



The things we've learned from a decade of content marketing partnership

Is it possible to wrap up a decade of content marketing partnership in one blog? The title already shows us that a brief overview may be a bit of a challenge. A challenge for sure, but if there's one thing we've learnt, it's that we're always up for one. So here we go!

Philippe Gosseye (marketing & team architect and firm believer in story leadership), Dirk Stael (senior communication consultant & content marketer) and Maaïke Van Severen (project manager) have joined forces on many different content marketing projects in the past few years. All three also want to extend their gratitude to former colleague [José Delameilleure](#), who sought other pastures in the meantime but who was quintessential for at least 9 of the 10 years!

So what's the "Phil rouge" in their story? And what have they learnt together?

1 Lesson #1 - There's no lack of valuable content if you find the right voices

When you start story leadership within your company, one of your first reflexes could be to follow the hierarchy and start with C-Level. But in our experience, content marketing is all about mapping the content to the right people - and by 'the right people' we mean the natural experts in their fields. They can be found anywhere in the organization - from C-level to sales - as long as they have an authentic voice.

"Find the right voices and you will automatically find a lot of valuable knowledge to work with. And once you have found them, they will inspire each other." - Dirk

"After all, people spark people and ideas spark ideas." - Philippe

That's where your challenge as a marketer starts. How do you get that knowledge out of someone's head? Turn it into conversations with the right tone of voice? And then into assets that you can distribute through the appropriate channels, in order to amplify the story?

2 Lesson #2 - Get support from your leadership from the start

You will need support from your leadership from the start. Perhaps your leadership won't see the ROI immediately, but if they trust you and give you the time and freedom to experiment, you can really show them the added value. You get it by playing by the rules first - so learn the rules and then bend them like a pro. That way you can teach them that ROI doesn't necessarily mean 'Return on Investment'. It can be much more valuable to measure your success if you define it as 'Return on Ideas'.

Avoid having too many cooks in your content marketing kitchen. Trust the team and give the content marketing chef the power to work their magic and be agile in adapting what did not work well.

"Don't be afraid to make mistakes. Be creative, experiment and do your thing. Remember Bob Ross: "There are no mistakes, just happy little accidents" - Philippe

3 Lesson #3 - There's always something new to do, content marketing never stops





Throughout our joint journey, we moved from a white paper that talked about the need to digitize marketing further, to a series of e-books, which were turned into tablet-friendly reads, resulting in a series of new booklets (with a vertical veneer), with a string of high-profile customer events and a collection of blog and social media programs for a wide variety of execs.

"We once said that if content marketing were an Olympic discipline, it would be the marathon, not the 100 meters." - Maaike

And we've definitely stuck to that! Also, everything you do can then again be turned into smaller bits and pieces of content, which you can distribute further.

This means that, even though creating a new content marketing asset from scratch can take some work and investment, you can recycle and upcycle it in so many different ways that it continues to live for quite a while. Chop it up into pieces and distribute it again (we call this "saucissoneren"). And don't forget to revisit it after a while and check where it needs updating. After that, you can distribute it once again.

4 Lesson #4 - Stories for content marketing come from surprising places and surprising people

Looking for the right stories that will inspire customers and employees will bring you to surprising and inspiring places and people. In one of my previous roles, we supported two C-Level events inside the Vatican. We were able to visit the Vatican Apostolic Library, where, at that time, all manuscripts were being digitized for future generations.

The best stories come from people and places you would never expect. We therefore also invented the ['Revolve'-Unconference](#), which was a conference where start-ups and established technology businesses could meet and share ideas. We also took marketers out of their comfort zones, in an unusual setting like the forest or the seaside, where they could brainstorm with non-marketers like biologists, philosophers, entrepreneurs, artists, and even a butcher.

"Bringing together un-likeminded people can offer you a new perspective and bring crispness to your content and ideas." - Philippe

5 Lesson #5 - Sometimes, it's best not to overthink things

One of the strongest content assets we've created together – an e-book on the need for innovation within established tech companies - was written within a very short time frame, using mainly a lot of our own general knowledge. Still, it turned out to be one of the best things we've written. At least, that's what our audience said about it.

"The longer you think and the more approval flows you have in place can kill your enthusiasm and the crispness of your content." - Dirk

6 Lesson #6 - People will rate you on the caliber of your thinking

[A LinkedIn/Edelman study](#) amongst C-level profiles teaches us that thought-provoking content marketing and thought leadership will have a positive impact on how you are perceived by





others. This means bringing visions and ideas. In other words, focus on selling insights instead of selling solutions or products. And give it considerable thought. Don't settle for mediocre, as that will not send business your way.

"Show people something they haven't seen before – inspire them, provoke them, challenge them." - Maaiké

7 Lesson #7 – Have fun along the way!

And of course, we've also asked ourselves the question how content marketing has changed in the past decade. If you ask us, not so much. We see a more focus on video and social media now, but we have always avoided putting all our content marketing eggs in the event basket. There is so much more that you can do with great content!

