

# in this issue

A magazine for comms, media, marketing and PR professionals

SAVING THE WORLD

## THE FINANCIAL REWARDS OF COMMUNICATING YOUR SUSTAINABLE STORY

SECONDS OUT

## THE BATTLE BETWEEN LONG- AND SHORT-FORM CONTENT

READ ALL ABOUT IT

## ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT UK NEWSPAPERS

INCONSISTENT VOICE

ARE YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS  
CONFUSING YOUR CUSTOMERS?

DOING A RATNER

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH THE  
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BLANKETY BLANK

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU  
SUFFER BRAIN FADE

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ou might be wondering how this copy of *In This Issue* ended up on your desk.

Well, let me tell you the story.

The short version is that we had a dream of producing a stylish magazine which would inspire and inform PR, marketing and communications professionals both to help their spokespeople deliver better media interviews and their organisations to produce more meaningful content.

The slightly longer version of that same tale is that *In This Issue* is the result of two companies coming together. One of them, Media First, you have probably already heard of. The other, Thirty Seven, a journalist-led content marketing and design agency, I hope you are going to love.

But why launch a print magazine now? Well, this is not some nostalgia-driven move. In fact, while the world has become increasingly digital, rumours of print's decline have been greatly exaggerated. Some of the world's biggest brands, as you will see inside, have increasingly turned to print to tell their story.

And we feel it is a great format to showcase the talents of Media First and Thirty Seven. And who knows, maybe some of you will be encouraged to go and check out our websites and learn more.

But we also want *In This Issue* to achieve much more than that. We've worked hard to produce a publication full of engaging content and our aim is that this magazine becomes your go-to source for insight and advice on the communication and content challenges facing your organisation.

We've covered a range of topics in this first edition, from the story behind the ultimate off-the-cuff gaffe, to the battle between long- and short-form content, and the value and risk in corporate sustainability.

*I'm sure that whatever industry you work in you will find articles that are relevant to you. But I would also love to know what you think, so please get in touch and let me know your thoughts on this first issue and what you would like us to cover in future.*



James White  
Co-founder and CEO of Thirty Seven  
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by James White

James is the managing director of Media First, which provides tailor-made communication training and other related services to suit the individual needs of every client.

James is also the co-founder and CEO of Thirty Seven, a journalist-led content creation and design agency. We put journalistic principles at the heart of every piece of content we produce and every website we build for our clients.

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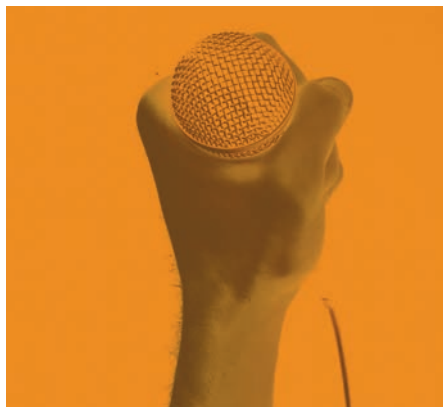
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# ARE YOU STRIKING THE RIGHT TONE?



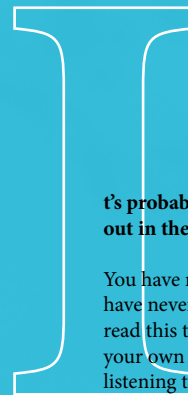
**by Graham Jones**

Graham is the author of 16 books about the internet and 12 other business books.

He is a former radio presenter, magazine editor and an award-winning writer for national newspapers, consumer magazines and trade publications.

He is often in demand with both Media First and Thirty Seven clients and as an expert commentator for the media on all things internet related.

**Nowadays, the typical office worker actually writes around 20,000 words a week. That means you are writing the equivalent of a novel every month.**



**It's probably a good idea to get this out in the open right at the start.**

You have no idea who I am and you have never heard me speak. As you read this the voice in your head is your own voice, not mine. If you were listening to me say all this instead of reading it, you'd get a different impression.

After all, I might be saying this with a smile on my face, in a light-hearted way so you'd know that I was mucking about. On the other hand, I might have a stern look, wagging my finger at you and making you realise I was rather forthright about this topic.

The written word can only communicate part of the way. Without vocal tone, facial expressions and body language, it's all too easy to get the wrong end of the stick when we read something.

These days we write and read more than ever before. Emails, tweets, Facebook posts, blogs – the list goes on. Nowadays, the typical

office worker actually writes around 20,000 words a week. That means you are writing the equivalent of a novel every month.

The result is that every office worker will have developed a style of their own; a way of writing that is unique to them. And therein lies the problem for business communication.

It means that the way in which one member of the team writes on social media, for instance, can be vastly different to the style used by another staffer. That leads to inconsistency among the readership and the followers; they are confused about your company's personality.

# M

any firms realise this and so they develop a corporate style guide or tone of voice document. And that can often lead to another problem; the company's communication, on social media in particular, is no longer human. Corporate style allows things to be consistent but it turns most text into boring, business-speak.

Companies are often afraid that if they allow their style to be more human they'll be in danger of trivialising themselves on social media. They get a sense of the more human approach devaluing their operation.

These firms worry that you might get maverick behaviour, with staff saying things in all kinds of negative ways on Twitter or Facebook. They don't want to be like Channel 4, for instance, that tweeted "BREAKING: It's definitely better to be nice to people and not be a dick. We'll update you as and when we have more on this story." Or, perhaps, the tweet from KFC in Australia which said "Something hot and spicy is coming soon" above a picture of a woman looking down at a man's genital area.



Social media activity like this seems fun and human, but it is the kind of tone of voice that puts off the corporate-style police. That, though, is a problem. It means that millions of social media messages are just plain boring. People skim straight past them, meaning they are a complete waste of time for the companies in the first place.

## So, is there a way out of this conundrum? How can your company come across as human without people going bananas?

One way is to train people in writing skills. Given that the typical office worker is producing a novel's worth of material each month, it's worthwhile taking stock and thinking 'are they trained for that?' People get trained in the technical skills of using email, for instance, but how much training do people get for writing? These days, writing is one of the most common activities for office workers and few are trained in this skill.

A key feature of learning to write well is understanding how your material sounds, so that even though the reader cannot see your facial expressions they can still get a jolly good idea of your meaning through the way you use phrases, sentences and punctuation.

**Many firms develop a corporate style guide or tone of voice document. And that can often lead to another problem; the company's communication on social media in particular is no longer human.**

Staff that are well-trained in writing are going to be much less likely to make the mistakes of businesses trying – and failing – to strike that human tone on social media. That's because trained writers tend to stop and think more before they commit finger to keyboard.

It's also about seeing the reader in your mind's eye. Professional writers visualise the people for which they are writing, rather than just focusing on the words. Skills like this can be taught and learned and can create a significant advantage on social media. That's because, with everyone trained, the personality of the company can shine through and the maverick behaviour can be diminished.

Essential to getting it right is understanding your audience very well indeed. Taco Bell, for instance, does this brilliantly. Its social media posts are light, fun and humorous, reflecting the fact that what the company offers is a fast snack that is usually eaten socially.



Similarly, the airline JetBlue manages to strike a good balance between fun and being serious. It doesn't trivialise air travel but it does emphasise that travelling itself should be fun and enjoyable. Its Twitter feed is consistent in that it contains a sprinkling of humour among the more serious tweets.

Another good example is the bookstore Waterstones. It provides informative social media posts as well as humour and conversation with its followers. It has a consistent tone that is light when needed and serious when talking about something that demands it. In other words, it understands the connection between the topic and the reader very well.

**Professional writers visualise the people for which they are writing, rather than just focusing on the words. Skills like this can be taught and learned and can create a significant advantage on social media.**

Fundamentally, what these companies share is a solid understanding of their readership. They may well be using trained writers, but their social media posts reveal that they truly understand their audience. You can only write in the right tone if you understand who is going to read your material and their motivations.

For some companies this will mean you can be light, fun and entertaining. For others, it will mean that you need to be conversational and witty. And for a few, it will mean you need to strike a balance between serious and light. The only 'right answer' about tone of voice on the internet is 'it depends'. It depends on your product, your sector and your audience. Two things will help you get this working properly: trained writers; and a solid, well-researched understanding of your target audience ■

## Marketing personas – what you need to know

Marketing personas – or buyer personas as they are sometimes also known – are a semi-fictional representation of your ideal customer, based on market research and real data.

They are used by organisations to help them understand where they should focus their time, identify their audience and solve their problems.

It is generally recommended that organisations have between three and five personas and, like much in life, the more you put in, the more you will get out. That means you are going to need customer demographics, behaviour patterns, motivations and goals, hobbies, computer literacy, values and fears, where they get their news and real quotes from interviews with customers.

To help the personas take shape you should give them a real name.

So, to give you an example, one of your personas could be an operations manager called Fred. He is in his early 50s, is educated to degree level and is married with teenage children. He works for a manufacturing company which has 2,000 employees. He values the security of his job but would like a promotion.

His biggest challenge is being asked to do more with fewer resources and a smaller budget. He hates lateness and is not particularly comfortable with new technology and systems.

He reports to the senior management team and leads a team of ten people. He prefers email for work-based communication and his social media interaction is restricted to LinkedIn and Facebook. He reads trade magazines and industry blogs and relies on television and radio for news.

Depending how far you want this to go, the persona could then be extended to include a look at a typical day in Fred's working life, his ambitions and a more detailed look at the day-to-day problems he faces.

## Profiling your audience

There is no real substitute for talking to your audience on a regular basis so you can 'get under their skin' and get a 'feel' for their likes, dislikes and so on. However, there are some ways you can profile your audience to help you.

Demographic data helps. You will be able to find this in your website analytics data, such as Google Analytics. You can connect social media to most analytics software for a complete picture. In Google Analytics you will find the information in the 'Audience' section. It's worth checking the 'Interests' section as well.

Your website analytics can also reveal likes, dislikes and so on through the keywords people use on your site. Check out the keywords section of your results on a regular basis.

Surveys and polls help too. You can create these with tools like SurveyMonkey, SoGoSurvey, or SurveyGizmo. Make sure your surveys include free-form fields so that people can type in their own answers. That way you can analyse the words they use and thereby see what really interests them as individuals.

You can also check your audience's social media profiles to find common words, phrases and mannerisms so you know how to speak with them. Just click on the profile links for the most frequent visitors to your social media account and then look at what they are saying and note the words they regularly use. Also, search on Social Mention ([www.socialmention.com](http://www.socialmention.com)) for the associated keywords that people are using.

Essentially, treat this exercise like dating: find out as much about them as possible, investigate their likes and dislikes and then deliver what they want in the way they want it.



ARTICLE

# Brain fade? Here's how to handle it



by Simon Brooke

Simon is an experienced national newspaper journalist who has written on subjects ranging from business and management to education, marketing, property, retail, food and the environment.

He has also worked in public relations, working for the communications teams of the George Bush Presidential campaign.

He was also head of broadcasting at Conservative Central office in the 1990s.

He is now one of the expert tutors at Media First and writes for Thirty Seven.



**It's everyone's worst nightmare.**

You're in the middle of a presentation or coming to a critical point in a media interview and suddenly your mind goes blank.

What on earth were you going to say? Where are you going with this? What the heck comes next?

Natalie Bennett, the former leader of the Green Party, described this as "brain fade," a phrase that has now entered the language. Just a few months ago, during the last general election, Diane Abbott suffered a similar experience. Another victim was Michael Bay, film director of Transformers.

During our media training courses delegates often ask: "What do I do if my mind goes blank?" To answer this it's worth exploring why our brains can sometimes apparently switch off at key moments. Very often stress is the cause.

In some cases when we're under pressure the brain switches off the prefrontal cortex and powers up the more primitive parts of the brain that deal with 'fight or flight' instead. Suddenly, rather than processing complex information, our brains flood our bodies with adrenalin, preparing them for action by tensing up muscles, quickening the heartbeat and causing rapid, shallow breathing. All this makes it even harder to think of that important point you wanted to make or key statistic you were going to quote.

