Content Hubs Are Here

The secret to a long and prosperous life in publishing

an eBook by

Scoop.it!

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SPECIAL FEATURE

The content hub look book

Toast?
This eBook is dedicated to the millions of exhausted content marketers among us.

Failure: it actually is an option

Thousands of companies join the content marketing parade every day.

Thousands more bail. Or fail.

Know why?

Few have the resources to stay the course. They all had good intentions and high aspirations.

Like you, they understood if they consistently published the valuable content readers actually want to read, watch, listen to and look at, the content marketing dream would be realized. Legions of prospective customers would subscribe, buy, share, and become loyal brand advocates. That's the idea.

The reality is a different story

In fairly short order, the vast majority of content marketers discover how immensely time-consuming it is to publish original content at regular intervals.

They burnout. Then they surrender.

You don't have to suffer the same fate. You can establish a content hub—an extremely elegant destination on the web. You can populate it daily with information assets both topical and timely. And you can make it work for the long haul—without running out of steam.

Having trouble picturing it?

We're going to show you exactly what the future of branded publishing looks like.

Content hubs: a smart strategy to power your publication

Blogs have grown up in a big way over the past decade. Both consumer-facing and business-to-business blogs have become central to the online marketing success of millions of companies.

The company blog fuels numerous channels: search, social and email, most notably. Though it's debatable as to whether or not blogging has passed its tipping point, the strategy has been a bust for millions. Reasons include a plethora of problems tracing to:

- Lack of consistent content

- Failure to differentiate

- Struggles to be discovered

- Lack of audience engagement

- A lack of integration with social media content

The final point above merits some elaboration. Business blogs often become a content silo.

Marketers publish via their blog, but publish separately on multiple other channels such as YouTube, SlideShare and numerous social pages. The approach is neither integrated nor efficient.

A content hub houses all your content

Though you can choose to have your hub 100% blog-based, you can raise the bar with a diverse media mix—from a variety of sources—designed to appeal to a wide range of media consumers.

All the content you create for all channels is housed on your hub. The effort you put into creating content for various channels is rewarded with traffic to your website.

A content hub does not replace your blog. It gives it a more attractive home. Plus it can afford you some amazingly efficient shortcuts.

If it's digital, it's fair game

A wider media mix

A content hub is a highly flexible forum in which you publish whatever you like (or more importantly, whatever your audience likes). The media mix may include video, audio, infographics, slides, articles, papers—your call. If it's digital, it's fair game.

Your hub centralizes all that you publish to provide visitors a more interactive and valuable experience.

Your content may be:

- **Homegrown**—Some portion of your content will be produced by internal resources.

- **Curated**—Another portion will originate from other companies or media sources—those you deem to be credible and authoritative.

- **Social media**—Your content is published on your hub, then promoted via social media, so you drive traffic from social channels to your website.

- **User generated**—You can publish media created by your customers or partners.

- **Advertising**—Hosts sometimes choose to include ads to showcase offers from sponsors.

Content hubs look sharp
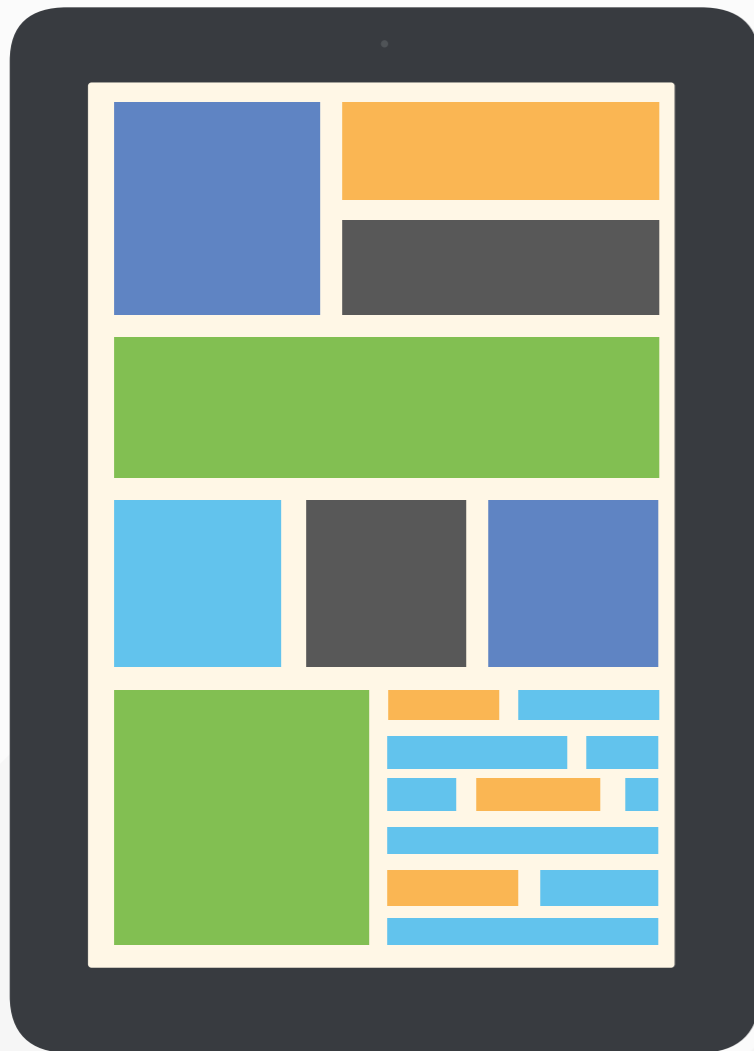
Easy on the eyes

