



New Rainmaker

8 Ways a Digital Media Platform is More Influential than Marketing



TRANSCRIPT



Robert Bruce: We've been talking about "media not marketing" in this broadcast quite a bit ... but what does that actually mean, what can it look like?

As you'll hear in a few moments, examples of this done very well throughout the history of media are all around us, it only takes a simple shift in thinking to see them.

But can this approach to building an audience have an actual effect on the bottom line revenue of your business, or is it just more philosophical wordplay?

This is New Rainmaker, from newrainmaker.com. I am Robert Bruce and today Brian Clark lays out eight tenets of creating a digital media strategy — based on storytelling, trust, and teaching — that works to build your business much more powerfully than mere marketing.

Stay tuned ...

Brian Clark: Imagine this scenario.

Two attorneys are chatting against the beautiful tropical backdrop of the Cayman Islands. The elder lawyer suggests to the young rising star that he "grab a Red Stripe," which leads to the selection of the Jamaican-brewed beer from an ice-cold fridge.



So simple ... but it's a powerful association between the "good life" and a particular brand of beer. Did it work?

Within a month, sales of Red Stripe in the United States increased by over 50%. Within a few weeks of that, the company collected a \$62 million payday by selling a majority interest in the brewery to Guinness.

That would be a pretty effective commercial, if it was one. After all, who can afford Tom Cruise and Gene Hackman for a beer commercial?

The scene I described is from the film *The Firm*, an adaptation of the John Grisham novel of the same name. This was not a commercial, but an example of product placement, and a highly effective one at that.

Clearly, American consumers have been hoodwinked into buying expensive Jamaican beer against their will! Except ... the science indicate that's absolutely not true.

Early studies on product integration in entertainment media from the 1990s found that the majority of people are not deceived by the practice, and do not find it objectionable. In fact, compared to being interrupted by a "commercial," people *preferred* product integration in content.

Recent studies confirm the earlier findings, but go a step further in favor of the practice. Consumers see product integration as providing more realistic



narratives, compared to the former practice of props for generic soda, beer, sneakers, and what have you.

Product integration is just one example of a subset in the bigger picture here. Taking a media approach - compared to traditional marketing and advertising - is more influential and effective, not because it tricks anyone, but because it gives people what they want in a format that they prefer.

For starters, you avoid the automatic “tune out” of your commercial message – but it goes much deeper than that. Let’s dive in, and look at eight ways your own digital media platform is more influential than more traditional concepts of marketing.

1. It’s All About the Presentation

Brian Clark: When the main character from 2010’s animated film Megamind confronts wannabe bad guy Titan, he taunts him by saying:

“Oh, you’re a villain all right, just not a SUPER one!”

“Oh yeah?” responds Titan. “What’s the difference?”

“Presentation!” says Megamind, with Guns n’ Roses blaring as he emerges from a giant hologram ... of his own head.



Megamind may be a super villain who ultimately turns good in the end, but his answer is correct - even for consistently “good guy” marketers and digital media producers.

Put simply, media content influences perception and behavior in ways that marketing often can’t ... simply because the commercial aspects are presented differently.

There is ample evidence showing that people psychologically process narrative and educational content differently from promotional and rhetorical information.

In other words, trying to overtly persuade is *less persuasive* than more subtle forms of influence that are presented within content that people *want to pay attention to instead of wanting to tune out*.

This leads to blurred lines between entertainment, education, and persuasion. I would suggest that entertainment and education have always been highly persuasive, and it doesn’t take too long to realize that for yourself.

Some of the things I consider to have had the most influence on how I view the world and make decisions are works of fiction.

What about you?



2. Demonstrate Authority, Don't Claim It

Brian Clark: I've been seeing some low budget commercials on cable lately from a company claiming to be the "small business authority." Call me crazy, but I'm not convinced.

That's like seeing "Social media expert" in the Twitter bio of someone who has 17 followers. If you have to claim it, odds are you aren't it.

That said, actual authority is one of the most powerful forms of influence.

Social psychology studies have long demonstrated the potentially abusive power of authority, and neuroscience reveals the somewhat frightening reason why. Brain scans show that the independent decision-making parts of our brains often shut down when we encounter authoritative advice or direction.

Creating media content establishes authority and expertise by *demonstrating* it for all to see. Even better, as we'll see with the next section, you don't have to claim your expertise – because other people will do it for you in a much more credible way.



3. The Social Proof is in Social Distribution

Brian Clark: Traditional media is all about distribution. The number of theaters, bookstores, or international markets your intellectual property makes it into makes all the difference – and this is usually a function of money, not necessarily quality.

It's long been known that word-of-mouth recommendations from friends, family and news articles are highly trusted. Even the comments of strangers on review sites and online forums are seen as credible sources, rivaling paid advertisements.

Our tendency to follow what others are doing or saying is called *social proof*, and it's the basis of how things spread via social media. It's also another of the most powerful influencers on how we perceive quality, credibility, and propriety

You don't have to go wildly "viral" in order to benefit from social proof and social distribution. Your content turns you into a "social object" that spreads, and that's often more powerful than a network television deal – because the crowd spreads what it likes and finds useful, rather than the best guess of a sheltered media executive.



4. The Give and Get

Brian Clark: Let's say you and I are strangers stuck together doing some task. I excuse myself for a few minutes, and when I return, I've brought you a soft drink.

After we're done with the job, I ask you if you'll buy some raffle tickets from me. Are you more or less likely to comply?

A famous social psychology experiment by Dennis Regan showed that most people would not only buy the tickets, they'd pay more than the value of the free drink they received.

Sounds like a bad deal, but that's how we're wired. The experiment demonstrates the powerful cultural force known as *reciprocity*.

