

45 Ideas: Transitioning Print to Digital Content

Saturday June 2, 2012

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Kimberly S. Brown, Global Marketing Manager Kentucky Equine Research, former Publisher The Horse, former Contributing Editor to *The Blood-Horse*. Worked at Blood-Horse Publications for nearly 30 years. Change leader in transitioning from print to digital. In my current role I'm using print and digital content to tell the story of KER and our brand alliance partners (horse feed manufacturers) on six continents. Kim is married to musician Ben Brown, and her two daughters grew up with AHP. Kim and Ben each have a Quarter Horse from the Angel Quarter Horse Ranch managed by older daughter Barbara. Beth is a recent graduate from the University of Kentucky.

1. **Reuse, Repurpose, Recycle.** Anything you produce can be used in other mediums. For example, a print article can be placed online in its entirety, can be broken up into shorter articles, can be discussed in a blog, can be used in an email blast, and can be turned into a white paper. And believe it or not, all of those things can happen over time from just that one article.
2. **Follow your readers** wants and needs and the money will come. Don't do something digital just because you think you can sell it or sell ad space around it. Come up with killer content, then use it in all your outlets in various ways. A great print article might have photos that went unused, or a sidebar that didn't fit, or even a whole series that can be sparked.
3. **Don't say it for just the people in the room.** This goes back to the theme of Reuse, Repurpose, Recycle. If you have a good presentation, conversation, or realization about something that appeared in your print publication (or didn't), don't just keep it to yourself. Use that as content.
4. **Let other people provide your content.** It takes a lot of content to feed your digital machine, and that can be expensive. Look toward reliable sources of information (universities, companies, other publications, books, videos, etc.) and work out a deal to use the content for your purposes.
5. **Sometimes it doesn't appear in print.** Transitioning print to digital means that you have quality content that just appears in digital version. Sometimes that's hard to swallow when you are making the majority of your money on print, but it's a first step to bringing up your digital earnings.

6. **Build Lists.** It's important to use your content to build lists, not just sell space around it. Build lists through white papers, downloads, newsletters, blogs, or other.

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1. **You are only as good as your plan.** Many publishers spend ample time developing print products, but continue to treat online content as a distant relative. I still believe that a strong marriage of print and web involves online content relating the two. Are you making web content a priority in your editorial planning sessions? You need to. You are failing your readers if your plan is, "I have this extra stuff that I can't fit on a page, so I can throw it online." It all begins with your writers'/editors' goals when story planning.
2. **Let your experts build the buzz.** We find webinars to be the easiest online product to convert into sponsorship opportunities. Who are the needle movers in your world? Build a webinar around them. Several providers have cured (most of) the headaches associated with the delivery of these. Through live and recorded events, you can deliver win-win content: giving the readers valuable information while providing numbers advertisers will like.
3. **What is important for your advertisers?** Digital content can't survive without digital advertising. Measuring the effectiveness of advertising has become quick, inexpensive and automated for advertisers. This arms advertisers with more scrutiny toward the existing display ad model. With effective creative, you can create a lead generation offer in which you entice the reader with a digital download. We have found these 2 to 4-page white paper downloads are among the most popular downloads from our site. Better yet, we spend \$0, as these are composed of repurposed magazine content. Metrics will reveal the appropriate subject matter.
4. **Video killed the radio and print stars.** Who still needs convincing that video is necessary for your web site? Your editors don't need to know the best codec for video, but they need to think about planning a shoot framing shots, audio quality, and equipment. Audiences are forgiving -- they don't expect complicated material. If your editors/writers don't view themselves as film directors in this process, your end product will be a disaster. As editors, we are embarrassed by sloppy errors in our print products. Maybe it is time we have the same standards for video quality.
5. **Get someone in the know.** While editors need familiarity with digital content and tools, there will always be areas above their skill set or that

- they simply won't have time to accomplish. If you can navigate through the Nigerian millionaires, Craigslist can be a valuable tool for harvesting talent on contract. We've found additional video editors, audio engineers and transcribers who are affordable and turn around content overnight. Make sure to follow proper procedures regarding employment law.
6. **Tell a short story through Facebook.** Remember when we wanted our websites to direct people to our Facebook pages? Turns out we were looking in the wrong direction. Life became a lot easier when we quit trying to replicate the user experience of our site with that of Facebook. We've turned simple 200 word essays and images with into content and contests that out perform website-based counterparts in terms of audience reach and interaction.
 7. **Supplement that supplement with a supplement.** We publish a free, annual 64-page guide for new farriers. Strategically, this print product helped us build relationships with a segment that is transient and suffers from a high attrition rate. What took us further in both reader interaction and advertiser interest was creating a digital supplement for it. This isn't digital edition that mirrors the print product. It is evergreen material that takes advantage of the flexibility of online content. Through promotion and SEO, it then created awareness of a print product among the audience who found the digital property first.
 8. **Let them talk.** At times I will conduct interviews over email, but I still prefer the voice interaction of the phone. I have moved all of my phone interviews to Skype. Using Audio Hijack Pro to record these sessions. I've become more flexible in letting the subject get off the interview path, as it provides me with audio files covering subjects beyond the article scope. I'll serve these audio files on our site tied to that article or somehow in future use. Not only do I secure verbal permission to record, I get it to repurpose that audio content.

