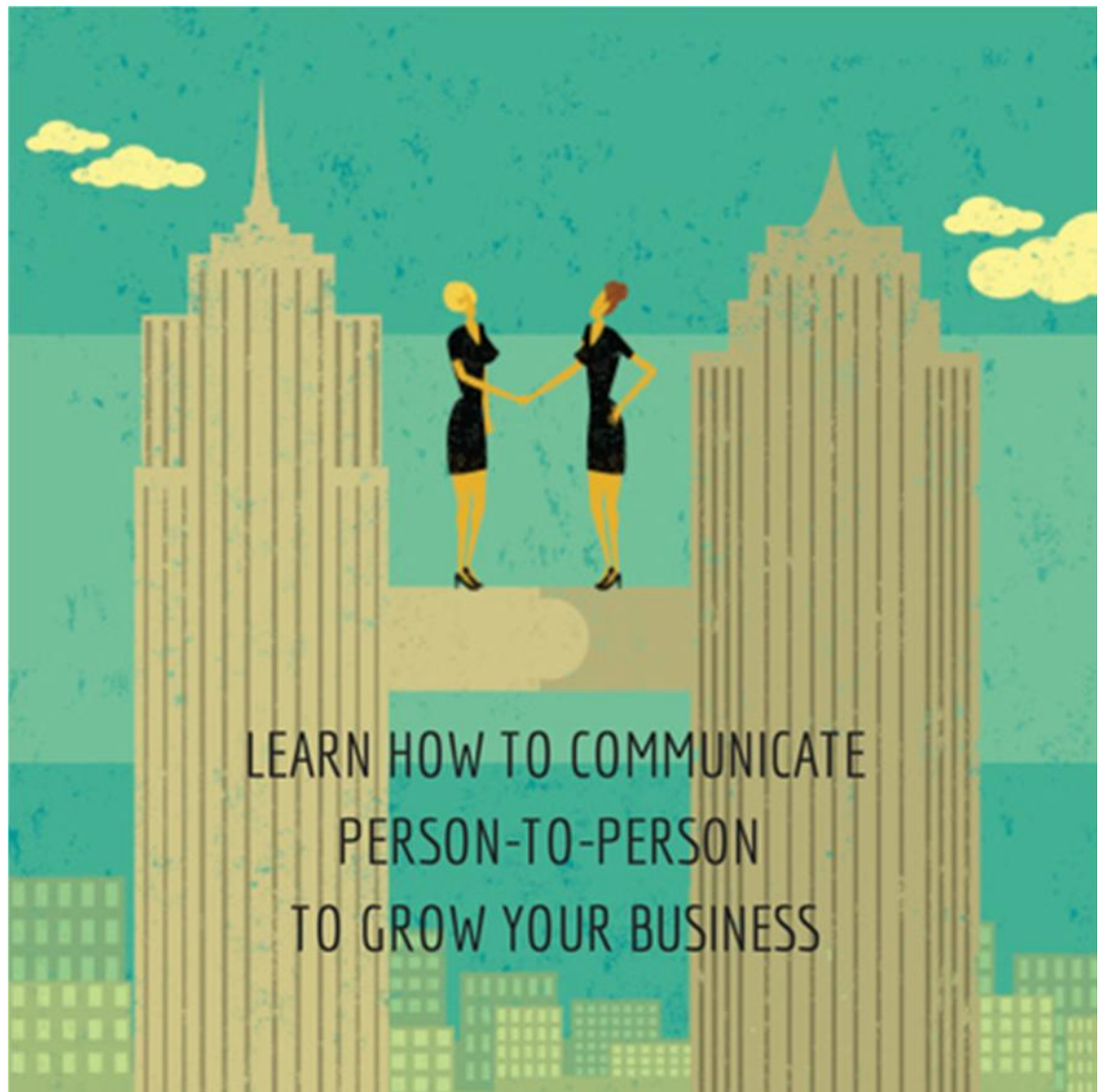




There is No B2C or B2B It's all P2P



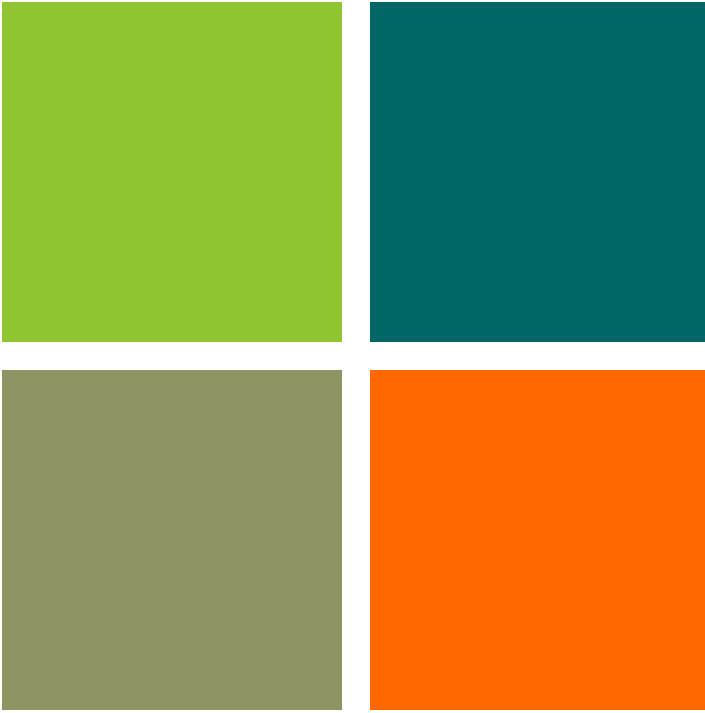


Table of Contents

Introduction

1. The Era of Transparency
2. Business is P2P Now
3. P2P Success Stories

Steps to be a P2P Brand

4. Tell Your Authentic Story
5. Ditch the Jargon
6. Be a Giver
7. Trust Others
8. Have Honest Conversations
9. Break the Mold

Brands in Glass Houses

10. How to Grow Your Business through Content

**P2P is the
only way to
do business
today**

The Era of Transparency

As a culture, we're fed up with the inauthentic. There are whistle blowers in the financial world and government; people and grassroots organizations are demanding the truth about ingredients in products and food. Some smart and brave organizations are recognizing this and putting everything out there for the world to see.

In the marketing world, there's a divide between "B2B" and "B2C" but it really doesn't matter. Whether you're a spa offering massages and facials or a software company helping businesses with logistics we're all doing business, P2P, person to person. People buy goods and services, not businesses.

Today people want to know whom they are doing business with, both on a business and personal level. The lines are blurred between the personal and commerce in the social and online space. Those that will earn trust and be rewarded with loyalty are the brands that are being honest and transparent in the content they create.





P2P Success Story: Patagonia

Who's Doing it Right?

Patagonia provides clothing and gear for camping and the outdoors. The company has earned great respect over the years for its genuine business practices and commitment to environmental integrity. Its straightforward company mission is to “build the best products and cause no unnecessary harm.”

To back up that statement, Patagonia created the **Footprint Chronicles**. This interactive tool lets you track the environmental impact of a specific Patagonia product from its initial design through store delivery. It not only shows you where in the world the fabric and trim came from, but offers video interviews with people working in those countries who talk about the process from positives to challenges.



P2P Success Story: McDonald's Who's Doing it Right?

McDonald's Canada encourages consumers to ask any question on its [website](#), which staff personally answers. To ask a question, participants must connect with either Twitter or Facebook to extend the social reach. There's no eluding the tough questions like "How is it that a McDonald's burger does not rot?" or "Do McDonald's smoothies have REAL fruit purees or extracts?" Within the first four months of the project, over 10,000 questions were answered.

1. Tell Your Authentic Story

Brand storytelling is a popular phrase. But many companies, especially B2B, don't think they have a story to tell. The problem is not that they don't have a story — they just don't understand how to find it, or how they should be sharing it.

