



WHITE RHINO

5 Ways to Keep BS Out of Your Marketing

By Irina Muradian



“Built around best-in-class CRM, commerce and industry solutions, we offer the most complete, cloud-enabled customer experience solution in the industry, creating an environment where companies can definitively differentiate themselves across all channels, touch points, and interactions...”

Did this sentence just give you some serious heartburn? Go ahead and admit that it made you glaze over and stare into the distance in the middle of reading it. Did it tell you anything you needed to know about a product or service? Nope, not really – a classic scratch your head and think “huh?” moment.

Hey, it happens to the best of us – we occasionally find ourselves “efficiently extending leading-edge platforms” and “leveraging turnkey solutions.” We’ve all been there because it’s hard to resist when you’re in a rush to get out that 35th email of the day.

Research has shown that people skip over marketing jargon. It’s essentially meaningless, despite the persistent belief that the buzzwords add credibility to the content, like some sort of secret handshake between a company and its customer – “you know what I am talking about, right?” (wink, wink).

It’s not easy to consistently churn out clear, compelling content. But it’s critical to do in this age of miniscule attention spans and information overload.

So, let’s burn some bridges, scatter the ashes, say some magic voodoo...or just consider these few tenets that will help your audience fall in love with your content. Bonus: examples of companies that do it brilliantly.

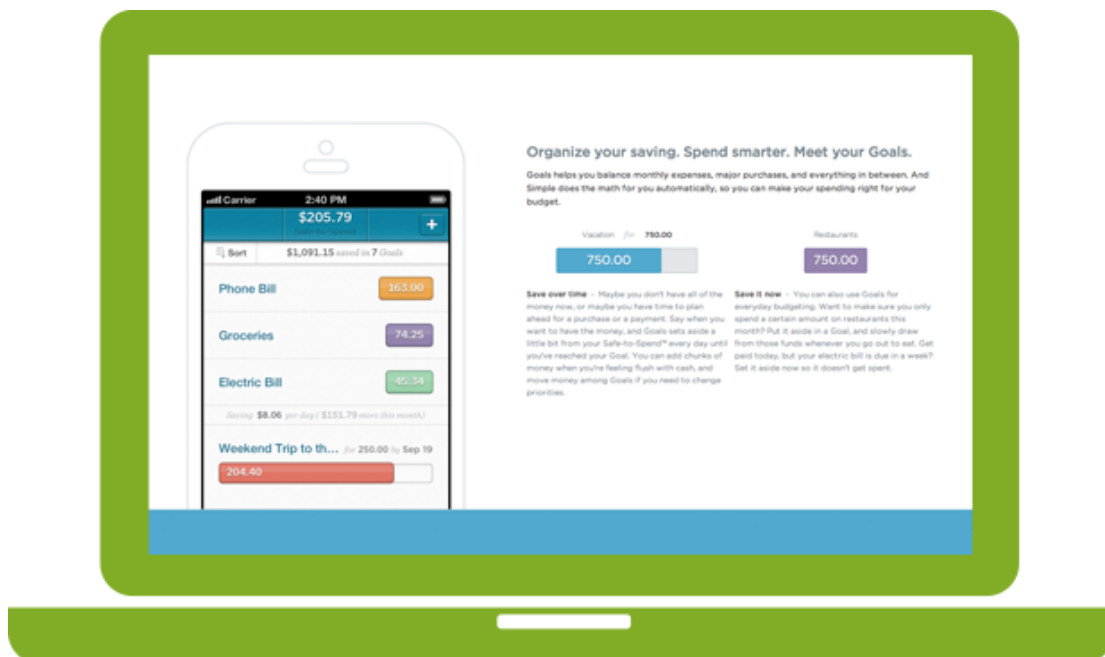


1. MAKE IT SIMPLE. CLEAR. HUMAN.

People get frustrated when they don't understand what you're talking about. Think back to how your family yawns when you talk about a scintillating work project you're working on. They hear your industry lingo and start backing away slowly while smiling. Same thing happens on the web. When people scan copy and start to drift off a few sentences in, they may bolt for a better alternative.

