It must be love: more than just content strategy

Carol Jones, Director Marketing and Engagement at Chapter in Cardiff
Chair, Tim Wood, communications director – The Place

Carol Jones is Director Marketing and Engagement at Chapter in Cardiff, one of the foremost multidisciplinary arts centres in Europe. She has worked in arts marketing for over two decades starting in 1986 at Cardiff Arts Marketing followed by a period of freelance work with venues and companies across Europe. Carol leads the marketing module on the MA in Arts Management at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama and is in the process of setting up a new pan-Wales arts and technology network, *ArtsTech Cymru*. Her real passion is about using social spaces to promote deeper engagement and to drive businesses forward both artistically and financially. She sits on the Wales board of the Chartered Institute of Marketing, is a director of the pan-Wales film literacy initiative, Reel Education and sits on the advisory board of REACT, a knowledge exchange hub that puts academics and creatives together to generate economic and social impacts.

In this seminar, Carol talked about people, passion and creating content that brings people closer to you. It was a 'warts 'n' all' session tracking the development of their new website. She explored how and why Chapter developed its content strategy in the way it did, including key things to think about such as steps in the process, tying things back to your mission, vision and values and how they integrated the process into their existing operations.

Carol Jones:
I'm going to begin this session with a sing along to the Madness song *It must be love* and record it on to my iPad for uploading online later. I've recorded that and I'll send you the link and you can Tweet it if you want to. That was an example of some fast, dirty, user-generated content that gives a flavour of what's happening.
Perhaps a more accurate title for today's session is:

OR HOW NOT TO FALL DOWN A BIG BLACK HOLE…
AND FIND ME AT THE BOTTOM OF IT

As well as the things that have gone right for us I'll be talking you through some of the things that have gone wrong. For instance I was really hoping that two weeks ago we have launched our new website with all this lovely content – it's not ready and we won't be launching until the spring (2013) – so that's definitely Wart #1.
I'm going to take you through some of the steps in the process, give you some key things to think about, how to tie things back to your mission, vision and values, and how we at Chapter are trying to transfer our successful offline social contract onto our digital presence including:

- Deepening emotional resonance,
- encouraging risk taking,
- rewarding digital engagement.

The photos and lots of the content throughout this presentation are generated by our users and our customers. Millions of people all the time are creating billions of bits of social digital content for us to use. Forrester did research on this a few months ago and only 13% of marketers are using this free, accessible content. So there's a big gap there in terms of how we can use that to enrich our campaigns, but also to bring users much closer to us.

This is a photo of the Chapter bees:
It was taken by a very brave person on an iPhone – no gloves …
[Carol played a video of a dancing man doing an excerpt from *Scarface*]
This was taken by one of our audience members in the courtyard at Chapter on an iPhone.
So, to put all this into context, a bit about Chapter
We're not 'Chapter by numbers' but by spaces and by people and the artistic vision that moulds and drives us: *Vibrant art AND community relevance with values of collaboration, openness, accessibility and sustainability.*

This is a photo of our frontage with work by the artist Bedwyr Williams. The frontage changes around every four to six months with a new piece of work that covers the whole of the frontage.
We're also about:
New people, more people, attending more things, more often.
Chapter opened its doors in 1971 with a vision to bring performance, film and exhibitions together under one roof united by a dynamic social space

We're all about 'collisions' as well

- Chapter is loved for the open space we create and the combination of radical new work that coexists with our many diverse users,
- a place where art forms collide,
- contemporary AND community,
- arts AND audience.

