

CRANK UP THE VOLUME:

***HARNESSING CONTENT
AMPLIFICATION***

A few years ago the Weather Channel ran a #TornadoWeek PR campaign that generated a windstorm of coverage.

In partnership with the digital marketing agency [Vert](#), the Weather Channel deftly used paid, owned and earned channels to generate buzz, create awareness and drive social engagement around the network's Tornado Week campaign.

The content was created through audience participation — a YouTube live-stream captured interns being blown away by industrial fans that were turned up every time #TornadoWeek was used on Twitter.

This is a great example of a multi-faceted content amplification strategy. The campaign:

- Earned massive media attention and over 10 million impressions through coverage in *The Huffington Post*, *Mashable*, “The TODAY Show” and many other outlets
- Drove 140,000 visits to the Tornado Week landing page
- Generated almost 50,000 tweets

All in ONE WEEK.

Read on for some actionable tips for creating and amplifying content to generate your own tornado of coverage.

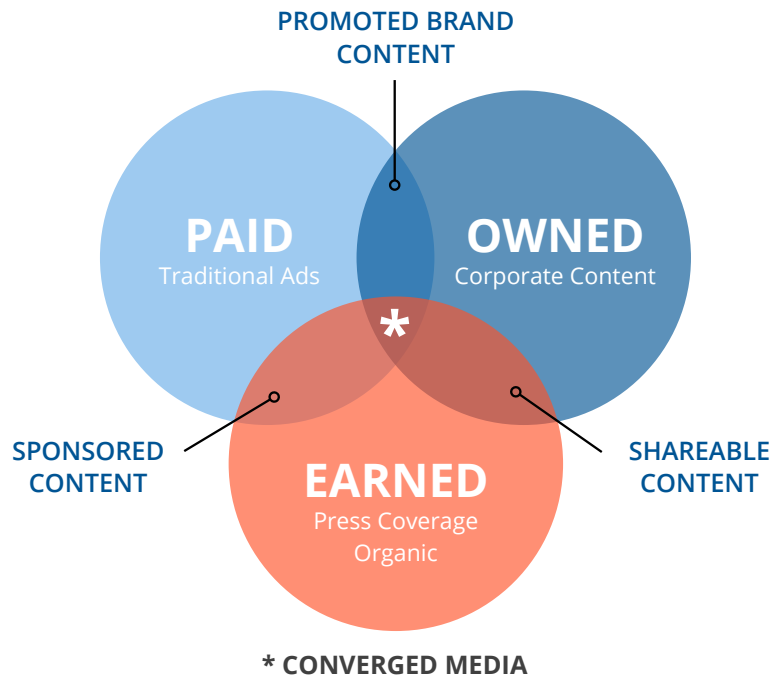


WHAT IS CONTENT AMPLIFICATION?

Content amplification is exactly what it sounds like: it's magnifying the reach and impact of the content you create. Because no matter how amazing your message is, if your target audience doesn't see it, you won't get results. Simple as that.

There are three different ways you can get your content seen and heard:

1. **OWNED MEDIA:** These are media channels that belong to your company or that you control, including such things as your website, social media properties or newsletters.
2. **PAID MEDIA:** These are channels that can reach your target audience but you have to pay for the access, such as digital ads (Google AdWords, ads on publications etc.), native advertising or content syndication. It can also include paid endorsements by influencers.
3. **EARNED MEDIA:** This is gold... and it's literally priceless (as in *you can't pay for it*). It's getting journalists to write about you or share your message with their audience – whether in print, broadcast or online news publications. It can also extend to non-traditional media and influencers, as long as you are not paying for it.



Each channel alone is good; all three together is great. The most successful content amplification efforts typically employ a combination of the three.

WHY BOTHER?

It should go without saying that you want your content to reach its intended audience. However ‘build it and they will come’ doesn’t work in this age of 24 hour news cycles and social media overload.