Like the ultra-popular mega-hubs on the social web, say, Pinterest and SlideShare, content hubs are presented "tile style" or magazine-like.

They're highly graphic.

They're cohesive.

The simple structural form they take makes them easy on the eyes and easy to skim. It's also easy to see social media share stats at a glance and promote sharing.
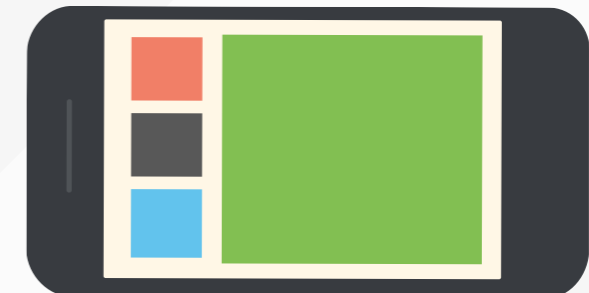
Six benefits of content hubs

Build a hub
Build an audience

Six benefits of content hubs

1

Establish and build authority

Online buyers follow the leaders and trust the authorities. Of course, the principle applies to low-cost, low-risk decisions, such as choosing a movie, book or clothing item. However, authority factors into the equation even more so for more considered decisions that categorize the majority of B2B purchases.

Consistently publishing trustworthy content is a proven route to building thought leadership and is among the most important benefits of hosting a stellar content hub.

2

Increase visibility and traffic

There's no longer any mystery to what it takes to succeed with search, the largest source of traffic on the web. It takes content—the content buyers seek.

Search engine users want answers. Thanks to the search engines, they'll find them instantly. Not only do search engines index billions of pages, they've become very good at determining the quality of content on the pages.

You understand how important it is to be visible via search. You understand a key to expanding your business is increasing traffic to your website. It's easy to understand now that a robust content hub is your marketing magnet.

3

Foster engagement

Your website could be ultra-magnetic, but unsuccessful. See, great sites do more than generate traffic; they inspire engagement.

There are probably a number of actions you'd like visitors to take: read, share, sign-up, try, buy, attend (and so on). "Engagement" is a catchall word to describe action on the part of the reader. Content hubs foster engagement far more than sales pages ever could—or can.

Six benefits of content hubs

4

Take control

Traffic on your social media pages is a good thing. However, social networks are ever-changing. The changes don't always benefit you.

Traffic on your content hub is far more meaningful because you control the experience. You make the rules. You tailor the experience. Your objectives come first.

Six benefits of content hubs

5

Generate leads

Content hubs enable you to generate leads and sales. When visitors find value in the information you offer, they'll invest more time there. You'll have far more opportunities to "feed your funnel" with tactics such as lead capture, progressive profiling, and contextual call-to-actions (CTAs).

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Six benefits of content hubs

6

Gain insights

Your content hub will provide detailed analytics reports. The metrics you'll gather inform your content creation team as to what does and doesn't excite readers. With more insights into what users deem valuable, you'll become progressively more effective at publishing.

