The KrehbielLetter

Dial back your expectations for the metaverse

Examples of the metaverse are silly and childlike, and **people aren't using it**. Meta is falling short of projections for their version, called Horizon Worlds. Most "worlds" get no visitors.

The appeal of the concept is the ability to interact with a virtual world, but to make that happen would require a full-body suit that could monitor all your movements and provide tactile feedback. **It's a cool concept, but it's horribly impractical.**

You can meet and talk to people in the metaverse, but you can't see facial expressions or read body language. It's not an improvement on a regular zoom meeting.

There will be some applications where it makes sense, but it's not taking over.

The concept is premature, at best. We don't have the tech yet to make it much more than a silly game, and when you create a place where people can do "whatever they want," it's easy to predict where that will go.

Avoid the metaverse hype and keep your eye on augmented reality.

Takeaways:

- Don't fall for this latest bit of hype (or its cousin, NFTs).
- Keep you eye on augmented reality.

Content is not King

Trustworthy content is king.

You hire professional writers to create fantastic content, and then somebody takes up the topic as a hobby and creates a WordPress site or a podcast that steals some of your audience. What's a publisher to do?

Develop a method to create trustworthy content and tell your readers about that method.

If you can't justify the advantage of professional content, you're in the wrong business.

Don't be paternalistic

You want people to believe that your professional process is more reliable than Joe with a keyboard. The question isn't whether that's true or false. The question is why anyone should believe it.

When people hear "professional media," they imagine a cable news blowhard with an opinion who's spouting nonsense. Why *shouldn't* they believe the amateur?

Prove you're more reliable. Just saying "we're professional journalists" isn't going to convince anybody. We all know too many professional journalists.

Address confirmation bias head-on

People want information that confirms their opinions. Here's the hard truth many publishers miss: that includes your writers and editors!

Objectivity and independence require diversity. Not the trite diversity people usually talk about, but *viewpoint diversity*. **Have an intellectually and culturally diverse group of editors vet your content**.

Mount this saying on your wall. "But none of my friends voted for Nixon."

Focus on content experience

Create infographics, quizzes, and other interactive content. Joe with his blog probably doesn't have the time, talent, or resources to do that. If you don't know how to do this, or don't have the tools, give me a call.

> **Takeaways:**
>
> - Develop a method to create trustworthy content and tell your readers about it.
> - Hire an ideologically and intellectually diverse staff.
> - Focus on reader experience. It's not just text anymore.

Project management tips

Over the years I've fine-tuned my method for managing large projects. Below is a **quick sketch of my method, which is for a longer-term project**, such as a CDP implementation, a switch to a new ESP, or a website launch or redesign. This method is not for quick, short-term tasks, for which a ticketing system is the best option.

There are two essential components to this method: meetings and documents.

Rules for meetings

Everybody hates meetings, but everybody schedules them. Change your attitude and **think of meetings as work**. Here's how to design them to get things done.

- **Have a pre-published agenda**, which people are expected to review.
- The project manager (or another designated person) must take notes during the meeting.
- **Summarize the decisions and to-dos from the meeting and get verbal buy-in from the group.**
- **Memorialize all decisions and to-dos** of every meeting by an email sent to all the participants. That email is also added to the Project Notes document.

The 3 Primary Documents

All three of these documents should be shared and accessible to the entire team. Make use of color and emphasis to make the documents scannable.

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PROJECT NOTES

- **Create a reverse chronological list of meeting notes**. It's helpful to make it navigable, E.g., each date is a "header 1" in the google doc. You can also add bookmarks to make entries linkable.
- **Include each email to the team in which you memorialized decisions.**

PROJECT DOCUMENTATION

- Summarize the project scope, team, and purpose.
- List all the issues related to the project and bookmark each heading. To the extent possible, organize the issues by tasks, but in any event, all tasks should be listed.
- Link the tasks from the Project Timeline to their appropriate section in this document.
- Record decisions made and the reasons for each decision.
- Define naming conventions.
- Explain access rules and roles.
- **When the project is over, this document will become a training manual** for anyone who works on the project, and a reference so people can understand the decisions that were made and why things were done the way they were done.

PROJECT TIMELINE

- List each task. You can organize the list sequentially, or group them by categories.
- **Include a RACI matrix for each task**, and inform all the people in the I column.
- Mark each task as green, yellow, or red, and regularly update statuses.
- Include links from each task to the appropriate section of the project documentation.

A benefit of this method is that **you don't need complicated software**, and you don't have to fuss with those weird Gantt charts. Google Sheets and Google Docs work just fine.

If my method interests you, I'd be happy to help you customize it for your organization.

> **Takeaways:**
>
> - Think of meetings as work.
> - Get buy-in on all decisions, and document them.
> - Use the RACI matrix.
> - Call me if you need help with project management.

The information vs. experience metric

You may have seen the recent Bo Sacks post with the headline "**Magazine readers prefer print**."

One interesting thing about the results is that **even younger magazine readers prefer print**. Not to the same degree as older readers, but it's still a strong preference.

At the same time, there is a strong move towards digital on the news side.

"Information vs. experience" explains the discrepancy.

News is information the reader wants in his brain in the most efficient and convenient way possible. That clearly implies digital, and more specifically, mobile.

Reading a magazine is different. While there used to be news magazines, they're dying left and right. **Magazines that do well focus on a lifestyle, a hobby, or a niche interest**. You read them in your easy chair with an adult beverage. You like the pictures, and you even like the ads. If you're into boating, for example, it's nice to see all the new boats.

A similar rule may apply to podcasts and videos. For a long time, people have been saying that videos should be short. No more than a couple of minutes. Then Joe Rogan came along and dominated the market with three-hour-long shows.

So which is better: short or long?

It depends. It's information vs. experience. If I want information, I want it fast and efficiently. If I want an experience, I want it to linger.

One implication of this is that **it's meaningless to discuss print vs. digital, long form vs. short form, without the greater context** of the consumer's desire when it comes to that particular form of content.

Does the consumer want you to beam information into his head, or does the consumer want a more immersive experience?

That question should guide how you format your content.

> **Takeaways:**
>
> - Treat "information" content and "experience" content differently.
> - Don't be distracted by long vs. short analysis that doesn't take this issue into account.

Tracking reader/subscriber engagement

A recent Bo Sacks post included this interesting paragraph.

"Norwegian publisher Amedia … uses a machine learning algorithm to identify characteristics of user behavior that indicate happy and satisfied customers. **The algorithm analyzes up to 70 reader behavior statistics and boils it down to a single number called Engagement Index** which indicates the likelihood of a reader to stay loyal. What adds to its value is that the index captures factors that are under the publisher's control." (Emphasis supplied.)

That's very smart. **Renewal efforts need to start as soon as someone subscribes.** That includes a welcome campaign, on-going measurement of engagement with your content, and re-engagement efforts for people who show signs of slipping.

Don't wait until they fail to renew and then wonder why!

A CDP is a great tool for tracking engagement – provided you set it up correctly.

If you need help tracking your reader engagement, give me a call.

Call me at 240-687-1230, or visit krehbielgroup.com with the QR code.