So, how can you overcome this? Media skills training experts, such as ourselves, will tell you that the first answer is, of course, to really know your stuff.

Many people are surprised by how little they need to know for a media interview. The truth is that for press and certainly for broadcast interviews you can really only put across one or two key messages.





## **For broadcast interviews you can really only put across one or two key messages.**

People can find their mind going blank when those minds are stuffed with facts on messages, statistics and other information. Bennett is probably a good example of this. Knowing less, but knowing it well, is key.

Simplicity applies to your notes as well. Going to do a radio or press interview or delivering a presentation with a whole pile of papers will be more likely to cause you to dry up than not having enough information.

Similarly, if just before a TV interview you're juggling notes, papers and reports, when you finally start answering the questions on camera there is a danger that all this information will clog up your brain and cause it to freeze. Even if you do manage to keep talking the chances are that your messages will be too numerous and wide ranging for your audience to take on board.

Edit down those messages and use a few bullet points or trigger phrases that will remind you of them, plus an example or proof point for each one.

To avoid that panic reaction, breathe deeply and softly both before and during a media interview or presentation. Plant your feet firmly on the floor and stand up or sit up tall. Adopting confident, expansive body language will help you to relax and feel more in control.

## **To avoid a panic reaction, breathe deeply and softly both before and during a media interview.**

But what if the worst does happen and brain fade kicks in? What can you do to overcome it? During a media interview you can always be honest and say; "Sorry, I've lost my train of thought," and then ask the journalist to repeat the question.

You certainly won't be the first person that this has ever happened to so your audience, unless they are very hostile, will understand and probably sympathise.

## **It is important to remember you won't be the first person that has suffered brain fade.**

Again, as with preparation, simplicity and focus are your friends here. If you suddenly lose track of what you wanted to say, phrases such as, "But, anyway, the point is that..." or "What really matters here is that..." will help you get back to your key message. Media training and presentation skills courses offer a safe environment in which to practice this.

If you're doing a presentation, again being honest with the audience and taking a moment to breathe, gather your thoughts and break that awful trance that comes with blank mind syndrome will also work. Your audience will almost certainly understand. No one likes to see a presenter suffer because they can imagine themselves in the same situation.


Finally, let's just put this into perspective. Where media interviews are concerned, if you're a politician like Natalie Bennett or Diane Abbott, or you're defending your organisation against a serious accusation, the interviewer will see it as their duty to hold you to account. They may well allow you to dangle in the wind if your mind goes blank.

However, in the majority of cases all the interviewer wants from you is a few interesting facts and thoughts, backed up with an example or two. During live media interviews it's the responsibility of the presenter to keep the show on the road and to avoid dead air. Therefore they're very likely to jump in and keep things going.

Brain fade is something that everyone has suffered but with preparation and rehearsal you can handle it and get back on track ■



## Thirty Seven is a journalist-led content creation and web design agency.

 ur editorial team responds to current trends, topics and stories which are important to your industry and customers and develops new angles and insights for consistently high-quality content.

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# CONTENT SHOULD BE MORE THAN JUST MARKETING



## Interview by Tom Idle

Tom is an experienced content creator having worked as an editor, writer and journalist. He has spent the last ten years developing content and engagement strategies for some of the world's biggest organisations. He was editor-in-chief at 2degrees and, before that, editor of Sustainable Business. Tom now writes regularly for Thirty Seven and our clients.

# M

Meeting at the Reading headquarters of Media First, James White and Mark Mars are in a buoyant, if pensive, mood.

I'm here to interview the pair about the culmination of a frantic few months which sees the launch of their brand new business, Thirty Seven, a content marketing agency hoping to seriously shake up the communications world for the better.

"I couldn't bear to sit around on the sidelines any longer while some agencies just messed things up," is how James puts it when I ask why he's decided to venture into the world of content marketing.

In his six years as MD of Media First, James and his team have been asked more and more to help with different communications challenges – to present better, to deliver more impactful messages, to shoot and edit film, to hone communications. "We've been naturally moving towards helping with content marketing over the years. Now, with Thirty Seven we will get to help our amazing clients in a much more involved way."

James is joined by Mark, an ex-Microsoft application development consultant, who has been running his own content and design agency for the last five years. Having worked together enhancing Media First's own content marketing and SEO performance, the pair decided to team up. "We've built a loyal following and I enjoy knowing that what we are producing is worthwhile and entertaining," adds James. "I knew that, so long as we kept enjoying the creative process and stayed true to our journalist-led approach of always putting the audience first, then there was a good chance that people would continue to enjoy reading, watching and listening to the content we were making."

Enjoying the frisson of their new business launch, the pair were keen to tell me how and why they plan to do content marketing better.

**It seems that your decision to establish Thirty Seven was based on a belief that most content marketing is poor. What's wrong with it?**

**Mark Mars (MM):** So much content is produced without any strategy behind it and the quality just isn't there.

When it comes to SEO, there has been such an overriding focus on creating pages that rank for certain keywords. What you often end up with is lots and lots of content which might create a decent search ranking, but the quality is so poor that visitors don't stick around for long. Google has caught up with that and now has more quality measures in place.

**James White (JW):** SEO and content are still considered by some agencies to be separate pieces of work. But they need to be considered together. You can't produce good SEO with poorly developed content; it just doesn't work.

**But clearly your customers are increasingly aware of the need to improve content quality. How have you evolved to cope with changing client needs?**

**MM:** A hell of a lot has changed in the last five years. Back in 2014, spend on content marketing in the UK was about £125 million a year. By 2020, it is set to jump to around £350 million, so brands really understand that this is the best way to reach their audiences.

There is also more appetite from consumers to digest content in many different forms, which opens up plenty of opportunity for publishers and content creators.

But that is not to say that it is being done particularly well. About 80 per cent of B2B marketers claim to use content marketing. But 70 per cent of them lack a consistent or integrated content strategy – and that's a big problem. There has been too much focus on quantity over quality.

**JW:** 'Quality' is such a generic term because it's all subjective. You need to develop the right content, for the right audience, in the right format, at the right time and in the right place.

Brands need to think more like publishers to really get the value out of their content.

**You use journalists to deliver content for your customers. The benefits of doing that might be obvious, but what is it you're getting from journalists that you might not get from other content creators?**

**JW:** Well, content should be more than just marketing. It's not just good enough these days to tell good stories. You have to educate, entertain and excite audiences. You have to give people a reason to care.

**BACK IN 2014, SPEND ON CONTENT MARKETING IN THE UK WAS ABOUT £125 MILLION A YEAR. BY 2020, IT IS SET TO JUMP TO AROUND £350 MILLION.**

Journalists inherently get this. They know how to sniff out unique stories that make people stop, sit up and listen. My wife is a journalist and she has a great ability to be brutally honest. I could spend all day coming up with, what I think is, a great idea. I'll go home and tell her about it and she'll challenge me by saying something like, "Who cares? Why will your audience give a damn?"

And that's what's great about journalists. They can easily put themselves in somebody else's shoes and work out how people tick. That's why I've loved working with our team of journalists at Media First these past six years.

**All of your customers will have very different needs. How do you approach each piece of work to deliver the best results?**

**MM:** Well, you need to get into the mind of the client to find out what they want to achieve, rather than just blindly creating content. You need to help build a cohesive and coherent plan that includes not just what content you will create, but also how you are going to publish it and promote it.

**JW:** It's all about meeting objectives. Is this content to raise awareness? Or is it to convert lurkers on a website into buyers?

It's also about looking at data to find out what types of content a client's audience wants and how it wants that delivered.

When we get into content creation mode, we work like an editorial newsroom to script, write, edit and sub-edit. That then goes through a cycle of refinements until we are happy for it to leave our office and reach the client for sign-off.

**There's a continuous debate about the virtues of long-versus short form content. Which do you think is best?**

**MM:** It's not really about what's better. It's about what's most appropriate.



**WE DO LIVE IN A FAST-PACED WORLD, BUT TO SAY THAT NOBODY WANTS TO READ MORE THAN 500 WORDS JUST ISN'T TRUE.**

We do live in a fast-paced world, but to say that nobody wants to read more than 500 words just isn't true. Long-form content has always received more shares and links than shorter pieces. People do appreciate the time that goes in to creating quality long-form content. And Google does too, with their algorithm generally favouring longer content.

**So, are there rules for creating great content that you stick to?**

**JW:** We like to use the simple TRUTH test – that the content is Topical, Relevant, Unusual, Trouble (solves, raises awareness of or discusses) and importantly, contains Human interest.

But it has to be delivered in the right format as well. Many people were surprised to hear that Media First and Thirty Seven have joined forces to create this magazine. Yes, it might seem a bit retro but not all audiences are the same; not everyone wants to read a blog or get their information from social media. I have a Kindle and iPad at home but still buy books, newspapers and magazines.

**The General Data Protection Regulation is coming, giving individuals more control over how their personal data is collected and used online. What will it mean for the content marketing industry?**

**JW:** It's certainly something our clients need to be aware of, not least because the new regulation is so far reaching. It will affect not just marketing but internal comms and even supplier contracts.

You can either hide under your desk and pretend it's not happening. Or you can see it as an opportunity to be proactive.

I personally think it's a great thing. I will have more control over my data and who markets to me. And as a content producer, I will know that we are providing our audiences with information they want.

**So, what does the future look like for content marketing?**

**MM:** We are drowning in content and it is getting harder to get results. The average number of shares of any content has been steadily falling over the last few years. So the whole practice does need to evolve.

That means content marketers need to be a lot more strategic about the type of content they create, backed by better research. And instead of asking inexperienced or new writers to churn out low-quality blogs for long-tail keyword targeting, content teams will be comprised of creative designers, developers, AI experts, videographers, as well as plenty of experienced writers and journalists too. The future is bright and exciting for content marketing.

**I HATE THE CONCEPT OF A FULL SERVICE MARKETING AGENCY, WHERE EVERYTHING IS OUTSOURCED... WE WANT TO SUPPORT OUR CUSTOMERS TO RETAIN IN-HOUSE TEAMS.**

**JW:** We also know that it's going to be important to work closely with our customers' teams. I hate the concept of a full service marketing agency, where everything is outsourced. I hate to see comms teams dwindling in size. We want to support our customers to retain in-house teams because we've seen just how important they are during the last 35 years working with Media First.

**What's with the name, Thirty Seven? How did you come up with that?**

**MM:** Well, if you ask a group of people to pick a random number between zero and 100, a disproportionate number of people will choose the number 37. The more you delve into the number – the fact that it appears more regularly than any other number in films, for example – you realise just how special it is. It's also a prime number and seems to have a number of other properties that people are attracted to. There are even websites all about the number 37. It has an attraction and we're in the attraction game, so it made sense.

**What's it like working with each other? Do you always get on or are there things you disagree on?**

**MM:** We're very similar. We're both ambitious and want to succeed.

But our work lives have been very different so we have different ideas about how things should be achieved.

**JW:** Sure, sometimes Mark and I approach things from a different angle. Occasionally this leads to disagreements. But we complement each other. If we were both the same, we wouldn't be anywhere near as good as a team.

Ultimately, we both want to deliver projects that excite and motivate us. That's the reason we get out of bed in the mornings; not to just earn money to pay the mortgage. It's about more than that ■

**WHEN WE GET INTO CONTENT CREATION MODE, WE WORK LIKE AN EDITORIAL NEWSROOM TO SCRIPT, WRITE, EDIT AND SUB-EDIT. THAT THEN GOES THROUGH A CYCLE OF REFINEMENTS UNTIL WE ARE HAPPY FOR IT TO LEAVE OUR OFFICE AND REACH THE CLIENT FOR SIGN-OFF.**



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ARTICLE

# Social Media Trends

You probably don't need us to tell you that the social media landscape changes at a breakneck pace.