Create a killer content hub

Here's how it's done

We've looked at reasons why your company will benefit from creating and maintaining a content hub. (And in the following chapter, we'll uncover the killer app for simplifying the care and feeding of it.) Now, let's examine strategies for creating a new hub or revisiting one that might not be connecting with customers the way it should.

Create a killer content hub

Establish the objectives

What's this effort all about? What are you trying to accomplish? No need to overthink it. You're likely aiming to achieve the benefits covered in the previous chapter.

Generating leads probably tops the list, but doesn't have to. Get the marketing and sales leaders and role players together, agree on the primary objective, prioritize secondary objectives and document them.

Create a content marketing mission

Content Marketing Institute's Joe Pulizzi submits (in no uncertain terms), like a publisher, you must document a content marketing mission. It should clearly articulate:

1. Your approach to content creation
2. Whom the content is for
3. How the content will satisfy the needs of those that consume it

It's not critical to publish your content marketing mission. However, it's crucial everyone that contributes to your content must understand and abide by it. On the content hub, *SAP Business Innovation*, SAP actually does document their mission, demonstrating exactly what a clear content marketing mission looks like.

SAP Business Innovation's mission is to help executives develop a deeper understanding of the trends affecting the future of business through fact-based executive research, supplemented by the latest thinking from expert bloggers.

You'll find the making of your content marketing mission (and some of the steps that follow) far easier if you have created the following:

- **Insightful personas** for the important customers you serve —In addition to basic demographic information, embellish each persona with psychographics to identify the person's pains and pleasures.

- **The company's unique value proposition (UVP)**— Your UVP answers the question, "Why do people do business with you?" Ask yourself "why" as many times as it takes to arrive at an emotionally compelling value proposition.

Create a killer content hub

Make a publishing plan

It's time to begin your editorial planning.

Assess your prospects' needs—Do you know what questions your sales and support teams are most often asked? Write them down and create content to deliver the answers. This approach should be the foundation of your editorial plan.

Examine the competition—Dive into the content your competition delivers to determine (1) where the gaps might be and (2) how you might do things better or differently.

Audit existing content—Whether you're new to publishing or not, you're sitting on usable content. It may come in any number of forms—email, FAQs, presentations, webinars, RFPs, case studies, research, sales pages, brochures, and so on.

These are candidates to revisit and turn into helpful content: articles, blog posts, infographics, videos, eBooks, podcasts, or any form factors you believe viewers may like. You'll need to experiment.

Tap search and social—A large part of your editorial planning process focuses on the things the people in your target market do and say online.

- Use the free Google Keyword Planner tool to research search activity.
- Examine data regarding your website captured by your Google Analytics.
- If you have an onsite search mechanism, gather insights from the data it produces.

- Look at questions posed on Q&A sites such as Quora, online forums and LinkedIn Groups.
- Conduct hashtag searches on relevant social media to monitor conversation topics and trends.
- Monitor conversations about your brand and competitors on social networks and via Google Alerts (or another monitoring tool).

Think forward—You probably have a sense for the changes that will affect your industry. Make sure to include these types of topics.

Create a killer content hub

Hire the right talent

It takes talent to succeed with content marketing. At the top of your list should be a content strategist who will take the lead. Your next hire should be a managing editor.

If yours is a one-person content marketing team, your first hire will oversee strategy and editorial (and possibly even social media management). As budget allows, your content marketing team might expand to include a graphic designer, video specialist, analytics expert, and others.

Hiring freelancers is a practical strategy to fill voids, round out the team and maintain a steady publishing schedule. Of course, dedicating a portion of your resources to curating content will go a long way toward increasing your output.

With a content hub, a single person with editorial skills may be capable of writing, editing and curating content to manage all your needs as you establish a publishing cadence.

Design an attractive hub

Your content hub should be inviting, user-friendly, and smartly branded. Bring a web-savvy graphic design professional onboard to make the content hub section of your site:

- Reflect well on your company with a branded look and feel
- Serve your audience well with a navigational structure that makes it easy to find the content needed

Create content promotion plans

There's no question, you need to promote your content hub. And there's no denying

you won't lack for competition.

Make distribution and promotion part of your plan from the get-go considering paid, earned and owned channels:

- **Paid:** You can buy audience by investing in social media advertising, native advertising, paid content discovery services, and pay-per-click programs.
- **Earned:** A variety of strategies may help call attention to your hub including guest blogging, article syndication, blogger outreach, SEO, and of course, social media marketing.
- **Owned:** In addition to hosting a content hub, you'll want to promote your content via email marketing, social channels, and content communities such as YouTube and SlideShare.

