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CONTENT INTELLIGENCE:

7 Steps to Get Ahead of Marketing's Next Big Disruption

INTRO

Disruption has become the norm these days. But that doesn't make navigating it any easier. And marketing is one of the functions that has undergone some of the most disruptive and rapid shifts.

It's only been about 5 years since marketing specialists cited the following challenges as their deepest concerns:

- **Content primacy (81%):** the content companies must create to communicate with customers on various devices at the varying stages of the buyer's journey
- **Complexity (80%):** the multiplicity of channels and the surge of data that has created huge opportunities to better understand and connect with customers, but has also introduced a bewildering array of technical and managerial challenges
- **Connected and empowered consumers (74%):** the power of consumers to direct brands, shape perceptions and make demands on brands
- In addition to these three C's of disruption, as they were called, the fast pace of technology was described as a major concern among 77% of the marketers surveyed by the Association of National Advertisers.

At the time, marketers admitted they were unprepared for the challenges they suddenly faced. Of the respondents, 84% did not have a formal content strategy and distribution process. And, although 96% said they realized data was essential for responding effectively to disruption, more than 33% didn't use data to make decisions. And nearly 50% said they didn't have the right analytics in place.

Maybe you have already made a lot of changes during the past 5 years, investing in content strategies, analytics, social media, search, and earned media and paid media.

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But it's time to adapt again.

With recent advances in the use of artificial intelligence for marketing, we're potentially facing one of the most disruptive periods in modern marketing. The leading innovation in this space is content intelligence.

In this ebook, we outline 7 steps that are critical for moving forward with content intelligence as the center of your marketing strategies.

Not only will they help you adopt content intelligence, they can help you get ahead of your competition in the midst of the next wave of marketing disruptions.

Marketing Disruption: A Definition

Any profound change in the business landscape that forces marketing organizations to undergo significant transformations, as opposed to incremental changes.

— McKinsey & Company

"The advances that AI is bringing to our world have been a half-century in the making. But AI's time is now. Because of the vast amounts of data in our world, only the almost limitless computing power of the cloud can make sense of it. AI can truly help solve some of the world's most vexing problems, from improving day-to-day communication to energy, climate, health care, transportation and more. The real magic of AI, in the end, won't be magic at all. It will be technology
that adapts to people. This will be profoundly transformational for humans and for humanity."

— Lili Cheng, corporate V.P., Microsoft AI & Research

1. ACCEPT THE ROLE OF CHANGE AGENT

Marketing always has been a key driver of a company's success. Some would say that marketing is the business. If you can't reach and connect with your audience, nothing else really matters.

Even so, marketing departments have a history of operating on the sidelines — in a support role.

Nearly five years ago, the ANA's CEO Bob Liodice remarked that marketing specialists have been reluctant in leading the charge for change throughout their companies.

In today's climate, there needs to be a shift. Marketing leadership, particularly the CMO, must be the ones to drive change in the company, according to Target Marketing, which recently released "The Marketing Leadership Report."

According to the team's analysis of the report findings, these are the three leading reasons marketing leadership must lead change in the company:

1. No other department in the company is as exposed to changes in consumer technology and consumer behavior as the marketing department.
2. No other department in the company has as much to lose as the marketing department if they do not have access to the latest technology and data capabilities.
3. No other department has as much to gain from the opportunities that come with that change than the marketing department.

With the company's success depending upon the success of the marketing team's performance, it is critical that marketing managers move forward with the responsibility of being the change agents within their companies.

To make that shift, marketers must embrace change as an opportunity — instead of looking at it as a negative, according to Thorin McGee, editor-in-chief for Target Marketing.

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"Far from being victimized by change, marketing leaders who can use change to make the marketing department more effective — by changing the marketing vision and scope of responsibilities, changing the technology stack, changing the roles on the team, changing the metrics they use to better prove effectiveness against company goals — are able to deliver a more concrete contribution to the company's goals," McGee says. "And when you can do that, the marketing department can write its own ticket."

