offices of Cap Gemini Ernst & Young, and you're faced with a fascinating solution to this problem.

Schindler's insight? When you approach the elevators, you key in your floor on a centralized control panel. In return, the panel tells you which elevator is going to take you to your floor. With this simple presort, Schindler Elevator Corporation has managed to turn every elevator into an express. Your elevator takes you immediately to the 12th floor and races back to the lobby. This means that buildings can be taller, they need fewer elevators for a given density of people, the wait is shorter, and the building can use precious space for people rather than for elevators. A huge win, implemented at a remarkably low cost.

Is there a significant real-estate developer in the world who is unaware of this breakthrough? Not likely. And it doesn't really matter how many ads or how many lunches the competition sponsors: Schindler now gets the benefit of the doubt.

**The Sad Truth About Marketing Just About Anything**   
Forty years ago, Ron Simek, owner of the Tombstone Tap (named for a nearby cemetery) in Medford, Wisconsin, decided to offer a frozen version of his pizza to his customers. It caught on, and before long, Tombstone Pizza was dominating your grocer's freezer. Kraft eventually bought the brand, advertised it like crazy, and made serious dough. This was a great American success story: Invent a good product that everyone wants, advertise it to the masses, earn billions.

That strategy didn't just work for pizza. It worked for most everything in your house, including aspirin. Imagine how much fun it must have been to be the first person to market aspirin. Here's a product that just about every person on earth needed and wanted. A product that was inexpensive, easy to try, and promised huge immediate benefits. Obviously, it was a big hit.

Today, a quick visit to the drugstore turns up lots of aspirin and aspirinlike products: Advil, Aleve, Alka-Seltzer Morning Relief, Anacin, Ascriptin, Aspergum, Bayer, Bayer Children's, Bayer Regimen, Bayer Women's, BC Powder, Bufferin, Cope, Ecotrin, Excedrin Extra Strength, Goody's, Motrin, Nuprin, St. Joseph, Tylenol, and, of course, Vanquish. Within each of those brands, there are variations, sizes, and generics that add up to more than 100 different products to choose from.

Think it's still easy to be an analgesics marketer today? If you developed a new kind of pain reliever, even one that was a little bit better than the ones that I just listed, what would you do? The obvious answer, if you've got money and you believe in your product, is to spend everything you've got to buy tons of national TV and print advertising.

There are a few problems that you'll face, though. First, you need people who want to buy a pain reliever. While it's a huge market, it's not for everyone. Once you find people who buy pain relievers, then you need people who want to buy a new kind of pain reliever. After all, plenty of people want the "original" kind, the kind they grew up with. Finally, you need to find the people who are willing to listen to what you have to say about your new pain reliever. The vast majority of folks are just too busy and will ignore you, regardless of how many ads you buy. So you just went from an audience of everyone to an audience a fraction of that size. Not only are these folks hard to find, they're picky as well.

Being first in the frozen-pizza category was a good idea. Being first in pain relievers was an even better idea. Alas, they're both taken. Which brings me to the sad truth about marketing just about anything, whether it's a product or a service, whether it's marketed to consumers or corporations: Most people can't buy your product. Either they don't have the money, they don't have the time, or they don't want it.

And those are serious problems. An audience that doesn't have the money to buy what you're selling at the price you need to sell it for is not a market. An audience that doesn't have the time to listen to and understand your pitch treats you as if you and your product were invisible. And an audience that takes the time to hear your pitch and decides that they don't want it . . . well, you're not going to get very far.

The old rule was this: Create safe products and combine them with great marketing. Average products for average people. That's broken . The new rule is: Create remarkable products that the right people seek out.

As I write this, the top song in France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and a dozen other countries in Europe is about ketchup. It's called "Ketchup," and it's by two sisters you've never heard of. The number-two movie in America is a low-budget animated film in which talking vegetables act out Bible stories. Neither is the sort of product you'd expect to come from a lumbering media behemoth.