The new thinking on content says that you should spend 20% of your time *creating* content, and the other 80% of your time *promoting* it.

In other words, it’s better to create less content and focus your time instead on promoting those pieces through a combination of paid, owned and earned media channels.



AVOIDING THE CONTENT BLACKHOLE

If all you do is post content and move on to the next project, it will be lost in the vast sea of information out there. “Content supply is exponentially exploding while content demand is flat,” explains [Mark Schaefer](#), author of [The Content Code](#).

He calls this ‘content shock’.

While the same number of people are searching for content, far more people are producing an exponentially greater amount of content. That means your content has to compete with an ever-growing pool of other great (and not-so-great) content, all vying for attention.

Schaefer argues that, to avoid content shock, companies need to “spend at least as much time on amplification as on content creation.” He even goes as far as to say that “we are moving to a situation where amplification arguably matters more than the quality of content.”

However, that doesn’t mean you can bombard your audiences with similar-sounding messages or repeatedly show them the same content everywhere they go. That can result in follower fatigue or unsubscribes — and won’t help you get the engagement or results you’re hoping for.

CREATING CONTENT THAT MOVES

The first part of any successful content amplification strategy is creating easily amplified material. This may sound elementary, but it's not exactly easy, either. Throwing spaghetti at the wall hoping that it sticks just won't work; your content has to be the right quality before it can be amplified effectively. If done properly, one piece of quality content can take on a life of its own and reach your targeted audiences and beyond.

Here are just a few techniques to help you create attention-grabbing content:

1 BUILD A SKYSCRAPER

The [skyscraper technique](#) involves building on others' work to reach even loftier heights.

You can build your own content skyscraper by digging into the content of competitors or related industries. Use [Google Trends](#) to find trending topics and search to see what comes up with those keywords.

You can also use tools like [Ahrefs](#) or [BuzzSumo](#) to discover your competitors' most shared content, or search the most popular content per topic.

Avoid plagiarizing content but don't be afraid to 'stand on the shoulders' of your competitors — incorporate the best ideas and execution examples and use that to kick start your efforts.

Don't forget to look at your own content as well! Which pieces had the most views? The highest engagement? This can help you understand what works specifically with your audience, and use the best parts of past content to create something even better.

If you're building a skyscraper from your own content, Brian Dean, founder of SEO training blog [Backlinko.com](#), suggests some easy ways to do it:

1. Bring it up-to-date: Update statistics, facts, examples and anecdotes so they are timely and relevant to your audience.
2. Make it visually appealing: Add graphics, images or videos that are shareable and will grab attention.
3. Add bonus insights: Add another tip to an existing list, or combine two lighter-weight pieces to create a larger, more comprehensive one.

If I have seen
further, it is by
standing on the
shoulders of giants.

- Isaac Newton

2 GO LONG

Because of their depth, long form pieces like whitepapers can help you build credibility, authority, and readership. These longer pieces are valuable to people interested in the topic, and also paint your company or organization as a thought leader on a given subject.

Expanding on existing blog posts or combining smaller pieces into a single, longer format piece is always easier than writing content from scratch. They also provide an opportunity to build a deeper interest in your topic or product. That's why you'll almost always see whitepapers offered during the consideration stage of the buyer's journey, ie. when people know they need to solve a problem.

3 SHORTEN IT

Though we've just finished extolling the virtues of lengthening your content, the fact is that sometimes the opposite is true: sometimes less is more.