McGee went on to say that, moving forward, it's critical for marketing leaders to make a choice about taking on the role of driving change.

"Marketing leaders who drive change are able to win the arguments for budget and buy-in because the bottom line is on their side," he says. "Marketers who don't drive change and have it forced upon them are never more than beggars in the C-suite."

"Complexity and the speed of change have caused confusion, and that inhibits marketers from moving forward and setting themselves up for long-term success. CMOs need to take charge and effect change because the marketing organization often trails the rest of their company."

— Bob Liodice, president and CEO of the ANA

2. UNDERSTAND THE "WHY" BEHIND CONTENT INTELLIGENCE

While it's always a good idea to get to the "What is … ?" question, especially with something as new as content intelligence, it's even more important to understand the "Why."

As with any other tool, whether it's a hammer or software, the overall focus should be on "Why" you need it. And "Why" now.

But we will start with the definition to establish a common foundation.

Content Intelligence is taking an analytical view of an organization's content activity and providing information back to the marketer on how the performance of that content can be improved in areas such as:

- Target Audience
- Persona
- Channel
- Consumption Type
- Messaging Themes
- Competitive Framing

And that leads us to the "Why" behind adopting content intelligence. It simply comes down to this — making a brand's content more relevant to their customers and prospects.

After conducting a survey of consumers' expectations, Adobe recently released the "Experience Index" which revealed that 61% want brands to "know me and respect me."

"As consumers, we have become quite a demanding group," says Adobe executive Brad Rencher. "And the theme that ties this all together isn't the things we want, it's the experiences we demand. The sum total of all of a customer's interactions with a brand, from awareness to purchase to consumption, are now critical … so at each touch point, consumers feel uniquely understood and important.

"To do this right, brands need a holistic understanding of their customers, so they can wow them at every single interaction," Rencher added while delivering a keynote address at Adobe Summit 2017. "This is where we're all competing for the foreseeable future."