Platforms and their offerings constantly change in a bid to attract new users and money from advertisers.

In fact, you could argue that the only constant is change itself.

And with constant growth – 30 per cent of all-time spent online is now allocated to social media interaction – the pace of that change is going to increase.

The good news is that the Thirty Seven crystal ball has been put to good effect and helped us identify the things you can expect to see much more of.



**Aimee Hudson is Thirty Seven's senior account manager.**

She specialises in the management of website projects and creative digital campaigns and ensuring companies make the most of their social media output.

Before joining Thirty Seven she worked as an event operations manager, responsible for overseeing event communication and registration for luxury automotive brands.



## Stories

S

napchat has, since pretty much the beginning, had a feature called 'Stories' where users can publish snippets of what they're doing out to everyone who follows them.

Within the last year or so Instagram and Facebook have copied this idea and, interestingly, Instagram seems to have become the more popular platform for this feature with 100 million daily active viewers in 2016.

Many people and brands share snippets of their day and then add text, stickers, filters or emojis and publish it so anyone who follows their account can view it.

Since Facebook now owns Instagram it has also rolled out the feature to its own platform, but with little success.

## Ephemeral Content

T

his type of content is intriguing and one that can be quite hard to achieve successfully. It is where your followers see a short clip of content or an image for a matter of seconds before it disappears.

It is the format Snapchat was built upon.

However, more brands are exploring ephemeral content to present a different side of the business for certain occasions.

For example, ephemeral content is great for giving an audience a sneak peek or a behind-the-scenes look at a product or event. Burberry used it to wide acclaim in 2015 to create an ad in real time.

Alternatively, it can be used for competitions and giveaways, interviews, holidays or a daily/weekly series.

The key to being successful with this form of content is to be human. It should be unpolished and light-hearted or, in other words, 'flawed'.

## Live Video

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here's no doubt that live video is on the rise with more and more brands tapping into it. And in 2018 it is expected to take centre stage.

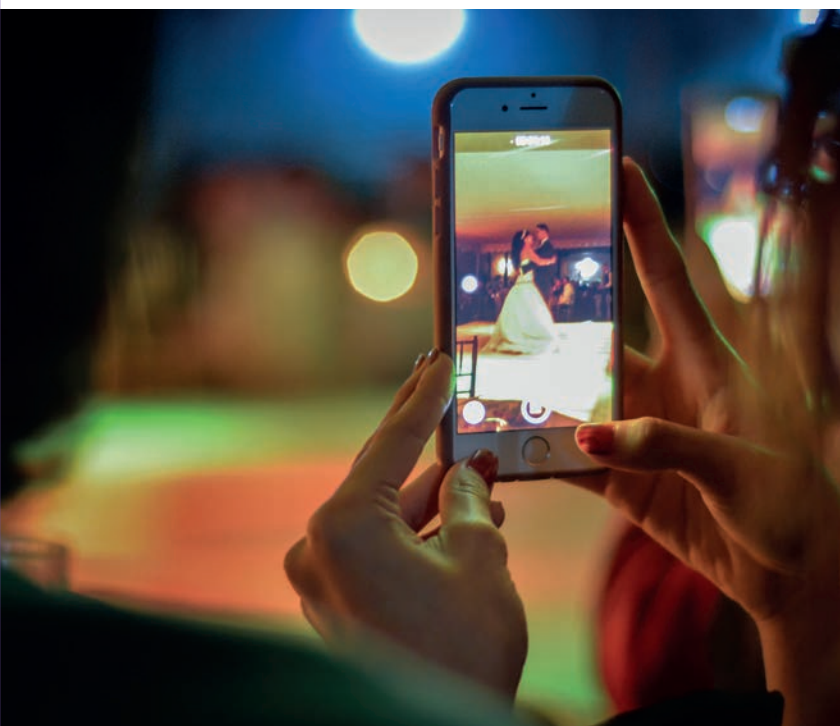
While there are many video streaming platforms — and LinkedIn is in the process of rolling out one to its users now — Facebook Live and Periscope appear to be the most popular.

Periscope, in 2016, stated that users watched 110 years of live video every day in the app and on New Year's Eve Facebook Live reached a record-breaking number of users around the world.

Twitter and Instagram have also launched a live video platform within their apps. In Twitter's case there is now a button to live stream via Periscope.

This feature is particularly useful to those who want to live stream an event, for example a product launch, to everyone who couldn't be there. Q&As and a live video series are also opportunities to pick up on.

With new capabilities like 360-degree videos, there are new ways to engage an audience.







## Messaging Apps

**W**ith more people spending more time online, social media companies are investing in instant messenger functionalities.

Facebook was the first to initiate this with the Facebook Messenger app. This allows people, as well as brands, to communicate globally for free.

These aid customer service processes as they provide a faster and easier way for customers to get the assistance they need, compared to email or phone.

The hotel chain Hyatt utilises Facebook Messenger for 24-hour customer service so guests can make reservations or ask questions.

Many companies that don't use social media messaging apps use similar technology which can be embedded into their websites.

## Artificial Intelligence

**T**his is a fairly new feature for most social media brands but Snapchat has paved the way since the beginning with their variety of filters.

Powered by artificial intelligence – or AI – the filters are known to be engaging and interactive. I mean have you seen how many selfies have dog ears over them now?

Due to its growing popularity, other platforms have adopted the feature in order to entice users.

Many companies are investing in AI and creating new, interesting ways to engage audiences.

It's believed that AI will drive social media in the coming year with some stating that it is essential for social media success. It is certainly something Apple has placed a lot of emphasis on while launching its new iPhone X. For businesses, it's a new way of opening doors to interact with customers, publish adverts and network.

## Marketplace

**E**-commerce is becoming more prominent within social media platforms, with Facebook, Instagram and Twitter offering ways for users to buy products directly within their apps.

With one simple click, a user is taken to the company's desired URL to either browse products or with the intention to buy.

The marketplace is powerful. In a recent survey, 56 per cent of consumers said they follow brands on social media to know when products are on sale and 31 per cent said they use social media to specifically look for new products to purchase.

Many people go on social media to interact with interesting content and are more likely to engage in posts that provide information to them rather than an advert, for example gift ideas for your sister. Indirect advertising allows companies to reap more benefits.

Re-marketing, via adverts on social media, is also known to increase sales for businesses and can be a very effective strategy when done well.



## Mobile Advertising

**I**f you haven't started investing more in mobile advertising it's about time you did. It's wise to advertise across all social media platforms if possible and take advantage of the new features that are released.

In 2016, Facebook brought in \$7 billion worth of social media ad revenues. Its algorithm ensures that a user's friends and family content comes first so that the 75 per cent of brands that pay to promote ads on Facebook will have to create appealing and engaging ads in order to capture the user's attention first.

Twitter, on the other hand, has paid advertising features including videos, sponsored hashtag icons and stickers to provide users with a variety of ad options.

Interestingly, users said in a recent survey that adverts on Instagram were more memorable compared to ads on Snapchat. However, Snapchat offers more appealing ad features, like sponsored filters, that are popular during film releases making them more likeable to users.

Overall, each platform runs a pay-to-play operation to make advertisers pay as much money as they can so they can get the results they want. For example, if you're looking for conversions and have a budget of £50, Facebook will put this in front of only a select few people. But if your budget is £500 your ad will be placed in front of many more people who are likely to complete your desired conversion action ■



INTERVIEW

# THE STORY BEHIND THE ULTIMATE OFF-THE-CUFF GAFFE

Gerald Ratner is widely credited with making the ultimate off-the-cuff gaffe with his infamous “it’s total crap” description of some of his company’s products.

The remarks, which wiped £500 million from the value of the company, were made in a speech in 1991, yet such are their notoriety that when someone makes a similar mistake now it is still referred to as ‘doing a Ratner’.

Ratner was speaking at the UK Institute of Directors when he said: “We also do cut-glass sherry decanters complete with six glasses on a silver-plated tray that your butler can serve your drinks on, all for £4.95. People say, ‘How can you sell this for such a low price?’ I say, ‘because it’s total crap.’”

He added his store’s earrings were “cheaper than an M&S prawn sandwich but probably wouldn’t last as long”.

But how much do we really know about this speech and the way it was handled by the media?

We sent Lawrence McGinty, one of our expert tutors, to find out more about the infamous comments and what Ratner thinks of the media now.



## Interview by Lawrence McGinty

Lawrence was the science and medical editor for ITV news for 32 years.

Career highlights include stroking a polar bear, piloting a Harrier Jump Jet and landing it vertically, appearing with Cilla Black at the London Palladium and signing off ‘Lawrence McGinty, ITV News at the North Pole’.

Having retired from ITV News, he now fills his time as an in-demand after dinner speaker, delivering media training for Media First and writing for Thirty Seven.



**Lawrence McGinty (LM):** How did you feel at the time about the media and how do you feel now that you have recovered?

**Gerald Ratner (GR):** Well, I didn't realise that the media could cause so much trouble for me. I know it sounds a bit naïve but I thought I was sort of bomb-proof. I didn't think it would transfer into my business going down the pan; I never thought that for a minute. I was actually more worried about The Times and the Daily Telegraph than The Sun writing negatively about the company because of how it would affect the share price.

I never really focused on that side of the media, although it is true to say that I was very high profile and it was doing me a certain amount of good at the time. In the Ratners Group, we had other companies that were not called Ratners. But because of my profile, the companies with the Ratners name were actually out-performing others like H. Samuel and Ernest Jones. I'm not comparing myself to Sir Richard Branson, but all of that publicity was having a positive impact.

But everyone kept warning me that it's a two-sided coin. I dismissed that, as you do, when you're on the crest of a wave.

But I don't feel as bitter as you might think.

**LM:** If you are approached now to do an interview with a newspaper how do you feel about it?

**GR:** I would still do it. At the moment, whether I am doing speeches for my online business or whatever, it is good business and I have to be in the public eye as much as possible. I am not in that luxurious position that some people can be in business where they don't need the media. I'm more likely to be offered to do a speech if I have been in the newspapers the previous week. The people who are making these decisions are reading this and thinking, 'Oh yes, Gerald Ratner' and opportunities come about because of that.

I got funding for one of my businesses purely because I was in the Daily Telegraph about something totally irrelevant. It gets people thinking about you and you need to be in the public eye.

**LM:** Can I take you back to when you were preparing that speech, because I read that you actually prepared it very carefully.

**GR:** Yeah, I did because it was a big event. It was the biggest speech I had ever done at the time; the Institute of Directors at the Royal Albert Hall. There were about 5,000 people there, including the President of South Africa and [former Chancellor] Norman Lamont, who was a bit of a big shot then. They always used to choose the businessman of the time to do the speech and it was a great compliment.

I nearly pulled out because I began to get nervous about it. I was writing the speech and thinking, 'I'm not used to this sort of thing, it's going to be a flop'.

They said I could pull out if I wanted to, but I carried on with it and it was a deadly serious speech. In fact it went on YouTube in its entirety not that long ago and it is a good speech with a lot of serious messages.

I sent a draft of the speech round to all my colleagues on the board of the Ratners Group and one of them came back and said, "Well, it's a good speech. The only thing that's missing is there are no jokes in it." So I said, "The jokes that always work are the prawn sandwich one and the sherry decanter one." So he said, "Well, put those in."

So I put those in at the last minute and I don't really blame him for it. I don't think he was trying to get rid of me; he was genuinely trying to be helpful.

**LM:** And of course they were ironic in a way and that is the hardest humour to understand, isn't it?

**GR:** Self-deprecating as well. Some people say I have a lot to be self-deprecating about. I just felt it worked to not be the normal businessman who is always blowing his own trumpet; that never goes down well. However successful you are, people do get a bit turned off by your continual boasts about how wonderful you are.

