



Online Brand Success:
Why Authenticity Now Matters to Google
Presented to UWIT, October 24, 2013

Think about your favorite story. For most of us it's probably going to be a story from our childhood.

Think about that story for a minute (...)

What was it that made you connect with that story?

STORY OF RED CLAY SOAP
www.redclaysoap.com

So why do I bring up stories? We're talking about stories because the way in which advertisers and marketers view businesses – notably businesses online – is shifting. And for our discussion, we're not referring so much to large, online corporations like Wal-Mart or Amazon. What we're talking about are the newbies to the field. The new businesses. Small businesses. Perhaps the start-up company with big ideas. Businesses wishing to make it online need to realize that the “newness” of the online space is fading away, and need to focus more on who they are – on their story – as much, if not more – than HOW they market.

Rewind to the late 90s and early 2000s and website content was about one thing: the keyword.

(INSERT SCREENSHOT OF 1999 WEBSITE)

Words were important and words were king. Even when photos were at play it was still about naming those photos, alt tagging, adding description, embedding keywords. Words, words, words. And don't get me wrong. These things are still important. But what do you do when someone is rambling? When someone is carrying on and on and on? You tune them out. You look for something more interesting in the room. The same is happening online. Lauded and boastful keywords are being silenced by two elusive items even more important: experience and meaning. And Google knows this.

Keywords used to make up the entire house. Today, keywords function as a strong foundation, and what's inside the home is very important.

TWO SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT

KEYWORD BASED THINKING: PRODUCT >> SALES >> MARKETING

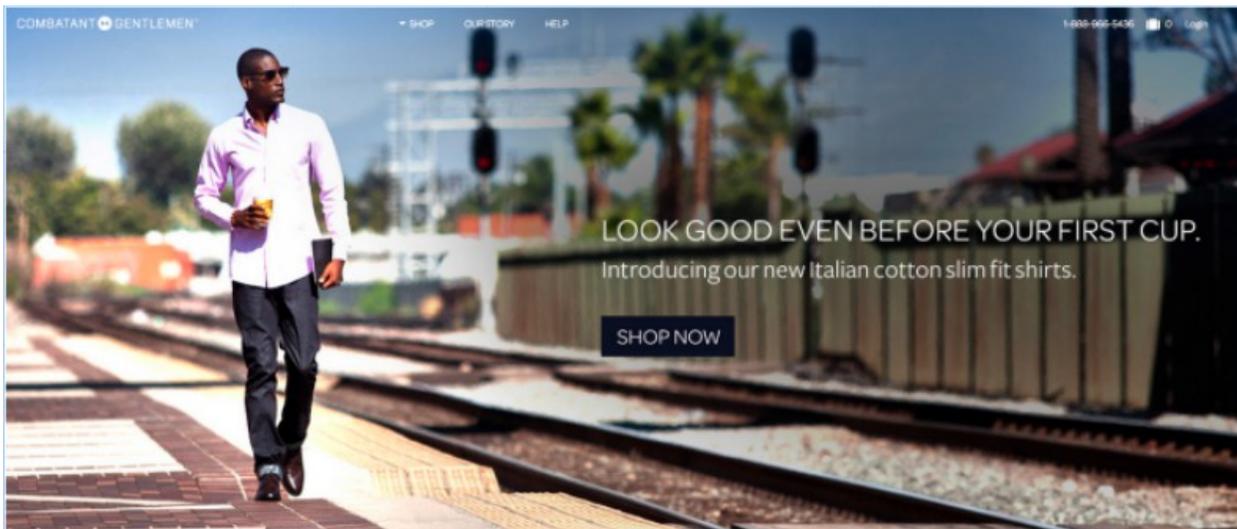
STORY BASED THINKING: PERSONAL >> APPROACHABLE >> RELATABLE

- Lessons for Other Businesses
 - No longer competing product to product
 - What Should I Buy >> Why Should I Buy

Google knows that technology has changed. And more than technology, the way we search has changed. We now search with expectations, desires, entitlement. When it comes to small business websites, what we're seeing is a shift away from providing objects and information, to experience and meaning.

Companies must now begin to think of websites in the same manner we think of offline, brick and mortar retail establishments. Why? Because that's good business. When you walk into a store, you have expectations of what the sales experience will be like. We want to easily navigate the store, find our item, not be bothered by overbearing staff, and have a smooth and quick checkout process. The same is true online. Our definition of "content" now extends beyond the text to encompass the buying experience. Are buttons easily visible, are menus easy to navigate, was the checkout process seamless? What was once a landscape dominated by keywords, search engine ranking is beginning to consider the overall experience and usability of a website.

(WHY COMBATANT GENTLEMAN WORKS)



Here's a great example of a company that eliminates frills, thinks about their target, and offers a seamless experience. www.combatantgent.com. They only offer three suits and a limited number of shirts and ties. The line on their website reads, "We get it. You need a suit that will cover all the bases, but won't leave you eating ramen noodles for the rest of the month." The layout of the website matches their belief about suits. Quality in simplicity.

METHOD VS. MEANING

The more technology is integrated into our lives, the less it is seen as a tool and the more it is seen as a part of who we are. The marketing shift then is to focus less on the product, and more on how the product lets us live our our lives.

Think about car commercials today. Cars have been around for over 100 years. Marketers don't need to talk about what a car does, how the engine works. Everyone understands the concept of cars.

Commercials then, don't reflect the mechanics of a car, as much as they reflect us living our lives. Yes, there are some selling points that still relay on tech, but even then, the lure of the horsepower is not in the power itself, but in the way it makes us feel. Passion, emotion, engagement – these things will always compel more than statistics. *Even when statistics are used, while the numbers may grab our attention, it is the way we FEEL about the numbers that causes us to think on the topic.* This car has big horsepower – I can go fast. I can dominate. This car has leather seats, I feel luxurious.

Here are some very non-tech words to describe the changing face of online: transparent, honest, emotional, shareable, accessible. These are buzzwords being used to talk about companies both online and offline.

- The Google Shift
 - Information and Objects >> Inspiration and Meaning
 - Web no longer just a resource
 - SEO moving to holistic view of websites, rather than keywords
 - Content is more than text
 - How do people search vs. What are people looking for

TECHNOLOGY VS. NOSTALGIA

(MADMEN CLIP OF KODAK CAROUSEL) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cT0d-ISXH5Q>

Crafting a story, formulating a connection, sparking memories will always create a greater bond with a product than merely speaking ABOUT the product.