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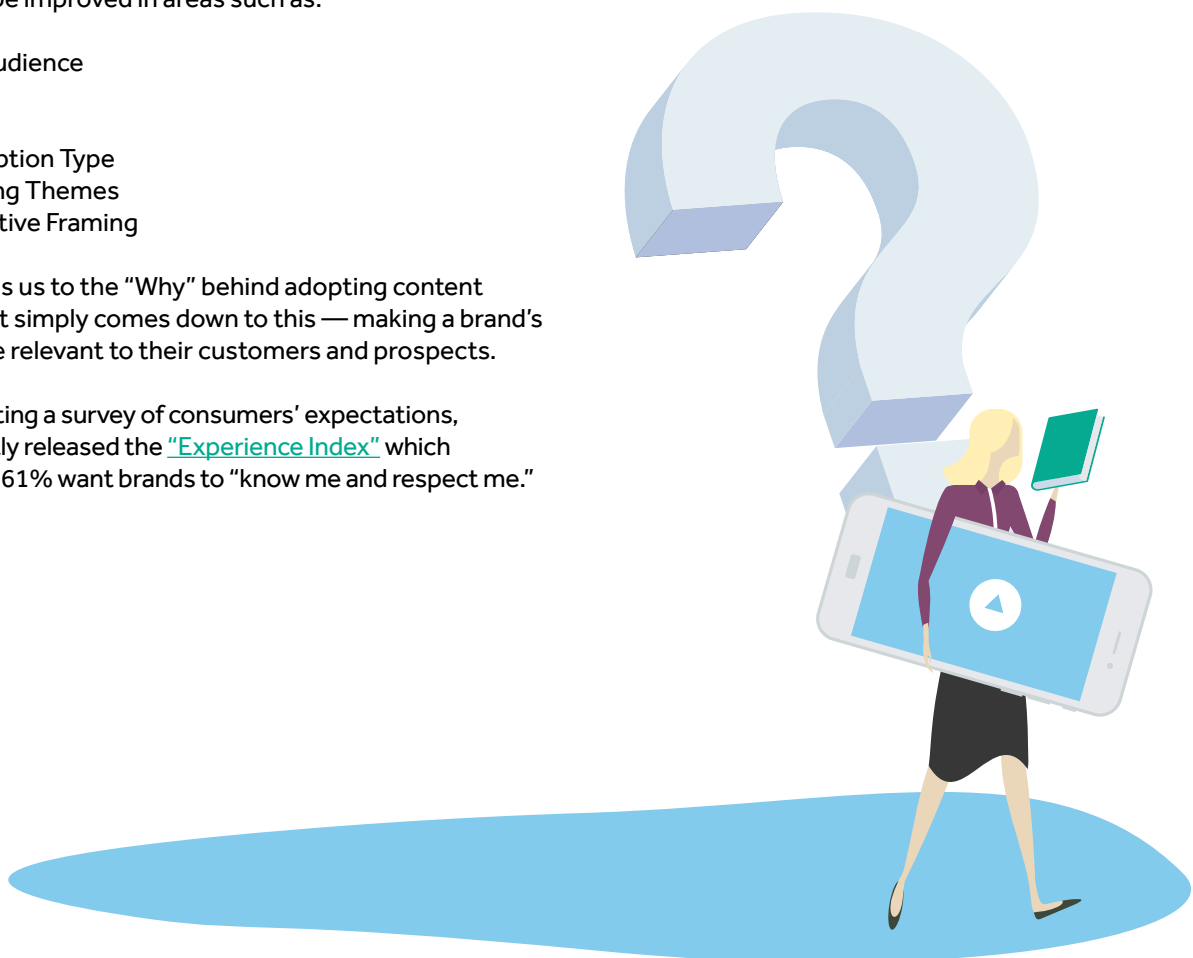
To get better and better at delivering customer experiences that differentiate your company from your competition requires deeper insights.

Content intelligence delivers on those in-depth insights that can help you cut through the clutter and give your audience the personalized attention they're now demanding. It gives you the ability to execute a more relevant experience.

When developing a content strategy, marketers face common questions like the following: Should I provide more content on a certain topic to encourage conversions ? Is the tone right? The promotion? The timing of delivery?

These are the types of questions that data can help you answer. While the current tools you're using provides some of those insights, content intelligence is able to speed up that process while, at the same time, give you more accurate and comprehensive insights.

Content intelligence also provides a path for getting better and better at delivering on your customer's expectations throughout the entire buyer journey. As with any relationship, there comes a point when you need to assess how you're doing.

By continually gathering data about your audience, content intelligence measures your performance and enables you to get closer to the ideal experience your customer expects.

"Our jobs as marketers are to understand how the customer wants to buy and help them to do so."

— Bryan Eisenberg, author

What Consumers Want From Brands

1. "Know me and respect me."   — **61%**
2. "Delight me at every turn."   — **57%**
3. "Keep technology transparent." — **51%**
4. "Speak in one voice."   — **49%**

— Adobe's Experience Index

3. GET BUY-IN FROM THE TOP

Since content intelligence can have a significant impact on your team's approach to getting results, requiring a shift in the way your team operates, you need to get buy-in from the top.

That means convincing the CEO and other top-level executives to support any initiatives related to introducing content intelligence as a central component of your strategy.

With your executive team fully backing you, it will be easier to quickly expedite the implementation of content intelligence.

In this case, it's helpful to review the Prosci ADKAR model, one of the tools commonly used to ensure that your efforts with change management are successful.

- **A**wareness of the need for change
- **D**esire to participate and support the change
- **K**nowledge on how to change
- **A**bility to implement required skills and behaviors
- **R**einforcement to sustain the change

It's probably no coincidence that "awareness of the need for change" leads the list. As pointed out in the second section of this eBook, building a convincing case on why your company needs to excel at delivering a superior customer experience should lead your business case for content intelligence.