Anyway, the people in the Royal Albert Hall all felt it was very funny the way it was meant, as a joke. But the Institute of Directors sent a copy of the speech to the press in advance. I was told the press was going to be there and the Daily Mirror was particularly interested in the story.

Anyway, as I left I was quite relieved. I was so nervous about the speech that I hadn't even gone to work that morning. I went straight to the venue in the afternoon because I was in a bit of a state. The Daily Mirror journalist came up to me afterwards and he said, "Can you make a comment Mister Ratner." I said, "What about?" and he said, "You have made fun of your customers."

I said, "No, it wasn't meant that way at all" and then he carried on and I just ignored him.

That evening, I went out with a journalist called Jeff Randall which had been pre-arranged. The press were outside the restaurant. Jeff went out and talked to them and told me, "They are after you; The Sun is out there."

The next day it was all over the press – on the front page, page 3, page 5 – and it was something that I didn't recognise I had said. For instance, I was quoted as saying, "All my jewellery is crap" which I never did; it was a joke about a sherry decanter.

But there was no point arguing the toss. I had made a mistake. They really painted this picture of me being this arrogant snob, multi-millionaire, whose customers can't pay the electricity bill and save up for a pair of earrings and I had made fun of them.

**I SENT A DRAFT OF THE SPEECH  
ROUND TO ALL MY COLLEAGUES  
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JOKES IN IT."**

# IF YOU FEEL THAT SOMETHING IS NOT YOUR FAULT AND YOU ARE BEING UNFAIRLY TREATED, YOU SHOULDN'T ARGUE THE TOSS. JUST PUT YOUR HANDS UP, ACCEPT IT'S YOUR FAULT AND EVERYONE WILL ACCEPT YOU DO MAKE MISTAKES.

I might have a lot of faults but I wouldn't have gone down that road. It was a mistake making the joke, I accept that. But I'm not that person to make fun of customers; it's just not who I am. I paid a very high price for that, to say the least.

**LM:** Yet you have mentioned Sir Richard Branson before. He seems to be able to inject some personality and energy but still say the right thing, so to speak.

**GR:** Yeah he knows what to say. He gets his fair share of disasters as we all do in business, whether it is a train crash or terrible food on one of his flights. His way of handling things is not to say, "It's not really our fault and it was somebody else's fault and here are the extenuating circumstances." His answer is actually quite clever – an indirect approach if you like.

In the case of the train driver he said, "The train driver is a hero" and he deflected it. When someone complained about the food on a flight, he made a joke about it and dealt with it himself rather than put somebody up. He didn't deny it.

I'm sure that when BP had the oil slick, if it was Branson dealing with it he would not have turned around and said, "I'm waiting to get my life back" or as the chairman said, "We always treat little people well."

I didn't know it at the time, but I have learned a way to deal with things. If you feel that something is not your fault and you are being unfairly treated, you shouldn't argue the toss. Just put your hands up, accept it's your fault and everyone will accept you do make mistakes.

**I GOT FUNDING FOR ONE OF MY BUSINESSES PURELY BECAUSE I WAS IN THE DAILY TELEGRAPH ABOUT SOMETHING TOTALLY IRRELEVANT. IT GETS PEOPLE THINKING ABOUT YOU AND YOU NEED TO BE IN THE PUBLIC EYE.**

When Hugh Grant got caught with the prostitute he said it was a ridiculous thing to do and that he had a weakness. People have a certain amount of sympathy for that; they are reasonable. What they can't accept is when you deny something when it is, in fact, your fault.

## I DON'T FEEL AS BITTER AS YOU MIGHT THINK.

**LM:** What advice would you give to people about what they can do when they make a mistake?

**GR:** There is no quick fix. Volkswagen has recently been down this road. The answer really is you have to be successful again. I know that is easier said than done, but people do admire success, especially if it has come after a fall. If you remain in the gutter people are going to keep kicking you there, which is what they do after you have made a mistake. If you pull yourself out of it and are successful people admire that. Luis Suarez, the footballer, kept getting into trouble but also kept scoring goals. If he hadn't scored goals they would still be criticising him. David Beckham was the most unpopular person in Britain when he got sent off in the World Cup quarter-final against Argentina, but look at him now.

You can come back stronger than ever. It won't happen the next day and it won't happen by denying it and saying, "I wasn't there." You have to go through certain stages. The first is denial, then the next one is anger that it happened at all, and then you will go through bargaining where you will try and make it better than it was. Then it will start dawning on you

and it will be depression because of what you have done. And finally, the fifth one is acceptance. You might be a bit better just to accept it on day one rather than go through all of those things.

**LM:** We're in the business of media training. Do you think that would make a difference in terms of stopping you make those mistakes?

**GR:** Well, I'm unlikely to make a mistake now, although it wouldn't make any difference because people still know me for that one mistake. If I did anything terrible now it would have to be pretty massive to compete with that one. But that is a sort of glib answer. I think there is a bit of truth that because of what happened I am more careful now and I understand how you can make these mistakes.

## THE NEXT DAY IT WAS ALL OVER THE PRESS - THE FRONT PAGE, PAGE 3, PAGE 5...

I do feel there is this ultra-cautiousness with companies at the moment where you really get turned off by the fact they are saying all the right things and repeating it. They are saying the bleeding obvious, as John Cleese would say, and really there is not a lot of point in that.

But I can understand it to a certain degree and I'm very cautious now in what I say. I try to say the right thing only because I have experienced what it is like to make a mistake and I'm really scared of going back down there. It is like when you have lost all your money, when you recover you make sure you don't lose it again ■



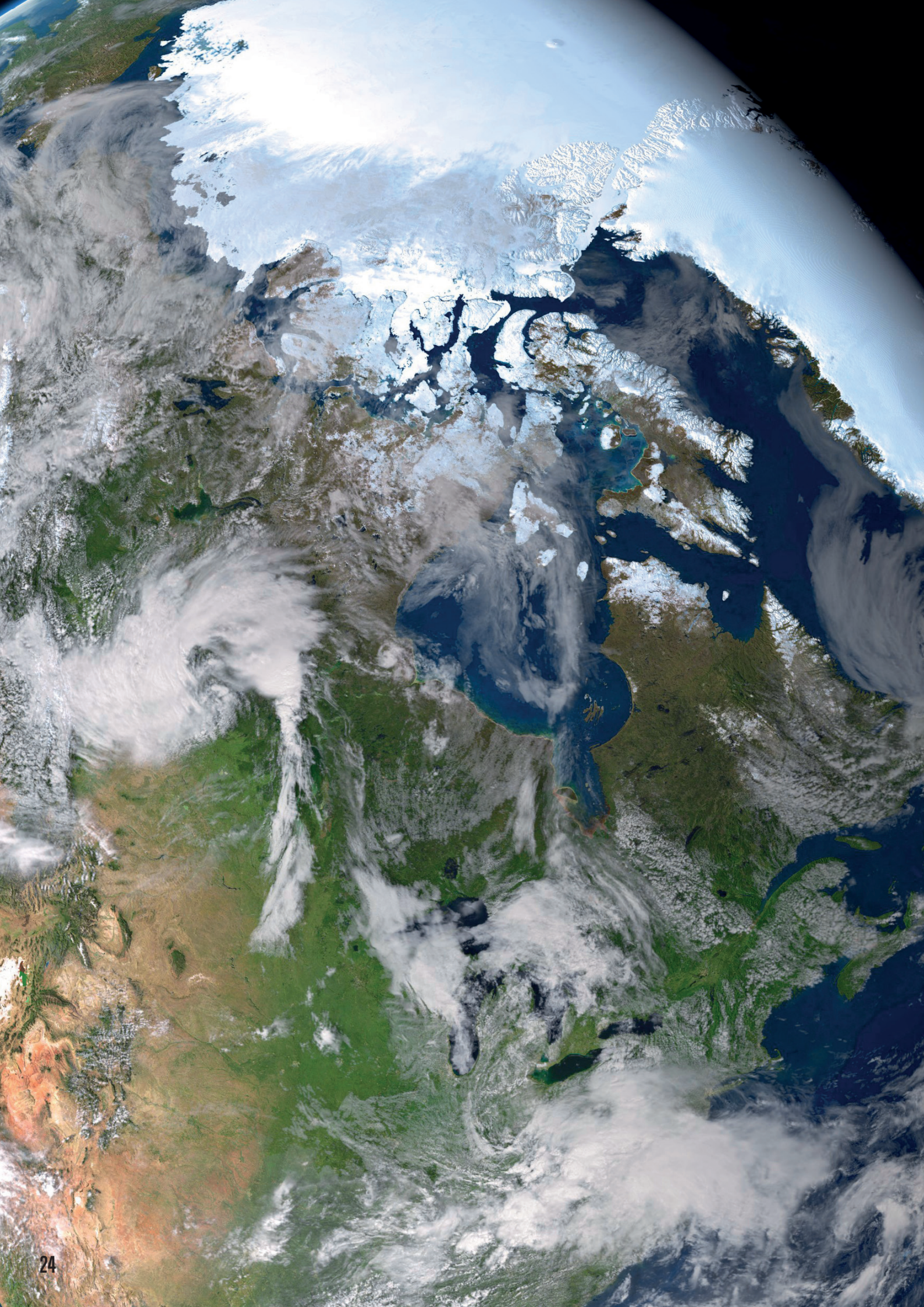
**Gerald Ratner** was the CEO of Ratners which once boasted 2,500 stores, 25,000 employees and annual sales of £1.2 billion.

After his infamous gaffe, he was forced to sell the business and start again.

Despite causing one of the biggest collapses in retail history, he travels widely making speeches on how to be successful.

[geraldratner.co.uk](http://geraldratner.co.uk)







FEATURE

# THE VALUE AND RISK OF COMMUNICATING YOUR SUSTAINABLE STORY



When hammer-wielding gambling addict Eric Baptista went on the rampage smashing up a number of fixed-odds betting terminals (FOBT) in William Hill stores across Liverpool he knew exactly what he was doing. His actions caused £36,000 of damage. In one branch he smeared paint all over the place. In another, he filmed himself, smartphone in one hand, a hammer in the other.



by Tom Idle

Tom is an experienced content creator having worked as an editor, writer and journalist.

He has spent the last ten years developing content and engagement strategies for some of the world's biggest organisations. He was editor-in-chief at 2degrees and, before that, editor of Sustainable Business.

Tom now writes regularly for Thirty Seven and our clients.

**T**his was Baptista's revenge protest against a betting industry he claims regularly exploits people like him – those that have lost thousands of pounds betting on FOBTs and are encouraged to keep doing so, regardless of the consequences.

His actions, while destructive and illegal, garnered a wealth of sympathy across the media, raising serious ethical questions about the validity of FOBTs in high-street betting shops. A lunchtime flutter on the horses has become legend across the generations. But offering the option of pouring hundreds of pounds into an algorithm-controlled giant computer is a relatively new phenomenon – and one that has raised concerns, particularly among local councillors and MPs. They continually face questions as to the social benefits (or otherwise) of betting shops popping up on every high street across the UK, especially when two million people are said to be addicted to gambling or at risk of developing a problem.

Of course, it is a narrative of which the gambling industry is only too aware. Being a socially (and environmentally) responsible business that plays a useful role for people and the communities in which they live, is front of mind for many CEOs – even those running companies in a sector constantly battling claims it is devoid of any positive social value whatsoever.

For those of you still unsure about whether it's worth 'doing sustainability' (largely defined as investing in measures to ensure your organisation is fit, proper and able to stay competitive for the long-term), you can stop it right now. More and more evidence suggests that those companies proactively looking for ways to make sure they are viable and attractive entities 50 years from now are already reaping the benefits.

Just look at the consumer goods giant Unilever.

When addressing shareholder meetings, the softly spoken boss Paul Polman sounds more like Bono than a CEO, opting for soliloquies on global warming rather than detailed analysis of quarterly financial returns.