Case in point: banks with personality are a rarity. Most of their websites are drowning in generic marketing slogans and confusing industry jargon.

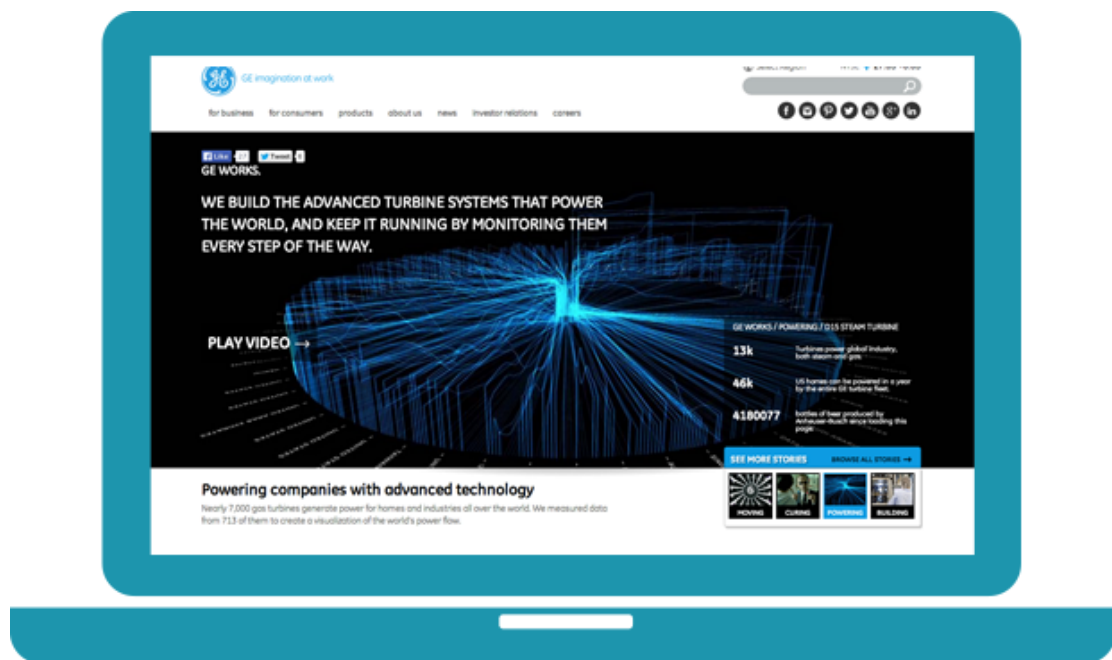
Example: Enter Simple Bank out of Portland, Oregon (www.simple.com). This bank lives up to its name and keeps its content brief, easy to understand and follow. The result – you voraciously read through the site since you understand 100% of what is being talked about. Nice design doesn't hurt, either.



2. MAKE IT USEFUL.

“I love fluffy, vague content that sends me on a wild goose chase to find what I came looking for!” said no user, ever. When we scour the Internet, we look for substance – typically, the answer to a question. Help people quickly understand what you’re about and offer value they can immediately take advantage of and they’ll love you for it.

Example: GE (www.ge.com) does a brilliant job of offering quick, clear and relevant product or technology information. Then they package it into a stunning visual wrapper (the icing on the cake).



3. MAKE IT FUN.

You can write about product features until you're blue in the face. But people retain information the best when they are entertained and involved.

Find a way for your customers to actually interact with your content. Make it fun, magnetic and make them feel in control of it. The emotions they'll feel during that experience will go a long way in building trust with your brand.