David M. Russo is the Midwest Regional Sales Manager at Publishers Press, Inc. in Louisville, KY. I'm a graduate of Rochester Institute of Technology with a Degree in Printing Management. I've been involved in magazine printing since 1980, and been employed by Publishers Press since 1988. I have held positions in print manufacturing and management, estimating, IT, paper purchasing, service, and sales. This gives me a well-rounded experience that I can share with my prospects to assist them in improving their content distribution, whether it be print or in digital.

1. **Survey your audience.** Do they have Internet access? How do they want to see your content? What kind of devices do they use? Nearly all consumers and professionals have access to web sites, either through computers, smart phones and now tablets. By 2016, for example, 760 million people around the world will have tablets - is there any compelling reason to believe that horse owners and breeders are so different.

Probably not. Digital offers publishers the chance to begin to grow their information businesses, but look at the various media - print, web and mobile, and now even web TV - to do different things. Print for “how to” and storytelling, web for immediacy and information, mobile for geo specific information and direction, TV for entertainment. It’s only all of our good fortune that the brands that most publishers rely on had their origins in print - that's something to be capitalized on, rather than diminished in favor of something else.

2. **Don’t give up print entirely in favor of digital.** The various media at a publisher’s disposal today should all be used for what they naturally do best. You can't run news stories in monthly issues, just as running a 10 page article on a historical aspect of a market won't work on a web site. You can't put video into a print publication - but you can in a mobile application.
3. **Don’t give digital content away. Charge for it.** Content on the Internet has been given away for since the beginning of the Internet, it is time for a change. Companies are setting up pay walls for their content. You can sample articles for free and use that as a way to sell something else. Give the first iPad app away for free, or the app itself, but if you want it populated with content, and support a lot of functionality you should charge.
4. **Have all your content xml structurally and semantically tagged and stored for easy access.** This will allow you to repurpose previous articles and unpublished material either in print or digital. All publishers should have one archive of all content. It should be based on a standardized xml scheme. Articles should be available for semantic analysis, so a publisher can better understand, in detail, what they really write about, and how much of their content well, over time, has been dedicated to certain topics and subject matter. Xml offers the publisher a chance to make something once and use it many times, semantic tagging or text mining allows for articles to be related to one another based on contextual relevance.....html 5 is the file format that makes it possible to run content in a variety of applications from one management system.
5. **If you’re going to have a digital edition, do not just duplicate your print edition.** Add to it with podcasts, instructional videos, interactivity. Offer additional articles, photos, etc. Entice your advertisers to embellish their ads with video as well.
6. **No matter which direction you go, digital or print, strive to improve your content.** If content is not good, it won’t matter if you are digitally or print publishing, you will not prosper. Great content is the starting point, but recognizing the strengths and weaknesses of each media as it relates to a publishers content and audience is what will make the difference between success and failure over time.

7. **Go Digital to Print with new projects.** Here's a crazy idea, try new topics, publications first in digital. Attract and build new audiences then create a print product that will work for them. It's much less expensive to experiment on the web than in print.
8. **This is a critical time for a publisher to educate themselves on technology, and the new marketplaces, such as the app store, that a publisher will have to compete it.** The app store is like Wal-Mart, lots of stuff on lots of shelves, and lots of shoppers. The technology today allows for rapid product development and testing, and if something doesn't work don't be afraid to move on to the next iteration of that initiative.

Christy West has worked in equine publishing for 13 years, both full-time and freelance, for such publications as The Horse: Your Guide To Equine Health Care, American Farriers Journal, Virginia Horse Journal, Horse Care, and Northwest Horse Source. She is also the webmaster for American Horse Publications. She is currently employed in her other passion--skydiving--as the marketing and communications director for Skydive Spaceland near Houston, Texas.