Here's 'Our Maj'' – one of our diverse many users. She visited for the Jubilee this year and has been seen serving on Box Office, working behind the bar and ushering. It has provided great photo opportunities and we've had lots of Facebook and Twitter activity, user-generated content with pictures of people and Her Maj'.
So we are a place where lots of things collide, not just art forms but the idea of contemporary and community and arts and audience.
Chapter also has a variety of spaces including an edible community garden, the forecourt where different pieces of art take place and spaces such as the café bar where artists can make work including Gruff Rhys from the band Super Furry Animals who approached Chapter to do an installation called *Hotel Shampoo.*

Projects such as *Ultrasaurus* by artists Mike and Heather Williamson generated a huge amount of content for us, a Facebook group, lots of Twitter activity and it became a real social space down on the south coast. The intention was that it would tour back to Cardiff but sadly it burnt down and then that in turn generated a whole load of activity i.e. RIP *Ultrasaurus*.

We're a Major Creative Cluster and we've got resident companies, artists and creatives – we're home to 40 small, creative businesses employing over 100 more people. Our social space acts as a catalyst for creative entrepreneurs and creative independents to meet, discuss and collaborate. It is a vibrant platform for – social media surgeries, games events, book and film clubs etc.
Our hire spaces provide affordable options for dance classes, youth theatre, poetry, music and comedy. Chapter is a really busy Social Space and last year we had:

- over 800,000 visits
- 395,000 customers for our cafe-bar

- 175,000 hot drinks sold (1 every 90 seconds) / 150,000 pints of beer sold (1 every 80 seconds) / 14,000 bottles of wine (1 glass every 2 minutes)
- 58,000 gallery visits
- 52,000 participants at classes and workshops
- 1,920 film screenings / 430 theatre performances

And some more numbers…

- Our trading income is circa £2.7M
- Turnover – circa £4M
- Over 70% of our turnover is earned income making us one of the largest social enterprises in Cardiff
- We provide jobs for local people – we employ over 170 people, 95% live in Cardiff

Our Community Garden has brought use really close to the community and people can pick what's grown there and take it home. The community garden is supported by The People's Millions and Environment Wales and we used a lot of content generation in order to help secure that funding because people have to vote for The People's Millions projects.

We're a social space that locks audiences into our vision and values. Research by Matthews Millman as part of the redevelopment confirmed that loyalty to Chapter was not just about repeat attendance behaviour but a stronger emotional attachment that locks audiences into our vision and aspirations. This is key when we have a look at the challenge of moving our social presence from offline to online.
This quote is from the think tank Demos; *People Make Places: Growing the Public Life of Cities*, 2005 about the social space growing the public life of the city: 'Users appreciate the high degree of diversity, and the tolerance of people who are often not tolerated elsewhere. At the same time, cutting edge film and art helps confer a sense of status and esteem.'

The Challenge

The challenge is how we are going to transfer from off- to online. I haven't spoken much about the art, the theatre, gallery or our cinemas but we have a lot going on in and around those three art forms.

Where we are now

Our existing site is hanging on in there – it had over 20 million hits last year with one million of those being unique visits, over 35% of our sales are online and it's a sales site. While it's working for us it isn't really representing what we are about.

- Your Content Strategy needs to be based on your audiences' needs and their behaviours – our current website isn't really doing that,
- don't guess – use on and off-line research to guide you,

- it needs to be a good match,
- this all takes time and you need to be realistic about what you can deliver.

We have a few strategies that we use in terms of the research part of it and one of these is *stealing* while the second is *snooping*. When we 'steal' we look at other, often commercial, organisations that have audiences or values similar to ours. We look at what they've done, we know that they've done a huge amount of research to inform what they are doing and then we steal it. In terms of snooping; it always amazes me how many organisations don't 'follow' their Twitter followers. We follow all of our Twitter followers and we 'snoop'. When we look at what they are tweeting it gives us insight into what else they are doing. The Unthinkables talked this morning about 'looking outside of your organisation', what else is happening on the customer journey – it's not just the journey they are having with you – there's a lot of other stuff going on. You can inform quite a lot of your activity.

Wart #1
Allow enough time. As I mentioned at the start I thought the new website would be up and running a few weeks / month ago but our new web presence will not now be launched until the spring. Make sure to communicate across the whole organisation.