Create a killer content hub

Tool up

You'll need software tools to host a content hub. However, you won't need to invest a lot of money or time. You really need just two tools:

- **Content management system (CMS)**
  Content marketers rely on a CMS platform to make creating, publishing, optimizing and maintaining web pages simple. WordPress is by far the most popular CMS. The essential code is free and a huge aftermarket provides publishers an enormous selection of add-on components (referred to as plugins and widgets) to address most needs

- **A content hub manager**
  Scoop.it Content Director isn't the only choice for your hub management needs, but it's the most affordable and simple platform. The platform was expressly developed to meet the needs of marketers aiming to adapt lean content marketing strategies with a turnkey approach for planning, sourcing, and distributing content.

The following pages explain the most important features and benefits of Scoop.it Content Director.

The secret to a healthy hub

Keep your hub humming with Scoop.it Content Director

So you're hip to the hub idea? You're going to love Scoop.it Content Director.

The platform offers a heap of features and benefits to help you realize a long and prosperous life in publishing. It's simple to learn. And it's simple to explain as a set of five awesome capabilities: plan, source, publish, measure, and integrate.

Power planning

It's your hub. You make the rules. You make the schedule. You select the channels. Scoop.it Content Director then makes planning ridiculously click-simple.

> Click for detailed feature descriptions

Sourcing: the secret sauce

Anyone who's ever touched any Scoop.it solution understands it makes content curation crazy cool and easy. You tell the platform what kind of content you'd like to share. It crawls more than 20-million web pages and serves up what you need.

Scoop.it! Content Director

> Click for detailed feature descriptions

Presto! Publish

Here's where you can say goodbye to some tools you're probably paying for. You can ace your automation needs with Scoop.it's powerful scheduling tool that makes digital distribution delightfully simple.

> Click for detailed feature descriptions

Get an A in analytics
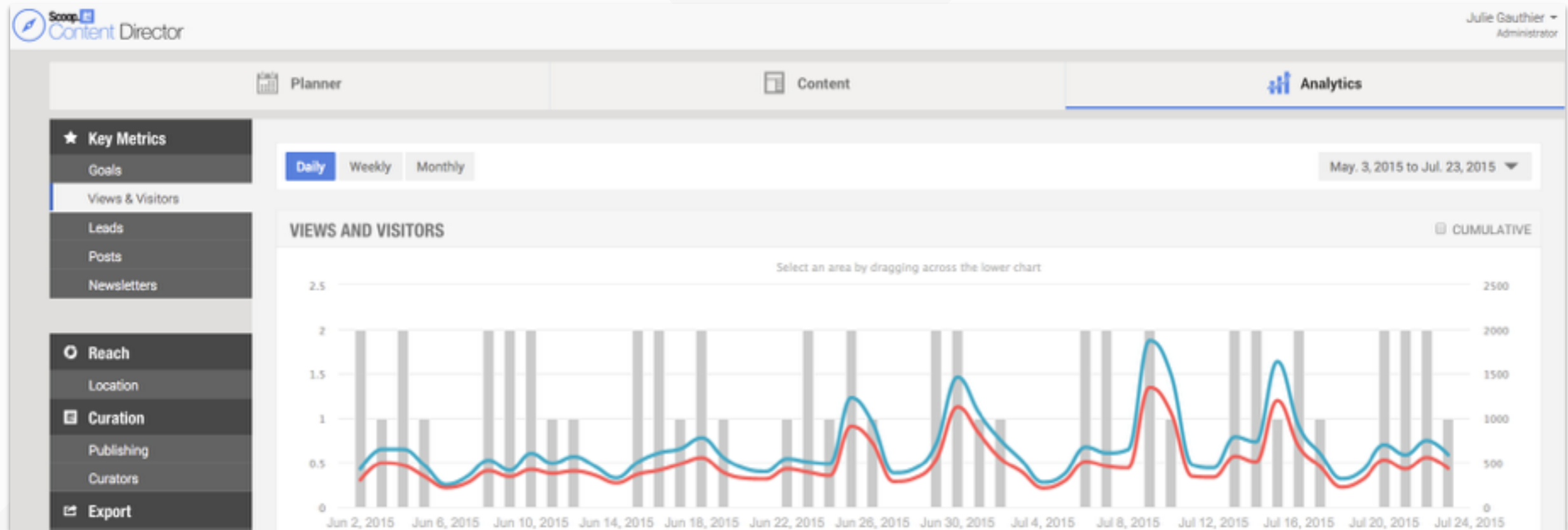
Scoop.it Content Director delivers the analytics you need to assess the performance of your hub's content—onsite and off. It's your dashboard, accelerator and the navigator you need to help steer the direction of your content marketing.

