

5 Signs that You Don't Know Your Audience

Hosting the Oscars is not an easy task. We don't know from personal experience, but given the number of times that the Hollywood press has raked past hosts over hot coals, it's a fair assessment to say that the high-profile opportunity can be a career downer if not executed with finesse. (See [David Letterman](#).)



Jaffe Staff

The challenge here is the audience – or rather the audiences. An Oscars' host has two people to please: the celebrities in the room and us regular folks at home. And while, yes, we all put our pants on one leg at a time (some of us just have nicer pants), celebrities and lay people don't always find humor in the same things. Take Ricky Gervais and his hosting of the Golden Globes in 2016. While his ability to snare celebrities in the room with a quip has become his shtick, it has a tendency to attract the ire of Hollywood. (See [T.J. Miller's comments](#) regarding Mr. Gervais' most recent hosting gig. Despite the fallout, Mr. Gervais will be returning to host in 2020.)

While firms might have multiple audiences with overlapping but separate interests, they too often try to cater to both with identical content. What you get is a content program with a lot of effort invested but diminished ROI. In the end, the old adage is true: You can't be everything to everyone.

Because it is the beginning of the year, this is a great time to audit your [firm's content marketing program](#). To help with what should be an annual ritual, we offer you these five signs that your firm doesn't know its audience. Oh, and fear not if one or more of these resonate with you. First, a content strategy is forever in a state of evolution. Second, each is easily fixable with a little effort and fine-tuning.

1. You've never conducted a target market analysis: Before you can target your market, you have to *know* your market. That's why the most critical piece of market intelligence for your content program is the audience profile. This is a document that identifies and deconstructs your market segments, from decision-makers to referral sources to influencers. These can be broken down along any number of lines, from general demographic information – such as age, income and title – to the unique factors that influence each audience segment's purchasing decisions.

2. You never change your voice: A verbal brand is a key component to an overall brand strategy for any business. (FYI, a "verbal brand" is a combination of the diction, sentence syntax and other linguistic elements a brand uses to give itself an original identity.) However, even a verbal brand can be tweaked depending on the audience. Consider how you talk to your spouse versus your boss. Or how you talk to a child versus an adult. These same principles of interpersonal communication apply to organizations and their fluctuating target audiences.

3. You have one blog representing your *entire* firm: We fully encourage [firms to start a blog](#). It's a great way to develop credibility, reach an audience consistently, prove value and gain prominence among search engines. However, I've seen some firms try to create one blog for the entirety of the firm, despite the firm handling any number of issues, from real estate transactions to discrimination lawsuits. The problem with this strategy is that you end up talking about everything to everyone, which means that nobody wants to listen to you. Content marketing is meant to be tailored to a niche audience. Otherwise, how can you possibly expect to create affinity with your brand, let alone [break through the content deluge](#) that exists across the internet? Our recommendation: Identify the practice or industry group that A) has a clearly defined audience and B) has service professionals who are willing to invest the effort required to produce relevant content for that audience on an ongoing basis.

4. You talk about yourself all the time: You know how you get bored when you meet someone at a party and their favorite subject is themselves? That's what you look like when your firm prioritizes talking about a new ranking or a new hire over the issues that matter most to your clients and prospects. While it's important to promote your accolades and developments, the priority is always your *audience's* needs, and the vast majority of your audience need information to help them overcome a serious problem or challenge. Make sure that your prime real estate – like the top of your homepage – is devoted to your audience's needs. Firm news can still be placed prominently; it just shouldn't overshadow your thought leadership.

5. You don't interact on social media: A few years ago, it was a welcome sight to just see [firms have a presence on social media](#). But the bar has been raised since then, and frankly, if you do plan to get any real ROI out of social media, just being there and posting is not enough. The key to success with social media is interaction and, to interact effectively, you need to know your audience. What's an interaction? I'm talking about retweets, comments and responding to comments. It also includes creating posts that foster engagement, such as prompts and polls.

Your marketing program must continually evolve. If you need help pushing your firm's marketing in a new and bold direction, contact Terry M. Isner at tisner@jaffepr.com.