

What content curation can do for your business—and three things it can't

Content curation is the act of continually identifying, selecting and sharing the best and most relevant online content and other resources on a specific subject to match the needs of a specific audience. By “content and other resources,” I am talking about links to articles, blog posts, videos, photos, tools, tweets and more, published elsewhere. Just as gallery curators collect the best art to showcase, content curators uncover the most valuable and relevant content to share on their sites.

Content curation isn't necessarily anything new. Content aggregation—the harvesting of links to content—is what powers services like Yahoo! News and Google News. Finding extraordinary stuff (or extraordinary deals) to share online with an audience is what sites like CoolHunting.com and LikeCool.com do, what bloggers have long done, what so many of us do on Twitter already, or what aggregators and social sharing sites like Alltop or StumbleUpon have been doing for a while.

But content curation is emerging as a specialty of its own. Unlike automated aggregation, curation includes a human element: Human editors add their own organizing and filtering skills—and, well, judgment—to the process. At the same time, curation services like Curata, Eqentia and Pearltrees offer the ability to intelligently and quickly aggregate real-time content based on specific search terms—kind of like a hunter-gatherer on steroids.

Content curation can fit into an organization's content strategy nicely. By finding, filtering and sharing the timeliest, most relevant and most stimulating content, curation can help to establish an organization as an authority and thought leader, and as a resource to its audience. Sifting through a pile of web content, finding the tastiest, choicest bits for your readers, is a great way to build trust and authority with them and to

become a valuable resource on a particular topic. They'll rely on you to filter the best stuff so they don't have to hunt it down themselves.

What's more, for organizations just beginning to generate content—say, for those just starting a blog or a microsite—curated content allows them to ramp up quickly, both from an SEO (search engine optimization) and a content perspective.

So that's what it is, or what it could be for your business. But to do it well, it's important to remember what curation isn't.

If you are thinking that you can rely on content curation rather than create and publish original content, here's a recommendation:

Don't.

of your own publishing efforts.

Second, curation isn't an automated fix. Using curated content doesn't mean you have an automated machine spewing out content like Dr. Seuss's Eight-Nozzled Elephant-Toted Boom Blitz (although that machine spewed sour cherry stone pits, not blog posts). You still need a human at the helm of your content efforts. Content requires the deft touch of a real, live human editor to pick and choose and order and comment on the best stuff for your audience. As with any kind of content, warm-blooded humans make all the difference.

Finally, it isn't aggregating. The real opportunity of curating content is in adding your own two cents to the content created elsewhere—to give it context, to add meaning and ultimately to deepen a reader's understanding of the material. If you aren't adding anything new to curated content, you're not a curator. You're just an aggregator. •



about the author

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