> Click for detailed feature descriptions
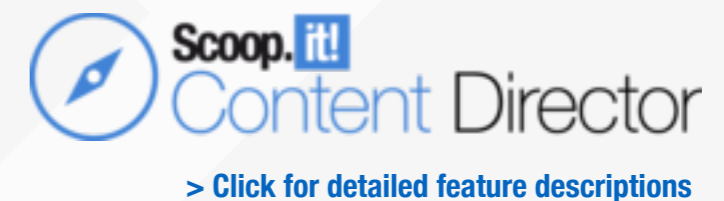
Inte-great

A team of software super heroes made integration hassle and headache-free. Scoop.it Content Director plugs into your CMS, social networks, social media tools, and email and marketing automation platforms.

Websites & blogs	Social networks	Social media tools	Marketing automation	Email newsletters

Presenting some hot hubs

Inspirational examples from media-minded marketers

H&M Life

A world of fashion, inspiration and the latest trends

http://www.hm.com/us/life

The H&M Life content hub delivers daily updates on fashion, trends, beauty and pop culture. Interestingly, they've included music from Spotify into the media mix.

Team Titleist

A community of passionate golfers

http://www.titleist.com/teamtitleist

The Team Titleist hub merges a blog and user forum to provide exclusive access to the Titleist team and the news golfers need to know.

Think with Google

A hub and home for data, analysis and digital innovation

https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/

Google wants its subscribers to think of "Think" as the go-to site for high-level insights, stats and useful tools. The hub looks at digital campaigns across industries, platforms and audiences.

CMO by Adobe

A curation platform for chief marketing officers

http://www.cmo.com/

CMO.com delivers insights for and by marketing leaders to help marketers stay informed. The information-packed hub features curated content from more than 150 leading sources.

Williams-Sonoma Taste

Fun for foodies

http://blog.williams-sonoma.com/

Taste is a curated content hub devoted to cooking and entertainment. Features include seasonal recipes, spotlights on food trends, and interviews with chefs and cookbook authors.

American Express OPENforum

A pioneer of B2B content marketing

https://www.americanexpress.com/us/small-business/openforum/explore/

OPENforum, an interactive community from American Express, represents a landmark in content marketing. The seven-year old hub's filled with advice from experts to help small business owners. Readers submit questions and get answers from the forum's experts.

Lowe's Creative Ideas

A DIYer's dream site

http://www.lowes.com/creative-ideas

If there were more screen space to work with here you'd see Lowe's Creative Ideas for Home and Garden aggregates featured projects, a massive array of home ideas, videos, digital magazines and apps.

Rushmore Ramblings by Harley-Davidson

Born to be wild

http://www.harley-davidson.com/content/h-d/en_US/home/2014/socialhub.html

This hub's hog heaven. Harley-Davidson's Rushmore Ramblings is a user-based community. Enthusiasts talk about their dream machines and adventures via social media and hashtag their posts for Harley-Davidson to collect and republish.

