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# bulletin

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*and Why Am I in This  
Handbasket?*

# What's Trending in 2018

BY KIM KELLEY, FRBMA

**Here are a few of my most-loved marketing trends and must do's as you roll into 2018.**

## **Pull up a chair**

Marketers have earned their seat at the boardroom table. As consumers continue to influence brands and corporate reputations are at stake, marketing professionals are being asked to help shape the strategic direction of their practice. Historically, marketers have not been invited to this forum, but the tide is changing and it is a perfect opportunity for the marketing department to prove its value.

## **Influencers you know**

Employee roles affect customer relationships and drive business results. Effective workplaces, inside and out of healthcare, benefit from communicating with employees to build trust and ultimately brand champions. Historically, it's been tough to maintain transparent, internal communications, but your influencers may be closer to you than you think. Work to engage these influencers for the purposes of creating compelling content that appears to be organic in many cases.

## **Branding is benched**

No, I'm not suggesting that your brand is no longer important. But, a sole focus on the image of your brand should command less of your attention. Trends that are pointing to content marketing and branding are finally reaching a crescendo. This means you need to provide more opportunities for your customers to interact with your brand—not just complete a transaction. Storytelling and digital marketing are at the core of this effort. Work to create a customer journey that translates the “why” and “who” of your brand into experiences your patients and referrers can relate to. If you're looking to establish a competitive advantage in 2018, I would highly suggest lining up branded content.

## **Will the real AI please stand up?**

Artificial Intelligence (AI) may be on the way to becoming mainstream, but we are likely a few years away from AI having a noticeable impact on marketing outcomes. With that in mind, make way for Actual Intelligence. Marketing departments have become much more perceptive at working with data and analytics to make business decisions. Expect marketing, operations, and other departments to leverage Actual Intelligence and take the guesswork out of marketing tactics designed to move the needle.

## **Social media's year, again**

Social media has been on our radar for years, but the medium continues to change, improve, and reach audiences in your local market. C-suites, in general, have lagged in the adoption of social media as a credible marketing avenue, but that's changing. Posted content will be more likely to be liked and shared in 2018, as long as it makes an emotional connection. (A few things to watch: Twitter may be dying a slow death, LinkedIn ups its game, and Facebook adds new tools for advertisers.)



## Fear not the online profile

With eyes on reputation management and online review sites, some companies fear so much the possibility of a negative review, they choose not to speak up at all. Reality is, and I have said this before, there is a conversation about your business happening online whether you participate in it or not. Better to participate. There's a second reality: Even if you are the most amazing customer-service-run business in America, you are likely to tick off a few customers while running your business. These ticked-off people are passionately motivated to let the whole world know how you have messed up, and now they have a platform. However, you have recourse. When you proactively claim and optimize your online profiles, publish branded content, and ask for reviews, you'll push the offending content right off Google's first page. If it doesn't live on the first page, it's as good as gone.

## Embrace the chatbot

Later, FAQs. Sometimes people just want to connect in conversation to ask a question rather than searching for the answer online. We all know there's a limit to human capacity and we can't always have a staff person at the ready. Chatbots allow your business to provide lightning fast responses to your customers' questions, comments, and

complaints. There are several tools you can use, like Botsify and Chatfuel, to create your chatbot, and they integrate with your website and Facebook Messenger. Be sure to inform your audience that they're chatting with a bot and offer a connection to a real person if they need to exchange private patient information or if the bot isn't programmed to answer their question. From there, you can program your chatbot to answer common questions and teach it new sentences over time.

## I can't get enough

I'm fired up for this year's marketing trends and can't wait to put some of them in motion, myself. Plus, there are so many more options to explore... like native advertising, and explainer videos. Send me an email and let me know about the changes you'll be making in the new year. 



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