For the past six years the business has been building what it calls 'Sustainable Living' (SL) brands, such as Lifebuoy, Ben & Jerry's, Dove and Hellmann's – businesses with a social or environmental purpose strongly attached to their operations or customers. For example, the ice cream maker Ben & Jerry's exists to "make and sell the finest quality ice cream" all the while sourcing natural ingredients and making sure its operations have zero negative impact on the planet.

**FOR THOSE OF YOU STILL  
UNSURE ABOUT WHETHER  
IT'S WORTH 'DOING  
SUSTAINABILITY' YOU CAN  
STOP IT RIGHT NOW.**

All of the company's brands are said to be focused on reducing their environmental footprint and boosting their positive social impact. Those that are furthest ahead are tagged as 'SL brands' and, collectively, they grew over 50 per cent faster than the rest of the business last year, delivering more than 60 per cent of Unilever's growth. "Our results show that sustainability is good for business," says Polman, pointing to a spurring of innovation, strengthened supply chains and reduced costs.

The telecoms business BT is another good example. It has spent plenty of energy and resources in recent years making sure its product and service offering can help its business customers be more responsible and efficient too. As part of its 3:1 goal, BT's consumer operations and products that contribute to carbon savings now represent 22 per cent of annual revenues and are worth more than £5 billion.

Waking up to the realisation that customers, of all shapes and sizes, care about what it is their favourite brands are doing to create a better world, or not, companies should know that CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility – or whatever you want to call it) is increasingly valuable.

And that's largely because the next generation of consumers and customers want to know why companies exist, how they operate and whether their core business is having a negative impact on people and planet. A new study by Cone Communications reveals that 87 per cent of consumers say they would purchase a product because a company advocated for an issue they cared about, while more than 75 per cent say they would boycott a product or company if the brand supported an issue contrary to their ethics and values.

**“OUR RESULTS SHOW THAT SUSTAINABILITY IS GOOD FOR BUSINESS,” SAYS POLMAN, POINTING TO A SPURRING OF INNOVATION, STRENGTHENED SUPPLY CHAINS AND REDUCED COSTS.**

It is a trend only likely to grow with Millennials and the Gen Z putting their money where their mouths are, purposefully backing more socially responsible brands over any others. Even if they don't care about issues like climate change, pressured by peers on social media, they know they ought to so are more easily swayed to 'do the right thing'.

So, if CSR has real value, why aren't more companies talking about the good, positive things they are doing?

A lack of confidence and an absence of good, simple storytelling lies at the heart of the lacklustre response by all but a handful of progressive businesses. Ultimately, customers want their relationships with brands to possess the very same qualities they value in their personal relationships: Trust, empathy, respect, openness.

**THE NEXT GENERATION OF CONSUMERS AND CUSTOMERS WANT TO KNOW WHY COMPANIES EXIST, HOW THEY OPERATE AND WHETHER THEIR CORE BUSINESS IS HAVING A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON PEOPLE AND PLANET.**

But in a corporate world defined by quarterly growth stats, companies blindly believe that acting more human will destroy any chance of economic success – a view that flies in the face of a growing mountain of evidence.

Maybe it's too early for the likes of William Hill and Ladbrokes to gamble on ripping out their valuable FOBTs, a move that would stake a claim to the moral high ground.

But what might the future CSR payback look like among a consumer base keen to defend and support companies that take an ethical stand? Might we see gamblers flock in unison to any betting shop willing to gamble on first mover advantage in positively responding to Baptista's

argument that they, in fact, may well be destroying the lives of society's most vulnerable.

In a world of continued divestment from companies unwilling to accept and respond to environmental and social risks, the corporate world can no longer bury its head in the sand.

Instead, it must rise in response to the big challenges the world faces – from poverty and human rights abuse, to global warming and water scarcity. To avoid being left behind forever, companies must change their course. But in doing so they must engage their customers effectively – a task that demands transparency, accountability, honesty and, above all else, fantastic communication and storytelling to bring them along for the ride ■



**A LACK OF CONFIDENCE AND AN ABSENCE OF GOOD, SIMPLE STORYTELLING LIES AT THE HEART OF THE LACKLUSTRE RESPONSE BY ALL BUT A HANDFUL OF PROGRESSIVE BUSINESSES.**

# Should PR people be on media interviews?



by Adam Fisher

Adam is a content editor at both Media First and Thirty Seven.

A journalist at heart, he worked as a news editor and sports reporter before spending time as communications and media manager for two high profile public sector bodies.

Adam has an eye for a great story and a talent for spotting alternative angles which make people stop and think differently.

**T**hey say three's a crowd and sometimes it feels like the phrase was intended for PR and comms professionals who sit in on media interviews.

After all, the journalist doesn't really want you there and if you interfere directly in the interview it can go disastrously wrong.

I sat in on many media interviews during my comms career and often wondered what I was doing there. I also carried out many interviews as a journalist where the PR person in the room appeared to be little more than a third wheel.

It can really feel like a no-win situation at times. But that does not mean it should not be done.

Sitting in on an interview can be vital to the success of an interview, particularly if an organisation has an inexperienced and nervous spokesperson who simply needs a reassuring presence in the room while they speak to the media. After all, it can be a scary environment.

At the end of the interview the PR is ideally placed to praise them for what went well and highlight any areas which may need improvement.

Certainly when managing a crisis, I would expect the PR person to be present during the interviews.

This is not about hand-holding, as organisations should be using an experienced spokesperson. But it is likely there will be numerous requests for interviews and being present will enable the PR to manage conflicting demands and time pressures, and have an accurate record of who has been spoken to and what has been said.

**IT CAN REALLY FEEL LIKE A NO-WIN SITUATION AT TIMES. BUT THAT DOES NOT MEAN IT SHOULD NOT BE DONE.**

It will also enable them to have a greater understanding of what journalists are looking for, the questions they are asking and the angle they are likely to take; great for future briefing of spokespeople.

**But if you have an experienced spokesperson, who has had recent media training, and the interview subject is not controversial, do PRs really need to be there?**

Letting them carry out the interview on their own could help to create an impression of greater transparency. It could also allow the spokesperson to build positive relationships with reporters, which can help raise their profile as an industry leader or expert and see the journalist want to interview them again in the future.



# ple sit in views?

Increasingly we notice more and more interviews are being carried out by telephone as reporters battle against a range of time constraints and limited resources. And often that means the interviews are conducted on speakerphone so the PR person can listen.

**CERTAINLY WHEN MANAGING A CRISIS I WOULD EXPECT THE PR PERSON TO BE PRESENT DURING THE INTERVIEWS.**

But this really impacts on the sound quality and if the reporter can't clearly hear what your spokesperson is saying, there is more chance of them being misquoted.

Most modern office and mobile phones allow for an observer to 'barge' into a call so that they can ear wig on the conversation while the spokesperson can use the hand held receiver. I'd recommend speaking to your IT or telecoms provider to ensure that you are able to do this. It really should be very easy once you know how. But if you do this, please make sure the reporter is aware you are listening to the call.

Ultimately, the decision about whether there is room at the interview table for PR pros is going to come down to gut instinct and judgement on the experience of the spokesperson, the subject matter and the journalist who will be carrying out the interview.

But PRs should not feel they automatically have to sit in on every interview a spokesperson carries out ■

## TEN REASONS WHY JOURNALISTS WRITE GREAT CONTENT

1

Journalists are natural researchers, able to translate and deliver engaging information to a mass audience.

Journalists are skilled at gathering and filtering huge quantities of information, rejecting what's superfluous and getting to the heart of a story.

Journalists have a sixth sense for spotting new stories and fresh angles to really bring a piece of copy to life.

Those who work in the media are driven by a hunger for current affairs, trends and talking points and are able to use this insight to respond quickly, providing content which is topical and relevant across a range of industries.

Journalists are experts at presenting information in a clear, compelling way and telling authentic, researched stories that persuade readers to think, feel or do something.

Journalists are skilled at interviewing, with the ability to empathise with people and specialists at all levels. They have the knowledge and experience to ask the questions that really cut to the chase.

Journalists are not daunted by a lack of knowledge in specialist areas. They are inquisitive and able to interpret information with original thinking and honest appraisal.

A story is wasted if nobody reads it. Journalists know how to create attention grabbing, killer headlines that compel the reader to find out more.

Journalists can self-edit and have the ability to adapt and reuse content for different channels – a crucial skill in maximising the impact and life of content.

10

Journalists are relentless in hitting deadlines. After all, in the media, if a story isn't filed on time it doesn't make the paper or news bulletin.

# BLACK, WHITE AND READ ALL OVER —OUR GUIDE TO THE UK NEWSPAPERS

## NEWSPAPER READERSHIP AT A GLANCE

|    |                         |           |
|----|-------------------------|-----------|
| 01 | THE SUN                 | 3,653,000 |
| 02 | DAILY MAIL              | 3,215,000 |
| 03 | METRO                   | 3,028,000 |
| 04 | DAILY MIRROR            | 1,691,000 |
| 05 | LONDON EVENING STANDARD | 1,658,000 |
| 06 | THE DAILY TELEGRAPH     | 1,171,000 |
| 07 | THE TIMES               | 1,049,000 |
| 08 | THE GUARDIAN            | 898,000   |
| 09 | DAILY EXPRESS           | 838,000   |
| 10 | i                       | 475,000   |

## THE SUN

Whatever your opinion of The Sun it remains the country's most read paid-for newspaper with more than 3.6 million of us reading it every day. A common misconception is that it is the paper of choice for the chav, but 1.2 million of its readers are from the ABC1 socio-economic group (see key overleaf). This is the group made up of people with more education and better-paid jobs. Its website attracts 5.2 million unique browsers every day. The reading age (in other words the age at which someone should be able to read it) is between seven and nine.

A newspaper which appears to never stray too far away from controversy, yet it remains the most popular English language newspaper website in the world, attracting 15.4 million daily unique browsers. It is also the only national newspaper which has more female readers than male (somewhere between 52 and 55 per cent according to surveys). More than 3.2 million people read the printed version of the Mail every day. The average age of a Mail reader is 58 and it has the lowest percentage of millennial audience make-up at just 14 per cent.

## THE DAILY MAIL

Readership figures correct as of August 2017

## GENERATION GAME

### BABY BOOMERS:

Typically this is a term used to describe those born between the mid 1940s and 1964, when there was a large rise in the birth rate following the end of World War Two.

### GENERATION X:

Is the group of people which preceeded the millennials and is usually used to categorise those born between 1966 and 1976. This group is also sometimes referred to as the 'lost' generation and the 'latchkey' kids.

### MILLENNIALS:

Millennials is the term given to a broad and vaguely defined group of people. Often it is used to describe someone reaching young adulthood in the early 21st century. In our newspaper guide it is those that are under 34.

### GENERATION Y:

This is an alternative definition for those who fall into the millennials category.

### GENERATION Z:

This is the group after millennials and is typically used to describe those born from 1996 onwards. The basic rule is that if you can't remember September 11 2001, you are a member of Generation Z and not a millennial.

## METRO

This free morning newspaper is now the country's third most read daily print paper with a daily audience of more than 3 million, according to figures from the National Readership Survey. The paper remains uniquely neutral on the big political issues and has no leading articles, opinion pieces or a Westminster reporter. And there is success online too as it is now the fastest-growing national newspaper website with 2.6 million daily unique browsers.

The workers' paper and the Labour party's most loyal supporter, the Daily Mirror was overtaken by the Mail several years ago and its daily readership now stands at 1.6 million. Perhaps surprisingly, 559,000 of these are in the ABC1 category. Interestingly, it is attracting a younger audience with those in the millennial age range forming 29 per cent of its audience – the joint highest percentage with The Sun. The Mirror attracts more online readers than its traditional tabloid rival with 5.5 million daily unique browsers.