Canva Design School

A very good-looking school

https://designschool.canva.com/

School's the perfect label for Canva's amazing hub where lessons abound about all things graphic design. A variety of free tutorial courses are offered to "fast track your ability to create amazing designs."
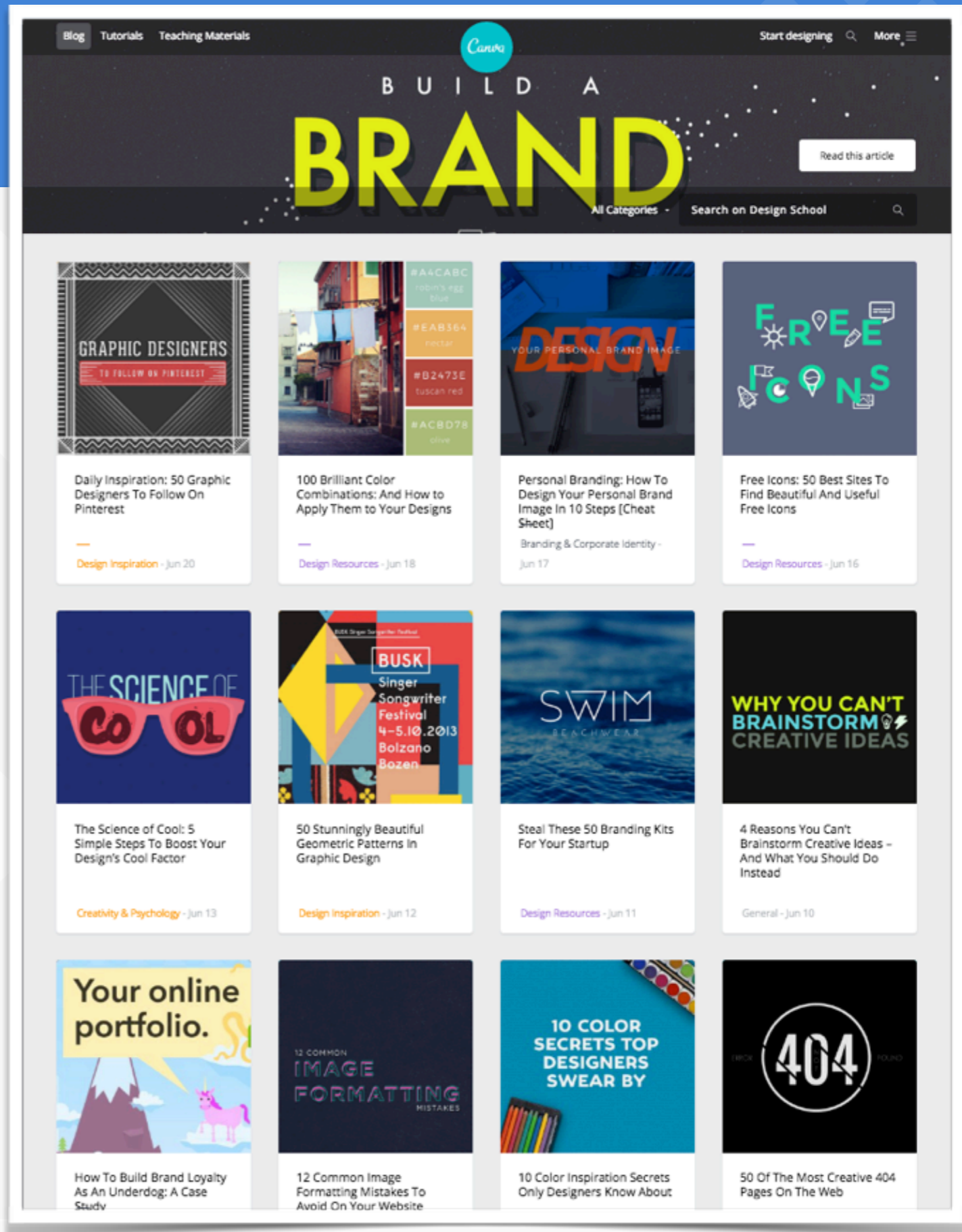
Red Bull

No company's more bullish on content

http://www.redbull.com/

Who knows where to begin describing Red Bull's approach? The company is simply a pop culture media giant with properties including Red Bull Content Pool, Red Bull Mobile, RedBullTV, RedBull.com and the Red Bulletin.

Microsoft Stories

People, places and ideas that move us

http://news.microsoft.com/stories/

Microsoft's Stories hub takes a people-first approach to delivering all kinds of human interest stories related to technology.