Sociologists maintain that all human societies subscribe to the principle that we are obligated to repay favors, gifts, and invitations. It makes sense, really; reciprocity is at the root of what makes us human, and has allowed us to adapt and progress from primitive tribes into a complex global economy.

You may think that free online content is so ubiquitous that it doesn't spark a feeling of reciprocity. But what we're doing by building a media platform is creating an ongoing relationship with an audience, and that's a very different dynamic.



Regan's experiment further showed that we don't even necessarily need to like the person in order to feel obligated to reciprocate. So imagine if they do like you!

5. You Really, Really Like Me

Brian Clark: In my previous life as a litigation attorney, I recognized early on the truth in Clarence Darrow's famous quote: "The main work of a trial attorney is to make a jury like his client."

I saw first hand that how the jury *felt* about the client was more important than the law, the evidence, or even the objective truth. You've likely witnessed the same thing yourself with a few infamous celebrity trials.

Simply put, we like to do business with people we like. And there are multiple reasons why we like people – physical attractiveness, similarity, familiarity, and even simply because they give us compliments.

With that I'd like to pause for a moment here and say that you're all smart, wonderful people. Thanks for listening.

When creating media content to grow your business, the key to likability comes down to two things:

- A relentless focus on helping *them*.



- A relatable, even fallible human voice.

That's not to say that everyone will like you. They won't.

But that's a good thing ... because that gives you the opportunity to be really well liked, and even loved, by a smaller and much more enthusiastic audience.

6. The Digital Foot in the Door

Brian Clark: Leonardo Da Vinci said, "It's easier to resist at the beginning than at the end."

Let me give you an example of that.

Author [Richard Wiseman](#) tells the story of researchers who asked homeowners if they would place a huge sign in the front yard that said "Please drive carefully." Everyone said no.

The researchers then asked a second group of homeowners if they'd place the same message in their front yard, but this time on a much smaller sign. Almost everyone agreed.

Two weeks later, the researchers returned and asked those agreeable homeowners to switch out the small sign for the huge one. 76% said yes!



This is the psychological influence principle known as commitment and consistency, or the “foot in the door effect.” Essentially, we tend to act consistently in light of our prior commitments and actions.

It’s hardly surprising that people strive to appear consistent, especially in social, political and business contexts. A high degree of consistency is associated with intelligence and character, while a lack of consistency indicates flightiness and a lack of integrity.

This is important when you think of the successive conversion steps that a prospect takes by coming into your audience on the way to customer or client. Each of these steps is a further commitment of trust and belief in you, and each satisfactory step in turn transforms you from a choice to the only logical choice.

7. Tell Me a Story

Brian Clark: Storytelling is one of the most amazing forms of influence. Tell the right “big” story (which is a story your prospect wants to hear, but doesn’t know it yet), and your business takes off.

Granted, advertisers use storytelling all the time. That’s because at the neurochemical level, [fascinating things happen](#) during the experience of reading, hearing, or watching a story.



During the conflict stage of a story, cortisol is released, which causes distress and heightens attention. Then, Oxytocin is produced, which intensifies feelings of connection and empathy.

Powerful stuff. Psychologists have long known that storytelling mentally takes people to another place, which is referred to as *transportation* – and the characteristics of that transport are exactly the effects of cortisol and oxytocin!

Stories capture attention and allow people to persuade themselves, and that's what it's really all about. You might say that we never convince anyone of anything—we simply help others independently decide that we're right.

Do everything you can to tell better stories with a media-first approach, and you'll find that you are a terribly persuasive person. And unlike advertisers, you have permission to contact your audience with a new story all the time.

8. Educate to Influence

Brian Clark: When you think about it, teachers are some of the most influential people on the planet. Anyone who teaches you something by creating understanding and knowledge has changed the way you think forever.

When creating content that builds a business, you're naturally educating. You'll definitely throw in some entertainment for engagement, but haven't your best



teachers always done that?

But think about this – the way you treat your “students” will also influence how they ultimately utilize the information you provide. A landmark study from 1964 showed that if teachers had been led to expect greater gains in IQ from certain students, then increasingly, those kids gained more IQ – because the teacher treated those students differently in subtle ways.

What if your “marketing” strategy is essentially to become the best teacher possible? Wouldn’t that be the better way to be regarded, as opposed to the person who “sold” the other person something?

Transparency For the Win

Brian Clark: When you take in the eight items above as a whole, it seems like there is a whole lot of potential for under-the-radar, super villain evil. Is that the goal?

No, because what I’ve been talking about here is all about trust. You’re doing this not to deceive, but to get prospects to *trust you enough to believe your promises*.

Some of the most successful content marketers (including us) around are highly transparent ... instead of trying to pretend they’re not ultimately selling something. Because people aren’t stupid, and as long as you’re providing value in the process, they don’t mind.



Let's come full circle with an example, this time about one of the earliest, and most successful product placements in film.

In 1982, the producer of a little film in development called *E.T.* contacted Mars, Inc. The idea was to have M&Ms become a certain extraterrestrial's favorite Earth candy. Mars, despite its interplanetary moniker, infamously said no.

So, the producers went to Hershey, who smartly said yes for its Reese's Pieces, which was far from a "thing" in the world of candy at the time. What you may not know is that Hershey didn't pay a dime for Reese's Pieces to appear in the film.

Rather than fly under-the-radar, however, Hershey's agreed to something else. The candy company staked \$1 million to advertise the film, while celebrating the alien's choice of candy.

In other words, Hershey made sure that everyone knew about the deal. Sales of Reese's Pieces shot up by 85%.

Robert Bruce: Thanks for listening to New Rainmaker.

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