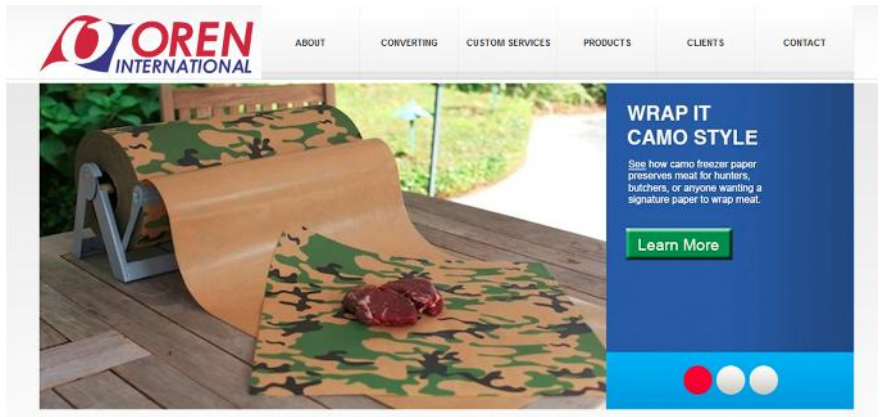
A brand story is made up of all that you are and all that you do. From the company's history, mission, inspiration, goals, audience, and *raison d'être*, it's why you exist.

Your story is the people, places, and ideas that your company thrives on. It's the foundation that keeps a brand going and growing. It's a blend of those vital little nuggets of information about

your business — how you came to be, why your products or services are special, what you're passionate about, your company culture, how you make people's lives better, and why *you* would do business with your company.

From your website to emails, social media posts, videos and even your customer service conversations, your story should be consistently told at each touch point with consumers.





Case Study: No Brand is Boring

Think your business isn't exciting? Paper converting likely doesn't sound thrilling either. But here's an example of how our client **Oren International**, a paper converting company, transformed itself from dull and technical into an interesting and creative brand. A redesign took an old, boring website focused on numbers, weights and measurement and transformed it into the story of a fun, creative group with an amazing paper facility that services major clients worldwide. It now highlights the company's custom innovative projects, which has gotten them more recognition from both customers and media.

Within the first three months of its new website launch, Oren International saw a 69% conversion rate for its eBook, which targeted restaurants, and an 86 percent conversion rate on an eBook about the environment. Both of these pieces show Oren's expertise and commitment to quality through interesting storytelling. Oren's content now shows the possibilities of paper!

2. Ditch the Jargon

No one wants to read your company's newsletter if it's filled with industry jargon, buzzwords or only tries to sell something. People want to know what your business can do for their business, or how your product or service can actually improve their lives in some way.

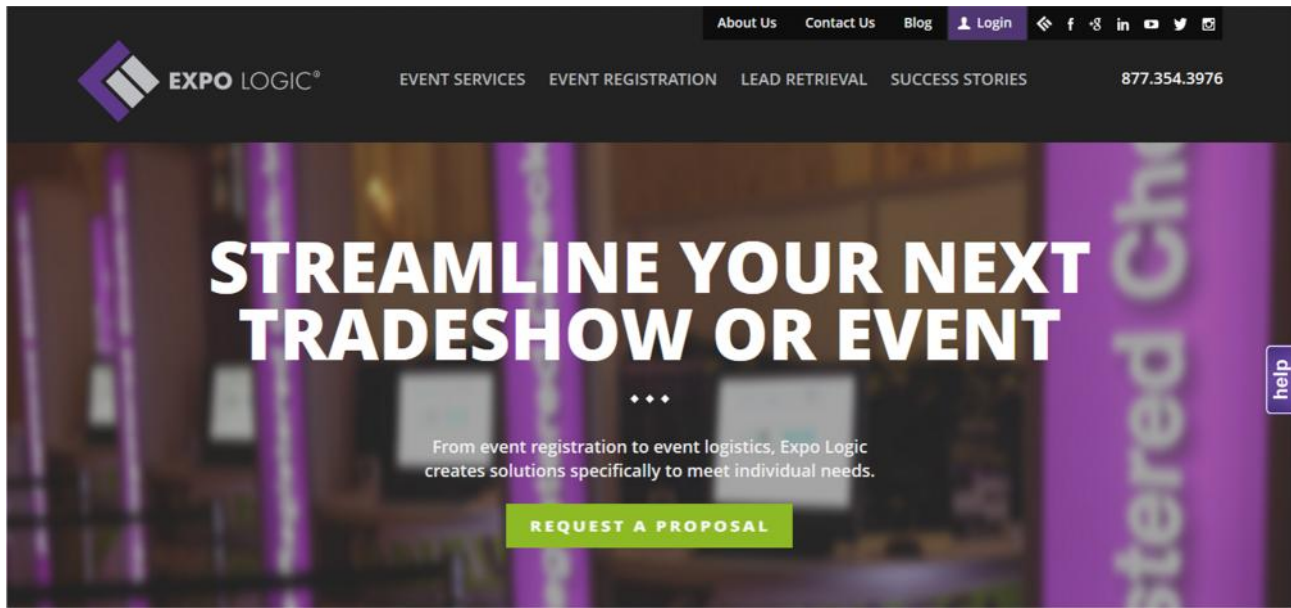
At SPROUT Content, we like to say we specialize in boring content. Our clients range from document storage and shredding solutions to communications and technology providers for senior living communities. "Even the most technical and regulated industries can spark fun conversations," says Debbie Williams, SPROUT Content Co-founder

and Chief Content Officer.

