2018 Marketing Trends
User-Generated Content Report
We recently surveyed marketing and business professionals to better understand how brands are leveraging user-generated content (UGC) to market to customers and prospects. The results are in and over 500 organizations responded with insights on the role UGC plays in their business, the challenges it helps brands overcome, and how UGC is integrated into marketing efforts.

The survey was split between two groups: 42% of respondents being TINT users and 58% made up of non-TINT users in marketing and branding related fields. For TINT users, this research offers benchmarks on how other companies are leveraging TINT to achieve success. Marketers, in general, will be interested to know that their peers reported user-generated content has had an impact in three key areas: humanizing marketing, boosting social media metrics, and supporting marketing campaigns.

This data intersection generated many answers that directly inform current and future marketing best-practices. For instance, 75% of respondents agree that user-generated content makes marketing more authentic, strongly suggesting that even for those not using a solution like TINT, the need for authentic content marketing is greater than ever. And with 41% of marketing professionals ranking content engagement as their top KPI, the data reveals a trend towards UGC taking on a larger role in 2018 marketing strategies.

Read on to discover the insights from the survey.

TINT would like to thank everyone that participated in the survey.
The Roles Invested in User-Generated Content

As mentioned in the abstract, responses from this survey stemmed from two groups. TINT users and a segment of marketing professionals familiar with user-generated content marketing. Typically, we found that the job roles most invested in user-generated content are those whose positions find major benefit from earned media, promotion gained organically at no cost or online word-of-mouth.

Across both surveyed groups we saw similar occupations, with social media managers/coordinators and marketing managers the 2nd and 3rd most common lines of work. The most common role, or the “other” in this case, was project managers—which makes sense considering the extra content and impressions UGC can give PMs in agencies and educational departments.

Analysis

It is no surprise that all levels and ranges of marketers use TINT or have a vested interested in UGC. Research on user-generated content has consistently pointed towards higher engagement rates and conversions for organizations that leverage this earned media.

For marketers, UGC provides practical value in the form of higher quality content at scale, meaning that content marketing efforts through social or specific campaigns can be more easily supported.
The key to illuminating the investment in UGC as a marketing practice or in TINT as a solution was identifying where these groups focus their daily efforts. Increasing engagement was overwhelmingly the main priority for both respondent types—with 25% of TINT users and 22% of marketing professionals selecting it as their main focus on the job. This priority is closely followed by increasing awareness and creating content.

Analysis

While both groups agreed on the top three priorities, there was a slight discrepancy in the importance of content for TINT users. It was rated higher at 18% as opposed to non-TINT users at 15%. For the latter group, content creation just barely inched out over increasing awareness. This divide between the two groups raises the question of why TINT users hold content creation in higher regard. From use-cases, the implication is that TINT users are more likely to adhere to the concept that content boosts both awareness and engagement.
Both groups overwhelmingly chose engagement as their number one key performance indicator (KPI). This metric was selected as the primary number tracking performance over follower counts, impressions, and even lead totals.

Analysis

Engagement as the metric that matters most for marketers and TINT users alike strongly suggests a few possibilities. One is that UGC in these companies is an effective top of the funnel and inbound tool. Displaying user-generated content at first and second customer touchpoints makes it easy to generate the impressions and engagements needed to hit monthly or quarterly goals. It may also be the case that social and display content at these companies has not yet been fully integrated with middle and bottom of the funnel.
Concerns on the Job

Lack of content and time stand out here as top concerns for both groups. While poor performance topped the list for the general marketing group and came in third for TINT users, we realize the generality of that particular choice could prove unreliable.

Analysis

Lack of content points to modern marketing’s emphasis on content. With traditional advertising and demand gen tactics becoming increasingly ineffective, marketers are turning towards SEO, social, and content as methods for attracting, converting, and retaining customers. The main reason we’ve seen this pivot is that when content marketing is done right it is perceived as authentic by prospects and customers.