InnovateThink

Curation from business and IT leaders

http://innovatethink.com/

CXO Media, from Cisco, uses Scoop.it Content Director to deliver a guide to the emerging technologies and issues shaping technology. The hub features "playlists," videos, and infographics on disruptive technologies from all over the web.
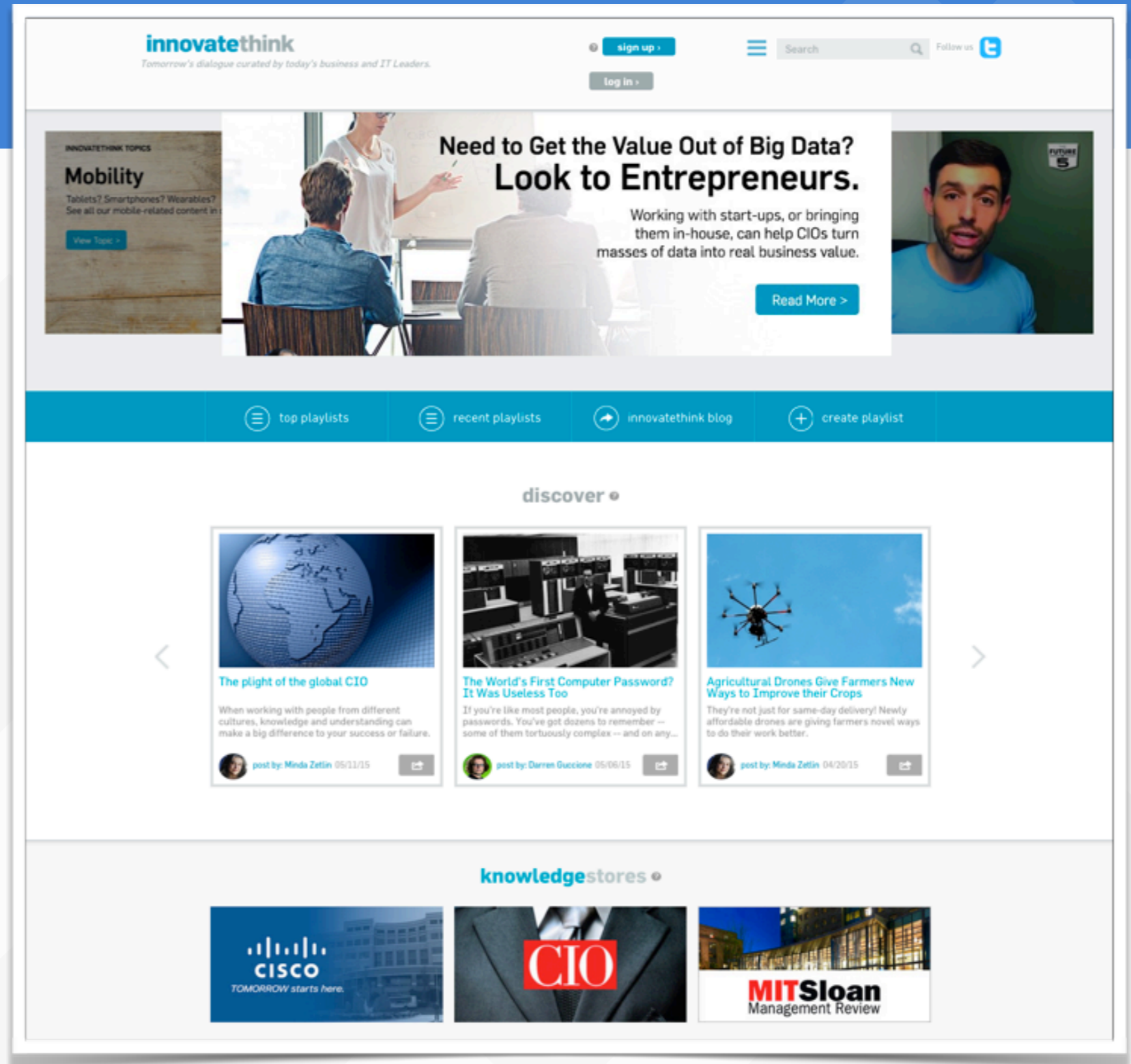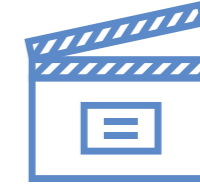
RingCentral

Curating from the cloud

https://blog.ringcentral.com/business-news/

RingCentral's media team "scoops" business and media news to create a steady stream of content as part of its multi-faceted and highly trafficked blog.

About the author

Content Hubs Are Here was written by Barry Feldman of Feldman Creative. Barry is a content marketing consultant, copywriter and creative director. He writes for many of the web's leading online marketing websites and a vast array of businesses. Barry's recognized as a leader in online marketing and social media. Visit www.feldmancreative.com for more information.

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This eBook is brought to you by Scoop.it, a software service provider dedicated to helping businesses scale their content marketing to save time. Scoop.it Content Director is an easy to use, all-in-one platform designed to help you meet your content marketing goals. Signup for a free demo of the platform today.

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