Use words to paint an exciting picture of your business!

HOW TO BE INTERESTING

- **Discover your "Aha" moment.** Dig deep in your company's history, main characters, mission and even past failures to find nuggets of information that others will find interesting and valuable.
- **Don't write for search engines; write for people.** Read your content out loud. If it doesn't sound authentic, like you would actually say it to someone in a conversation, fix it.



Case Study: Power of Words

Expo Logic is a trade show registration and lead retrieval company contracted by associations conducting meetings and conventions. The company provides onsite registration services and lead retrieval services - like barcode scanners - for these associations to collect information from attendees of the conventions. It's a business full of technical terms and what could be considered boring terminology.

But Expo Logic also solves problems for its clients. When they first came to SPROUT Content, their outdated website was a collection of business jargon that didn't speak to the people who would benefit from Expo's products. By learning the ins and outs of their business through research and interviews of both employees and clients, we were able to turn their journey into a story, which wasn't something the Expo team was able to do internally. Using the right words on their website and blog and humanizing their social media interactions led to an explosive online presence which they've maintained today.

3. Be a Giver

Too many businesses today are afraid of revealing too much. They think the competition is going to steal their secrets. But being a giver of helpful insider information will position you as a beneficial resource that people will remember, connect with, and come back to again and again.

HOW TO SHARE INFORMATION

- **Create a “resources” e-book** answering frequently asked questions about your business or service.
- **Share quotes from your favorite industry experts or authors,** celebrities, historical

figures and cultural icons.

- **Review a product,** service or book that other people in your community or industry will care about.
- **Create a blog** to share your expertise and educate consumers while reaping the added benefit of driving traffic leads. A blog is one of the greatest resources that businesses have to answer their customers' questions, show they are listening and shine a bright light on their vast industry knowledge.



Case Study: Share Your Secrets

HubSpot is the world's number one marketing software and boasts over 10,000 clients (SPROUT Content is a HubSpot partner). Business owners and marketers use it to create and publish content and measure its effectiveness in generating traffic, leads and sales for their websites. But HubSpot isn't just software, it's a massive inbound marketing resource.

The company is a machine at producing content. They publish multiple blogs every day focusing on marketing, sales, social media, technology and ecommerce. They produce ebooks, webinars and have created a company culture where almost every employee contributes to content. In fact, 99% of HubSpot's content is produced in house. So, how do they benefit from educating people about content marketing?

Giving away free content educates prospective customers about the products and services you offer, which leads to more leads and sales for your business. It's the premise HubSpot was built on, and they are certainly walking the walk.

4. Trust Others

Brand evangelists – or advocates – are loyalists who are so passionate about certain brands that they'll market to others without any personal gain.

