

How to win your Zero Moment of Truth

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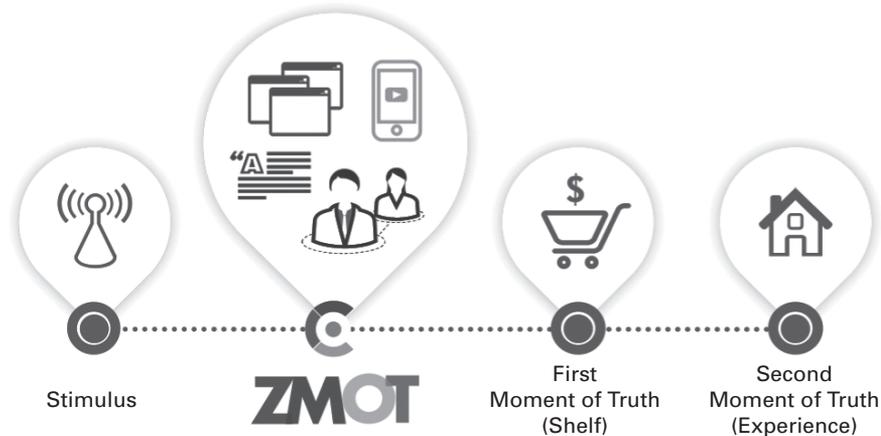
BRICE BAY

Brice Bay, CEO of EnVeritas Group (EVG), is a pioneer in the content marketing industry. For over a decade, his firm has helped Fortune 500 companies power their digital initiatives with engaging content and communications. EVG features over 2,000 writers worldwide who can create content in 34 languages.

There is no doubt that today's shoppers are digital consumers, with over 80 per cent first searching our interactive ecosystem for information that shapes their buying decisions. With just a few swipes of a smartphone, consumers can compare prices, read reviews, watch a demonstration, send product photos or locate a store. What was once a one-way marketing plan that funnelled the consumer from stimulus to purchase inside a bricks-and-mortar store is now a multi-person, interactive dialogue, with consumers often leading the conversation as they search for local goods and services online.

Google calls this the '*Zero Moment of Truth*' (ZMOT), and it's defined as the moment when first impressions are made and an individual becomes aware of and forms an opinion about a company's brand. Historically, marketers such as Procter & Gamble have understood that the FMOT (first moment of truth) is when an individual encounters a product on the store shelf and decides to buy one brand or another, and the SMOT (second moment of truth) as when she uses the brand at home and likes it or doesn't.

In a 2010 Google Consumer Packaged Goods (CPG) Blog entry, Jenny Liu pointed to IRI's Economic Longitude 2009 Study, which showed that 83 per cent of shoppers made purchase decisions before they entered a store, a striking increase from 60 per cent in 2007. That number has continued to rise each subsequent year since the IRI study was released.

FIGURE 12.1 Zero Moment of Truth

SOURCE: Lecinski, Jim (2011) *ZMOT Winning the Zero Moment of Truth*, Google.

It is critical for brands to be part of this conversation and provide prospects with real value instead of just another marketing message. This new paradigm requires that brands become publishers and deploy strategies that address audiences' needs for relevant content across the interactive ecosystem throughout the purchasing process.

Innovative brands are now focusing on this purchasing process, instead of the selling process, and becoming an integral part of it by creating relevant content that solves their prospects' problems, answers questions and engages them with their brand through all phases of the buying cycle.

Start with seven steps to win your ZMOT

If you're ready to win your brand's ZMOT, you're probably wondering where to begin. You can start with these seven steps that will put you on the path to delivering real results for your bottom line.

- 1 Empower.** Put someone in charge of ZMOT for your company. Be specific and acknowledge the time this person needs to spend working on it. Then support those efforts with a budget. Be prepared to see results long term, not overnight.
- 2 Discover.** Find out where your brand's ZMOTs happen. Ask users how they go about learning about your products and/or company. Then, when you have identified where and how they search, as well as what they're looking for, look at the information that is and, more importantly, is not available.
- 3 Listen and learn.** To answer the questions people are asking, you'll need to spend some time listening to the conversation, both in online communities and by talking with your customer service staff. What questions are they routinely answering? What do you know about your company that you think consumers already know? What should they know so they'll be happy with their experience?
- 4 Optimize for the ZMOT.** Now that you know where consumers are researching and what they want to know, decide on what content you'll need to provide to assist consumers in their ZMOT. Then make it a priority to provide the content in a trustworthy format. Learn to think like your consumers and develop channels that serve their needs without the hard sell.
- 5 Join in.** These consumer conversations are happening right this very second, so it's time to join in. Someone, somewhere is talking about your brand, telling a friend about a cool new tech gadget or complaining about your product's warranty. Be there for them, and they'll be there for you.
- 6 Be fast.** Things happen in the digital world 24/7, and ideas go viral at the drop of a hat. Stay on top of the ZMOT experience and be

prepared to adapt and adopt quickly. Don't dig in and keep something just because you've invested time and money. Be ready to move and react so that you can take advantage of the moment, because if you don't, there are others who will.

- 7 Visualize.** The internet is, above all else, a visual medium. Sometimes it's easy to forget that and get caught up with the words. But the visual component may be more powerful than words alone, and a helpful video demonstrating how to do something, showcasing your products in 'real life' or otherwise engaging potential users really validates the old adage: 'a picture is worth a thousand words.' Just consider the fact that the 'Old Spice: the man your man could smell like' viral video received over 42 million hits on YouTube.

According to Google, \$428 billion is spent on products and services that are researched online and purchased offline. That money is being spent by 97 per cent of consumers who turn first to their laptop, tablet or smart-phone to find out more about your company, brand and products. When they ask questions, when they join the ZMOT conversation, are you ready with the answers?

Sources

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