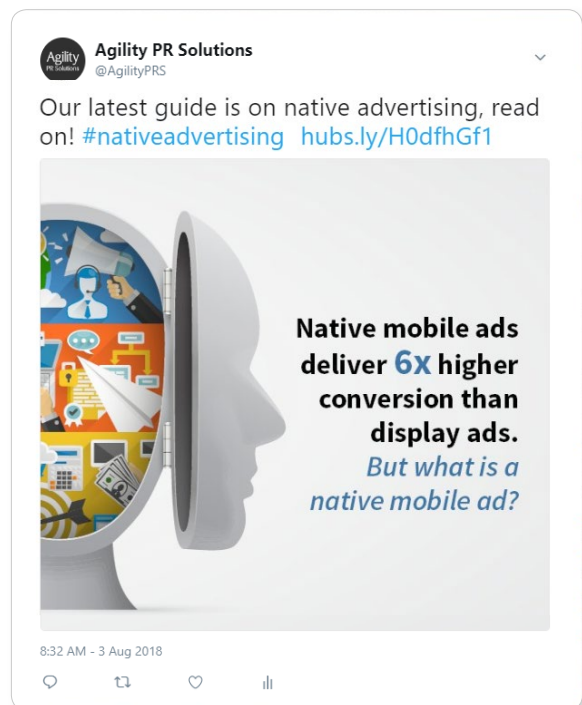
Lengthy pieces can be just plain scary and even if someone downloads it, they may never read it if they are daunted by its length.

When you break a meaty hunk of content into bite sized pieces you get:

1. Multiple pieces to promote (with minimal effort)
2. A lighter commitment piece — perfect for those earlier in the buying process

For example, if your paper has four tips, write a teaser blog about one of those tips and then link to the paper and the other three tips at the end.

Or go really short and pull a quote from the paper — a little nugget of wisdom to share with your audience. Tweet the quote or create a graphic for social media that is eye-catching and use that to promote the content on your social channels.



4 MIX IT UP

Making your message visual is more important than ever. People's attention spans can be shorter than a goldfish's and unless your story or post has an interesting visual element, you risk getting lost in the content blackhole. Visuals are critical for social media but journalists are also begging for multimedia content, so help your message stand out with some eye candy. Try [Canva](#) or [Desygner](#) if you need a great free tool for whipping up social media images.

If you want to incorporate video but are thinking you don't have the time, budget or skills, there's some great tools out there like [Lumen5](#), [Wave.Video](#) or [Rawshorts](#), that are low cost and make creating videos incredibly easy.

Now you can quickly turn that old paper or article into a video and include that with your pitch. Or use those PowerPoint skills to turn it into a presentation and post on [SlideShare](#) where it can be easily found.

PRO TIP

Social networks like to keep people on their site and they'll reward your posts if you help them do that. So if you're posting on Facebook, upload your video on Facebook instead of linking off to YouTube. Similarly, you can keep LinkedIn happy by pointing to a slide deck you host on their SlideShare platform.

AMPLIFYING ON OWNED CHANNELS

Now that you've got your killer content it's time to get it out there. The easiest and best place to start is to promote through the channels you own — your website and social media properties. Here are some things to keep in mind as you prep those snappy social posts:

DON'T PUT ON REPEAT

This may seem counterintuitive when trying to amplify your content but sharing the same post over and over can cause follower fatigue (and may get you flagged as a spammer).

Try highlighting a different point or quote in each post or promotion. Tease your audience with a variety of tidbits. This will also appeal to those who have already seen posts about the piece as it may highlight a point that speaks to them.

PRO TIP

Twitter is now penalizing anyone who posts the same content and messages through multiple accounts — so don't try that trick.

PICK YOUR POSTS

You're likely going to be tempted to create posts for every piece of content. After all, you've worked hard to create it, so it's understandable that you want to share it in as many ways as possible. But resist that temptation. Choose your best content and stick to promoting the best of the best. This will build credibility and teach your followers to pay attention when you post.

SPEAK TO YOUR AUDIENCE

Long before you create your content you should have a crystal clear idea of who you're writing for. And this should extend to your amplification efforts too.

- Know where your audience goes for advice or insights and promote your content there.
- Speak their language. Whether it's the words you use or the tone — your content and promotion should use the voice of your audience.

