

Clout

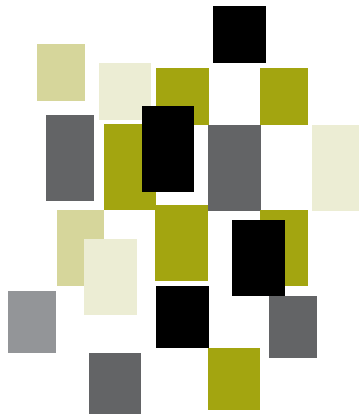
the ART and SCIENCE of
INFLUENTIAL WEB CONTENT



COLLEEN JONES

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VOICES THAT MATTER™

Sensory Detail

When you portray how things look, sound, smell, taste, or feel, you trigger people’s gut reactions. Lindt, for instance, describes how wonderfully chocolate engages all five senses, tempting a chocoholic like me (**Figure 4.12**).

Figure 4.12: Lindt uses sensory detail to evoke emotion.



Associations with Words and Images

Beyond their literal meanings, words and images stir up feelings (also called connotations). “Grow” in the previous Grasshopper example meant not only a larger voicemail plan but also the ambition to thrive. Refer to Figure 4.10.

2. IRRESISTIBLE IDENTIFICATION

Identification is overcoming our differences to find common ground. It’s the key principle to help you attract the right people. Rhetorician Kenneth Burke defined identification as “any of the wide variety of means by which an author may establish a shared sense of values, attitudes, and interests with his [or her] readers [users].”⁶ When users identify with you, they’re more likely to be drawn to you.

Five Rhetorical Devices You'll Love

Rhetorical devices are tools to enhance content emotionally. These are text examples, but you can apply many of these devices to images, video, or audio, too.

1. **Hyperbole.** It's over-the-top exaggeration, usually meant to be funny. *I love quality content so much that I want to marry it.*
2. **Irony.** It's when the literal and intended meaning are out of sync, often intended to be funny. *You should publish the blog post that you paid someone \$10 to write for you.*
3. **Simile.** It compares unlike things. *This stagnant content is like a cesspool.*
4. **Rhetorical Question.** It's a question for dramatic effect, not asking for a literal answer. *Do we really want to keep creating terrible web content?*
5. **Personification.** It's adding personality or human qualities to a concept or object. *The website threw content from 1999 in my general direction.*

Identify on the Right Level

We connect with people who are like us on different levels.

Shallow

People relate superficially to people who share the same demographics. We can identify quickly with people who appear to be just like us. For example, the Alice home page features a thirty-something woman—a key demographic for household goods (**Figure 4.13**).



Figure 4.13: The photo of a woman represents an important demographic for Alice.

Deep

People connect more intensely to other people in a similar role or with like values, interests, and beliefs. Relating to people deeply can transcend shallow differences. In his historic campaign to become the first African American president of the United States, Barack Obama stressed change (**Figure 4.14**). That value came to life in the slogan “change we can believe in” and web content such as interviews, videos, photos, tweets, and other web content that *showed* Obama’s personality and way of thinking as a change.

The image shows a screenshot of the Obama campaign website. On the left, there is a 'Community Blogs' section. A post from Erica Sagrana's Blog is featured, titled 'Photo of the Day: Ohio'. The photo shows President Obama sitting at a kitchen table with the Weithman family, including children Rachel and Josh, and their mother Rhonda. They are all smiling and raising their hands in a gesture of celebration. Below the photo is a caption: 'President Obama visited Columbus, Ohio yesterday, where he sat down with the Weithman family at their kitchen table to discuss some of the challenges they've faced in today's economy. After their discussion, the President joined the Weithman kids Rachel and Josh, and their mom Rhonda to spell out "Ohio."'

On the right side of the screenshot, there is a quote from Barack Obama: *"This victory alone is not the change we seek — it is only the chance for us to make that change."* Below the quote is a list of bullet points detailing the Obama for America campaign's goals and strategies, such as joining grassroots OFA campaigns, spreading the word to friends and neighbors, and supporting leaders who share their values.

Figure 4.14: Content on the Obama campaign website appealed to people’s values.

Not Everyone Will Identify with You—and That’s OK

It’s hard to watch people turn away from your company or cause. Even the successful Obama campaign didn’t attract everyone. When you try to reach everyone, you risk reaching no one. As content marketing expert Joe Pulizzi says, “Your brand has to stand for something. If *everyone* loves you, you might be doing something wrong.”⁷ As long as you’re attracting the people you want to attract—whether qualified leads or enthusiastic supporters—you can rest easy if someone turns away.

Apply Identification to Content

To attract people who identify with you or your organization, web content can help.

Persona/Character/Spokesperson

It's representing your organization with a person or character (or two or three) who relates well to your users. For example, HowStuffWorks offers a collection of podcasts hosted by relevant personalities. The most popular is Stuff You Should Know. On this podcast, the self-proclaimed geeks Josh and Chuck banter about, well, stuff they think other geeks should know (Figure 4.15).