## DAILY MIRROR

## LONDON EVENING STANDARD

Now under the editorship of former chancellor George Osborne this local paper for the capital continues to have a national newspaper status. Its fortunes have risen since it went free and it mixes serious issues with stories about the metropolitan glitterati, while Osborne appears to enjoy a dig at the Tory government. More than 1.6 million of us read the Standard every day, more than a million of which are in the ABC1 category. Its website attracts just under 1 million daily unique users.

You may not be surprised to read that the Telegraph, with its traditional conservative reputation, has the oldest average readership in the country at 61. Also, fairly predictably, it has the second lowest percentage of print audience under 34, at just 15 per cent. The Telegraph, which regards itself as the favoured journal of the Church of England, has 1.1 million daily readers and just over 5 million daily unique website browsers.

## THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

## THE TIMES

The Times has a daily readership of just over 1 million and virtually all of it is in the ABC1 category. According to the British Business Survey, The Times is the number one daily newspaper for business readers and reaches 50 per cent more decision makers than the Financial Times or the Daily Telegraph. Millennials make up a healthy fifth of its readership. The Times' online content is hidden behind a paywall which subscribers pay £6 a week to access.

The paper of choice for the intellectual left, healthcare worker and those in local government. The Guardian has a daily readership of just under 900,000. It boasts the second lowest average age reader at just 44 and an impressive 28 per cent of its readers are under 34. The Guardian claimed to have had a record 1.2 billion page views on its website in June 2017. The paper abandoned its Berliner format and became a tabloid in January 2018.

## THE GUARDIAN



## DAILY EXPRESS

A paper which appears to have an endless supply of Princess Diana and health-scare stories, the Express continues to be a fading force. Readership has now dropped to 800,000. Its remaining audience is elderly but not impoverished and is mainly based in the North. It is still very right wing in its outlook and migrants, pensions and the weather continue to be regularly covered stories. The Express was brought by Trinity Mirror (owners of the Daily Mirror) in February 2018. The new owners have pledged it will retain its identity.

Still the new kid on the block – as the short-lived New Day has already been and passed into newspaper history – the i has just under half a million daily readers. The paper started life as The Independent's little sister but is now owned by the publishers of the Yorkshire Post and The Scotsman. It is aimed at readers with limited time and attracts younger, metropolitan types, including a number of students and those in their first job.

• i

## INDEPENDENT

The UK's first national newspaper to give up print and go online only, The Independent attracts more than 6 million daily unique browsers. Its bold move away from print has returned it to profitability as it has removed the costs of print plants and paper distribution. Time will tell if other publications are contemplating a similar move. The Independent has the lowest average reader age at 43.

The 'pink 'un' recently announced it has a record 650,000 digital subscribers. Print circulation is just over 60,000, of which more than 20,000 are bulk copies distributed at hotels and airports. The rest of its print circulation is in Europe (59,000), Asia (27,575) and the US. Despite the complexity of some of the issues it covers, the FT has a reading age of around 12-14. Men make up an astonishing 81 per cent of its readership.

## THE FINANCIAL TIMES

## THE SUN ON SUNDAY

The phoenix which arose from the ashes of the News of the World, the Sun on Sunday has seamlessly inherited the older, London-based male audience of its predecessor. With a readership of more than 3.2 million, celebrities, exposés and football are still very much order of the day.

The big, brash and dominant player in the Sunday quality market, The Sunday Times has a readership of 1.8 million. More than 30 per cent of its readers are in the over-65 age range and 35 per cent of them live in London. The paper is known for its exposés and its business stories; in fact, the British Business Survey describes it as the "number one quality Sunday paper for business owners". Anything to do with aspiration and advancement, ranging from property to education, is good for The Sunday Times.

## THE SUNDAY TIMES

### ABC SOCIAL GRADE CLASSIFICATIONS

A

Higher managerial, administrative and professional

4% OF POPULATION

B

Intermediate managerial, administrative and professional

23% OF POPULATION

C1

Supervisory, clerical and junior managerial, administrative and professional

28% OF POPULATION

## THE SUNDAY TELEGRAPH

With a reputation for being more conservative than its weekly counterpart, it is perhaps not surprising that almost half of the Sunday Telegraph's readers are in the 65 and over age bracket. It has a readership of more than 1.1 million which is pretty evenly split between men and women. Alongside investigative stories are jolly features about the countryside and issues affecting the middle classes. Its business coverage is well respected and its comment pages are favoured by the intellectual right.

The Mail on Sunday is the most read Sunday paper with a slightly higher readership than the Sun On Sunday at 3.3 million. Like most Sunday newspapers it relies on a mix of exposés and publicist-placed celebrity stories. Features about health and beauty are also prominent. Almost half of its readers are in London and the Midlands and 43 per cent are aged 65 and over.

## THE MAIL ON SUNDAY

## SUNDAY PEOPLE

A paper with a steadily shrinking circulation, although this was briefly halted by the closure of the News of the World. The Sunday People now has a readership of 1.1 million with more than a fifth of them living in the North West. Just under half of its readers are in the 65 and over age range. On the left of the political spectrum, it relies on human interest stories and celebrity interviews.

The Sunday Mirror has seen a worrying circulation fall of more than 17 per cent in the past year, but still has a total readership of more than 1.6 million. The paper is respected among journalists for its scoops and recently ran a campaign to make Twitter take action to prevent paedophiles from using the service to exchange obscene images.

## SUNDAY MIRROR

## THE OBSERVER

As with its daily sister title The Guardian, the Observer is the preferred paper of the dinner partying left. Stories about social injustice feature prominently alongside extensive arts coverage. Its readership now stands at just over 800,000 with 36 per cent of those living in London.

**C2**

Skilled manual workers

**20% OF POPULATION**

**D**

Semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers

**15% OF POPULATION**

**E**

State pensioners, casual and lowest grade workers, unemployed with state benefits only

**10% OF POPULATION**

# NEWS CONSUMPTION

## NEWSPAPERS

NEWSPAPER CIRCULATION HAS FALLEN FROM **9.2M** IN 2010 TO **6M** IN 2016.



THE SUN AND THE DAILY MAIL ARE THE MOST READ UK NEWSPAPERS.



are the only newspaper titles which have more print readers than online.



MORE PEOPLE READ A  
NEWSPAPER DAILY THAN  
EAT A PACKET OF CRISPS.



**ONE IN TWO**  
adults read a print  
newspaper every week.



One in five (17%) say they use printed  
local or regional newspapers for news.

# 234,193

The world editions of the *Financial Times* have  
a combined average daily circulation of **234,193**  
with **88,000** for the UK edition.



# NEWS CONSUMPTION ONLINE

**48%** OF ADULTS USE THE INTERNET FOR NEWS,  
AN INCREASE FROM **41%** IN 2015.



Over half of online news consumers use the BBC website app.



The second most popular online news source is Facebook (27%).



**15%** USE SOCIAL MEDIA FOR LOCAL NEWS.

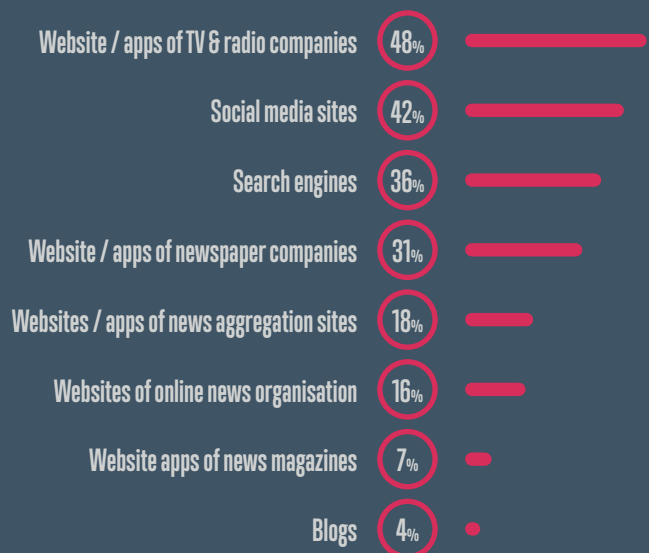
**29%**

OF PEOPLE USE A MOBILE FOR NEWS.



**ONE IN FOUR** PEOPLE READ AN  
ONLINE NEWSBRAND EACH WEEK.

## ONLINE CHANNELS USED FOR NEWS:



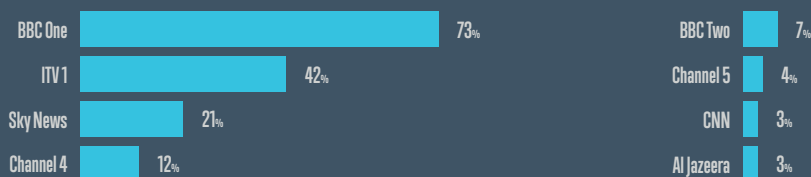
Percentage of adult viewers selecting all applicable news sources.

# NEWS CONSUMPTION TELEVISION



In 2016, UK adults watched an average of **110 hours** of news on television.

## TV CHANNELS USED FOR NEWS:



Percentage of adult viewers selecting all applicable news sources.

## TV IS THE MOST POPULAR PLATFORM FOR ACCESSING LOCAL NEWS.



**43%** of news consumers say they watch regional and local broadcasts on BBC TV and **31%** say they do on ITV.

**69%**

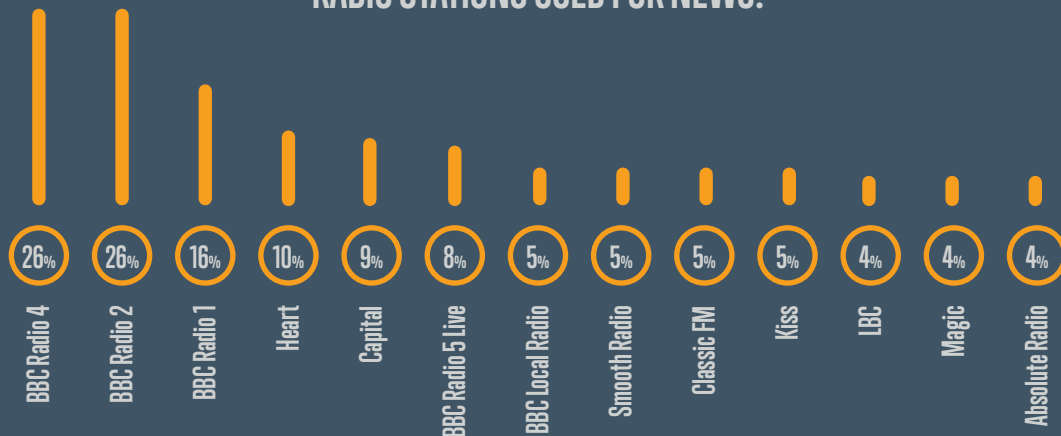
OF ADULTS USE TV FOR NEWS.

**19%**

OF ADULTS ONLY USE TV FOR NEWS.

# NEWS CONSUMPTION RADIO

## RADIO STATIONS USED FOR NEWS:



Percentage of adult listeners selecting all applicable news sources.



One third of UK adults say they consume news through the radio.



Of that third, 77% use BBC radio stations.

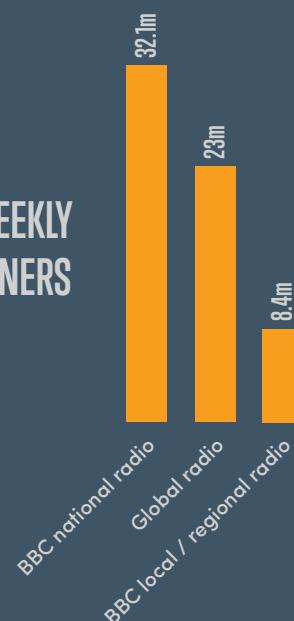


42% use commercial radio stations.


# 55%

of adults who use radio for news only use BBC radio for this purpose.