MESSAGE FOR THE MEDIUM

The medium is the message. This statement is truer than ever, but in a different way. You can't create one ad or witty post and use that on your website, all social platforms and as your pitch to journalists. You need to change your approach and message based on where you're posting it.



On Twitter — Brevity is king. Even though you have 280 characters now, you need to get to the point and not waste characters on senseless hashtags, rambling statements or long URLs.



On Instagram — It's all about the visuals. Don't use stock photos. Ever. Full stop.



On Facebook — Video is king, but keep it short and silent. 85% of videos are watched with the sound off, so create your video with that in mind.



On your website — it's all about SEO. We could write a whole paper just about that but in short you need to get other people to link to your content. These backlinks will build authority by demonstrating the credibility of your content to the search engines.

If your content is relevant, original and most importantly, searchable, you're well on your way to getting the engagement you're looking for.

PRO TIP

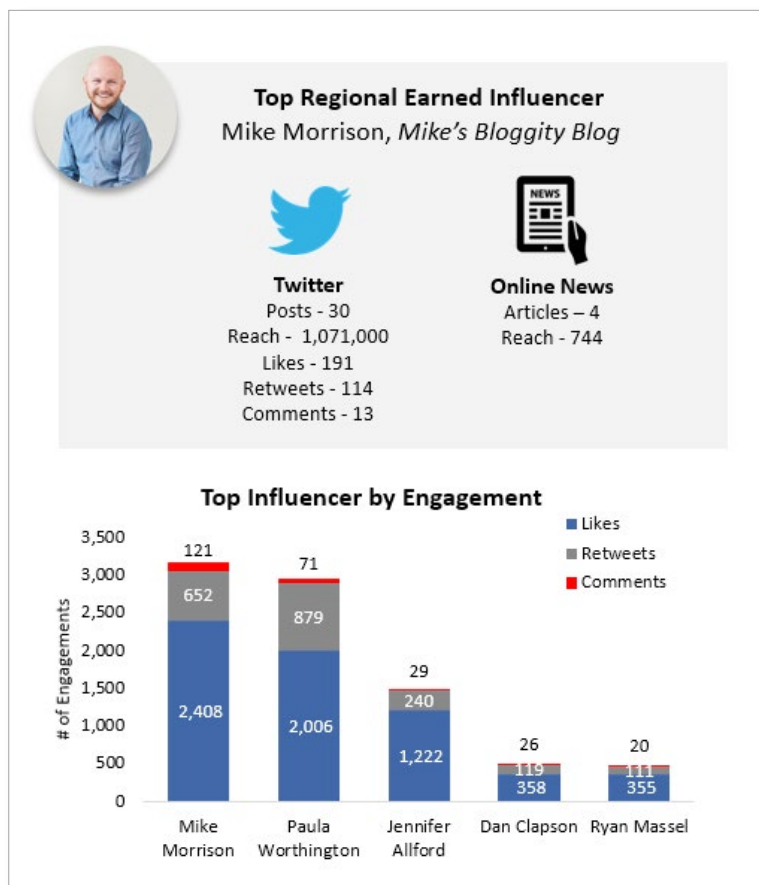
Text in images and PDF documents included in social media posts and on websites aren't visible to search engines like Google, so make sure your key text is also directly in the body of your social posts and web content to ensure it is searchable.

THE POWER OF INFLUENCERS

[Influencers](#) are experts within a particular industry or on a particular topic. More than just experts though, an influencer is someone with a large and engaged following — and we’re not just talking about social media followers. Someone who is influential with your target audience can open the door and welcome you into the group, or shut it firmly in your face.

To find influencers, you can use a media contact database, [media monitoring tools](#), or social analysis techniques to identify individuals who write about your industry, or your competitors and who seem to have a lot of sway. You can look at numbers of followers, but you need to go deeper and look at engagement. Is their audience sharing their content or commenting on it? You can do this the old-school manual way, but if you have a bit of budget there’s a number of tools that can make this arduous task easier.

