

# Unlocking The Potential Of The Participation Age



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Technology has irrevocably changed the face of today's consumer and their relationships to the companies they buy from. One of the most significant changes is the way consumers interact, and want to interact, with brands. [Millennials](#) want to feel a personal connection with brands – they don't want to be spoken to, but rather spoken with. We have entered "[The Participation Age.](#)"

Never before have consumers exercised so much control over their own buying journey – choosing their preferred path, what information they will consume, and when, where, and how they interact with brands. At the same time, they have never felt so weighed down by the deluge of content that hits them at every turn. Yesterday's content no longer fits today's buyers, and [marketing](#) teams have to respond accordingly. It's time to trade dissertations for dialogue, inflexibility for interactivity, and passive consumption for engagement.

## The State of the Buyer

Marketers must consider how their buyers' behavior has changed if they hope to meaningfully engage them. The barrage of marketing messaging means that modern consumers have grown adept at filtering out content that is not relevant or captivating. Their attention span has dropped, they complete

most of the sales journey before ever speaking to a rep, and they wish to access interactive/visual content on demand. They have a lower tolerance for fluff and filler, demanding instead direct action and access.

These behaviors, combined with the desire to feel a personal connection to brands, has spurred a growing tidal wave of content creation. 76 percent of marketers say they will produce more content in 2016 than in 2015, and over half plan to increase their marketing spend over the next 12 months. However, 60 percent say producing engaging content is their top challenge.

Why? Because consumers are not interested in irrelevant and/or low quality content. Quality trumps quantity, and more content equates to more clutter. The content treadmill that marketers have run on thus far will not lift conversions in the participation age – an era where custom content will always beat one-size-fits-all. Mass marketing is dead, and targeted, personalized, adaptable content is taking its place. It's time to cut the fat and replace flabby, static content with assets that can bend and flex to the consumer's will.

## **Interact, Interact, Interact**

Given the above trends, two of the most pressing questions facing marketers today are 1) How do you make your content more compelling and customizable for today's consumers? and 2) How do you enable consumers to participate, and feel less overwhelmed and more in control of their buying journey?

The answer is interactive content, which enables readers to choose and change the content they see, transforming static content into engaging, useful digital experiences. This content includes assessments, contests, calculators, multimedia complications, surveys, quizzes, and more. In short, anything that allows the consumer to become an active participant and imparts value. Effective interactive content

provides consumers with real-time customized results that address specific questions, interests or problems. It creates responsive experiences that give them more control – the ability to get more out of what they want, and filter out what they don't want.

For brands, the benefits of interactive content are significant. It leads to higher engagement, demonstrable consumption, higher conversion rates, real brand differentiation, richer measurement, meaningful sales alignment and improved buyer behavior insights. Interactive content converts moderately or very well 70% of the time, which is double the rate for static content.

## **Making Your Content Irresistible**

Before you can increase conversions, you must increase consumption of your content. The best interactive content will have no effect if no-one sees it. Once you have attracted consumer attention, then the challenge is to keep it. There are a number of best practices that promote interactivity and shareability.

First, you want to keep your text bite-sized and get to the point quickly. Tell your story with visuals, and paint clear pictures with your words. It's also important to tailor the copy to your audience. Anticipate questions and provide clear, concise answers. In addition, illustrate your points with stories, metaphors, and engaging examples. Infuse and leverage emotion.

Furthermore, add value to the content with actionable takeaways. And, given the importance of personalization, enable your readers to choose what content they see or ignore. Finally, appeal to different senses and preferences by mixing media formats, including text, graphs, animation, video, and audio.

The participation age is eons away from the consumer era of

even 10 years ago. In this brave new world, interactive content is a marketer's best friend and most potent tool. If you are still stuck running solo on the content treadmill, it's time to get off and invite your customers to join you on a different, more exciting ride. To learn more, [check out this interactive infographic](#).



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