

Continuous Improvement

The Newsletter of Orobor

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by Steve O'Keefe

Would you like to improve your business by 15% this year?

Who wouldn't? I'm about to explain how to do that. But first, please allow me to introduce our new company, Orobor, Inc., dedicated to the science of continuous improvement.

Orobor grew out of the content marketing firm SixEstate, whose name projected our desire to revolutionize journalism (the "fourth estate") through private content creation. The company is still in business, under the capable command of my colleague, David Reich. SixEstate's signature service is newsblogging: a strategy for building a following by covering news in your field.

Newsblogging works. Properly practiced, it will increase your website traffic by at least 15% a year. However, being a restless soul, I was never satisfied with a 15% increase in traffic. I wanted to turn that into a 15% increase in sales. That's where Orobor comes in.



Your traffic can grow by 15% and your followers can increase by 15% and your search engine position can improve by 15%, but what does that mean for your bottom line? Honestly, most of the people we work with don't know. Do you?

Maybe you know "business is up" or "business is better," but until you know how or why, you're getting a small portion of the whole picture. Most likely, you're only getting a small portion of the growth your efforts deserve.

Whether you like the funnel metaphor for customer acquisition or not, it is essentially the model upon which all content marketing is based. Quality content is distributed as a form of bait. It might be news posted on a blog, or a how-to video, or a humorous podcast, which is distributed in hopes of reaching a large audience. Often, quality content does connect.

Almost as often, that connection doesn't lead anywhere. Are you harvesting the handles of every person that likes or retweets one of your Twitter posts? Are you collecting and storing the names of every person who likes you on Facebook? Do you build your own profile for every person who con-

nects with you on LinkedIn? If not, you are leaving most of your marketing money on the table.



Many of you have realized that Facebook is running a con game. You spend good money to develop quality content and to manage your page, building a list of followers, and then Facebook slams the door and charges you to talk to your own people. That's outrageous. And that's the business model for every other so-called "free" social network. At some point, they have to generate revenue. When that day comes, the books will be balanced on your back.

You have to fight back, unless you want Twitter and Google and Facebook to sell your content to their audience, cutting you out of your share of the proceeds. The way you fight back is to use their platforms as your farmland, continuously casting your content seeds and harvesting the fruit of followers.

How do you harvest the fruits of your labor? With CRM — Customer Relationship Manage-

ment software. In simple terms, you don't leave your 15% growth to chance. You stop hoping enough people will convert to customers to make your content marketing pay off. You ensure that growth by taking control of the process of prospect conversion. And you do that through CRM.



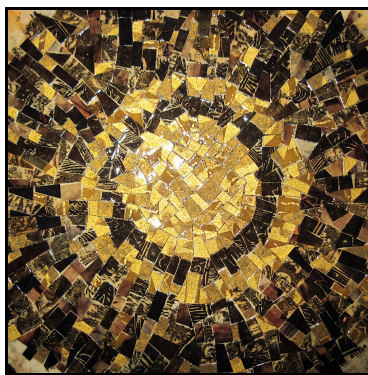
Every person who "likes" you gets added to your CRM, and a profile is started. Every person who retweets you opens a new record in your CRM. Every person who connects with you or follows you or friends you gets added to your CRM.

It goes even further. Every phone call you receive gets added to your CRM. Every recipient on every email that passes through your server gets added to your CRM. Everyone who even looks at your LinkedIn page gets added to your CRM. Every IP address that visits your website is potentially added to your CRM. Everyone who brushes up against your organization in any way gets added to the CRM. Then the fun begins.

Behind every handle, every screen name, every IP address, there is a person or organization. Your next job is to find out who that person or organization is and add whatever you find to — you guessed it — your CRM.

This sounds like a lot of work, and it is, but it's work that can be outsourced to low-wage sectors of the world where improving your database means a big improvement in someone's quality of life.

It's work that can be done by interns, apprentices, or entry-level staff. The hard part is creating compelling content. The easy part — the part most organizations fail to do — is building up profiles from that tiny nugget of data that first comes across the screen.



Is all this effort really worth it? Yes, it is. Just because someone retweeted something doesn't mean they're going to become a customer. What it does mean, though, is that they have made a tangible connection with your company. So what?

Here's what: The best and most profitable customers come from referrals. Perhaps in a future newsletter, I'll unpack why that's true. For now, I hope your own experience confirms this, or that you'll accept it at face value and see where it leads.

The people and organizations in this massive database you are building are *not* likely customers. They *are* likely sources of referrals. They have brushed up against your organization in some small way that makes them feel connected to you. That's what social networking is all about. And that is enough for them to become a source of referrals to your organization of people who *are* likely to

become customers, clients, donors, members, volunteers, or other material contributors to your bottom line.

Ask yourself how many of your customers have come through referrals. Here's an even more revealing question: how many of your customers were referred by someone *you have never done business with*? If your business is like mine, the majority of your referrals come from people who have not done business with you but who know what you do. The referrer connected with you somewhere in the past (in my case, I likely know where; most businesses don't have a clue). When a friend asked, "Who do you recommend?" this person said you, maybe because you are the only one who came to mind. Or maybe because way back when, you published a piece of clever content they found memorable.



If you follow this strategy of relentlessly pursuing referrals from all those who brush up against you, I guarantee you will experience at least 15% annual growth. That's what continuous improvement in content marketing is all about. That's what Orobora is all about.

I hope you'll continue to subscribe to our newsletter, because we are dedicated to making your life a little better. If you know anyone that could use a dose of continuous improvement in their marketing, we would appreciate a referral.