Agility PR Solutions has a media database, monitoring tools and advanced services to help you identify and analyze your top influencers. [Talk to us](#) if you need help...



WHO NEEDS INFLUENCERS?

You need to engage with influencers if you want to successfully amplify your content outside of your owned channels (without relying entirely on paid placements). Engaging with influencers can be a major part of an earned media strategy.

Of course you think your content is great, but when it's recommended by someone outside of your organization, someone the audience trusts and respects, it carries much more weight.

Here are three ways [Jay Baer](#), entrepreneur, best selling author and influencer in his own right, says influencers can help amplify your content:

1. EXPAND YOUR REACH

Your ideal influencers should have a large base of followers that they engage with regularly and those followers should look a lot like your target audience. If you can convince them that your content will be interesting to their audience, and get them to share it, you can get a warm introduction to a whole new audience.

2. GIVE CREDIBILITY TO YOUR WORK

The best influencers are considered experts on your industry or subject matter. If these influencers engage with your content (either by sharing or commenting) it gives your work more credibility. By linking to or contributing to your content, the influencer is suggesting to their followers that your content is credible — because they are vouching for it.

This can be especially useful if your brand or company is facing a crisis. In the face of bad PR, your influencers can be invaluable surrogates who can speak in an unbiased way about your brand.

3. HELP YOU CREATE BETTER CONTENT

Consider asking influencers for quotes or having them contribute a piece to your company blog. Getting an influencer's name attached to your content, whether on the byline or in the body, will boost its value. Being featured does more than just improve your content, it also helps your influencer gain more recognition and authority. It's a win-win.

Influencers may also be willing to provide advice on what content to create or insights into the mind of your audience. Take the feedback seriously — they are experts, after all.

PAID AMPLIFICATION

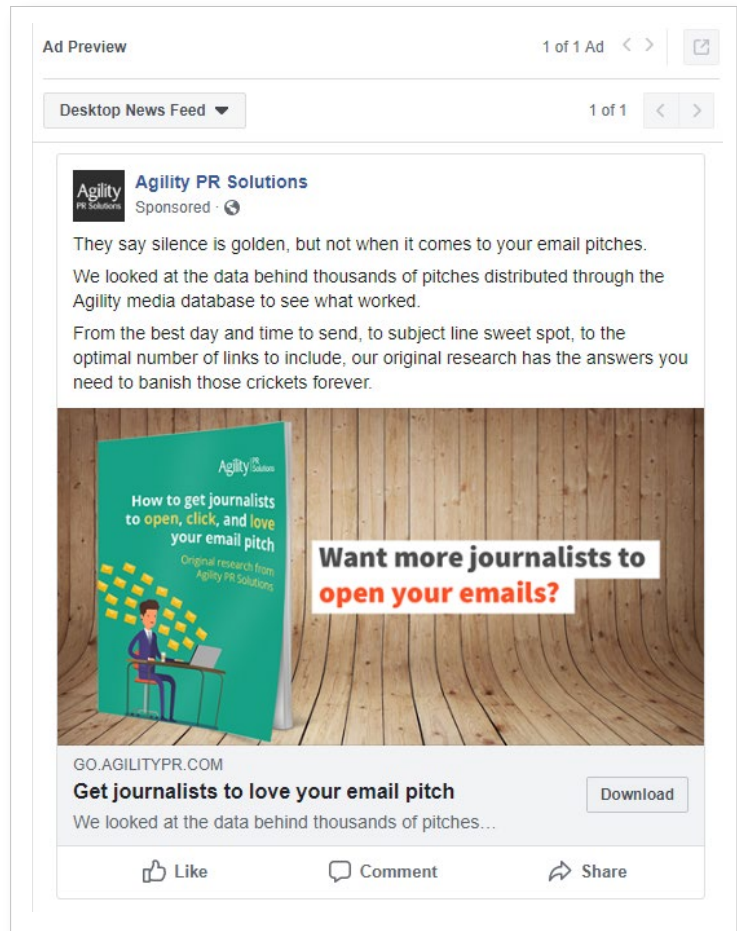
Sometimes your reach through owned and earned channels isn't enough to hit your communication objectives. That's when you need to break into that war chest and leverage some paid channels. But don't think of this as a last resort — you will make the biggest splash if you strategically combine paid efforts with owned and earned efforts.

