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THE SECRET SUCCESS FOR STORYTELLING

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No one loves storytelling more than Hollywood. Actually, no one loves storytelling more than content creators. And how do global content creators create exceptional content that is localized for their audience?

THE SECRET IS STORYTELLING WITH DATA.

If you want to create good content, you need to create content that not only has a good story but is also particularly relevant to those who are consuming it. One of the best and most accurate ways to understand your audience is through data. Because data can be complex, it needs to be reported in a fashion so it can be understood to create action. Creating the right, localized content requires data and insight.

Localization is about adapting products, services, or content to the cultural and linguistic specifics of a target market. It goes beyond mere translation and includes everything from translating your content into the local language to adapting your user interface, payments, images, formatting, and customer support — to name just a few elements — to local preferences, expectations, and conventions.

THIS CAN ALL BE ACCOMPLISHED VIA DATA.

Take Netflix, which has used customer data to localize content for years. With a huge amount of data on its users, Netflix constantly uses it to improve the customer experience. This data is also used to inform localization decisions, such as which languages to offer content in and what type of content will be most popular in each market. This focus on data has allowed Netflix to create a localization strategy that is tailored to the needs of each individual market.

It's also no secret that Netflix employs many data experts. They are a true data-driven organization. And to be a true data driven

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organization one must go beyond merely analyzing data.

Organizations must have experts who can transform relevant data into compelling stories that key stakeholders can readily comprehend and leverage to make better decisions. This vital skill is known as data storytelling, and it's a key factor for creating content that is worthwhile to content consumers in their specific markets.

Data storytelling is a critical skill for data-driven decision-making. The data storytellers are always seeking to convey actionable insights from their data and must tell compelling stories with data, emphasizing context and narrative (internally), then act on this useful "information" to ensure their audience (externally) has the most pertinent content.

So, what does data storytelling entail and how can experts put it to work to make good on data's potential and make a profit?

Telling stories with data is difficult — very difficult. However, keeping it simple, the "story" begins with knowing your audience. Starting with who your main "characters" are, that is, the audience for your data story. What information is most important to them? Structure the data story so you anticipate the next question the audience will have by thinking like the reader of the story.

The first hurdle most data storytellers face is gaining acceptance for the validity of the data they present. The goal of the storyteller is to clear up all questions as to the source of the data, the age of the data, so that in subsequent views of the data, the storyteller isn't continually defending the data.

The hurdle is ensuring that the data storytelling consists of visualization, narrative, and context. With visualization, a picture is worth a thousand words. The visual component of data helps people who do not understand technical data maps see it in a more simplistic way. Data scientists are not that great about helping end users visualize what the data is about. Therefore, to assist with complex visualization methods, it is important to add a narrative and context to the data being presented. The narrative is the story itself — the who, what, where and why. It's the emotional arc. The context is what the people hearing this story need to know.

Overall, data storytelling is about “action,” helping people create those narratives, providing more of the context, and allowing people to see the clear line between the data, the insight, and the action to come. In this story, what the data storyteller hopes to reveal will help bring insights and hopefully “action” to those producing or transforming content that is relevant to the respective local market. And there are many local markets on this planet.

The internet has blurred geographical boundaries, access to products, information, services, and content has become universal. The globalization of markets has created both opportunities and challenges. There has never been a better time to share content with foreign markets. However, the task of making your content relevant, unique, and tailored to local markets has become more complex than ever. Content consumers expectations are higher than ever, and they demand a seamless and personalized experience — no matter where they are in the world.

Data-driven insights for localization is a must-have. As data enables stakeholders to define priorities based on real-life and real-time (true) usage it must put and keep localization processes on the right tracking mode. If so, localization effectiveness generates a circular flow of data as it is driven by what customers do and like as much as it helps the whole business grow (with a laser focus on features and content that make a difference in a geographically diverse environment). Data storytellers translate all this data into information which, if acted upon, can magically create content to match a specific consumer.

Content creators need good storytellers. To be exceptional content creators, organizations need exceptional data storytellers to reveal the true action behind what is and what can be. ■