## WEEKLY LISTENERS





A low-angle photograph of a boxer, likely Manny Pacquiao, celebrating a victory. He is shirtless, wearing blue boxing trunks with "PACQUIAO" and "MANNINGUEZ" visible on the waistband. He has his right arm raised in a power salute, wearing a black and red boxing glove. The background is a dramatic sky with clouds and bright stadium lights.

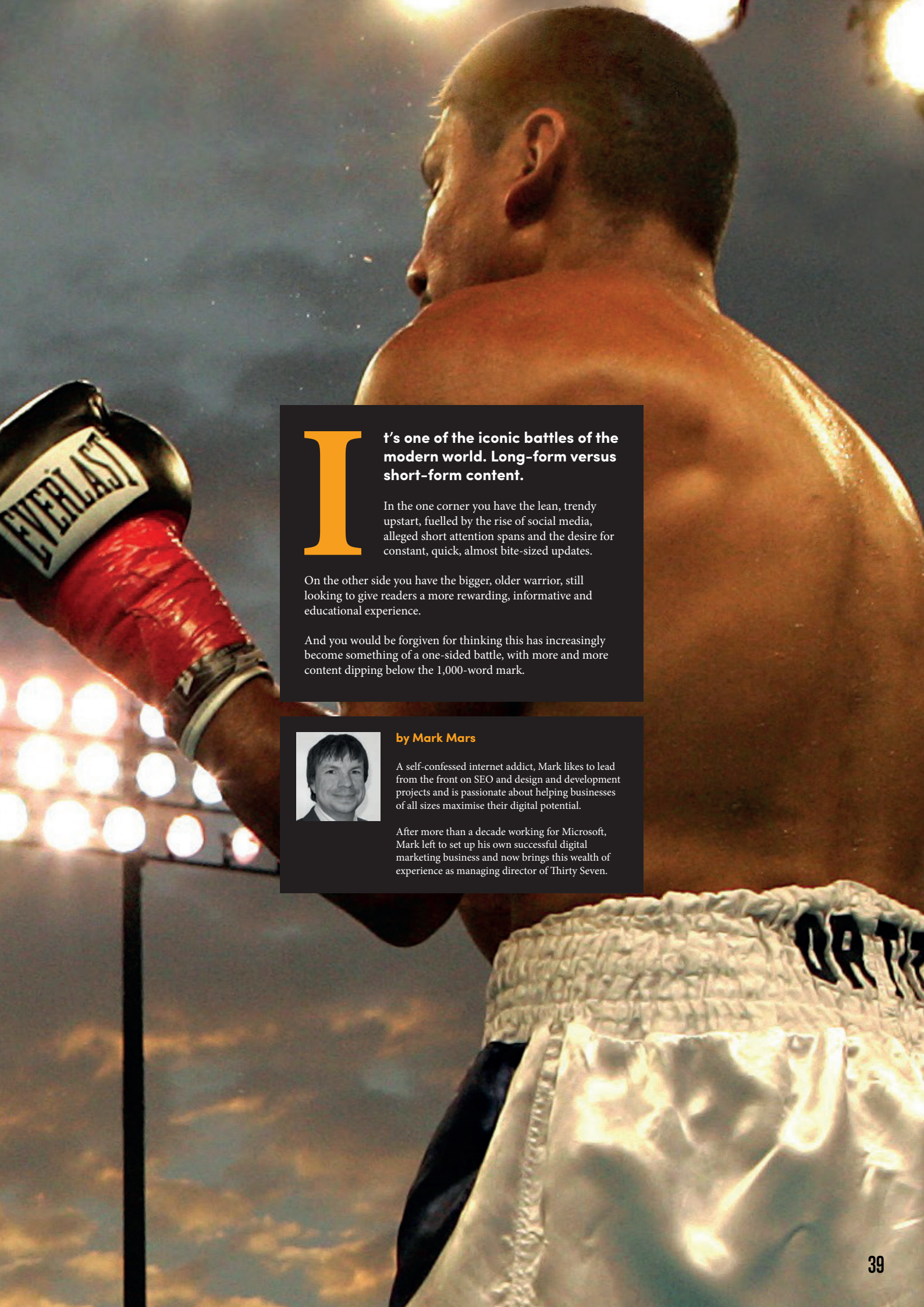
OPINION

**LONG**

**vs.**

**SHORT**





**I**t's one of the iconic battles of the modern world. Long-form versus short-form content.

In the one corner you have the lean, trendy upstart, fuelled by the rise of social media, alleged short attention spans and the desire for constant, quick, almost bite-sized updates.

On the other side you have the bigger, older warrior, still looking to give readers a more rewarding, informative and educational experience.

And you would be forgiven for thinking this has increasingly become something of a one-sided battle, with more and more content dipping below the 1,000-word mark.



**by Mark Mars**

A self-confessed internet addict, Mark likes to lead from the front on SEO and design and development projects and is passionate about helping businesses of all sizes maximise their digital potential.

After more than a decade working for Microsoft, Mark left to set up his own successful digital marketing business and now brings this wealth of experience as managing director of Thirty Seven.



At Thirty Seven, we believe brands should act like a publishing house producing a mixture of long and short content.

But we also strongly believe that long-form content is greatly underrated, that its strengths are perhaps not as widely appreciated as they should be and that it is not ready to be backed into a corner or hit the canvas just yet.

Don't get me wrong, there is some great short-form content about. But it is ubiquitous and consequently it has become really tough for the good stuff to be seen and heard.

I passionately believe the quality has gone out of the industry and that too many agencies just churn out short content because it is the fashionable (and easier) thing to do.

This content almost always lacks depth and leaves the reader craving more detail. I've lost count of the times I have clicked on something with an interesting-looking headline, only to be left disappointed as I find it consists of around 300 words and offers little or nothing I don't already know.

In some cases the content is actually closer to the 280 characters of Twitter than anything really meaningful or educational.

And, I'm not alone. Studies have shown that the desire for long-form content has never gone away. More specifically, there has been a trend towards longer content in non-fiction long-form storytelling. From documentary form factors such as 'The Journey' from Amex, serial podcasts like Stories of the InterContinental Life, and through social media 'story platforms' or a well-worked blog series.

Creating compelling long-form storytelling content is not easy, nor should it be.

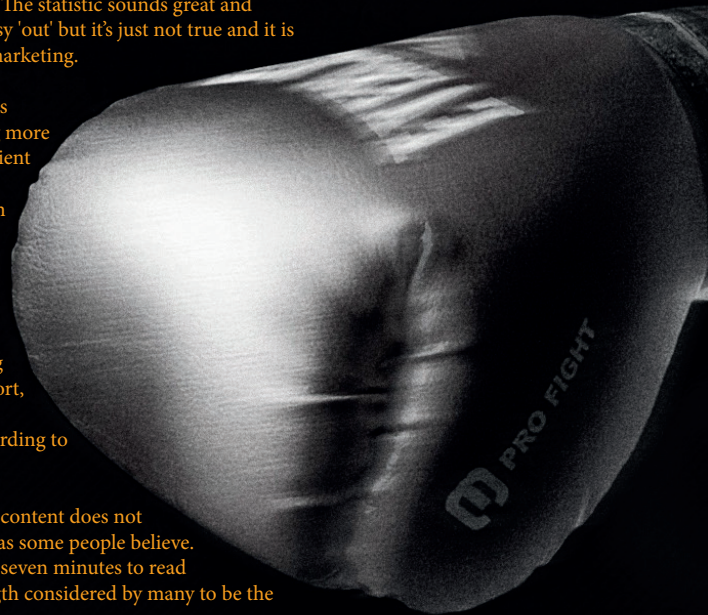
Investing in long-form content is sometimes perceived by sceptics as a gamble because of our supposed shrinking attention spans, the time pressures of modern life and a fear of giving away too much knowledge.

But it is a myth that we now have shorter attention spans than goldfish. The statistic sounds great and gives agencies an easy 'out' but it's just not true and it is damaging content marketing.

Our attention span is changing, becoming more intensive, more efficient and hungrier for information. Human attention spans are nowhere near satisfied with eight-seconds of ideas or content. They want more and, according to a recent BBC report, we can all vary our attention spans according to the task at hand.

And actually longer content does not take as long to read as some people believe. It actually takes just seven minutes to read 1,600 words – a length considered by many to be the optimal blog length.

I would argue that this is actually the shortest form of long-form content and that really effective long-form content goes beyond the written word. It is also about video documentaries, podcasts and stories told across various content formats.







Long-form content enables brands to take a much deeper look at a subject and really showcase its expertise in an area, increasing its credibility and positioning itself as a thought leader ahead of its competitors.

And because people like it, they tend to share it more. Research from Moz and BuzzSumo has shown that

despite 85 per cent of all content on the internet being less than 1,000 words, content over that threshold consistently receives more social media love.

As well as resonating with readers it is also rewarded by search engines.

Don't get me wrong, short-form content certainly has its place, especially when it comes to driving traffic to a website. But it is the longer form which really builds relationships and turns readers into customers.

Of course, it's harder to write and requires much more research, but get long-form content right and it can deliver a knockout blow for your brand ■

# LONG-FORM CONTENT WE LOVE

## The Journey

The Journey took a behind-the-scenes look at a fledgling company as it battled to become a national brand.

And it highlighted the dedication and commitment which goes into long-form storytelling.

American Express, which has been a brand publisher for more than 100 years, assigned a reporting team to cover the trials of North Carolina brewing company Buchi Kombucha, which specialises in a type of fermented tea, over a three month period.

The result was a seven chapter story encompassing three short video documentaries, high-quality photographs and 10,000 words which gave a glimpse of the daily highs and lows and human emotion that goes into running one individual business.

The great success of this story was that after seven instalments readers still wanted more.

## Stories of the InterContinental Life

The InterContinental Hotels podcast series explores the unique features about its hotels with the goal of tapping into a traveller's passion for new discoveries.

For example, one episode revealed that deep within the InterContinental New York Barclay Hotel's basement there is a hidden tunnel which was used to transport wealthy travellers to and from Grand Central Station in the 1920s.

The 20-minute Stories of the InterContinental Life podcast is aimed at reigniting their guest's passion for travel and intrigue in discovering new places. It is produced to inspire travellers to experience the world and create their own stories.

The podcasts were created as part of a global marketing campaign to drive engagement by connecting the InterContinental brand to what is relevant in culture.

There are now a series of videos to go alongside the podcasts to really bring the stories to life.

# MAGAZINE GUIDE

ARTICLE

**I**F PRINT REALLY IS DEAD THEN SOMEONE CLEARLY FORGOT TO TELL SOME OF THE WORLD'S LEADING BRANDS.

You see, while some newspapers and magazines have clearly faltered under the threat from digital and social media, a number of brands have increasingly turned to the format as part of their content marketing strategies.

Companies have become their own publishing houses, producing regular magazines aimed at informing, entertaining and evoking loyalty in their customers.

And the ones who do it well produce compelling content which is a long way from the sort of advertorial type material you may traditionally expect from branded print.

One of the great strengths of brand magazines is that if they are good, people will keep hold of them for longer than other promotional material. They also offer something different from the digital bombardment many customers face.

**HERE ARE SOME OF OUR FAVOURITES:**

## THE RED BULLETIN



The Red Bulletin has all the high-octane, adrenaline-fuelled and adventure-packed articles you would expect to read from Red Bull, a brand which makes energy drinks and runs Formula One teams.

But among the stories on extreme sports, like cliff-diving and rock-scaling, are features on more sedate pursuits, lifestyle activities and interviews with high-profile actors and musicians.

The monthly magazine, which is illustrated with stunning images, is distributed in London alongside the Evening Standard newspaper and is also available at universities and gyms.

Subscriptions are also available, while the magazine is backed by its own eye-catching website.

## THE FURROW



John Deere began publishing The Furrow long before the term 'content marketing' had first been used.

The first issue was published back in 1895 and is widely regarded as being the oldest example of content marketing. The publication is still going strong today with around 2 million global readers.

