

PERSONALIZATION IN MARKETING

The Art of Being Relevant

Erika Stenson

“You just watched *Teletubbies*. You might also enjoy *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* or *Barney’s Christmas Special*.”

We’ve all been targeted. Whether on Netflix, Amazon or Facebook, savvy marketers are using customized experiences to speak to their audiences. These organizations use specific algorithms to create targeted, relevant content, based on specific criteria. And you thought they were just being helpful.

Identifying your target audiences and getting to know your visitors are the first steps in creating customized experiences. Intercepts, case studies, visitor surveys, and website analytics can provide you with important information about the people you want to engage.

I recently attended the BCMA 2015 Conference and hosted a table talk about breakthrough marketing. The two key takeaways I hoped I imparted upon the group were 1) ensure you understand your organization’s strategy because without that you have no idea what you are actually marketing. And 2) you have to have a clear understanding of who your target audience is (and the two better align!).

Marketing today is all about the customer (or in our case, the “visitor”).

Visitors want engagement before they physically come to see you. Visitors want to know that you understand their interests and can deliver on what you promise.



Above: Royal BC Museum Twitter account screenshot.

And because everyone is on social media and sharing their thoughts instantly, it's critical to ensure you're matching experiences in the real world with your online engagement, and that these experiences are always linking back to your target audience. It means shifting your thinking away from what is relevant for you, to what is relevant for your audience. They aren't always the same thing.

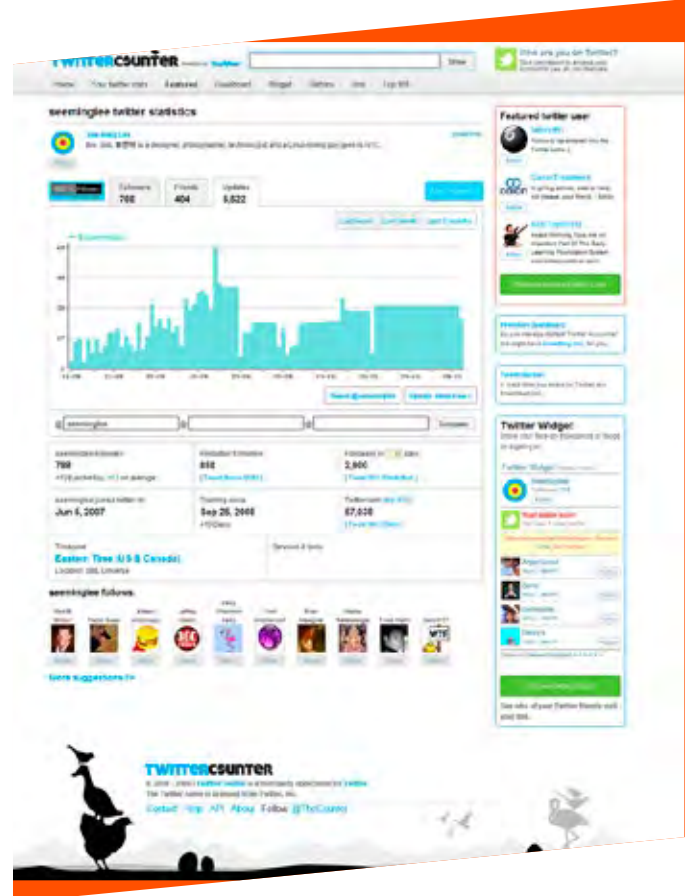
Visitors are changing how they make their buying decisions, and we must adapt with them (which is hard for us museum-folks, we hate change!). **Recent studies** have shown that human beings' attention spans have dropped to eight seconds - less than a gold fish. That means you have less than eight seconds to impress and delight, regardless of whether you are trying to reach your visitor through digital mediums or traditional advertising. These scattered attention spans mean visitors are bouncing between platforms and mediums and that traditional marketing methods designed to raise awareness may be failing to meet the needs of your audience.

The axiom still applies, people need to see or hear a message at least three times before they retain it.

So, how do we do it? We all have limited budgets, human resources and are multitasking as it is. I am reminded of a Henry Ford quote I heard years ago, "A company that stops marketing to save money is akin to a company that stops the clock to save time." Marketing (driving visitor engagement) is important to the health of our organizations.

But it needn't be complicated or expensive. You can leverage the tools you already have and keep it simple.

Ensure your website is set up with analytics (Google Analytics is free). Understand where your visi-



tors are coming from, how they track through your site, what pages they stay on and what pages they leave from.

Add a form for online users to opt in to receive information from you. Use this database, along with your membership database and social media followers, to survey and collect data on your audiences. There are a number of online survey tools that are free or almost free that tabulate the response data for you.

Meet your visitors where they are. This applies to traditional and new media. Mass marketing in the daily newspaper isn't going to drive engagement, especially when you have a limited budget. Where do your visitors live? Is there a neighbourhood with a particularly large group of your target audience?

Above: Royal BC Museum Twitter Counter.
Photo credit: Flickr user See-ming Lee

Focus on those. Traditional mediums, like direct mail and transit shelter advertising, can still be very effective, if they are targeted. Combine targeted traditional mediums with specific online initiatives like YouTube pre-roll, native advertising or Adwords, and you can get in front of your target group with relevant messaging again and again.

Look for opportunities to allow your audiences to share. They want to share their ideas and experiences with you and you should respond. Social media like Twitter and Facebook are important. But they are setup to provide opportunities for conversation. If you don't respond, you are sunk. It can be difficult to stay on top of these mediums.