A content strategy is about serving the needs of your audience:

- Listening
- Researching
- Testing
- Applying
- Listening some more

It can be really easy to get consumed by all the tech-y stuff and forget about the person at the end of that and about building that relationship.

- It's about understanding users and their motivations and then incentivising and rewarding for delivering content.

- It's not about the tech (well, maybe a little bit) but it is about the content and how real that is and how we relate with our audiences.

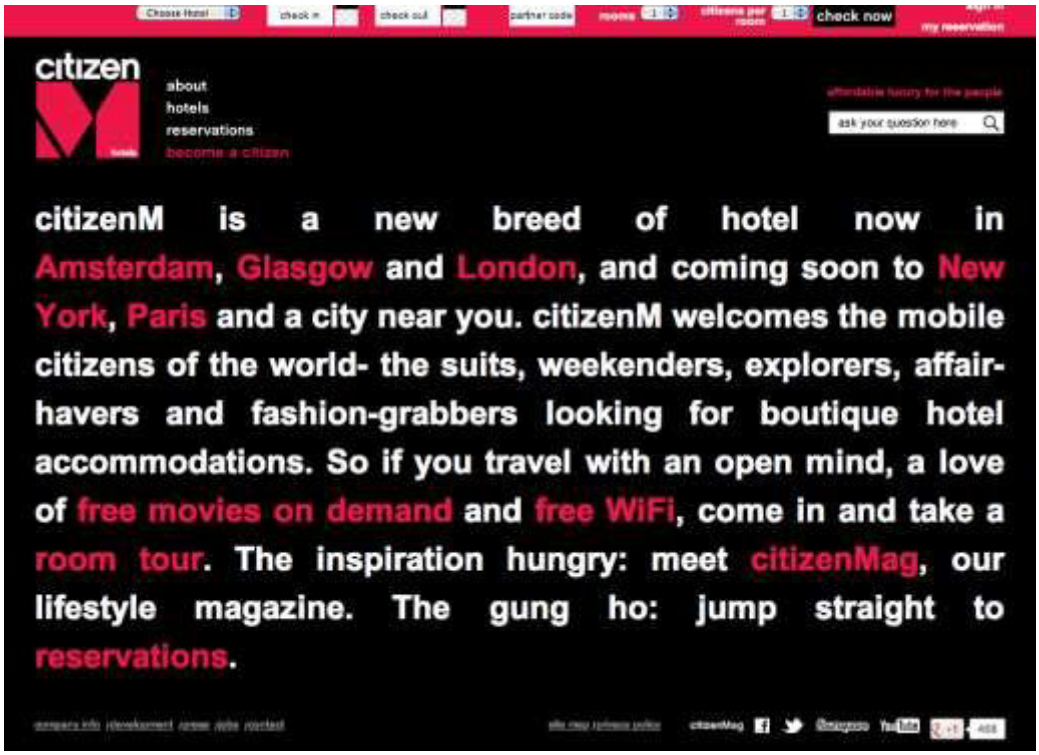
If you do that well, the tech will become invisible and people won't notice it. If you do it badly it's like running face first into a hurdle.

Maybe now's the time to turn things on its head:

- When developing content strategy it can be a good idea to park your goals and objectives and really think about the needs and behaviours of your audience (which can then feed your goals)
- Take time to understand your audiences and what your audiences want – and that's not just your programme

Develop collaborations and produce and share content together. I've recently had conversations with Matt Lawton from National Theatre Wales about how can we share content. Search out collaborations with other organisations that are doing interesting things – this can be inside and outside the arts. Search out great examples. Here are some that love:

- Citizen M
- Zappos
- Aiga Design Association (USA – developed community generated content feed from designers)
- Boden



While I don't particularly like their website it's interesting that on their homepage (above), they are already segmenting us i.e. 'the gung ho: jump straight to

reservations'. But if you want to look at them in a different way, take a look at the lifestyle magazine which offers things to listen, to see, to read, to explore, to taste, to wear and to play. It has lots of Citizen M insiders. A lot of them are staff but many are people that simply use the hotel. They are drawing on user-generated content to populate their site. They also have a lot of polls (not necessarily about staying in a hotel) and streams and use Flickr, Pinterest and YouTube. Boden has a social hub where you can join the 'chitter, chatter', *Behind the Seams* at Boden House and what gets them out of bed in the morning. There's a Twitter stream and a variety of Pinterest boards. Howies the clothes company uses feeds to create a real mix of content and not just generated by them but also their users and customers.

