SCRIBBLELIVE ACQUIRES VISUALLY FOR CONTENT MARKETING

Today, ScribbleLive announced that they have acquired Visually for an undisclosed amount. Read the Visually announcement here.

Many are touting that traditional, interruption-based advertising is becoming less effective, and in response marketers have shifted to creating content that stands out and offers the consumer a more unique experience. Visually, traditionally an automated infogragphic tool, has aimed to meet these needs by pairing brands with creative talent, and giving them tools to make content creation fast and affordable.

But according to Visually, “creating great content is only part of the marketing puzzle.” They claim, I think correctly, that brands need to “leverage an array of data sources to anticipate what the right content will be. They need to deliver their content across the right channels, find ways to scale and amplify their efforts, and they need to measure and optimize results across channels.”

Falling into the ScribbleLive portfolio is apparently the answer. The Toronto-based platform was founded in 2008, starting out as a liveblogging platform and growing to a broader set of tools for content marketing. Their products run the gamut, from using data to predict the types of content that will be successful to finding “influencers” who can give your content broader reach.

“Who’s going to create the content?”

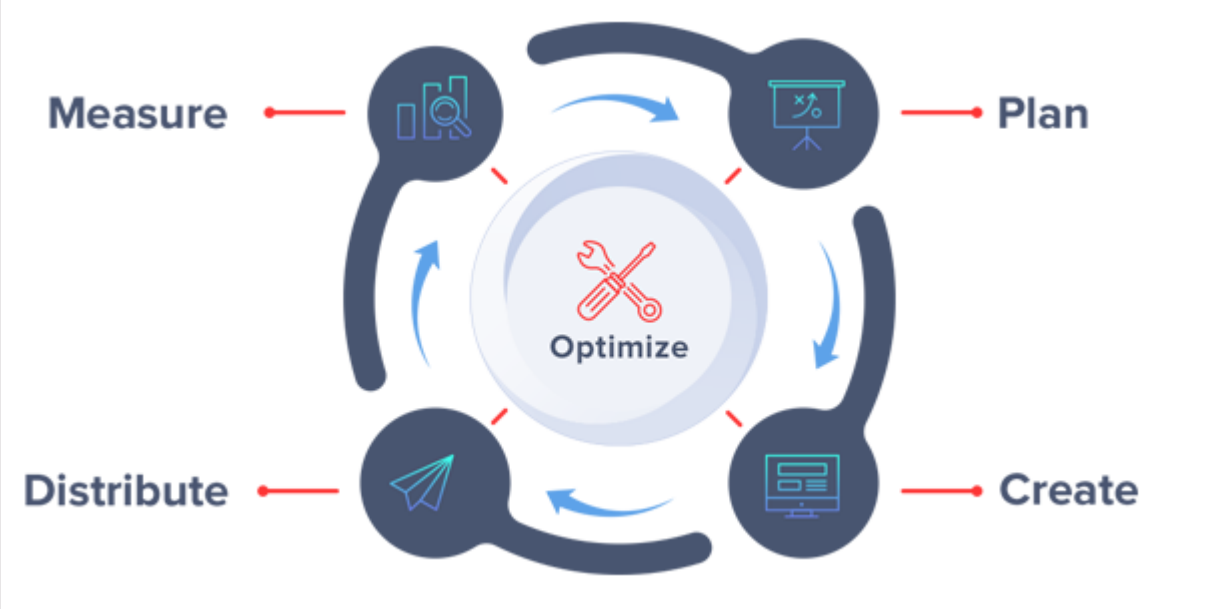
However, according to TechCrunch, ScribbleLive CEO Vince Mifsud said that one of his challenges is, “Who’s going to create the content?” This is where they see Visually coming in, who have evolved their business to recruit freelancers to create visual content. According to TechCrunch, both companies will continue to exist as a separate brand and marketplace, but over time will begin to offer a

range of hybrid products.

