

## DOES YOUR BUSINESS SPEAK HUMAN?

Your loyal and returning customers know a good thing when they see it. But, what about your *potential* customers? Each day, we're bombarded with various images and messages. As a result, we've trained ourselves to block out the "noise". Your potential customers don't care about your products or services... yet. If you want them to care, you have to stand out. While there's plenty of great advice on the impact of *content* marketing, business owners can take that one step further by thinking about *conversation* marketing.

"Conversation marketing is a one-to-one approach that companies use to shorten their sales cycle, learn about their customers, and create a more human buying experience," says author and CEO Kevin Lund.

By "speaking human", you can engage your customers and build brand loyalty.

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## TESTIMONIALS

"I want to thank you and your magazine for our recent renovation. We used local contractors that have advertised in your magazine to do a large renovation to our home."

– Deb M.

### Don't Follow the Crowd

No need to stick with one approach. Several paths can lead a customer to your business. "Those who are successful at conversation marketing understand [it's] not simply about propagating online content and sharing through social media accounts," Lund says.

Let's face it: running a business can be challenging. It can be very tempting to stick to a single marketing strategy – or avoid marketing altogether. The best way to share your business is to know your business. What makes your company so great? Why did you start it? Once you know those answers, try to convey them in a relatable, down-to-earth way. Remember, your repeat customers stick with you for a reason, and potential customers are looking for the same. You're talking to real people, not robots.

### Tell a Story

For Lund, conversation marketing is "a disciplined approach to communicating with a target audience in a way that tells a simple, human story that will educate, inform, entertain."



Good conversations are often filled with effective stories and anecdotes. Just think of your favorite companies and their marketing messages. Are they about freedom? Security? Innovation? If you can tap into a deep emotional need, you're on the right track!



### Learn to Listen

"Companies must stop talking 'at' their customers and, instead, connect with them by simply speaking human," Lund says.

A conversation is a two-way street. Too often, marketers focus on how great they (or their company) are. With conversation marketing, the top priority is your customers' needs – not your ego! Listen to your audience. Learn their likes and dislikes. Stay committed to your marketing, pay attention to the feedback, then use it to hone your marketing message.



At BVM, we have all kinds of opportunities for advertisers to meet the needs of their communities (and customers) in unique, relatable ways. One way is through our Expert Contributor program, designed for the business owner to invite the community into a conversation with that business owner in their area of expertise. These articles are a great vehicle for building a meaningful relationship between the customer and the business because they center on the "why" of both the needs of the customer and the business owner's desire to provide the community with their expertise.