

The Highbrook Guide to a Good Night's Sleep

Revealed: the issues keeping content
marketers and publishers awake at night
in 2024 – and the solutions



Welcome

Hello and welcome to *The Highbrook Guide to a Good Night's Sleep*. In this paper we look at the ambitions and obstacles facing content marketers this year – and suggest solutions. The future hasn't happened yet but it's a good idea to forestall it just a little.

On the following pages are five big concerns for content marketers, and how we think you can deal with them.

Michael Pilgrim *Chairman, Highbrook Media*

Q1 2024



69%

of B2B marketers
say they'll invest more in
video in 2024.

BUT they say making
video eats up time.

It doesn't have to.

SOURCE: CONTENT MARKETING INSTITUTE

So how do you create videos without reaching for the ibuprofen?

Start with stakeholders. Meet to discuss as many times as you can. In fact, meet more than that. You need agreement – on narrative, format, tone, length, messaging and process. Create storyboards. Heck, create moodboards.

Find the big question. Ask yourselves: what action do you want viewers to take? How do you want them to feel? This should help identify your central thread.

Stick to the script. Improv has a place and that place isn't your brand video.

Stay open-minded. Heart set on creating The Godfather IV: Key Takeaways from our AGM? Step away from the clapperboard and listen to your team. Perhaps animation would be more suitable for your mobile-first, time-poor audience. Here are a few types of video to consider:



Behind-the-scenes



Case studies



Mini-documentaries

Think of a logistics company following the journey of a brave little avocado from farm to plate (although the happy ending might need consideration)



Brand films

High production (budget-dependent, this one)



Explainers



Animation

And one type NOT to consider:



Talking heads

People rarely want to see company folk pontificating about 'exciting software updates'. Nope. Not even if there's an exotic plant in the foreground.

When a script is signed off, it's signed off. No going back. And remember: any script in its first draft is too long. Way too long.

Know your platforms. Social media videos must be snappy. A good rule is to make them 30% less formal and 50% shorter than videos for elsewhere. For LinkedIn, Hootsuite recommends 44 seconds tops.

Beware of self-indulgence. Now is not the time to embrace your inner Godard through close-ups of corporate leaders looking contemplative. Keep it short. And make sure every scene ties back to that big question.

Finally, don't edit to the point of meaninglessness. A few rough edges are good – anything too polished loses relatability. But if it doesn't contribute to the story, it doesn't make it.

Rachael Adams

68%



of finance marketers
are concerned about
social media's ROI.

Perhaps creating the right
content is the key.

We can help.

SOURCE: HOOTSUITE TRENDS REPORT 2024 FINANCE

Timing, humour and relevance might just save the day

The 'right content', it turns out, is content that entertains. Is another post 'circling back' on your product update or the canapés on offer at last week's client dinner really going to deliver on ROI?

Consider these intros. What do they have in common (apart from making you wish the internet had never been invented)?

'I am thrilled to announce...'

'I'm delighted to share...'

'I'm so proud to be part of...'

They're all about the poster, not the audience. Alarming, 48% of marketers share business updates like these every week, according to Hootsuite. So how can we create content that delivers on ROI?

Find your voice. Will it be irreverent and sardonic or earnest and endearing? Think about the tones of voice that resonate with your target audience.

Be relevant. Posts reacting to the news resonate. Business announcements can work, but only if you tailor them to your audience/their challenges/their burning ambitions.

Timing is everything. Know your audience's schedules. Want to reach FTSE 100 CEOs? Post at 4am when they're cooling down from their first 26-mile bike ride of the day. And tailor frequency to their reactions to your content.

Choose your format. A lot of what you post will be a cut-down of or a link to something else – so getting the most information across in the smallest space is the name of the game. Consider animation, mini-graphics, video or even a snappy static visual. Avoid stock photography of business people enjoying doing business or gleeful youths using VR.

Be interactive. Social media is for conversations, not monologues. Ask questions and invite comments – yes, even negative ones. It's a great chance to humanise your brand.

Play the long game. Seeing that hallowed ROI takes time. After all, no investment worth its salt matures in a couple of weeks.

Get your CTAs right. The point of all this agonising over social media is to drive sales. Signpost clearly to the original content on your site or your consultants' contact forms, or all will be for nowt.

Rachael Adams



66%

of finance marketers
will use AI to edit in
2024.

AI use overall is
expected to double.

**But what can you
trust the bots with?**

SOURCE: HOOTSUITE TRENDS REPORT 2024 FINANCE

How AI can actually make your life easier

There are some things most wouldn't trust AI with (law enforcement being one). But you can trust it with some elements of marketing, including financial marketing.

Here are Highbrook's dos and don'ts.

DO use it for:

😊 **Basic design.** Resizing images? Balancing colour contrast? Sure. Producing a presentation outlining a new branding strategy? Probably not.

⊕ **Research.** AI tools can collect information and deliver summaries faster than you can say 'not another 50-page whitepaper'.

👍 **Brainstorming.** Writer's block? Don't panic. If you get the prompts correct, AI can be a fount of idea generation. It will at least give you an idea of how the subject is usually done. Speaking of which...

✔ **Showing how not to do it.** Run the brief through ChatGPT and see what the banal, corny desk-researched piece would look like. Then write something much better. Regard AI as a minimum standard marker.