Visually is certainly excited. In their release, they express the power that the ScribbleLive platform will bring them a smarter solution to content marketing:

“ScribbleLive is a content marketing platform that drives top-of-funnel growth. With data science and content at its core, ScribbleLive supports every stage of the marketing lifecycle by giving marketers the ability to:

- **Plan:** Use data science to validate topics marketers should focus on and which influencers to align with for greatest impact
- **Create:** Quickly develop a wide range of engaging content experiences
- **Distribute:** the capability to deliver those content experiences wherever your audience is
- **Measure:** Gain a deep understanding of your content’s performance and ROI”



After watching the ScribbleLive video (see below), I can see why Visually is so excited. While content marketing is a great idea in theory, it always comes second to driving branded reach and frequency (at least for most brands). Also, content marketing can come with huge dollar signs, as it traditionally requires a lot of time and resources to execute effectively. But ScribbleLive seems to give a really easy way to get content marketing out at scale with a limited budget, which will give marketers at big and small companies one more option to consider.

DATAXU GETS $10 MILLION FROM SKY

Sky, Europe's leading entertainment company, today announced that it has invested $10 million in DataXu, a Boston-based startup that focuses on analytics, data management and media activation software. The investment brings DataXu's total fund-raising amount to $65.8MM, according to Crunchbase.

According to TechCrunch, CB Insights, which compiles finance data on startups and other tech companies, has marked DataXu as part of the "unicorn club"– with a valuation over $1 billion – since 2015. The programmatic prodigy told TechCrunch that its 2014 revenues were $167.5 million, up from $100 million the year before.

So with such a high valuation, $10MM doesn't seem like an enormous stake for Sky. However, Sky considers this to be more of a strategic investment in the spirit of partnership, rather than a potential high return. Sky plans to use DataXu's DSP ad tech in its current services as well as work together on future products. DataXu claims that its platform processes some 100 billion "digital advertising opportunities" daily globally, and Sky's advertising division plans to tap into that. "This strategic investment allows DataXu to partner with a true, global leader in television and media," said Mike Baker, DataXu Co-Founder and CEO. "DataXu and Sky have strong alignment on the future of programmatic and advanced television; and this investment ensures our two companies continue to learn and grow together."

Sky also plans to "explore a number of new opportunities" with DataXu, including extending the reach of Sky Media's advertising product, Sky AdVance, leveraging DataXu's experience in addressable TV ads, and leveraging data and analytics to drive better marketing results. "This investment will help us develop a deeper understanding of programmatic advertising, and play our part in shaping the market as it progresses," said Jamie West, Deputy MD at Sky Media. "Combining Sky's knowledge, experience and innovation in advertising with DataXu's programmatic marketing expertise will provide exciting opportunities for both businesses, and most importantly, for Sky's advertising partners."

Sky is clearly looking to capitalize on the intersection of digital and television. The recent investment follows recent Sky investments in over-the-top (OTT) video company TV4 Entertainment and online video aggregator Pluto TV. While adtech has been struggling from a market and investment standpoint as of late, this small, but highly strategic investment seems like a very good plan. Sky opens themselves up to minimum risk, while fueling a company that Forester has deemed a leader in the field (Demand Side Platforms, Q2 2015).