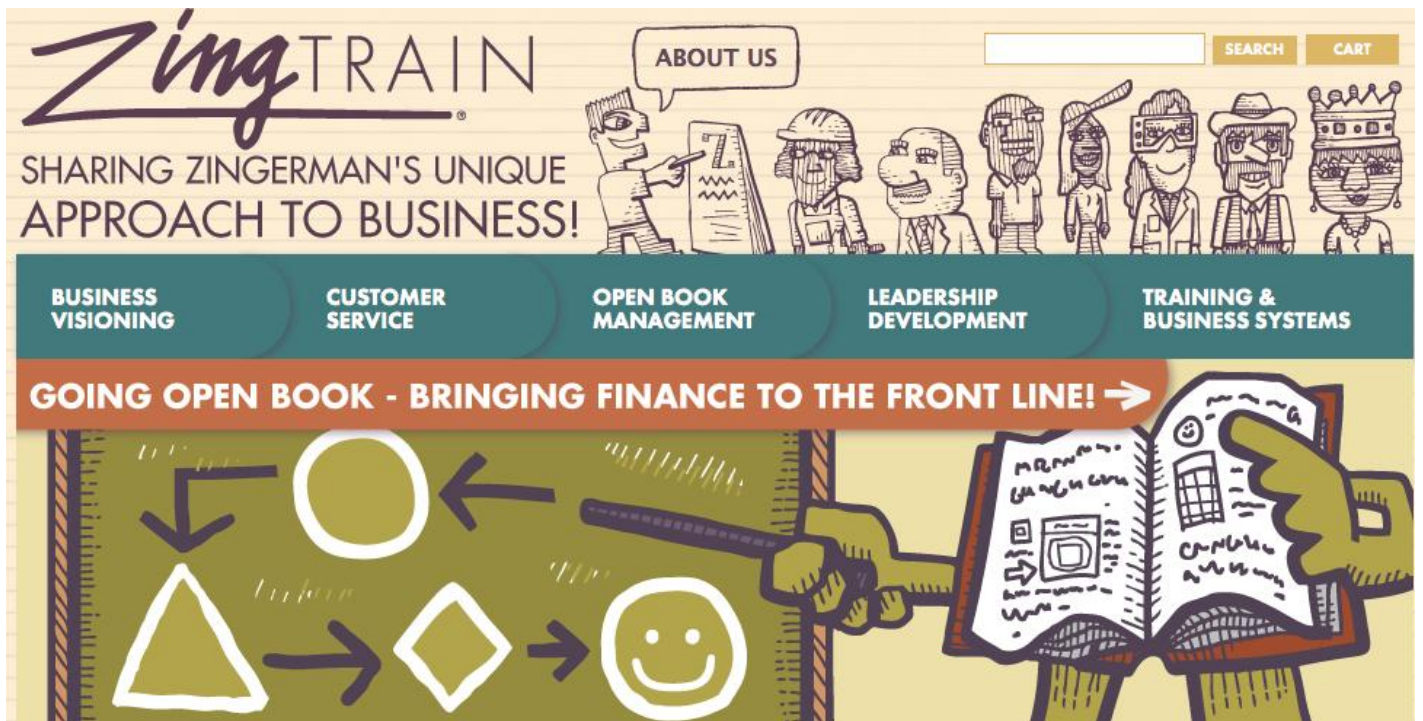
Often, companies feel they need to be the drivers of the conversation about their business and fear letting their customers speak for them, when actually, people who love a company's products and services are the greatest, most authentic marketers.

"People don't believe what you tell them. They rarely believe what you show them. They often believe what their friends tell them. They always believe what they tell themselves."

~Seth Godin, Entrepreneur,
Author & Public Speaker

HOW TO TRANSFORM CUSTOMERS INTO BRAND EVANGELISTS

- Be transparent.
- Engage with influencers.
- Deliver on promise.
- Listen and respond.
- Make emotional connections.
- Develop loyalty.
- Always evolve.
- Exceed expectations.
- Don't overlook employees.



Zingerman's Shows Trust

Founded in 1982 as a small corner deli in Ann Arbor, Michigan, Zingerman's transformed from a mom-and-pop shop into a business venture comprised of eight unique establishments with more than 500 employees. Zingerman's recipe for success was a simple formula of impeccable customer service, open book management and employee ownership policies. The real zinger? It teaches its employees about business, which increases their buy-in to the brand.

Dubbed the "coolest small company in America" by Inc., Zingerman's is paving the way for other small businesses with **ZingTrain**, which educates and trains business leaders on creating cultures based on customer service and employee value. The company's philosophy is "Fun, Flavorful Finance: Why Our Dishwashers Know Our Net Operating Profit."

5. Have Honest Conversations

People prefer authenticity to perfection from the brands they choose to do business with. Fans, friends and even foes want to see and hear from the real you. They don't want canned corporate responses, publicist sound bites, obviously fake excuses, or worse, the brush off.

One of the most damaging things a brand can do is ignore its audience online when negative comments pop up or a crisis arises. If you choose not to be involved in the conversation, it will happen without you.

HOW TO TALK WITH YOUR CUSTOMERS

- **Monitor social media**/review sites and participate in the conversation.
- **Respond to negative comments.** Ignoring them will not make them go away.
- **Speak up** sincerely, but lose the canned responses.
- **Use the feedback** to improve.