Empower your teams

To be able to get your team to generate content for you, you really need to empower them to do it. Your underlying policies need to allow them to be able to generate content and to feel confident about it.

We developed a social media policy after a particular incident when a diner started Tweeting negatively about the experience they were having that day. Interestingly our other Twitter followers started to Tweet positively for Chapter, confirming that the incident was a one off and that what they were experiencing was not at all like Chapter.

I asked several organisations to send me their social media policies as examples to help me write one for Chapter. The underlying message in a lot of them was to 'stop or get sacked, don't bring us into disrepute, seek your own legal advice'. This sort of policy was going to make it difficult to empower our teams so we came up with this (part of it):

Chapter encourages all staff to use social media to share insights, behind-the-scenes information and chatter about your day-to-day work activity, whatever role you play. Our audiences value this openness and transparency. When using social media take account of our key guidelines below and remember to have fun, be honest and respect colleagues, customers, stakeholders, tenants and associates.

At Zappos (shoe store based in the US) you'll find all 198 of the twittering Zappos employees most recent messages. They tweet about what they're doing at work and about interesting resources on and off the Zappos site.

Brave or foolhardy it's definitely working. There are also blogs and video content all posted by staff.

Wart #2

We started encouraging our staff with our open social media policy but what we didn't do was put some extra guidance in place. The mistake we made was that our fantastic team started to post what they thought was what *we* wanted them to post and we started to see 'naff' marketing Tweets i.e. 'This is on tonight! Don't miss it!!'

When you are empowering your colleagues it's not just about policies but about training and getting the message across that it's OK to write in their own voice about the things that interest them. One of our ushers is a librarian who has 10,000 to 15,000 followers on Twitter and who writes Tweets in a really wonderful way about things such as on her first day how excited she was to get her usher's torch and how wonderful it was to practice ripping tickets. Try to get across to your colleagues the importance of openness and integrity, being interesting and that it's not all about the selling.

Getting it right – a nice example of a Tweet from one of our cinema team 'getting it right':

We're also cultivating 'superfans' – our 'tastemakers'. It's important to start making a connection and a developing a relationship with these people who are doing this work for you and to say 'thank you'. That also applies to engaging journalists.
Develop tastemakers as they can point your other users in the right direction, develop content and let others follow their lead.

When it comes to finding content, 'look under stones'. Content can come from unexpected places. Use the art and events that are going on around you and your spaces. We record a 'walk and talk' with our curator and whichever of our invigilators are about at the time of all our exhibitions so we can give it to people who aren't there to give them a better understanding of the work before it opens.

The journey so far in terms of our new web presence

- We started out last year with initial scoping and research throughout 2011 (pre PatronBase)
- PatronBase installed October 2011
- Funding raised the money for it and gained that through Esmee Fairbairn who are helping us to move our offline presence to online
- Initial design and navigation plus draft pages
- Decision to proceed with a fully mirrored site in the Welsh language – not a Wart but a challenge in terms of producing content – not in one, but two languages.