1. **Remember that your casual online audience has the approximate attention span of baby gnats.** Cut the majority of your print writing (short news blurbs possibly excepted) in half, and maybe in half again as people just don't tend to read as much (CITE) or retain as much of their reading online (http://www.slate.com/content/dam/slate/archive/media/2011/08/66_mediummatters.pdf) compared to print. This report says they only read about 20% of your words, so make them count.
2. **Remember I said your casual audience has a short attention span. HOWEVER... your gold mines want all the info you can give them on your selected topic.** How do you satisfy both? Provide a short, sweet, search-optimized article with links to more in-depth content for the serious information consumers.
3. **Help the skimmers out.** You know how it is when you're looking for information and you don't yet know where to find it. You Google your search terms and click on links, poised on the back button or backspace key, ready to bail on a result if it doesn't deliver quickly enough. Make it easy for people to skim your content with bolded, bigger headlines and subheads, bulleted lists, sidebars, and pullquotes. About 20% of your audience reads word for word according to this: <http://www.useit.com/alertbox/9710a.html>.

4. **Don't forget the visuals.** Back to the skimming point and add to that that a picture is worth 1,000 words... graphics, by which I mean USEFUL graphics (not loosely related stock images). Particularly for how-tos or technical topics, illustration of the topic is key. The nice thing about online use is that you aren't restricted by page counts, but don't let that cause you to data-dump your entire photo shoot on a story. Picking the right images and ONLY the right images is essential. **Keep the signal to noise ratio high.**
5. **Optimize your visuals.** Yes, you CAN post your magazine-sized image online and have the code in the page resize it appropriately. But DON'T. Big files take more time to download and render, and in the equine world much of our audience tends to be in rural areas, meaning they're on dialup or otherwise slow connections. It's better than it used to be, but it is best to make the images the size they will be used in the story. If you want to allow people to click on a small version for a bigger version, that is fine.
6. **Research the keywords your audience uses, and use those (not your internal lingo) in headlines, subheads, body copy, image captions, meta tags, and alt tags.** Example: Let's say you are writing an article on founder. Check out the Google keyword research tool (https://adwords.google.com/o/Targeting/Explorer?_c=1000000000&_u=1000000000&ideaRequestType=KEYWORD_IDEAS) and see what words your audience is searching for. Search for "founder" and you see 1.8M searches, but look closer and you'll see many are for company creators or boating accidents. "Laminitis" (very specific to horses) gets 33,000+, "laminitis in horses" gets 6,600+ as does "horse laminitis." "Horse founder" gets 5,400+ and "founder in horse" gets 2,900+. Conclusion: Use both words.
7. **Promote, promote, promote.** Once you put fresh content on your site, tell people about it! Note it in your blog (and link to it), e-newsletters, Twitter, Facebook, etc. Don't expect people to find it on your own, especially right away. Search engines won't know about your content immediately, but you can tell your audience.
8. **Add Facebook, Google Plus, ShareThis, etc., widgets to your articles and multimedia features.** Ideally this is done through a template to make your life easier, but either way it should be done. You want people to like that article on Facebook (as an example) so that they can spread your content virally.
9. **Use a content management system.** Most of you have never had any interest in programming; you want to focus on what you're good at, which is creating content for horse people. Find a system and a developer who will build a system that gets out of your way and lets you do what you need to do. This will let you focus on your content and visuals rather than trivial things like adding links to menus, updating your homepage, etc.
10. **If you are starting out or redesigning, strongly consider one of the content management systems that includes sitemaps.** You may never see them, but Google does. Trust me.

Karen Tappenden is the Co-Publisher Holistic Horse Magazine which has been in print for 17 years. In 1997 Karen launched [www. Holisichorse.com](http://www.Holisichorse.com) taking lessons from the school of hard knocks of web publishing. Four years ago she launched the Holistic Horse eNewsletter which went weekly one year ago. Holistic Horse magazine is available on-line via Yudo. The Holistic Horse TV page on You Tube hosts 45 videos and has over 7 million views. She lives in eastern Pa with her horse, son, two dogs and numerous cats.

1. **Recycle old content**; take articles that are timeless and use them in eNewsletters. This is a wonderful way to get the articles to new readers, refresh the information to old readers, and link the reader to your other to online content and advertisers.
2. **Digital magazines offer the opportunity to add video**, utilizing clients 30 or 60 second TV commercials; recycle old commercials. Commercials need to be refreshed more often than print!
3. **Digital offers the opportunity for readers to instantly find out more about your advertisers' products**. Make sure the link is to the correct page to answer the call to action whether it is price, contents, where to purchase, colors available, etc.
4. **Produce ibooks with your recycled content**, sell the ibook on your website and in your eNews and in your printed magazine. Mention the content on Facebook and on Twitter. Sell a notebook on your website with your Logo for them to save the books in.
5. **When publishing eNewsletters send out notifications to Facebook and Twitter**. Your articles will get further reach via "friends" who may not want to subscribe to a weekly eNews. Make sure the subject line is catchy, using keywords that your readership may be searching.
6. **Google Ad Words has a Keyword and Analytical tab**. Before posting a title to an article, use this function to find out how many searches there were for that particular word or phrase, alter the phrase until you find a large number of surfers looking for this information. Warning: do not post a phrase that is off base for the article. You will accumulate bounces from your site. You want folks to read the article, see the ad and look for more resources on your site or in your magazine.
<https://adwords.google.com/o/Targeting/Explorer>
7. **We use social media outlets**. I like Facebook, to engage readers and drive them to our online content. Watch the trends on Facebook; look at your timeline and when there is a spike, see what you posted to engage fans. Use fun photos, advertiser give-aways, AHP news, and other free content, if you are too busy to add this to your list, hire a person -- it is well worth the money.