Case Study: Shutterfly Snafu

A recent targeted email campaign went horribly wrong for photo-printing website Shutterfly. The email congratulated recipients on their newborn babies. But instead of going to a select group of customers who had recently purchased birth announcements, the email was distributed to a larger group in error.

Naturally, customers took to social media to express their displeasure about the email celebrating births that never happened. It especially hit home for those dealing with infertility or the loss of a child. While Shutterfly issued a press statement and eventually a second email apologizing for the intrusion and offense, they were slow to respond to the social media barrage. Shutterfly responded to each negative comment on their [Facebook page](#), but didn't write an apology post that could have been pinned to the top of the page. Owning the mistake and having more honest conversations instead of a generic apology could have prevented some of the damage done with Shutterfly's customers.

5. Break the Mold

It's okay to be different. In fact, in order to stand out in today's massive amount of online content, it's necessary. But stand for something you believe in. Don't try to be something that your business is not.

Regardless of whether your company is B2C or B2B, it's important to connect with customers on a personal level. Admittedly, this is much easier for "consumer" brands, because they can easily use emotion. Appealing to a teenage girl on her first day of high school can be a successful way to sell beauty products.

B2B marketers often think too one dimensionally, detaching from the actual people they are trying to help. They think in terms of a generic corporate façade, rather than the humans behind it. And while B2B content needs to focus on facts, it also needs to connect to people on an emotional level. Remember, businesses do not have emotion. People do.

HOW TO BE DIFFERENT

- **Don't be afraid to experiment with different types of content just because no one else is doing it, yet.** Use analytics to see what is working for your audience and what isn't.
- **Think about who your audience is and what they need.** Your business solves problems for people, so appeal to them personally. Make sure your website is providing a good user experience.
- **Create a strategy for your out-of-the box thinking.** Have a plan for your creativity.
- **Use social media as a conversation.** It's not just another publishing tool, but rather an opportunity to connect with your customers.



+

Case Study: Creative Creators

Without a doubt, Intel dominates the PC microprocessor market. The company is also an excellent example of a B2B technology company who has made itself a household name. Its Intel Inside campaign, launched in 1991, actually made processors an object of desire. But despite this success, Intel realized it was losing touch with today's youth. Instead of being known as "the old guy", Intel came up with a bold new strategy.

The Creators Project, launched in 2010, is a global arts and technology initiative, jointly sponsored by Intel and Vice Media. The online arts channel brings together artists to create original art and highlights artists whose works are inspired by and enabled by new technologies. The Creators Project has over 300 million video views and has staged live events in six countries attended by over 760,000 people. This campaign displays Intel's commitment to entering a new era of creativity, not just computing.



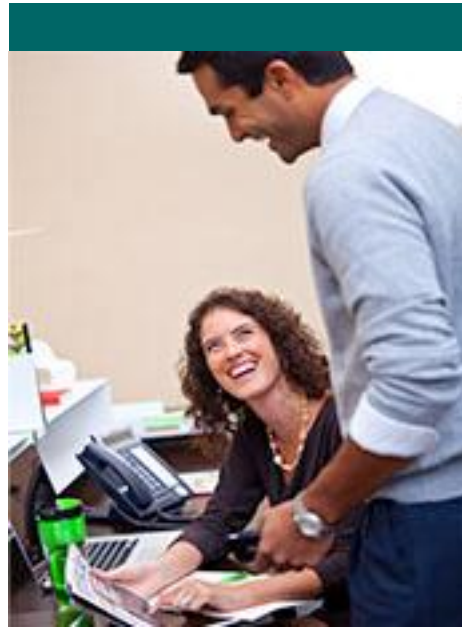
The Benefits of P2P

“In a time of universal deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act.” – George Orwell



Better Experience

People can make a customer's experience exceptional. Your people are your competitive advantage.



More Engagement

Being authentic and transparent leads to more interaction with customers and ultimately, more business.



Higher Expectations

Brands can better meet customer expectations when they know their audience is real people with problems they can help solve.

+

Are You Ready?

Even the most technical and regulated businesses can spark fun conversations that engage people.

Are you ready to be candid and honest in your business?

Contact Us to Get Started:

www.sproutcontent.com

info@sproutcontent.com

850-607-6981

SPROUTCONTENT
The Business of Conversation™