Sam Adams Beer was remarkable, and it captured a huge slice of business from Budweiser. Hard Manufacturing introduced a product that costs 10 times the average (the $9,945 Doernbecher crib) and opened up an entirely new segment of the hospital-crib market. The electric piano let Yamaha steal an increasingly larger share of the traditional piano market away from the entrenched leaders. Vanguard's remarkably low-cost mutual funds continue to whale away at Fidelity's market dominance. Bic lost tons of market share to Japanese competitors that had developed pens that were remarkably fun to write with, just as Bic had stolen the market away from fountain pens a generation or two earlier.

**Stand out from the herd II: Mail Call**   
Very few organizations have as timid an audience as the United States Postal Service. Dominated by a conservative bureaucracy and conservative big customers, the USPS has an awfully hard time innovating. The big direct marketers are successful because they've figured out how to thrive under the current system, and they're in no mood to see that system change. Most individuals are in no hurry to change their mailing habits either.

The majority of new-policy initiatives at the USPS are either ignored or met with nothing but disdain. But "zip + 4" was a huge success. Within a few years, the USPS was able to diffuse a new idea, making the change in billions of address records in thousands of computer databases.

How? First, it was a game-changing innovation. Zip + 4 makes it far easier for marketers to target neighborhoods and much faster and easier to deliver the mail. The product was a true Purple Cow, completely changing the way customers and the USPS would deal with bulk mail. It offered both dramatically increased speed in delivery and significantly lower costs for bulk mailers. That made it worth the time it took for big mailers to pay attention. The cost of ignoring the innovation would be felt immediately on the bottom line.

Second, the USPS wisely singled out a few early adopters. These were organizations that were technically savvy and that were extremely sensitive to both pricing and speed issues. These early adopters were also in a position to sneeze the benefits to other, less astute, mailers.

The lesson here is simple: The more intransigent your market, the more crowded the marketplace, the busier your customers, the more you need a Purple Cow. Half-measures will fail. Overhauling the product with dramatic improvements in things that the right customers care about, on the other hand, can have an enormous payoff.

**Why There Are So Few Purple Cows**   
If being a Purple Cow is such an effective way to break through the clutter, why doesn't everyone do it? One reason is that people think the opposite of remarkable is "bad" or "poorly done." They're wrong. Not many companies sell things today that are flat-out lousy. Most sell things that are good enough. That's why the opposite of remarkable is "very good." Very good is an everyday occurrence, hardly worth mentioning -- certainly not the basis of breakthrough success. Are you making very good stuff? How fast can you stop?

Some people would like you to believe that there are too few great ideas, that their product or their industry or their company simply can't support a great idea. That, of course, is absolute nonsense. Another reason the Purple Cow is so rare is because people are so afraid .

If you're remarkable, then it's likely that some people won't like you. That's part of the definition of remarkable. Nobody gets unanimous praise -- ever. The best the timid can hope for is to be unnoticed. Criticism comes to those who stand out.

Playing it safe. Following the rules. They seem like the best ways to avoid failure. Alas, that pattern is awfully dangerous. The current marketing "rules" will ultimately lead to failure. In a crowded marketplace, fitting in is failing. In a busy marketplace, not standing out is the same as being invisible.

In Marketing Outrageously (Bard Press, 2001), author Jon Spoelstra points out the catch-22 logic of the Purple Cow. If times are tough, your peers and your boss may very well point out that you can't afford to be remarkable. There's not enough room to innovate: We have to conserve, to play it safe. We don't have the money to make a mistake. In good times, however, those very same people will tell you to relax, take it easy. There's not enough need to innovate: We can afford to be conservative, to play it safe.

So it seems that we face two choices: Either be invisible, uncriticized, anonymous, and safe or take a chance at true greatness, uniqueness, and the Purple Cow. The point is simple, but it bears repeating: Boring always leads to failure. Boring is always the riskiest strategy. Smart businesspeople realize this and work to minimize (but not eliminate) the risk from the process. They know that sometimes it's not going to work, but they accept the fact that that's okay.

**Stand out from the herd III: The Color of Money**   
How did Dutch Boy Paint stir up the paint business? It's so simple, it's scary. They changed the can.