It will be interesting to see how this partnership pans out for Sky…

FACEBOOK ACQUIRES VIDEO TECHNOLOGY STARTUP QUICKFIRE

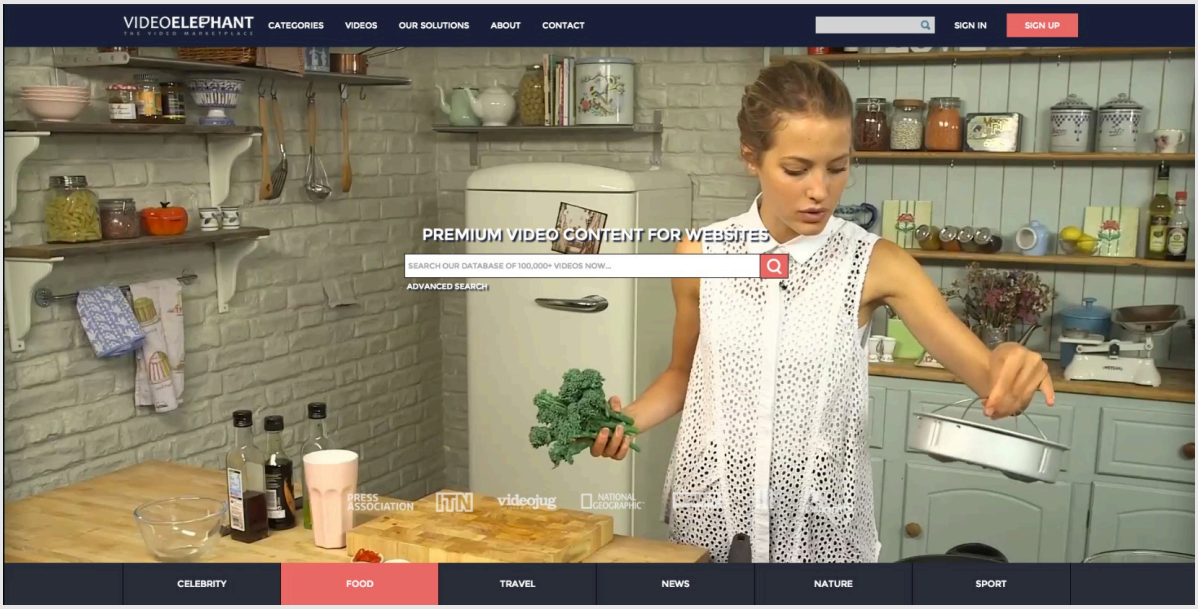
Facebook has acquired technology startup QuickFire Networks for an undisclosed amount. QuickFire's CEO, Craig Y. Lee, announced the acquisition on the QuickFire company website.

Video consumption online has exploded over the last year, and the trend is poised to continue. But QuickFire Networks thinks the net isn't keeping up with the demand. "QuickFire Networks was founded on the premise that the current network infrastructure is not sufficient to support the massive consumption of video that's happening online without compromising on video quality. QuickFire Networks solves this capacity problem via proprietary technology that dramatically reduces the bandwidth needed to view video online without degrading video quality."

Facebook averages more than a billion video views per day, and users are moving through their feeds at an extremely fast rate, so it makes sense that the company would want to pick up a technology that reduces bandwidth and load time for video. Facebook hopes that QuickFire will be able to help meet the demand of video and provide support as Facebook continues to expand its video products on a global scale.

VIDEO CONTENT STARTUP VIDEOELEPHANT SECURES $1 MILLION IN SECOND ROUND OF FUNDING

A second round of investment in video content startup VideoElephant will fast-track company personnel expansion and growth in the US



VideoElephant, a Dublin startup which aggregates and sells online video content for websites, secured another $1MM in its latest round of funding. The company will use the funds to expand their operations to New York and Los Angeles.

Marketers have found a lot of success in online video advertising. Where online video advertising still lacks, however, is in volume and accessibility of quality content. VideoElephant looks to solve this problem by collating premium content from multiple producers, genres, and categories into a single digital marketplace. The company also partners with different ad networks and technology companies to offer an all-in-one solution to publishers looking to leverage, and monetize, video content.

VideoElephant launched its website in 2013 with a content library of videos from blue chip providers including: AFP, National Geographic, ABC, VideoJug and Press Association. Over the past year the company has added, amongst others, ITN, Maker Studios and Newsy. It now stocks over 100,000 short-form videos and 15,000 hours of long-form content, across 15 genres from news and sport to travel and cooking.

Stephen O'Shaughnessy, Founder and CEO of VideoElephant, states in the company's press release, "Our recent content and adtech partnerships wins, coupled with this latest round of investment supports our development in Dublin, and expansion into New York and Los Angeles, centres for innovation in our industry. Establishing our presence there will generate new content partnerships and extend our capability to provide end-to-end content solutions." [sic]

O'Shaughnessy is currently in the U.S in preparation for VideoElephant's new office on the West Coast, while his business development team has been making the most of new business opportunities in Tel Aviv, London and New York. Brian Cullinane, Head of Business Development, is also attending ad:tech conferences in the US to tap into the content marketing world and establish VideoElephant as a major player in online video innovation.

