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## **Content: The Heart of Today's Integrated Marketing Process**

By Mary Sullivan

Marketers often slip into the trap of creating a program around every new marketing idea. A few years ago it was "viral marketing", and we searched for ways to create buzz. Around the same time, "weblogs" suddenly became hip and we tried to launch our corporate blogs. These activities invariably operated outside the marketing sphere where lead generation, advertising and the like were taking place.

Today, of course, marketers are talking about "social media" and "content". To make sure we're talking about the same things, let's define these terms:

**Social media** – Various platforms used by people to interact and talk with each other online — with you or without you in the conversation. (Consider here that people are finding out about your company before they are even on your radar.)

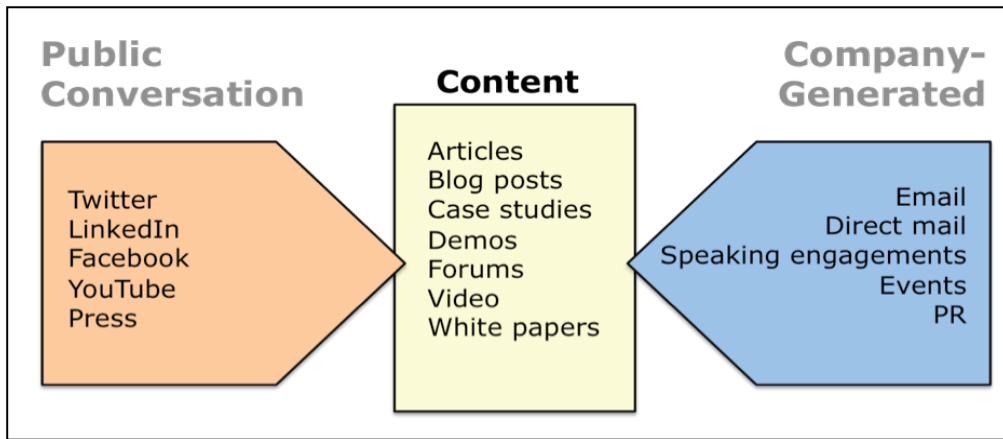
**Content** – Information and experiences that may provide value for an end-user/buyer/target audience in specific contexts. Content is valuable when it is deemed by the audience to have relevance to their interests (Consider that a good 90% of content generated today is irrelevant to the audiences who encounter it.)

Unfortunately, many marketing teams today are talking about content and social media separately from each other and in isolation from other marketing tools. But the fact of the matter is, ***content is the nexus between social media and demand creation***. In fact, content is the very glue that allows companies to operate in a truly integrated marketing environment.

Many of the pieces used in a traditional lead nurturing program fall into the category of content, which may be on the company's website, or it may be outside on blogs, industry online magazines, or on YouTube.

As people talk on blogs and social networks about companies and products, often without the company's marketers ever having contacted the parties to the conversation, control of the marketing message has slid out and away from marketers to a surprising degree. Marketers still run their marketing programs, albeit more sophisticatedly than some years ago, but often with little thought to the social conversations that affect buyers' thinking.

The beauty of content is that ***it serves both sides of the marketing picture*** — the public conversation and the company-generated conversation.



Content in the New Integrated Marketing Process

If it's attractive enough, relevant enough, content can draw people you didn't even know about into your site from social networks.

- Link to your content via your Twitter account. (There are several ways to do this, but that's another article.)
- Get your Facebook fans to click over to your content.
- Make announcements on relevant LinkedIn groups that attract people to your content.

Of course, content can also be the offer in a lead gen campaign. When you use content in your nurturing campaign, you give prospects something of value and help them forward in the process. Once people are aware of you, you can invite them to follow you on Twitter or become fans on your Facebook page, creating a purposeful loop.

Content that is on your website increases the chances of starting a direct conversation with someone who has shown interest in what you offer. Ask for a simple registration (name and email address is enough) for access to substantial content. Now the person is part of your database — a genuine prospect. You have successfully invited someone in out of the social conversation into your world!

*Previous social media articles in KickStart Accelerator:*

[Get Ready! Social Media for B2B Companies](#)

[Kickstarting Your Own Social Media Initiative](#)

[Tools That Make Social Marketing Work for You](#)

### **About the Author**

*Mary Sullivan, co-founder of KickStart Alliance, delivers customer-focused product marketing to clients in a variety of technology sectors, including clean tech. Mary is an experienced social media user and community builder: a long-time [blogger](#), LinkedIn member, Facebook user and active [Twitterer](#). Want help planning your content marketing approach? [Contact Mary](#).*