Paint cans are heavy, hard to carry, hard to close, hard to open, hard to pour, and no fun. Yet they've been around for a long time, and most people assumed that there had to be a reason why they were so bad. Dutch Boy realized that there was no reason. They also realized that the can was an integral part of the product: People don't buy paint, they buy painted walls, and the can makes that process much easier.

Dutch Boy used that insight and introduced an easier-to-carry, easier-to-pour, easier-to-close paint jug. "Customers tell us that the new Twist & Pour paint container is a packaging innovation that was long overdue," says Dennis Eckols, group vice president of the home division for Fred Meyer stores. "People wonder why it took so long for someone to come up with the idea, and they love Dutch Boy for doing it."

It's an amazing innovation. Worth noticing. Not only did the new packaging increase sales, but it also got them more distribution (at a higher retail price!).

That is marketing done right. Marketing where the marketer changes the product, not the ads.

**Why It Pays (Big) to Be a Purple Cow**   
As the ability to be remarkable continues to demonstrate its value in the marketplace, the rewards that follow the Purple Cow increase. Whether you develop a new insurance policy, make a hit record, or write a groundbreaking book, the money and satisfaction that follow are extraordinary. In exchange for taking the risk, creators of a Purple Cow get a huge upside when they get it right.

Even better, you don't have to be remarkable all the time to enjoy the upside. Starbucks was remarkable a few years ago. Now they're boring. But that burst of innovation and insight has allowed them to expand to thousands of stores around the world. Compare that growth in assets to Maxwell House. Ten years ago, all of the brand value in coffee resided with them, not with Starbucks. But Maxwell House played it safe (they thought), and now they remain stuck with not much more than they had a decade ago.

Once you've created something remarkable, the challenge is to do two things simultaneously: One, milk the Purple Cow for everything it's worth. Figure out how to extend it and profit from it for as long as possible. Two, build an environment where you are likely to invent an entirely new Purple Cow in time to replace the first one when its benefits inevitably trail off.

These are contradictory goals. The creator of a Purple Cow enjoys the profits, accolades, and feeling of omniscience that come with a success. None of those outcomes accompany a failed attempt at a new Cow. Thus, the tempting thing to do is to coast. Take no chances. Take profits. Fail to reinvest.

AOL, Marriott, Marvel Comics, Palm, Yahoo -- the list goes on and on. Each company had a breakthrough, built an empire around it, and then failed to take another risk. It used to be easy to coast for a long time after a few remarkable successes. Disney coasted for decades. Milton Berle did too. It's too easy to decide to sit out the next round, rationalizing that you're spending the time and energy to build on what you've got instead of investing in the future. So here's one simple, tangible suggestion. Create two teams: the inventors and the milkers. Put them in separate buildings. Hold a formal ceremony when you move a product from one group to the other. Celebrate them both, and rotate people around.

**Stand out from the herd IV: Chewing my own cud**   
So, how does an author get his new book to stand out from all of the other marketing books? By trying to create a remarkable way to market a book about remarkable marketing. How? By not selling it in stores. Instead, a copy of the book version of Purple Cow is available for free to anyone reading this article. You pay for postage and handling ($5), and Fast Company will send you one copy of the book-length version of this article for free (visit www.fastcompany.com/keyword/purplecow67 for details). How does this pay? At this site; see [my entire marketing plan](http://www.fastcompany.com/online/67/purplemarketing.html) - <http://www.fastcompany.com/online/67/purplemarketing.html>.

* Sell what people are buying
* Focus on the early adopters and sneezers
* Make it remarkable enough for them to pay attention
* Make it easy for them to spread
* Let it work its own way to the mass market

**What It Means to Be a Marketer Today**   
If the Purple Cow is now one of the P s of marketing, it has a series of big implications for the enterprise. In fact, it changes the definition of marketing. It used to be that engineering invented, manufacturing built, marketing marketed, sales sold, and the president managed the whole shebang. Marketing, better called "advertising," was about communicating the values of a product after it had been developed and manufactured.

That's clearly not a valid strategy in a world where product attributes (everything from service to design) are now at the heart of what it means to be a marketer. Marketing is the act of inventing the product. The effort of designing it. The craft of producing it. The art of pricing it. The technique of selling it. How can a Purple Cow company not be run by a marketer?