The magazine focuses on the farmers themselves and the current issues in farming, providing informative content, rather than promoting the equipment John Deere sells.

Such is its enduring appeal that it is now printed in 14 languages and is available online.

## ASOS



You might think that a printed magazine is an unlikely fit for an online-only fashion retailer aimed at the 18-34 crowd.

But ASOS began producing its self-titled magazine in 2007 and celebrated its 100th issue in February this year. It has proved a huge success reaching around 700,000 people globally, 450,000 of these in the UK.

It has attracted stars such as Taylor Swift, Lady Gaga and Jennifer Lawrence to its front page and interviews like these prove it is far more than a catalogue.

This glossy publication is backed by an online audience of more than 120,000.



## TRAVELLER



In-flight magazines first started appearing in cabins more than 60 years ago, when they were introduced by Pan Am, and are one of the oldest versions of brand magazines.

Despite smartphones and Wi-Fi increasingly creeping into planes, these magazines continue to go from strength to strength with around 150 printed around the globe.

United's offering, Rhapsody, is often cited as an example of a good brand magazine, but unfortunately you'll only get to read it if you book first class.

Despite its somewhat unimaginative title, easyJet's Traveller magazine is our pick from the in-flight market.

It is a stylish monthly publication, packed with a wide range of content. A recent edition, for example, ranged from looking at the latest crop of bands to emerge from Liverpool to an article on the charms of Comporta, in Portugal.

And if you miss a copy they are all available digitally on the magazine's own section of the easyJet website.

## WAITROSE WEEKEND



This breaks the mould of the other publications we've mentioned as it is printed in a newspaper format. In fact, when it was first published in 2010 it was the first free newspaper published by a retailer.

The 48-page publication, free every Thursday, has the look of a quality Sunday supplement and all the articles on food, drinks and cooking you would expect in a publication produced by a supermarket and aimed at Middle England.

But it also features celebrity interviews, a health and fitness section (with Pippa Middleton no less), a guide to events taking place around the country, a gardening section and TV reviews.

And like any good newspaper, it features an impressive number of high-profile columnists including Jeremy Vine, Clare Balding, Stuart Maconie, Jonathan Agnew and Mark Kermode, while Phillip Schofield has a 'Weekend Wines' column.

## PINEAPPLE



This was Airbnb's glossy move into the world of publishing.

The coffee table production, which came in at a hefty 128 ad-free pages, was distributed to the app company's host network.

It had rather vague aims of being a 'crossroad of travel and anthropology; a document of community, belonging and shared space,' but nonetheless was well received and covered a wide range of topics, including art, food, culture and style.

But here's the cautionary tale; despite plans for Pineapple to be published quarterly, there was only ever one edition before the magazine was quietly shelved.



# The one phrase I hate when people talk about my job



by James White

James started his career as a journalist, then moved into account management before taking over as managing director of Media First in 2012.

James' philosophy that high-quality content should be more than just marketing is the inspiration behind Thirty Seven.

As co-founder and CEO he is focussed on helping clients ensure their content builds long-lasting customer relationships and interactions.

**I** guess that no matter what industry you work in, there is always one phrase you find really annoying.

If you work in IT, for example, the 'have you tried switching it off and on again' joke may by now be running a bit thin. While I imagine web designers and programmers get tired of being told 'it's just a couple of lines of code'.

I know that our content editor just loves it when he is told 'anyone can write'.

And there is one phrase I find really, really frustrating as the managing director of a media training company.

It often comes after a media interview where a spokesperson has stuck rigidly to a corporate message or clearly tried to avoid answering challenging questions.

A pundit or some social media users will say something along the lines of 'you can tell they've had media training'.

At which point I calmly close my eyes and count backwards from ten (just like my Gran taught me).

## SPOKESPEOPLE SHOULD ALWAYS REMEMBER THAT JOURNALISTS ARE SIMPLY ASKING THE QUESTIONS THEY FEEL THEIR AUDIENCE WANTS ANSWERED.

Let's clear one thing up right from the start: If you think media training is simply about showing people how to evade a journalist's question, then you have not been on the right course.

On our courses we always tell delegates they cannot ignore questions they don't like and simply talk about their key message. It is vital they address and, if possible, answer the question before moving on and trying to steer the agenda of the interview.

Spokespeople should always remember that journalists are simply asking the questions they feel their audience wants answered.

Sure, media training is about empowering spokespeople to control a media interview and manage those challenging questions.

But it is also about helping people to find their own voice and not appear like corporate speaking robots, blandly repeating approved messages. We want spokespeople to be human, to show empathy, to feel confident about sharing personal examples in responses and to be humorous if the situation is appropriate.

## MEDIA TRAINING HELPS PEOPLE TO FIND THEIR OWN VOICE AND NOT APPEAR LIKE CORPORATE SPEAKING ROBOTS BLANDLY REPEATING APPROVED MESSAGES.

When it is delivered well, media training is not visible to audiences.

It is about making subtle changes which make a big difference and turn people into coherent, authentic and engaging spokespeople.

One of the most important roles it plays is in improving the confidence levels of spokespeople. We often find that no matter how confident or experienced a public speaker someone is, they struggle to get their messages across when put in front of a TV camera or microphone – or just a determined journalist on the hunt for a story.

The reason is simple: there's nothing in your normal working life which will prepare you for it, besides media training.

## WHEN IT IS DELIVERED WELL, MEDIA TRAINING IS NOT VISIBLE.

Nerves can be a great hindrance in an interview. Just imagine how anxious someone would be if they had not had any prior exposure to the media or training, particularly if they found themselves facing journalists during a crisis.

I find it particularly infuriating when jibes about media training come from journalists. Without being able to interview people who have been trained and regularly put their skills into practice they would not be able to find high quality sound bites and quotes that make their television, radio and newspaper pieces come alive ■

## FOUR INFAMOUS INTERVIEW DISASTERS

### BlackBerry crumble

What should have been a good news story for BlackBerry turned into a complete disaster when its then managing director repeatedly ignored the journalist's question. Appearing on BBC Breakfast to talk about the company's new phone, Stephen Bates tried to desperately evade questions about its delayed launch and attempted to simply answer the question he wanted to be asked. Not only that, but it was an interview filled with awful corporate jargon. Exasperated journalist Stephanie McGovern ended the interview by saying 'I guess we'll never know what went wrong.'

### Brain fade

Natalie Bennett, the former leader of the Green Party, used the phrase 'brain fade' to describe her calamitous interview with the radio station LBC during the 2015 election. Listeners cringed as Bennett struggled to answer basic questions about her affordable housing plan and stumbled when asked to provide basic details. Such was the level of her performance that presenter Nick Ferrari was moved to ask if she was "alright". He also suggested she may have "genned up" on the subject ahead of the interview.

### King spin

Although it only happened at the end of 2017, Lord Bell's Newsnight interview is likely to go down in media training folklore. The man often referred to as Britain's 'King of Spin' filled his interview with rookie errors. His mobile phone went off three times during the interview and on one occasion he felt compelled to try to show the presenter Kirsty Wark the details of the person who had just called him. Wark eventually showed her frustration by quipping "you are a popular man tonight".

### Water crisis

There's no doubt Gary Southern faced a difficult task when he attended a press conference about a chemical leak his company was responsible for, which left 300,000 residents in West Virginia with contaminated water. Bizarrely opting to drink water throughout a press conference about water shortages, Southern appeared to look for sympathy, telling reporters it had been an "extremely long day". He went on to speculate on what had caused the incident before trying to bring the conference to a premature end before coming back to take more questions from the gathered media.



## ARTICLE

# HOW TO PERSUADE A RELUCTANT MEDIA SPOKESPERSON



by Adam Fisher

Adam is a content editor at both Media First and Thirty Seven.

A journalist at heart, he worked as a news editor and sports reporter before spending time as communications and media manager for two high profile public sector bodies.

Adam has an eye for a great story and a talent for spotting alternative angles which make people stop and think differently.

**I**t's probably a scenario which will be familiar to many people working in PR and communications.

Your pitch has gained a journalist's attention – good publicity and widespread coverage are only an interview away.

The only problem is the spokesperson has got cold feet and doesn't want to be interviewed or has suddenly gone missing and is not returning your calls. It is certainly something which has happened to me.

While managing media relations for a police force, I often generated interest in a particular witness appeal or new initiative, only to find that when talking to journalists was mentioned, everyone suddenly became far too busy with 'real police work'.

It is a scenario which regularly leaves PR professionals with their head in their hands.

So how do you solve the problem of reluctant spokespeople?

## UNDERSTAND THE RELUCTANCE

The first step has to be to understand the reasons behind the reluctance. For some it will be a confidence issue, while others may feel they cannot free up their time for interviews. Some may even struggle to see the value of engaging with the media.

Another consideration is they may have had a bad experience with a journalist before and have decided they don't want to risk a repeat performance.

## START SMALL

If the thought of facing questions from a journalist just seems too daunting for your spokesperson, consider putting them forward for an interview on the intranet or staff magazine first.

This could act as a gentle introduction to the interview process, well within comfort zones, while still improving their skills and working to ensure they get their messages across.





**Empowering and encouraging them to use their own words (within corporate guidelines), anecdotes and examples will not only increase their confidence but also help bring messages to life.**

On the intranet site they could perhaps face some challenging questions from employees through a live chat, which could help boost their confidence in their ability to respond under pressure.

## PRINT

For many spokespeople, particularly those with less experience, print interviews can feel a lot less daunting than taking to the airwaves on radio and television.

The setting is likely to be more familiar and relaxed than a studio environment and in many cases there is the chance to get back to the reporter after the interview with further information and to check facts.

While it is obviously important that spokespeople are not complacent about these types of interviews, getting a few articles with trade and local press under the belt is a good way to boost confidence.

## PREPARATION

The best way to ensure a spokesperson feels comfortable and confident about taking part in a media interview is to make sure they are properly prepared and know what to expect.

Explain how you will work with them not just on messaging but also on identifying likely questions, particularly the negative ones, and how they should respond.

Make sure they know who the journalist is they will be talking to and the publication they work for.

Mock interviews can also work well in advance, particularly with strong and honest feedback about what went well and what needs to be improved.

## TIME PRESSURES

Some spokespeople (in my experience, the more senior ones) may be reluctant to give up their time for media interviews and even question the value of doing them.

You may, for example, have encountered the phrase ‘can’t they just use what is in the press release?’

The key in these cases is to show them both the value to the organisation and their own careers of accepting interview requests.

Show them what rival companies are doing in the media and how it is helping to ensure its messages and story are heard by a wider audience.

Also outline how joining in the conversation with engaging, entertaining interviews, delivered with clarity and confidence, will ensure they are viewed as an expert and thought leader in their field.

## IT’S NOT ABOUT TALKING TO JOURNALISTS

It is important that reluctant spokespeople understand and remember interviews are ultimately not about talking to a journalist and that they are actually about speaking to customers.

Carrying out regular interviews will give your organisation a voice and, in the case of television interviews, a face.

A newspaper article, TV spot or radio interview can generate huge, entirely free publicity with your organisation’s views and opinions seen and heard by millions.

## LOOSEN THE NOOSE ON YOUR MESSAGING

Sometimes spokespeople feel uncomfortable because messaging uses language they may not be comfortable using.

Empowering and encouraging them to use their own words (within corporate guidelines), anecdotes and examples will not only increase their confidence but also help bring messages to life.

We regularly find some of our clients come back to us after media training courses to help them develop and fine tune messages so that spokespeople have more confidence in what they are being asked to deliver.

## MEDIA TRAINING

The best way to improve the confidence of spokespeople is through realistic media training which exposes them to current working journalists in a safe environment.

This will give them the skills and opportunity to practice controlling messages and honing messages.

If your spokesperson has had training before, it is worth remembering the media world and the techniques and methods used by journalists change quickly. It is important to keep pace with these developments.

Being a media spokesperson is like any other skill – the more you practice the better and more successful you will be ■



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