

Who owns the content space? The battle for content hots up

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28 SEP 2015 5 min read

Who owns the content space? James Morris, global head of MediaCom Beyond Advertising, says it's all about experience, integration and collaboration.

The debate about who should make content for brands will run and run. There are good reasons for that, not least of which is that fact that you can approach content from so many directions. It's one of the new grey areas of marketing where different types of agency from media to creative to PR to digital agencies compete directly against each other.

Increasingly, content is becoming central to communication strategies in order to fully engage with consumers. It is driving some of the best work around at the moment and I'm very proud that many of MediaCom's recent wins at both Cannes and **the M&M Global Awards earlier this month** were content-led.

However, while I am bullish about MediaCom's capability, I also feel it is important that work goes to the agency that is best placed to deliver it.

Growing the content opportunity means that the work has to go to the agency with the creative nous to deliver that form of content. Making or briefing digital films is very different to setting up and delivering a full advertiser funded TV programme. An agency might be able to do the former but not the latter, everyone needs to know what their limits are.

For media agencies to compete they can't simply convert media people into content people; they need to employ experts who have actually been there and done it (both in-house and freelance) – producers, editors, copywriters and designers and so on all need to be part of the team.

More than the content itself

But content marketing is also about more than just the content itself. Successful campaigns need to be integrated. They need to be effective in paid as well as earned distribution channels and those digital connections need to be co-ordinated with the more traditional media support and partnerships that might also form part of the campaign.

Clients are also leading the way or starting to adapt to content commissioning. Some have even gone so far as to create new roles within their marketing departments, such as chief curation or content officer.

However, for brands, and these new roles, the real challenge comes with integrating the advertising, media and digital leads to ensure they are working with the best partner whilst also delivering an integrated brief.

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I believe that the very best content agencies of the future will be partly guided by the most forward thinking brands/clients, but also be defined by their ability to collaborate.

For example, we have recently competed with other retained agencies on a global client brief. Whilst the client has chosen our idea above the others, we are working in partnership with the other agencies to produce the project. For this client and brief it suits the client and all parties. I am not saying this will always be the case, but being open to working with other agencies and stakeholders in a way that can benefit the client and deliver the best work is the best way forward.

Put simply – content has recently been portrayed as the new battleground for agencies. Those agencies that have the best product and people have won the briefs to date and will be in pole position to win them moving forward.

However, having the confidence and bravery to work with partners including other agencies (but also more collaboratively with the client and wider stakeholders including media owners) will ultimately lead to the best results. Bose **#listenforyourself** is a perfect example of this where client, agency and media partners worked together to great effect.

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