The company hopes that expansion into US markets will allow it to connect with existing and new partners on both the demand and supply side of video content.

VideoElephant is an online marketplace which provides long and short form video content to web publishers, ad networks and platforms. Since 2011, VideoElephant has expanded its content partnerships to provide over 100,000 videos across 15 categories. For more information please contact roisin@videoelephant.com or visit www.videoelephant.com

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BRANDWATCH RAISES $22M TO BOOST SOCIAL PLATFORM

Yesterday Brandwatch, a social media monitoring firm that crawls over Facebook, Twitter, and 80 million other sites to provide consumer insights to businesses, announced that it has raised $22MM in a Series B round. Funding was led by Highland Capital with participation also from Nauta Capital and other existing investors. According to a Techcrunch article, the UK based company says that it will use the funds to higher more staff, expand its services in Europe and the U.S., take on new markets like Asia, and begin “doubling down on engineering.”

The bread and butter that Brandwatch offers is not anything unique or new. There are dozens of companies that claim to be able to take the social sector of the big data universe and parse out meaningful information for advertisers. Where Brandwatch claims to differ is in the product experience itself. With infinite touch points and so many sources, social data can be extremely complex. Brandwatch aims to present a product that they say is more visual, easy to use, and is supported by a 24 hour staff.

What’s the next step? It’s not entirely clear but one customer base that is becoming increasingly attractive to B2B analytics companies is small to medium size businesses. As of now Brandwatch primarily works with larger corporations such as Verizon, Papa Johns, and Sky, but social media’s massive scale and reach at an efficient price tag makes social marketing an enticing tactic for SMBs

looking to stretch their marketing budgets. Companies like HooteSuite have seen a lot of success with SMBs and Brandwatch might be looking to jump in as another option.

Techcrunch also points out that Brandwatch might need to be careful about competing with their own revenue source. Companies that rely on third party data providers, as Brandwatch does with Twitter and Facebook, run the risk of turning that data provider into a competitor. Twitter's acquisition of companies like Gnip and MoPub, one could make the argument that Twitter is preparing to offer it's own "one-stop-shop" platform, providing analytics to distribution.

For now Brandwatch isn't too worried about their competitors and is looking to the future.

BIDTELLECT WANTS NATIVE TO GO PROGRAMMATIC

The social media revolution brought with it a consumer expectation of seamless integration for both content and advertising alike. This shift in mindset has brought air to the lungs of native advertising, a method which attempts to match an ad to both form and function of the environment in which it is placed. But atomization and programmatic ad buying is also on the rise, and the idea of individually customizing each asset for a range of placements can be off-putting.

Enter Bidtellect, one of the startups attempting to meld programmatic buying with native advertising. Still in beta, Bidtellect wants to combine demand-side platform access with direct sell-side platform access and focus on all native ad formats. Lon Otremba, recently named CEO of the company, says the company is currently testing with 10 to 15 advertisers (he won't say who) and that they expect to open their doors to customers within the next few months.

It's hard to think about how an automated buying platform for native ads might actually work. Programmatic buying is efficient and cost effective because its lowest common denominator is arguably the most expensive and time costly asset in advertising – creative. The essence of native advertising is that ads are *customized* to the site it's living on. Once you bring a standardized method of buying into native advertising, is it considered native advertising any more?

Another issue is navigating the creative approval process with clients, which anyone who works with a big spender can tell you is nothing short of sysiphean. "If every native ad buy needs to be setup/negotiated by hand, then you remove a lot of the efficiencies that programmatic provides," Chris Sukornyk, founder of media-buying platform Chango, told MediaPost, "A similar challenge exists with private exchanges today with display, but I think native ads have an even more difficult set of circumstances."

Skepticism aside, many see native advertising as an enormous opportunity, possibly even the next digital go-to. While it may be hard to grasp how companies like Bidtellect will automate the native ad business, technology is

moving at an exponential rate and it’s not too hard to think that they will figure out a way to do it.