The supporting cast of points in this argument include:
- Improvements in overall performance (i.e. various metrics that lead to increased efficiencies and sales)
- Staying on target with sales goals
- Minimizing risks presented by competitors outperforming you
- Return on investment
- Content proliferation or diminishing content effectiveness

Before approaching top-level executives, consult with leading vendors in the field of content intelligence to gain a better understanding of how the different solutions work. Ask for demos to gain relevant insights on how it can impact your team's content marketing goals.

With a strong presentation about the benefits of content intelligence, you're better positioned to gain buy-in from top-level executives.

"The only way on earth to influence the other fellow is to talk about what he wants and show him how to get it."

— Dale Carnegie, author of
How To Win Friends and Influence People

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4. OVERCOME THE RESISTANCE

It would be a mistake to assume that your marketing team will readily adopt content intelligence or any other new technology, process or methodology. While it's true that marketing teams are familiar with constant change, it's in our human nature to resist the unkown.

And with content intelligence being an arm of artificial intelligence, it's important to face the fears that people may have about the technology.

As Lili Cheng, corporate V.P. of Microsoft AI & Research, says, "artificial intelligence is one of the hottest, least understood and most debated technological breakthroughs in modern times."

Your team may have various responses to content intelligence — some positive, some negative. Be prepared to address the deeper issues that people may have about the new disruptions represented by this advanced technology.

Here are four steps to consider.

1. Understand different perspectives. Don't underestimate some of the resistance you may encounter. And, just as importantly, don't underestimate the high level of acceptance you may encounter.

Most employees indicate that they're looking forward to the benefits they can gain through the implementation of AI-driven processes, according to a survey by Adobe. About 68% of full-time and part-time professionals in the United States, the United Kingdom. and India said they're not worried about the growth of AI in the workplace; they feel their contributions will still be needed.

Also, according to the Global Trend Survey (GTS) of Artificial Intelligence, 30% of companies believe the greatest impact from artificial intelligence will be realized in sales, marketing or customer service by 2020.

While there may be overall acceptance of content intelligence, you may have a few team members who are resistant to embracing it. It's important to find out why, which leads us to the next point.

2. Start talking. According to author and futurist Jacob Moore, if people do have fears about artificial intelligence, it's typically related to questions about how it will impact their jobs.

Get an early start on discussing the potential of content intelligence by engaging your team. That includes inviting open discussion and listening, he says.

"Perhaps, the best way to solve the problem is to talk about it more. By starting conversations about the impact of automation around the world, more people can be aware of the technology and what it can do" Moore says in an article for Inc. "Understanding the unknown is the best way to conquer fear, so having a better understanding of what automation is and what it is (and isn't) capable of can help calm some people's fears."

By taking that approach, many companies are able to successfully implement AI-driven technologies, Moore added.

3. Highlight the benefits. Bringing on new technology requires some internal marketing.

According to Didier Bonnet, author of *Leading Digital*, you need to clearly explain the benefits of new technology to give people a compelling reason to embrace it. With the introduction to content intelligence, you can build a case for how it will help them with actionable insights that will improve their ability to build more meaningful content experiences that resonate with your audience.

> *"Technology is nothing. What's important is that you have a faith in people, that they're basically good and smart, and if you give them tools, they'll do wonderful things with them."*
>
> — Steve Jobs

4. Recruit the influencers. It's also important to recruit your team of influencers, the members of your team that can be targeted to help with the transition to content intelligence as well as convince others to do the same.

Bonnet stressed the importance of going beyond those who are already super tech savvy when recruiting your evangelists.

"Don't just pick the geeks — those who are most interested in technology," Bonnet says in an article for Harvard Business Review. "You want people who are able to work horizontally across the organization and who have good communication and networking skills."

