

Red Bull gives you...content marketing!

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11 Jun 2013

In our ongoing exploration of content marketing and our attempts to bring it to life, we're going to shed a little more light through a real-life example of 'stratospheric' proportion.

Created in the '80s by Dietrich Mateschitz having tasted a similar drink in Thailand, the first-ever can of Red Bull went on sale in 1987 in Austria. Twenty-five years on, the product is available in 165 countries with 35 billion cans sold so far. In 2012, the company recorded its best rise in turnover, moving to €4.9bn with South Africa as the main driving factor behind this (52% increase in sales on 2011). Behind this incredible rise is a story of pioneering marketing strategy.

When Mateschitz first introduced the drink to the Western markets, he in fact created an entire new category - the 'energy drink' category. However, he was also a visionary in how he marketed the brand. The company slogan, 'Red Bull Gives you Wings', aligns the brand very closely to its core activities and target markets around 'high performance', naturally in the areas of extreme sports. In the words of Mateschitz himself:

"What Red Bull stands for is that it 'gives you wings' which means that it provides skills, abilities, power etc to achieve whatever you want to. It is an invitation as well as a request to be active, performance-oriented, alert, take challenges and go for your limits."

Going for the sports link

Whereas no one will want to spend much time watching videos and photos about a drink, people will want to spend hours engaging with interesting and exciting content of extreme sports. With this in mind, Red Bull has gone about creating strong affiliations with extreme sports that strategically generate key content.

Let's look at some of Red Bull's most prominent platforms:

Websites

- Within RedBull.com are housed more than 900 domains in 36 languages.
- Red Bull TV

Social media

- Several accounts, with the main Facebook page carrying 38m (!) followers
- YouTube channels amassing over 300 million views
- There are a host of apps and games for every device

Sponsorships

- Teams ranging from an F1 team to various car racing teams
- Over 600 athletes such as Valery Rozov, the Mount Everest Base Jumper

Ownerships

- Over 20 events such as the Red Bull Flugtag and the Stratos Jump
- 15 sports teams such as the New York Red Bulls (US Soccer team)

Traditional Publishing

- Their own music label, Red Bull Records
- Creation of feature length movie 'The Art of Flight', costing US\$2m
- Red Bulletin, magazine, global circulation of around 5 million

The list is by no means conclusive, but gives you a sense of the scale at which Red Bull operates. It also makes clear why in 2007 Red Bull went ahead and opened its own fully-fledged publishing arm, Red Bull Media House (RBMH).

RBMH syndicates content too, owning and licensing over 50,000 photos and 5,000 videos of extreme sports. All of their content, by careful planning, is high production quality and evidence of a huge drive to *tell stories*. Every event created and athlete sponsored is a content generating opportunity if planned correctly, giving Red Bull an authority in that space.

Every action is aimed at enhancing the brand story

According to Werner Brell, RBMH managing director, "You can show up with some cash and sponsor an event, sure, but audiences won't admire you for one-off hits. Whenever we did any event, or signed an athlete or executed a project, everything has been put on film or photographed. Stories have been told, it's part of the DNA of the brand."

Every action is planned and aimed at the overall story of the brand. Sponsorships and events have a carefully crafted content strategy aimed at creating unique visuals and stories that stay in the online 'earned' social system for months and years after the event. With groundbreaking content generated from associations such as those with Felix Baumgartner - the man who skydived from the edge of space - can anyone argue that Red Bull are not the kings of creating content and generating an empire of earned media?

So, next time you're at the Cape Town Flugtag, think about all that fantastic content that is being generated in front of you, and how Red Bull will capitalise on it. Who knows, you might even decide to embark on something amazing like this for your own brands or clients...

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I specialise in content marketing and native advertising - two areas that I have been involved in strategically and on a ground level for many years. My media career has spanned a variety of senior roles that have lead me to start my own content agency with my personal vision - one of high quality service, products and innovation. My clients now benefit from and are part of this vision.

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