Companies that create Purple Cows, such as JetBlue Airways, Hasbro, Poland Spring, and Starbucks, have to be run by marketers. Turns out that the CEO of JetBlue made a critical decision on day one: He put the head of marketing in charge of product design and training as well. It shows. JetBlue sells a time-sensitive commodity just like American Airlines does, but somehow it manages to make a profit doing it. All of these companies are marketers at their very core.

The geniuses who managed to invent 1-800-COLLECT are true marketers. They didn't figure out how to market an existing service. Instead, the marketing is built into the product -- from the easy-to-remember phone number to the very idea that MCI could steal the collect-call business from the pay-phone companies.

But isn't the same idea true for a local restaurant, a grinding-wheel company, and Citibank? In a world where anything we need is good enough and where just about all of the profit comes from the Purple Cow, we must all be marketers.

You've got a chance to reinvent who you are and what you do. Your company can reenergize itself around the idea of involving designers in marketing and marketers in design. You can stop fighting slow growth with mind-numbing grunt work and start investing in insight and innovation instead. If a company is failing, it's the fault of the most senior management, and the problem is probably this: They are just running a company, not marketing a product. And today, that's a remarkably ineffective way to compete.

### 10 Ways to Raise a Purple Cow

Making and marketing something remarkable means asking new questions -- and trying new practices. Here are 10 suggestions.

1. Differentiate your customers. Find the group that's most profitable. Find the group that's most likely to influence other customers. Figure out how to develop for, advertise to, or reward either group. Ignore the rest. Cater to the customers you would choose if you could choose your customers.
2. If you could pick one underserved niche to target (and to dominate), what would it be? Why not launch a product to compete with your own that does nothing but appeal to that market?
3. Create two teams: the inventors and the milkers. Put them in separate buildings. Hold a formal ceremony when you move a product from one group to the other. Celebrate them both, and rotate people around.
4. Do you have the email addresses of the 20% of your customer base that loves what you do? If not, start getting them. If you do, what could you make for them that would be super special?
5. Remarkable isn't always about changing the biggest machine in your factory. It can be the way you answer the phone, launch a new brand, or price a revision to your software. Getting in the habit of doing the "unsafe" thing every time you have the opportunity is the best way to see what's working and what's not.
6. Explore the limits. What if you're the cheapest, the fastest, the slowest, the hottest, the coldest, the easiest, the most efficient, the loudest, the most hated, the copycat, the outsider, the hardest, the oldest, the newest, or just the most! If there's a limit, you should (must) test it.
7. Think small. One vestige of the TV-industrial complex is a need to think mass. If it doesn't appeal to everyone, the thinking goes, it's not worth it. No longer. Think of the smallest conceivable market and describe a product that overwhelms it with its remarkability. Go from there.
8. Find things that are "just not done" in your industry, and then go ahead and do them. For example, JetBlue Airways almost instituted a dress code -- for its passengers! The company is still playing with the idea of giving a free airline ticket to the best-dressed person on the plane. A plastic surgeon could offer gift certificates. A book publisher could put a book on sale for a certain period of time. Stew Leonard's took the strawberries out of the little green plastic cages and let the customers pick their own. Sales doubled.
9. Ask, "Why not?" Almost everything you don't do has no good reason for it. Almost everything you don't do is the result of fear or inertia or a historical lack of someone asking, "Why not?"
10. What would happen if you simply told the truth inside your company and to your customers?

# Real consumers don’t have ‘brand conversations’. They use search

In this guest posting, ***Simon van Wyk*** argues that much as marketers might wish otherwise, most consumers don’t have emotional connections with brands

I have a background in marketing, but my understanding of branding seems at odds with the 2010 opinions I see from social media commentators, marketing and advertising agencies.

I read [LoveMarks](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lovemark), but I don’t love brands. I read the definition which says: “Lovemarks reach your heart as well as your mind, creating an intimate, emotional connection that you just can’t live without. Ever.” I don’t actually feel this way about any brand. My life is busy and I reserve that level of investment for the important people in my life, not the stuff I buy. I assumed other people felt the same.