Principles for Adopting New Technology

Do

- Win hearts and minds by emphasizing how the new technology benefits the organization and makes employees' lives easier

- Encourage adoption by rewarding employees in ways that are most meaningful to them

- Build the new technology into the routines and rhythms of the workday as soon as possible

Don't

- Pick a technology that's more complicated than it needs to be; for a swift adoption, select a system that's approachable and intuitive

- Overlook the importance of getting your most influential employees on board early in the process; they will help you bring around others

- Leap to punish employees who don't use the technology; penalties should be a last resort if incentives and rewards aren't working

Harvard Business Review, "Convincing Skeptical Employees to Adopt New Technology."

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5. CHOOSE THE RIGHT CONTENT INTELLIGENCE SOLUTION

When choosing the ideal content intelligence solution for your company, it's important to focus on two main areas — your overall marketing goals and the level of ease with adopting the system.

Both are critical in ensuring that you will gain a ROI through your investment. First, you want to make sure that it addresses specific gaps in your current marketing strategy. Secondly, it must be user-friendly to ensure that your team will quickly integrate it into their day-to-day routines.

"If your goal is a high adoption rate within the organization, make sure you're choosing the most approachable, most intuitive system possible," says Michael C. Mankins, a partner for Bain & Company, in the HBR article. "Technologies that require multi-day training programs and hefty user manuals are a surefire recipe for employee bellyaching and a stalled adoption."

When exploring content intelligence software, compile a list of ways your content strategy could improve if you had better actionable insights:

1. Are we targeting the right audience?
2. Are there other audiences we should be targeting?
3. Which content topics would drive better engagement?
4. What is the right mix of content needed to increase awareness and, eventually, boost conversions?
5. What tone with messaging do our customers prefer?
6. Which promotions are right for each of our customer segments?
7. What is the right timing to deliver our messaging to each segment?
8. Which channels are ideal for conversion?
9. What types of activities are customers currently engaging in?
10. Which keywords will resonate with our customers?
11. What content is underperforming and why?
12. Which influencers are having the most impact on our customers?
13. Which content is most relevant at each stage of the buyer journey?

By identifying specific ways that actionable insights can help you better deliver a better customer experience, you can be prepared to determine which content intelligence solution is right for you.

It's equally important for your team to feel comfortable using the new content intelligence tool.

When comparing content intelligence systems, make sure that your team of influencers/champions are there to help you test drive the software as part of the demonstrations.

> "The advance of technology is based on making it fit in so that you don't really even notice it, so it's part of everyday life."
>
> — Bill Gates, Microsoft founder, philanthropist

6. TAKE ACTION

Maybe your company is among those who can assess a new opportunity and quickly move into action to make it happen, being willing to tweak or overhaul the solution until they get it right.

If not, you have plenty of company.

Although marketing departments already heavily rely on technology, the pace of adoption widely varies, according to a survey by Skyword and Researchscape.

About 30% of marketers said it takes four to six months to fully integrate new technologies into their marketing strategies; 12% said it took about a month; 21% said it took anywhere from seven to 12 months; 7% reported one to two years; and 1% even said more than three years.

Lagging to implement new technology puts your company at risk of failing to keep up with engaging your customers, a scenario that could result in you falling behind the competition.

It's natural to want to pause before jumping in with entirely new technology, says John Brandon, Tech Report columnist for *Inc*.

Overcoming that urge to hold back is critical to the success of your company, Brandon says in the article "How to Help Your Company Adopt New Technology."

"The rate at which you embrace change will determine your ultimate success," he says. "Stick-in-the-mud, feet planted on the ground ... that's a recipe for total disaster in business."

Many companies, of all sizes, have a "late adopter mentality" — a let's-wait-and-see mindset, Brandon says.

