

5 Essential Content Marketing Lessons from the Digital Summit Denver



Written by **Monika Stockbridge** on Fri, Jul 15, 2016

In June, several members of the **SPROUT Content** team attended **Digital Summit Denver**, one of the region's largest professional gatherings focused solely on digital strategy in marketing and business. Topics ranged from content marketing, to user experience (UX), to mobile usability, with engaging keynote speakers and fascinating experts facilitating more than 50 sessions over two days.

The conference drew upwards of 3,000 professionals from all over the country specializing in the digital realm, all seeking new ideas and opportunities to make better use of technology, communication, and consumer engagement tools on the ever-evolving digital landscape.

If you can't already tell, this conference was right up our alley.

We attended the summit in our very own mile high city seeking better ways to engage new customers, communicate more effectively with the ones we already have, and keep up with the rapidly changing apps, ideas, and best practices in the digital marketing realm. We couldn't wait to share a recap of our favorite findings, ideas, and even a few memorable quotes.

So here you have it: five things we learned at Digital Summit Denver 2016.

1) Behind every "B" is a "C"

The irrefutable **Gary Vaynerchuk** was selected to fire up the audience during his opening keynote remarks – and, unsurprisingly to those who know of him, had the audience sitting out of his hand within minutes. Vaynerchuk is an entrepreneur, investor, venture capitalist, and founder of Vaynermedia, a social media-focused digital agency. He also hosts **The #AskGaryVee Show**, where he answers questions about social media, business, and startup culture via YouTube, podcasting, and his most recent book, **#AskGaryVee** (which he handed out to every attendee).

Vaynerchuk's message was clear: you must gain people's attention in order to gain their business. The key word here? **People**. Before wrapping up his talk, he discussed the importance of developing an intuitive understanding of the customer at scale, and stated emphatically, "Behind every B is a C."

He means that, even if you're marketing in a business to business (or B2B) environment, the end goal is still to engage a customer's "C" – also known as a person. Vaynerchuk advises talking to people, not talking down to them, and always giving forth the best quality content possible. Among his final words to us, he said: "Be patient, work hard, and know your sht."

Start communicating with your customers person-to-person and download our guide: [There's no B2C or B2B - It's All P2P](#).

2) Methods based in humanity always scale

The concept of marketing to people was a recurring theme at the summit, echoed by another speaker who lives and breathes the philosophy of marketing to human beings: **Cliff Sisk**, UK Engineer at Salesforce. His presentation referenced post culture and modern media padded with a self-deprecating humor that immediately captured his audience. When he launched his key message, "Methods based in humanity always scale," we felt an instant connection.

"What does the customer feel," he implored, "when they open your automated email?" He compared engaging consumers to making new friends, founded upon a shared set of goals and valuable connections. Marketing, then, should be based in humanity – in caring for others, sharing valuable information, and helping people solve their problems however we can – to see true growth.

As it happens, **Erinna**'s VP of Sales, **Christopher Lester**, also emphasized a focus on the human connection. He remarked that, even in a B2B environment, "we're all still human."

We loved that.

3) Fulfill your readers' needs by knowing their motivations

Naturally, all humans have motivations. **Samuel Kim**, Senior Manager of Consumer Analytics & Research at AOL hit the jackpot when he talked about measuring the effectiveness of content by reflecting on its ability to satisfy a need or desire.

"Content marketing enables advertisers to have online conversations with their consumers in the digital environment," he said. He then discussed the importance of knowing your readers' motivations for engaging with a given piece of material. According to Kim's extensive research, the primary motivations include:

- To be inspired
- To be in the know
- To find answers
- To find comfort
- To connect and share ideas
- To feel good
- To be entertained
- To be social

In order to be effective, we must determine what our readers need, and what encourages them to engage with online content. After all, we're here to help people answer a question, or satisfy a need, or solve a problem. Do they seek comfort in stories about adoptable pets finding a home? Or do they seek answers to their mobile usability issues? Perhaps they just want to watch a funny video online. All are valuable and all can direct the type of content we create.

Download our guide, [Buyer Personas: Marketing Through the Voice of Your Buyer](#).

4) Don't underestimate semantics

Amie Kuan, CEO at Vertical Measures and author of *Content Marketing Works*, focused his presentation on content ROI by discussing different opportunities with keyword language. Using a quotation from *Pulp Fiction* as his analogy, he discusses how one can extract greater value from existing content by updating personas, conducting a rankings audit, and revising keywords.

Here's the clincher: Incorporating "semantic terms" or "related terms" as supporting keywords which would appear naturally in the context of that topic can strengthen the SEO value of the copy. Instead of repeating the same keywords over and over again, the idea is to vary the language using related terms, making the content sound more natural while also increasing the opportunity to rank for similar or related keywords within the document.

Mind. Blown.

5) Be bigger, bolder, and braver

Author of *WSJ Bestseller, Everybody Writes: Your Go-To Guide to Creating Ridiculously Good Content* and Chief Content Officer at MarketingProfs (among other accolades and titles), **Jain Handley** prompted us to "be bigger, bolder, and braver," and not to play it too safe.

Handley offered abundant examples of successful companies that offer educational, inspiring, engaging content by going out on a limb, expressing their stories, and often trying something new and different. She taught us about the [Stack Velocity Pack podcast](#) (because hey, we SPROUTers love Stack!) and ways to elevate the user's experience with valuable content that makes them feel smart and savvy.

The best part? She emphasized that companies don't need to be sexy, cool, or edgy in order to drive more content. You need only know how to describe yourself in the right tone.

A favorite quote was one that Handley borrowed from an employee of **Tractor USA**. "Your story is the start of the thing that sets you apart," Handley's take is that your story will distinguish you from the crowd, help identify your goals, and position your services in a unique and moving way.

Our takeaways were many, but we loved these speakers' perspectives on what it means to be human, to write with purpose, to be bold, and, above all, to **build valuable relationships** – which just so happens to be the SPROUT Content way.

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