8. **I still use Yudo for digital delivery.** I do not see the advantage of paying a per page upload, which my printer has offered me, until I can charge a fee for subscribing (and that opens up another can of worms). The upload programs I have seen so far are served to the Apple market but are not any easier to read. I think the money would be better spent producing ebooks and selling the content since our publication is primarily free.

Chad Mendell is the former executive editor of *The Horse: Your Guide To Equine Health Care* and TheHorse.com, where he helped develop an array of online educational products such as videos, newsletters, and live webinars. In 2010, he founded CowDog Media, an inbound marketing and web development company. Chad was selected to judge the 2012 Equestrian Social Media Awards and currently co-host the Equestrian Social Media Boot Camp. He is also a contributing editor for EquestrianProfessional.com.

1. **Content Length.** While 2,000 words might be the norm for print features, 500 words can be considered too long when it comes to content on the web. Readers' attention spans are much shorter when it comes to reading text online. You also have to consider that more and more people are consuming content via their smart phones or tablets, which have smaller screens and are usually used while on the move.
2. **Headlines are critical.** Headline writing is even more important when it comes to online content because you are essentially writing for three different audiences: People, Social Media and Search Engines. Web headlines need to tell the entire story in a few words. A headline might be the only content your readers see when they're viewing it in RSS feeds, newsletters, search results pages, or on social media platforms. Headlines are also an important consideration for search engine optimization.
3. **Take a multimedia approach.** The web is a very visual platform, maybe even more so than print. You can see evidence of this in how many people are sharing images on sites like Facebook and Pinterest. However, digital publishers aren't limited to images to tell a story, they can use a wide array of tools such as slideshows, text, audio, video, etc. By using multiple forms of media you can convey the story in ways that text and images might fall short. You can include clips from a recorded interview or a quick how-to video that shows exactly what you couldn't fully explain in 500 words or less. The downside of course is that there's extra work involved in creating, planning and executing multimedia content.
4. **Create speed bumps in your design.** Online readers tend to skim content rather than read every word. You can create visual cues around important content or make content very easy to digest quickly. Bold headings, bullet points and graphics are just a few ways you can get readers to slow down and pull them into your content before they bolt to another page.

5. **Create a sales funnel and include calls to actions.** Deliberately creating a sales funnel is something that publishers (and most companies) often overlook when creating a digital presence. One great thing that a publisher has over most traditional companies is content and a built-in trust with readers. You might not think of your content as a piece of marketing, but in truth that's what it is. Sometimes it might be playing double duty by being able to sell advertising around it, but one of your other goals should be either selling a physical or digital product or building your list. Using content and calls to action can accomplish this.
6. **Test.** I can't stress this enough. One great advantage to publishing online is the ability to try something without a lot of investment in time or money and measure the results almost in real time. For example if you create two different subject lines for your newsletter for an A/B test and one outperforms the other, you have a better idea of what your audience responds to. Or you can test different locations for your calls to actions
7. **Mobile is here.** If you believe content is king (actually it's not, the customer is), then delivery is certainly queen. If you're going to be producing content online in any form, you better be paying attention to mobile. Not just paying attention to it, but planning and testing how your content is going to work on those platforms and with that user demographic. Facebook recently announced that they had 400 million mobile users, and more and more people are using smart phones (especially in the horse industry) to stay in touch. Mobile isn't coming; it's here.
8. **Linking.** One thing that often gets forgotten when creating content online is linking to other related or sourced content. If you want to see a great example of this, visit just about any Wikipedia page. While print is a very linear platform, the web allows you to move the user from one piece of content to the next in a click on a button. Whether it's something that was written a year ago or yesterday, if it's relevant, you could easily move the reader there with a link. Additionally, links help you keep your content shorter because you don't have to keep explaining the same thing over and over again, you can just link to it instead. When you link to content on your site (this is called internal linking), you are giving the reader more reasons and opportunities to stay on your website. Plus search engines take links (both internal and external) into account when they rank pages in their results.