

The content engine blueprint

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A personalised experience has the right mix of context and content.



Supplied

Context is a combination of first, second and third party data that provides the right time and place for an experience to happen. Collecting, processing and activating all the data to create the context is all the hard work required to set up the optimal environment to deliver that killer consumer message.

With the stage set and primed by the context, it's time to unleash the content. We need to deliver that killer message, in the right format, to bring that personalised experience to life. The right content delivered within the right context results in a great experience.

In order to deliver these personalised experiences, we need to build a capability for predictable, repeatable and scalable content. This is a content engine.

The content engine is a model for building content as a function within the enterprise. It's not a technology solution, although technology will definitely enable it. It's a framework, a blueprint and set of principles for getting content everywhere that it needs to be. It sets out to answer the following questions for content marketers:

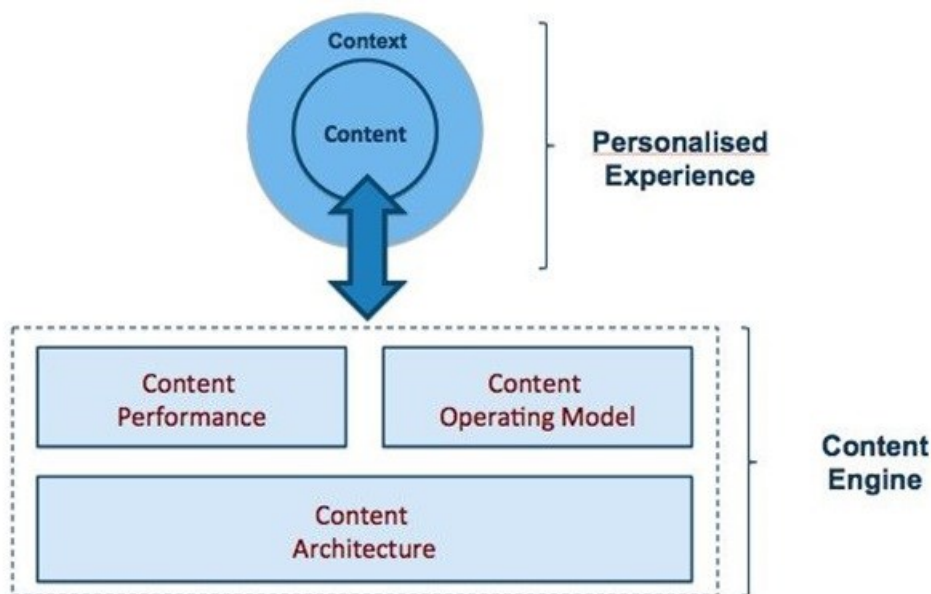
1. **How can I show tangible business value and success?** I need to understand what content exists within the enterprise and continually show its value, impact, and return to the business.

2. **How can I manage content as a product?** I need to move beyond episodic campaigns and projects and focus on assembling brand communications, using blocks of reusable content that are accessible across the enterprise.
3. **How should I approach content lifecycle management?** I need to establish clear processes and an overarching governance framework for getting content into and out of the enterprise to drive real-time personalised experiences?

The content engine

The content engine looks to address these content challenges and turn them into opportunities by stepping up to manage content as an enterprise-level, strategic asset that drives competitive advantage.

It is comprised of three inter-connecting parts, all required to deliver repeatable, predictable and scalable content that drives personalised experiences. I'm sure there are many more parts, but these three form the core:



Content performance

We seldom quantify the value of content in business terms. Instead, we see those people that work closely with content struggling to tell a story that resonates within an executive agenda. Worse still, it's too difficult to track and measure content performance over time against unclear and moving business goals.

Time for an example. I'm a news editor. I have two days of journalist's time to publish an article to address a local market ask. What KPIs and objectives would help me determine the optimal content to get the best return on my investment? I worked with one publisher that armed its editors with meaningful editorial intelligence. They knew precisely how long their journalists took to create articles, the global reach of all published articles, the level of reader engagement and the amount of article references, referrals and retweets. All the stats in near realtime. As such, they could select the best journalist for the task at hand. Content performance is critical to drive informed business decisions about which journalists are best positioned to create value in specific circumstances.

Content architecture

We have to design content to be business ready. That means modular, self-describing and channel agnostic. These are the essential characteristics of scalable content for use in different contexts, different channels,

different consumers, to communicate in highly personalised ways.

However, in the absence of a performance model for content that maps directly back to business value, it's difficult to make informed investment decisions around the design of content. How reusable should the content be? What level of granularity should we break up the content into? How many channels and over what period of time should we design the content to be accessible for? In the absence of business purpose and performance, all we can do is guess. So, we continue to fire more bullets into the dark, trying to make content more intelligent, but without a target in sight.

Hence, content performance and content architecture are connected. We must start with content performance to help scope, score and define success for content architecture. Then, when that's up and running, content architecture adapts to continuous feedback gleaned from content performance. Performance helps provide the guide rails for architectural activities.

Content operating model

If performance is the why, architecture the what, then the operating model is the how.

We need an operating model that details the end to end processes people follow to make content repeatable and predictable. However, before moving forwards, let's take a couple of steps back to understand your existing processes. Most organisations don't do this for a very good reason. They cannot describe their existing processes.

You need to understand your current operating model before forging a new one. The existing processes have value today and before you go on "mission improvement", consider the following:

1. Just because something is possible, doesn't mean it's profitable. There is no point designing new processes that cost more to run and operate in a new digital world. How would you know this without understanding your existing processes?
2. If it ain't broke, don't fix it. If the existing processes work, why bother changing them? Show the value in the new processes by comparing against the current processes.

The future operating model takes into consideration new capabilities afforded by a content architecture that delivers raw, modular and self-describing scalable content. The operating model brings repeatable and predictable processes that encapsulates the full end-to-end content management lifecycle.

This content engine blueprint is not technology, it's a framework that will help you to align your content creation process with your technology to consistently deliver personalised customer experiences. It pulls together three key parts of the process. Performance to continually define and measure success, architecture that structures scalable content and an operating model that will align your people and processes around the task.

ABOUT CLEVE GIBBON

Cleve Gibbon is a technology evangelist with over 20 years' experience delivering digital platforms for large organisations. Currently the Chief Marketing Technology Officer at Cognifide where the team provides the technical expertise to effectively make, manage, measure and mobilise digital content.

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