Lack of time highlights the need for modern marketing to keep pace with the internet’s cadence. Prospects and customers are inundated with online content everyday. The challenge is having enough time to cut through the noise with quantity or quality. With extra time, marketers have the ability to produce more or higher quality content, freeing marketers up to think strategically.
Top Challenges UGC Can Help Marketers Overcome

While displaying user-generated content digitally and offline were the top responses for TINT users, the power of UGC for the second group was found in humanizing marketing, increasing social media metrics, and supporting marketing campaigns.

Analysis

These responses illuminate the untapped impact UGC can have on all parts of the marketing funnel. TINT users highlighted the features that provide them the most benefit. But generally both groups are in alignment: with humanize marketing, increase social media metrics, and support marketing campaigns all selected as top choices. That tells us that user-generated content can have an impact beyond the top of the funnel.

As a brand tool, it can be effective in connecting with customers. For social media and community managers, there are great possibilities to boost more than impressions. And for the revenue focused marketer, there’s the ability to support demand gen campaigns.
The Power of User-Generated Content in Marketing

Over 50% of both groups agreed that UGC is helpful to marketers. And over 40% of both groups considered user-generated content invaluable to those in marketing roles. These statistics pair nicely with the data that over 70% of both groups agree that UGC makes marketing content more authentic.

Authentic content has been proven to produce increased engagement and conversions. For instance, Nielson Global reports 92% of people are more likely to trust a recommendation from another person over branded content, suggesting that the authentic approach to content is a best-practice approach. So as marketing continues to deal with a lack of time and the need to generate engagement, UGC will likely become increasingly “invaluable” for more marketers.

Analysis

How valuable do you think UGC is to marketers?

![Graph showing the value of UGC to TINT Users and Marketing Professionals]

Which of these statements do you agree with?

- User-generated content makes marketing more authentic.
  - 80% of TINT Users
  - 73% of Marketing Professionals

- User-generated content humanizes marketing.
  - 48% of TINT Users
  - 52% of Marketing Professionals

- User-generated content makes marketing more authentic.
The variety of responses for how UGC is or can be utilized bodes well for the marketing practice. From demand gen emails to presentations to marketing campaign support, marketers have used or can conceive of ways to leverage earned media across multiple areas of the marketing funnel.

Analysis
The omni-channel potential for UGC is extremely promising with social media managers, project managers, and marketers voting on a diverse mix of marketing applications. Although some users do not utilize TINT across various channels, customer research shows that this is due to the platform’s inbound effectiveness, intelligently analyzing the highest performing content for events, social, and web displays. However, 65% of TINT users were able to leverage the tool for marketing activities beyond display purposes.

All in all, the omni-channel applications for UGC are expected when you consider ComScore’s research that brand engagement rises by 28% when consumers are exposed to a mixture of professional marketing content and user-generated content.
Areas of Opportunity

The general conclusions that can be surmised from these responses is that user-generated content can be an effective inbound tool and shows great promise as a method for supporting mid and bottom of the funnel efforts. More specifically, the data reveals the following five areas of opportunity that brands should be aware of in regards to user-generated content marketing:

1. UGC is an excellent way to supplement content marketing efforts with an extra source of higher quality images and video, reducing time demands on marketers and the reliance on ineffective stock imagery.

2. As you develop your 2018 marketing plan, consider that in 2017 marketers focused their efforts on these three key activities: increasing engagement, creating content, and increasing awareness.

3. Marketers today have less time to accomplish their goals and are expected to keep pace with an ever increasing demand for content, making content creation platforms a competitive advantage for professionals with these challenges.

4. The majority of marketers think that user-generated content has omni-channel applications, extending beyond display content to email marketing, presentations, microsites, and campaign support.

5. 75% of marketers and TINT users agree that UGC makes marketing more authentic, suggesting that leveraging earned media is increasingly becoming best practice.