➡ **Drafting CTAs.** A good CTA can start a conversation, generate leads, take the bins out... and AI trawls the internet for wording you hadn't even thought of.

But DON'T use it for:

⌚ **Thought leadership.** We know sometimes the prospect of writing the executive summary to your annual sustainability report can feel daunting – but don't be tempted. AI is incapable of original thought.

✗ **Creating a content strategy.** Sadly, it remains beyond AI's capabilities to identify the nuances of a product or tease out a USP.

⊖ **Accuracy.** Almost everything in finance must have real, reliable, up-to-date primary sources. Few serious compliance departments would approve 100% AI-derived content.

🗣️ **Humour and humanity.** AI wouldn't fare well putting on a one-robot show on the Edinburgh Fringe.

⚠️ **Editing.** Final edits and flourishes require elegance and a discerning eye.

😞 **Responding to comments on social.** AI doesn't understand context or vernacular. Moderation is vital if you want to avoid reputational damage.

⊖ **Content that requires subject matter expertise.** That needs human experts.

Rachael Adams

81%

of online adults
think there's a lot
of fake news
on social media.

Expect a retreat
to trustworthy
sources.

SOURCE: FORRESTER PREDICTIONS 2024

How to stop worrying and love mainstream media

It's a depressing stat and unlikely to get better soon. Indeed, Forrester predicts that deepfakery and AI saturation of social media will only blur further the real and the fake, the truth and the downright dangerous falsehood.

But here's something to cheer you up in a round-about way. Many recent scandals have been uncovered not by politicians, not by law enforcement, not by social media activists, nor by the courts, but by old-fashioned, hard-working journalists. Is there a point here? Maybe a viral cat on TikTok is not actually quite on par with the FT or Computer Weekly.

So three things must flow from this.

First, tech firms will have to clean up their acts – but don't hold your breath.

Promoting properly sourced material with verified data is expensive and not easily accomplished by automation. Social media owners are unlikely to move at the pace required. Generative AI also needs to recompense the writers and creators who make it possible, and attribute sources of information.

Second, there will be a retreat to trustworthy media. That means the so-called mainstream media – the stuff you should pay for. Only mainstream media can afford the level of investigation, checking and double-checking

democracy needs. And they can only just afford it when much of the advertising revenue that would once have been their birthright is eaten by tech behemoths. We should all subscribe early and subscribe often to newspapers. Maybe sign up to a title you agree with and one you don't – for a more balanced life.

Some referred to the treatment of the Post Office miscarriage of justice in the UK as a 'media storm'. Absolutely. We need more such media storms – and fewer governments and corporations trying to hobble journalists' efforts. Consideration should be given to restricting libel litigation and legal coercion, especially where unscrupulous individuals and companies seek to ward off investigations by employing lawyers as attack dogs.

Instead, companies should be providing accurate, honest, accessible data that can be trusted by journalists, consumers and investors.

Third, blockchain has a role. Blockchain can timestamp and prove the provenance of video, photos, audio recordings and documents. In a world of deepfakes, this is probably the only absolute proof of truth. If it ain't on the chain, it ain't true.

Michael Pilgrim

57%

of people's time
online is on a mobile.

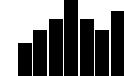
The question is:
what's the best
content to grab their
attention?


SOURCE: DATAREPORTAL 2023


In short, keep it short, snappy and smart

Loathe yourself for constant scrolling? You're not alone. Brits spend an average of four hours and 14 minutes a day glued to their handheld devices.¹ More shockingly, Gen Zers clock up more than seven hours a day on their mobiles.² Much of that time is spent on social media chatting with friends. But brands are increasingly communicating with their customers across numerous social channels. The challenge is to stand out from all the noise. What's the best content to draw people into your world?


This is what we find working well for our clients.


 **Animated data viz.** There are numerous ways of telling a story with data but with the rise of the video, animated data viz has to be the winner. Having said that, the data has to be right. Sometimes a bar chart is still the answer.


 **Podcasts.** People aren't spending as much time as they used to listening to podcasts but it's still close to an hour a day.³ Be sure to get the greatest value out of your podcast; create quote cards and short snippets to drive more listeners from social media channels. It's free content.


 **Videos.** Everyone is short on time, so short-form videos are king – although younger viewers have more appetite for longer reels.⁴

Still, we'd recommend keeping them short for LinkedIn: no more than 30 seconds as a general rule.

 **Blogs.** A good old-fashioned blog should still have a solid place in your content armoury. It's a good way of showing off your subject matter expertise, building personalities and explaining complicated topics.

 **Carousels.** These have been hugely successful on LinkedIn. Our advice would be to keep them to six or seven slides, use big numbers or icons to keep your viewer engaged, and avoid too many words.

 **Long social media posts.** Grab scrollers' attention with a short first sentence – perhaps a question, surprise fact or a personal point of view. These longer posts rely on good storytelling. You have to keep the readers' attention. Emojis, bullet points and questions all help.

 **Polls.** Everyone loves to give their opinion and that's why polls do so well. Choose a slightly controversial angle – but best avoid politics! Polls also offer the chance to learn about potential clients and engage with them.

¹ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1285042/uk-daily-time-spent-mobile-usage/>

² Dcdx gen Z screen time report. ³ <https://datareportal.com/global-digital-overview>. ⁴ GWI

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