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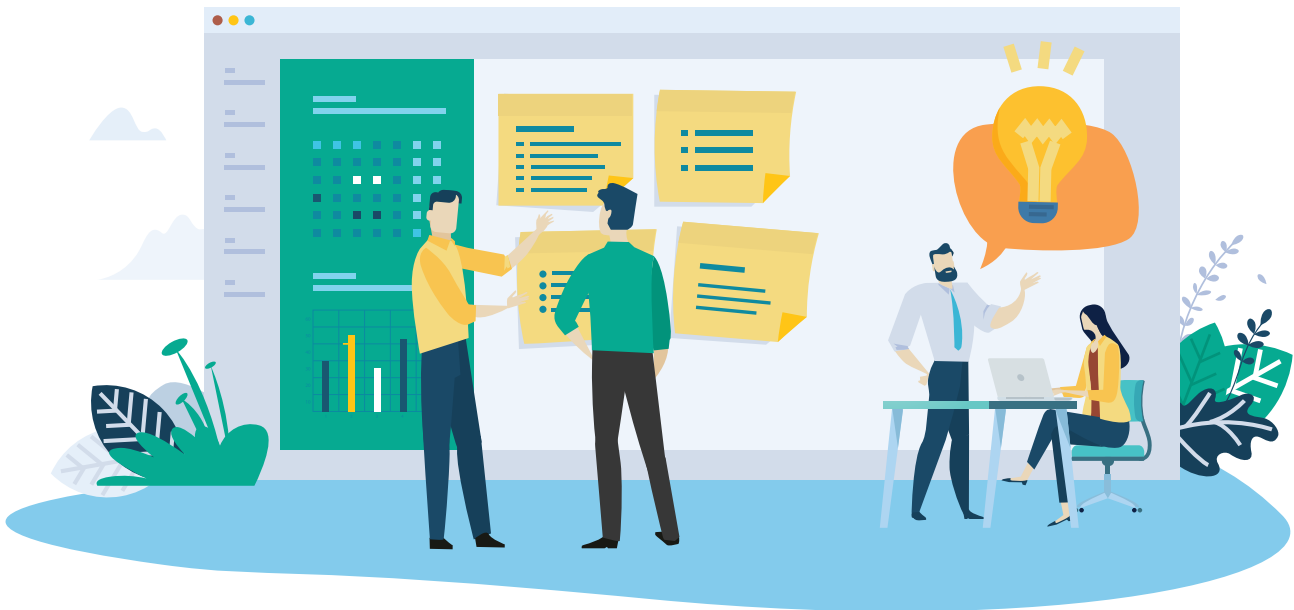
"This mindset means you wake up one morning and realize that everyone is using Slack, social media is the new marketing, and not having an app is a sign that you have fallen way behind in terms of tech trends," he says.

While it's not necessary for you to become the earliest adopter, it is important that you become a fast changer, says Brandon who has interviewed executive leaders at dozens of companies of all sizes.

After assuring that the technology is viable and makes sense for your company, you need to quickly adopt and adapt, Brandon says.

"To adopt tech trends, you have to become really good at measuring viability," he says. "Analyze a new trend for the value first; don't be confused by whether it is new and untested. Be quick to adopt and quick to abandon the trend when you see it doesn't offer any benefits or an advantage for your company. Terrible products and services reveal themselves quickly.

"Adopting early should also mean abandoning early," Brandon says. "Yet, if the tech trend is worth an investment, after doing your analysis and comparisons, be ready to dive right in. Embrace it fully."