I’ve read plenty on the social media debate about brand conversations. I don’t want a conversation with a brand. I just want what I need to make a purchase decision; when I’m having a conversation, that means something has gone wrong.

Conversation is about failure in the system. I’ve heard marketers talk about brand experience and brand aspiration and I never really bought any of it because I never felt the same way. I don’t have an emotional connection to a brand and most people I meet don’t, either. Hell, apart from groceries, most of my purchases, even toothpaste, are once a quarter. No emotional connection can survive that sort of neglect.

The Lovemarks language makes no sense in the context of real relationships. So by my reckoning it’s unlikely to make sense in a brand relationship. Finally, I don’t feel defined by anything I buy. If I did I’d assume something else was missing in my life.

I discovered Byron Sharp’s book [How Brands Grow](http://www.amazon.com/How-Brands-Grow-What-Marketers/dp/0195573560), where the South Australian academic makes a number of points based of extensive scientific testing of the facts that make complete sense to me. His model for brands looks a little different from traditional thinking.

It goes like this: Most of the purchases we make are irregular. Cars, cameras, TVs are once every five years, lots of consumer products are once or twice a year. So we don’t know a lot about these categories and we don’t know much about the brands in the categories. We’re hard pushed to remember the brands in a category and when we do it’s only a small number in the competitive landscape.

We use the brands we do remember as a shortcut to extensive research into a product category. So if I’m buying a new TV, I might be able to remember two or three brands in the category, say Panasonic, Sony and Samsung. Rather than spend a week researching the category I use these three as a shortcut to a detailed study. I have no knowledge of these brands, I have no love or in fact any feelings about any of them.

I can’t be bothered doing a full analysis of the landscape – like most people I’ve got too much on. So I do a perfunctory analysis using the internet, maybe ask a friend and talk to the sales assistant. My final reason for purchasing a specific brand might be related to any one of 100 reasons but most likely to be based on how I feel at the time. It’s got nothing to do with love, engagement or conversation.

All this is backed up by scientific research – this is actually how people deal with brands.

As Byron Sharp points out, “Brands compete for custom primarily in terms of mental and physical availability.” The key issue that brands have is to be remembered. It’s about salience – in other words, do I remember a particular brand in conjunction with a particular purchase?

What’s clear to me is that search, either paid or organic, is the most important element of branding. Why? Because the vast majority of search activity is somewhat generic ; a 50-inch flat-screen plasma TV, a medium-sized diesel 4WD, etc.

The outcome of this activity is a list of options. We know people scan the first two or three organic search options. If that doesn’t make sense, they’ll look at the paid search options. This quick scan is all we need to make a shortlist of options in our heads. If we see a few brands that we remember, that adds to the brand salience – if your brand is not there chances are you’ll be forgotten.

This behaviour has been confirmed by some of Google’s own research from back in 2007 where a study found that when a brand is in both the top sponsored and the top organic results, purchase intent increases by 8%, as well as revealing that consumers are 16% less likely to consider purchasing a brand that doesn’t appear on the search results page. In 2009 Omniture sponsored a paper that looked at this issue and found that search is 10 times more efficient than TV and 3.5 times more efficient than radio in raising top of mind awareness.

When you really understand the science of brands it all makes sense. So why, then, is this so contentious and so hotly debated? Byron Sharp says “Today marketing managers operate a bit like 19th century doctors: they are affected by the scientific revolution, but are not yet governed by it”

Look, I understand what the brand purists are saying. You need advertising to get into a consumer’s consideration set. I’m not suggesting doing away with advertising. But what I am suggesting is that every time you appear on a search results page, you are doing the most important branding job.

Connecting with someone in a category, when they are close to the point of purchase with the memory of your brand – there can be no better salience than this. Search is the most powerful branding tool in your marketing tool set. Make sure search is first place the brand budget is allocated, not the last.

* Simon van Wyk is Founder of [internet marketing agency HotHouse Interactive](http://www.hothouse.com.au/)