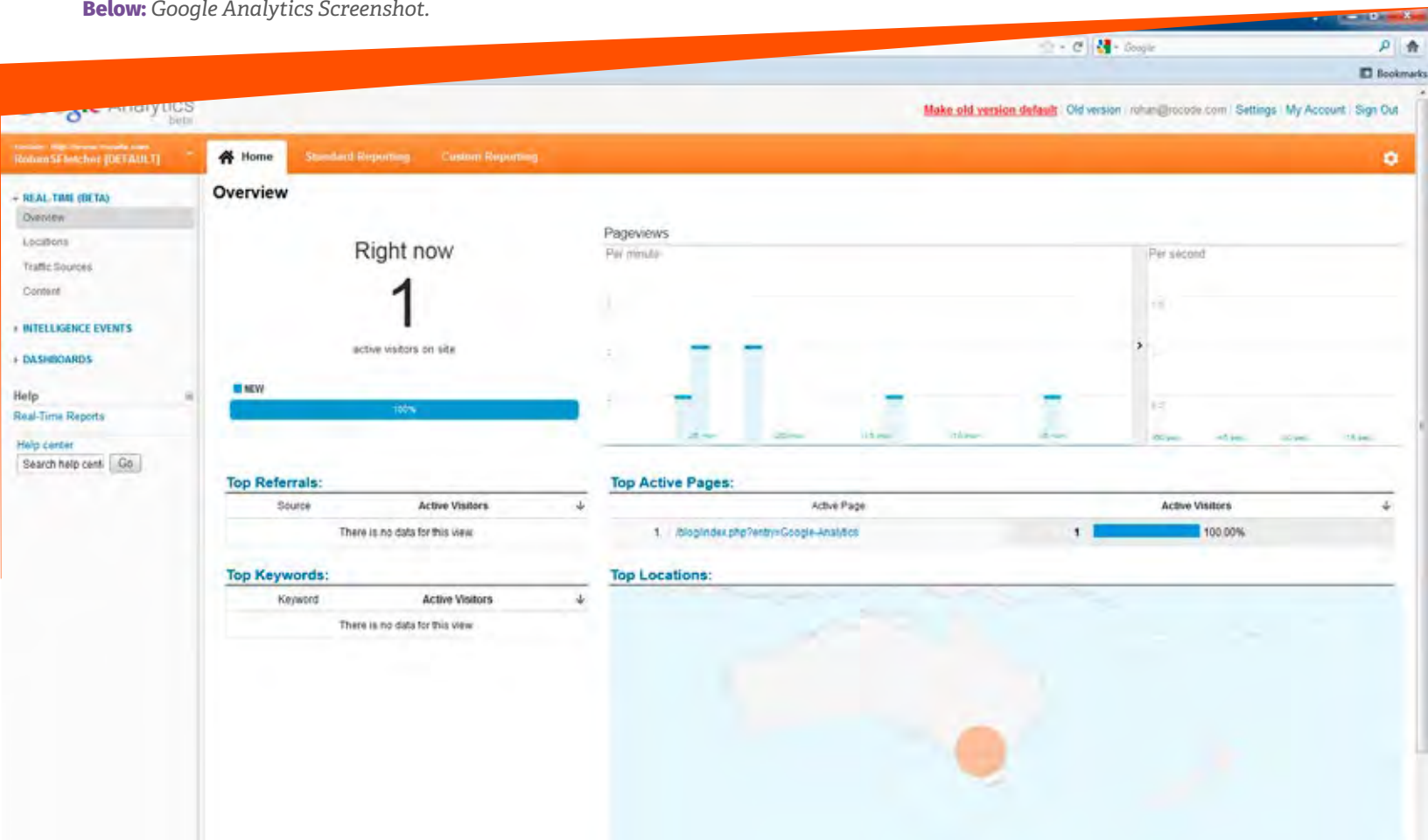
Understand which social media platforms your target audiences are engaged in and concentrate on those. You can't do it all, so pick one or two and do them well.

Below: Google Analytics Screenshot.

Focus on sharing content, responding to questions and challenges and encourage your followers to start conversations. Still need help? Get social media savvy volunteers working for you. It's also a great way to engage youth in your museum.


It is also important to understand that social media is *not* a meaningful source of direct traffic to sales conversion. In fact, according to an [online article by Jay Baer](#), social media represents only 1.55% of all ecommerce traffic and conversion rates are less than three quarters of one percent. BUT social media is additive in the conversion funnel. Social media is the new word-of-mouth. And word-of-mouth is part of 80% of all purchase decisions.

Online marketing channels take time to develop. A well-curated YouTube channel or Facebook page can turn into a hub of conversation, ideas and engagement, but none of it occurs without carefully building a following.




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Above: Britannia Mine YouTube Screenshot.

Let's not forget about traditional media. It's easy to talk about engagement, content and personalization in the digital form but what about print or broadcast advertising? This is where it is so important to understand what makes your audiences tick. What publications are they reading and what sections of those publications are the most important? What shows are they watching or listening to? Your message needs to resonate with your target group. What problem or need are you solving for them? Breaking through and "personalization" in traditional media means answering that question. Your message needs to be valuable to the minds that receive it.

Personalization is about being relevant to your visitor. It is about looking at what you do from their side and meeting them where they live. Engaging, monitoring and asking questions are key to driving

a successful marketing program. If you don't know who your target audience is and what they value, you may be wasting the small amount of resources you have.

Erika Stenson is the Head of Marketing, Sales and Business Development at the Royal BC Museum. Stenson is an alumnus of Harvard Business School, a communications and advertising accredited professional, and has a diploma in applied communications. Stenson served a two-year term on BCMA Council from 2013-2015 and sits on the BCMA Finance Committee.