> "A fast changer is someone who makes decisions based on the data available and the known value. Adopt, adapt and be ready to see how the change brings success.'
>
> — John Brandon, Tech Report columnist, Inc.
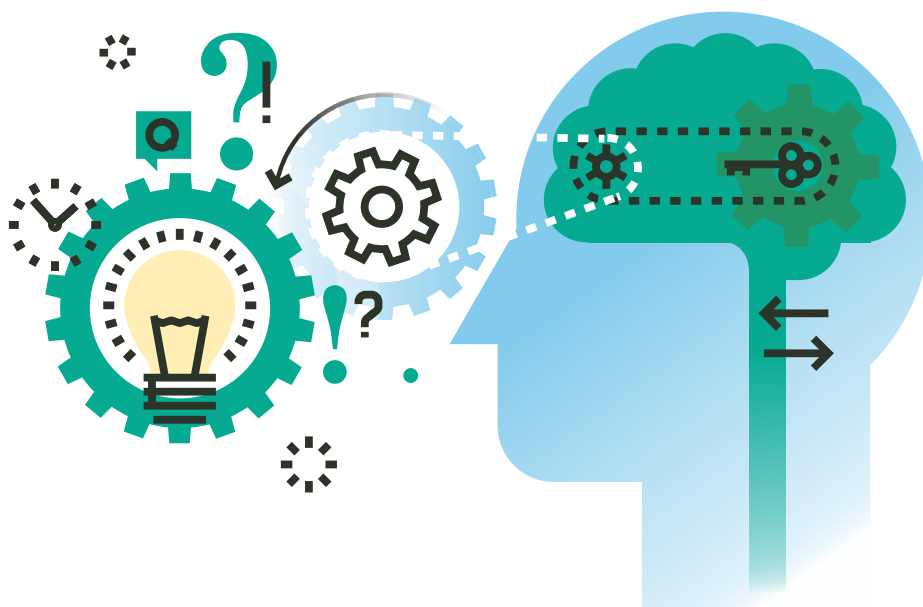
7. MAINTAIN A COMMITMENT TO LOOK AHEAD

As with anything related to the field of artificial intelligence or any new technologies, content intelligence is a field that's rapidly evolving, mainly as a result of new developments in areas like machine learning and natural language processing.

Here is what tech experts are predicting for the future of artificial intelligence and content intelligence.

- "By 2025, artificial intelligence will be built into the algorithmic architecture of countless functions of business and communication, increasing relevance, reducing noise, increasing efficiency, and reducing risk across everything from finding information to making transactions." — Jeff Jarvis, director of the Tow-Knight Center for Entrepreneurial Journalism at the City University of New York, quoted by the Pew Research Center

- "Technology is becoming wildly powerful. By 2025, computers will be able to mimic a human's intelligence capacity. We will begin to see computers learning from the experiences and data they receive. Software may be able to determine the sentiment behind online discussions through tracking context, sarcasm or emotional words." — Jon Simpson, owner of Criterion.B., Forbes Agency Council

- "AI methods and techniques are already part of the ordinary landscape. The problem with the term 'AI' is that it is constantly redefined to describe things we don't yet know how to do well with computers. Things like speech recognition (like Siri), image recognition (face recognition in consumer cameras), and the like used to be hard AI problems. As they become practical commercial offerings, they spin off as their own disciplines." — David Clark, a senior research scientist at MIT's Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory

With the ongoing developments that are sure to come with content intelligence, it's important that you are positioned to take advantage of the opportunities that will emerge to enhance your marketing efforts.

Keep an open mind and a willingness to adapt and change.

> *"We live in a moment of history where change is so sped up that we begin to see the present only when it is already disappearing."*
>
> — R. D. Laing, psychiatrist

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SUMMARY

Customers are increasingly expecting meaningful, relevant experiences from brands. They want to be assured that you accurately capture their wants and needs, even "delighting" them at every turn.

At the same time, as a marketer, you must lead your brand while navigating the challenges that come with trying to succeed in an environment inundated with content, much of it not working as well as it used to.

These are high expectations that require in-depth insights to the data that will help you deliver those experiences that make your audience feel seen, head and valued, and ensure that your brand is able to differentiate itself.

By using these 7 steps as a guide, you will be able to get ahead of marketing's next big disruption, harnessing the power of content intelligence to deliver a more effective content strategy.

Curious about content intelligence?

Learn how content intelligence can help you get ahead of the next marketing disruption. Contact Vennli for a demo today.

REQUEST A DEMO

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