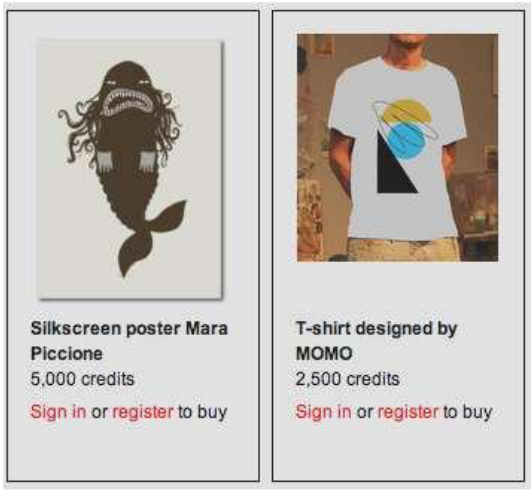
We were looking at a space that unfolds and unwraps and looks at all the social space things that I've mentioned before. We wanted it to work in landscape and portrait so that you can use it easily on your iPad and other tools. We wanted it to be accessible so it had an emphasis on touch, but still worked with a mouse and include those interactive features such as forums, polls, open blogs, uploading, downloading.

It was originally going to be incredibly content heavy and we had all these layers: Chapter Noise – an onward stream channel. Content creation heavy –Chapter TV/Chapter FM. Video and audio e.g. monthly highlights podcast, behind the scenes, 'two minutes in the day of', rehearsal footage, Inside Chapter (Staff Vlogs and insights). Another layer was Chapter Live with lots of live layers. Plus the *Bee Cam* with 24/7 bee monitoring . Live broadcast events for example exhibition openings, Q&A's, special events. Then there was another layer; the Chapter Open an inward stream: Twitter (quotes using favourite tweets), comment of the day (could be press quotes), Yelp etc (reviews/quotes), YouTube and including user video uploads. Yet another layer would be Chapter Conversation where you could post your idea or start a topic, vote to promote or demote ideas. There are also rewards for engagement with the site.

Content was to be driven by CRM through our ticketing system that would allow more 'Amazon-style' functionality and recognises you and knows your purchase history so can recommend items and profile top sellers. You can manage your own account, manage your Cl1c card points – which are points gained for engagement with the site. Many years ago we stole the idea of loyalty-based points schemes from Tescos / Boots; *Cl1c.* You collect points and these can be used to buy tickets. You can do this online and we are looking to incentivise our users for uploading their content online by offering Cl1c points.

The rewards for users include that they can become tastemakers so we can help them to understand that what they are doing for us is important and that it helps other users, they receive access to additional things – on and offline such as special offers and special treatment and the points.

The Incubate Music and Arts Festival in the Netherlands encourage their biggest fans to 'do stuff to get stuff' – rewards and points for their biggest fans that can be redeemed in the Webshop www.incubate.org/2012/webshop
We've stolen this idea and intend to implement it on our new website. Their users and biggest fans are encouraged to edit the bands' wiki-based biographies and the advise they give to them is to be funny, critical, wise, original but most of all be informative. When you've edited the wiki you gain credits and you can redeem credits for merchandise.



Real content customisation is the goal that allows our users to have the experience they want. Flipboard is an interesting social magazine available on iPad that connects with your friends on social networks and shares what they're doing. We're working towards having that Flipboard experience on our website allowing customisation of very distinct feeds and dynamic content that varies with attendance and purchase behaviour which we can track through the 'back end' of our CRM.

Wart #3
We've included a LOT of layers there and we're a very small team and the realisation was that there is just no way we can generate all this content. We are concentrating on the user-generated content whether that's from staff, marketing or audience. Technology moves really quickly and when planning and budgeting and we have to careful that our Content Strategy is flexible enough to keep up. We need to be able to plan to be flexible.

Here's a preview of the homepage. It expands across to five or six columns and contracts down to one column. You can 'fast track to tickets' if you want to cut through all the other stuff and simply buy your tickets. There are 'some ideas to share', staff blogs, a Twitter feed, Flickr streams, reviews, favourite films, 'do stuff, get stuff', membership, community, behind the scenes, 24/7 Bee Cam, partners' information, voting, sharing and more.	