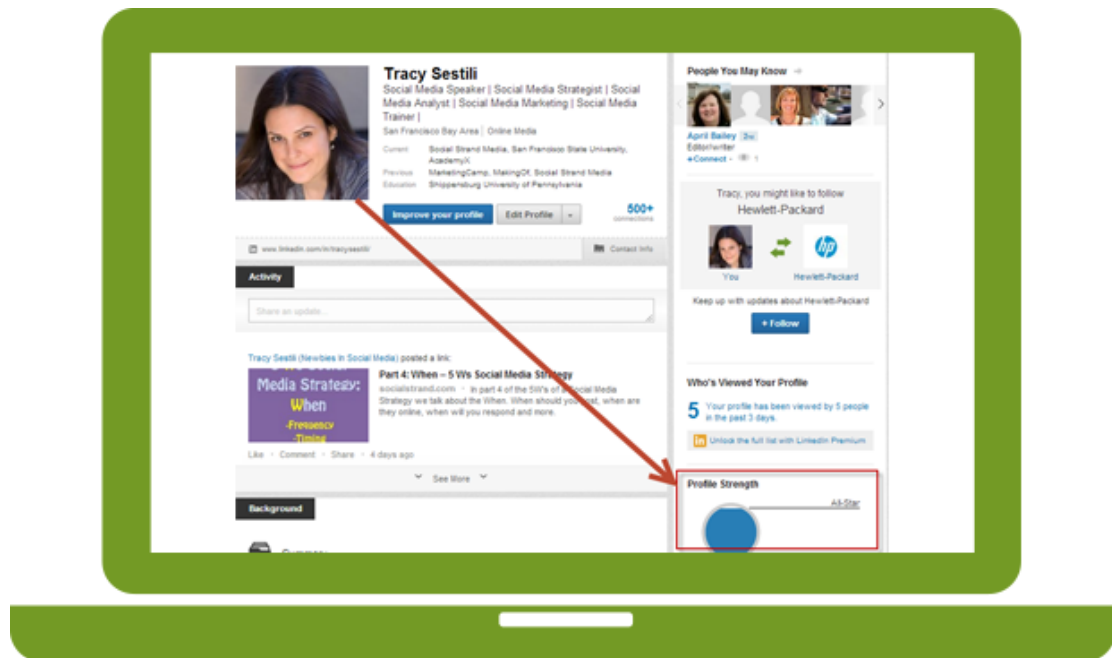
Example: Turning 200 years old doesn't have to age you one bit if you have plenty to celebrate. Massachusetts General Hospital (Mass General) has two centuries worth of mind-blowing medical milestones. To share and celebrate this wealth of achievements with its larger global audiences, Mass General created a 3D digital experience called "Mass General In Focus". The experience (<http://www.massgeneral.org/about/infocus/>) offers a highly interactive and engaging way for site visitors to explore the amazing work done at the hospital.



4. MAKE IT ADDICTIVE.

We all have someone in our lives who's a hard-core video gamer, ready to play day and night with no interruption. What makes video games so addictive and hard to abandon? Research shows that we're all born with the desire to play games. It's in our DNA. How can we turn this innate desire into a powerful marketing tool? The answer lies in using game mechanics to appeal and drive desired behaviors. Throw rewards into the mix and your marketing has just become irresistible.

Example: LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com) has this mastered. From a never-ending challenge to users to improve their profiles to the I'll-endorse-you-then-you-endorse-me game, these guys transformed business networking by playing up our collective desire to be recognized and recommended by peers.



5. MAKE IT ABOUT THEM.

Me, me, me - we all love talking about ourselves. While it's very tempting to go on and on about how awesome our company, product or service is (let's face it, we're only human), it's infinitely more valuable to focus on your customer instead. What keeps them up at night? What makes them jump with joy? Make your story about them and how you'll make their lives better. Spark that visceral emotional charge and the person on the other side of the screen will feel connected to your brand.

Example: The field of advanced X-ray inspection systems is pretty crowded yet many companies in this business sector tout the same thing— superior technology and advanced product features. American Science and Engineering (www.as-e.com) stands out by celebrating and supporting their customers – the true unsung heroes who feel a powerful responsibility to serve and protect their countries from dangerous security threats every day.