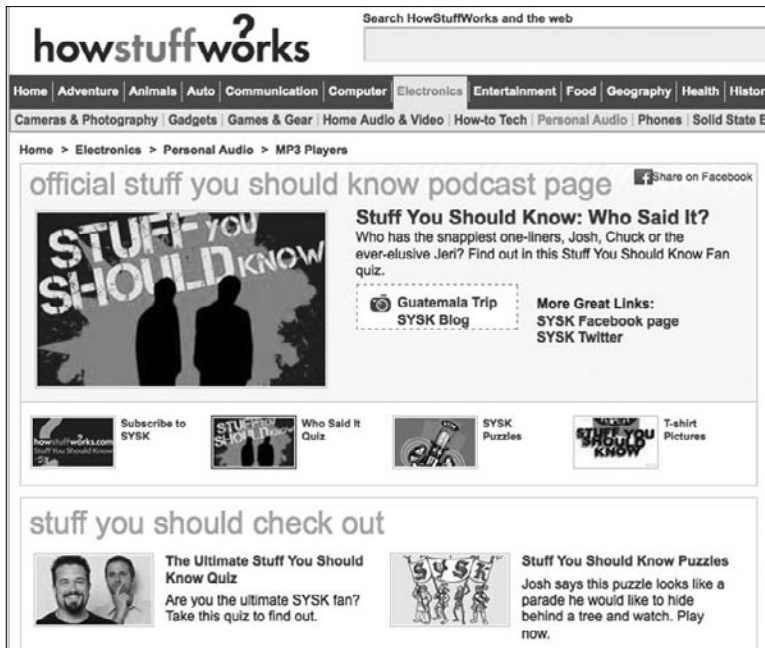


Figure 4.15: Josh and Chuck represent geekdom for HowStuffWorks.

Another example is @sharpiesusan, a persona who embodies Sharpie on Twitter. (For more about how Sharpie's use of personas evolved, see the sidebar Sharpie's Shift from Celebrities to Personas and Users.)

User-Generated Content

Similar to personas, your users can represent you well. How? Through comments and content they contribute to your social networking space. The right potential customers will identify with your current customers. The trick is to facilitate the discussion so it stays true to your brand and your users. FootSmart, for example, carefully cultivates community on its active Facebook page (Figure 4.16).

Figure 4.16: FootSmart actively facilitates discussion on its Facebook page.

The screenshot displays the FootSmart Facebook page interface. On the left sidebar, there are sections for Photos (2 of 16 albums), Wall Photos (Updated on Tuesday, 'Time for Fall Flats!'), Video (1 of 21 videos, 'Reebok EasyTone Shoes [HD]'), and Links (3 of 52 links). The main content area shows several posts:

- A post from FootSmart Clark's Rock Pump Ballerina Shoes with a link to a color selection poll.
- A comment from Danny Breland: "I'd like to get 1 with shoes in it."
- A post from Jane Simmons-Nunn asking for help choosing between New Balance TruBalance 1100 and New Balance rock and tone shoes.
- A comment from FootSmart Jane explaining the difference between the two shoe models.
- A comment from Jane Simmons-Nunn thanking FootSmart for the information.
- A post from FootSmart announcing a new catalog featuring Clarks Book Pump ballerina flats.
- A comment from Ann Daley: "This is my only shoe store!"
- A comment from Carol Harrison: "The Espy Spirit Anti Gravity shoes & sandals are the most comfortable I have ever worn! I love Footsmart!"

At the bottom of the page, there is a button that says "Create a Page for My Business".

Cause Content

Another approach is creating content around a cause. Research from the public relations firm Edelman has found that supporting a cause could even inspire users to switch brands.⁸ Select a cause that fits your brand values and your users' values. For example, REI devotes much content to environmental concerns (Figure 4.17).

The screenshot shows the REI website's Stewardship section. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for SHOP REI, SHOP REI-OUTLET, TRAVEL WITH REI, LEARN, SHARE, MEMBERSHIP, and STEWARDSHIP. Below this is a search bar and a promotional banner for free shipping. The main content area is titled "Environment" and features a photo of people on bicycles. To the right of the photo is a list of environmental initiatives, including "Shrinking Our Carbon", "Green Power and Smart Design", "Climate Neutral Travel", "Transportation", "Green Inside and Out", "Products and Packaging", "Better Paper", and "Rethinking Waste".

FREE SHIPPING for REI Members on orders of \$75 or more

Shopping Cart | Log In or Register

Gift Registry | 1-800-426-4840 | Email Sign-Up | Store Locator

SHOP REI | SHOP REI-OUTLET | TRAVEL WITH REI | LEARN | SHARE | MEMBERSHIP | STEWARDSHIP

People | Community | Environment | Stewardship Report | Kids and Stewardship

Free Shipping to Any REI Store! Have your REI.com or REI-OUTLET.com order sent to your local REI store then pick it up for free.

About REI

REI Stewardship

People
Community
Environment

Stewardship Reports

2008
2007 - Archive
2006 - Archive

Report to Members

President's Message
Chairman's Message
Financial Information

Board of Directors

REI Directors
REI Governance
Communicating with the Board

Company Information

Corporate Officers
100 Best
Background

Environment

REI Stewardship Home | Environment | Community | People

Shrinking Our Carbon
Green Power and Smart Design
Climate Neutral Travel
Transportation
Green Inside and Out
Products and Packaging
Better Paper
Rethinking Waste

Clients of REI Adventures and REI Outdoor School represent our largest source of greenhouse gas emissions due to flights. Since environmentally responsible travel has many benefits, we've addressed this impact to the planet by partnering with The Bonneville Environmental Foundation to offer one of the nation's leading carbon-neutral travel programs. Using Green-e certified renewable energy certificates, we off-set all of the emissions at no additional cost to travelers.

REI's Stewardship Aspiration

Figure 4.17: The environment is a cause close to the hearts of many REI users and relates to REI's brand as an outdoor outfitter.