We're also going to include a *Wheel of Fortune* as an incentive for logging on where you can play once a day and maybe win a prize that could be a free glass of wine, tickets or Cl1c points etc.

Have you got any ideas or challenges to share?
Delegate: in terms of that user-generated content, how do you moderate it? How do you decide what is acceptible?
Carol (CJ): We've got some guidelines in place mainly around children and things that are illegal but otherwise it is very open. We always ask permission from parents to use anything and children are not named. There are systems in place checking for anything that might incite racism or similar.

Gillian, Embrace Arts: we're looking at changing our website and I am interested in the costs involved in this project.
CJ: We've worked on the website creation with a digital agency who undersell themselves! Also, it's all open source which is high risk but gives you the flexibility to respond quickly to change with bolt ons and content provision and which allows us to go at a pace we can afford. I'll talk figures with you afterwards.

Delegate: tell me more about your 'superfans' and how you 'snoop' on them.
CJ: they're moved on from the traditional ambassadors schemes and what we've been doing, partly by snooping is identifying those 'superfans' and 'tastemakers' and recognising them, tweeting and DM'ing them and trying to start that individual conversation with them to bring them closer to us and to capitalise on their ability to 'spread the word'. We reward them with tickets

Tim Wood (TW): it seems like you are encouraging all these methods of interaction with the website but they all relate back to Chapter's brand. Is that a conscious decision, could if ever have been about the more general community, or say, film buff community?
CJ: there's a chance that it could go that way and if so then we will adapt and change. It may be that there are things we haven't considered that we need to build on, adpat later.

TW: What's the minimum number of people you need to make a success of a vibrant online community such as this?
CJ: Hundreds. Our current social media activity is very active with a lot of Twitter followers and activity on Facebook. But you do need that basis of exisitng engagement and to keep on cultivating it.

TW: Chapter is a really vibrant social space offline and that's transferring to online but was this difficult to sell internally with people who say that you need to sell tickets and get people into Chapter?
CJ: It is a challenge and you have to do that mediation in particular with your artisitic team. That buy in took a lot of negotiation. In terms of the finance it took a lot of talking from me to convince people that I think our sales will go up as people become more engaged.

Sally Goldsmith, Theatre Royal Stratford East: we've launched a similar website that allows people to enage with us in many ways and upload their own videos without any moderation. After six months it is going quite well but it is a challenge to get people to add content and I like the idea of incentivising them with the points etc. Do they therefore need to be logged into the website?
CJ: it's not obligatory but if you want to engage with the site to edit a Wiki, spin the Wheel of Fortune, earn points then 'yes' you have to log in.

SG: Do you know of a way of following all your Twitter followers without that being obvious?
CJ: we do it manually and we don't follow back sales sites but we find that people Tweet about it and like the fact that we are following them.

Almeida Theatre: we found a Wart in that we used to follow back followers on Twitter and then about two and a half years ago someone who believed that we shouldn't be doing that started un-following people and we had a massive backlash to that.

On a practical level, when you are such a small team, how do you manage to make that voice authentic when you might not be in the office
CJ: it's another Wart. We do work at weekends / evenings and we're constantly checking in. We're going to start opening it up to other people and teams and we will be changing from Chapter Tweets to having personal Twitter accounts / voices.

Ray, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry: if people get points for the content they upload is there any way of monitoring the quality before they upload it? Is it open to abuse?
CJ: we've thought about it but we haven't gone there although it may be something we will think about in the future but we're not going to be arbiters of the content quality. People don't come into the Community Garden and take all the courgettes so I'm hoping that we'll get the same kind of honesty online.

Tips to take away

- Think about your audience and their needs and behaviours not your goals
- Empower your staff
- Reward your customers
- Give yourself plenty of time

- Look under stones
- Collaborate with other people, 1 + 1 can = 3
- Monitor and change
- Don’t use this in isolation – create a unique and engaging experience across all your channels
- Try to develop a content strategy that builds relationships and the content will follow as will the *love*.
- Have fun …