FACEBOOK

Facebook offers fine-tuned targeting of their 2 billion monthly users, usually at a reasonable cost. You can target a granular audience using the wealth of demographic and psychographic data (personality traits, values, interests, lifestyle) that Facebook has on their users. Facebook makes it easy to create ads, test alternate versions or to boost an existing post. You can also control costs by setting a budget for each campaign.

LINKEDIN

LinkedIn is a great place to amplify content, especially for B2B companies. The ability to target people based on job role or industry means it's easy to focus your promotion on decision makers or specific organizations. That's important because LinkedIn ads can be quite expensive (they recommend a daily spend of at least \$100 for each campaign).



PAID PLACEMENT

Go where the eyeballs already are! Rather than trying to build your own audience from scratch, find out where your audience goes to get their news & insights and look for paid opportunities there. It may be ad space but also look at more exclusive options like sponsored promotion to their social followers or email subscribers. Look for media kits from related news websites or industry associations to see what options may be available — keeping in mind that you can likely negotiate a better deal than the posted rates.

CONTENT SYNDICATION

Content syndication is the process of publishing and promoting original content, such as articles, blogs, and videos, on third-party websites. The best content syndication networks have large, established audiences and recommend relevant content to site visitors. Some syndication networks are free to publish on like [Medium](#) or [LinkedIn Slideshare](#). Others like [Outbrain](#), [Taboola](#) or industry-specific networks like [TechTarget](#) for IT charge for content amplification but many also provide a lead guarantee — meaning they'll keep promoting your content until you hit your goals.

The screenshot shows a news website interface with a 'You May Like' header and a 'Sponsored Links by Taboola' header. Below these are six article cards arranged in a 2x3 grid. Each card consists of a thumbnail image, a headline, and a source attribution. The articles are: 1. 'These 2018 Crossovers Are The Cream Of The Crop!' with a car interior image, source 'Yahoo Search'. 2. 'Uniden® Cellular Booster' with a sunset image, source 'unidencellular.ca/Uniden-Cellular/Booster'. 3. 'Want to Take Control of Your Credit? Start Here!' with a smiling woman's face, source 'Capital One'. 4. 'The One WD40 Trick Everyone Should Know About' with a hand spraying WD40 into a toilet, source 'Eternally Sunny'. 5. 'The Cost Of Senior Living In Ottawa Might Be More Affordable Than You Think' with an image of three elderly people at a table, source 'Seniors Daily | Sponsored Links'. 6. 'If You're Over 50 And Own A Computer, This Game Is A Must-Have!' with an image of a knight in armor, source 'Throne: Free Online Game'.

Example of content syndication on a news website



IN SUMMARY

- ▶ A good content amplification strategy will use a combination of earned, owned, and paid channels.
- ▶ Before you amplify, you need to start with content that will resonate with your audience. Whether you build a skyscraper from existing content, or splinter one piece into many smaller ones — always keep your audience in mind.
- ▶ When promoting on owned channels like your website or social properties, make sure your message and approach fit the medium.
- ▶ Influencers are key to gaining that elusive earned media. Use a media database or monitoring tools to identify influencers and connect with them to expand your reach and build better content.
- ▶ Leverage paid channels to extend your reach and get in front of hard-to-find audiences.

NEED HELP FINDING INFLUENCERS OR MONITORING COVERAGE?

We can help! [Agility PR Solutions](#) has the #1 easiest to use media database, advanced monitoring tools and influencer identification services to help you every step of the way.

[Book a consultation with our media experts today](#)