THE TRADE DESK CLOSES $20M SERIES B

Today RTB Demand-Side Platform The Trade Desk, Inc. announced it has closed $20M in Series B funding led by Hermes Growth Partners with additional participation from seed and Series A investor IA Ventures. According to the business wire release, the growth round will further power The Trade Desk’s expansion into its international markets, including Europe, Asia Pacific, Australia, and Northern Asia.

The Trade Desk is a programmatic ad buying platform for display, social, and video advertising campaigns. The company was founded in 2009 by CEO Jeff Green and CTO Dave Pickles.

See here to read the full release.

ARE YOUR TWEETS ANGRY? ETCML CAN MEASURE YOUR MOOD.

Ever wonder if your Facebook posts or Twitter tweets carry a certain sentiment? Now you can find out for yourself.

Stanford Engineering has recently released a linguistic analysis tool called etcML, short for Easy Text Classification with Machine Learning. You can lookup trending hashtags or even give it your own text data set to analyze. Best of all, it’s free.

Here’s what etcML has to say for itself:

You can use etcML to learn interesting new things about whatever text data you’re already working with in your job or research. Say you’re a social scientist with written and multiple-choice survey responses – you can quickly see how well participants’ written text allows you to guess their multiple-choice response. Or say you’re a literary scholar who wants to know what distinguishes an author’s early and late periods – you can train a classifier and visualize the most predictive words for each category.

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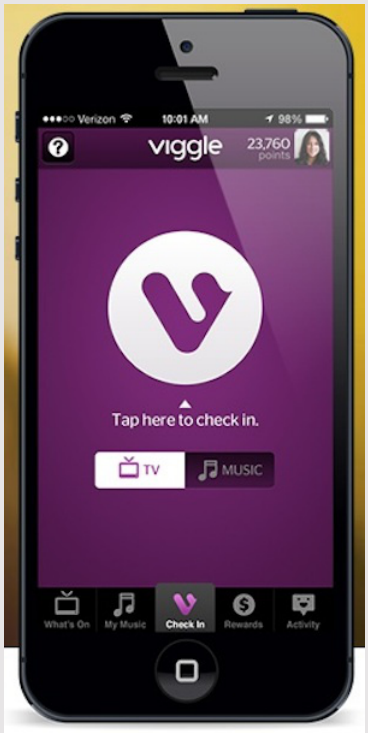
etcML is not an ad tech company, but the technology is actively being developed in the advertising industry. Commercial solutions such as ADmantX, a semantic advertising company that can serve advertising based on emotional triggers, do exist. As data becomes more real-time, sentiment analysis will be in the eyes of many big advertisers.

VIGGLE ACQUIRES DIJIT FOR TV DISCOVERY APP



On Jan 29, Viggle acquired Dijit Media, maker of a technology that helps fans search for, find, and set reminders for their favorite TV shows and movies wherever they are offered. The financial terms of the deal are not being disclosed, but a company spokesperson told Techcrunch the entire Dijit team will be making the move to Viggle. See the press release at here.

Viggle wants to help its viewers in three ways: discovery, reminders, and control. The plan is to integrate NextGuide and the Dijit reminder button into Viggle's platform. The The reminder button is an embeddable widget allowing users to sign up for reminders whenever a show is about to air.

Ultimately, Viggle wants to help viewers answer the question, "What should I watch next?" The NextGuide and reminder button will be the company's aim to give viewers personalized recommendations and find what to watch, tune in, adjust volume, control your DVR, and even invite their friends to tune in with them.

Viggle was founded in 2010 by Robert F.X. Sillerman.

VIDEO STARTUP VIDIBLE RAISES $3.35M IN

SERIES A FUNDING

Vidible has raised $3.35M in Series A funding led by Greycroft, according to an article released last Friday on Techrunch. Vidible is a programmatic video content exchange with a complete SaaS platform for video management to syndication and analytics. Vidible aims to deliver professional quality video content to the right context or audience at a transparent price in real time across all devices.

According to the article, President of Vidible Tim Mahlman wants to improve the "archaic" methods of syndicating videos and give more control and transparency to buyers and sellers. Vidible's solve is a platform that allows buyers to search for different kinds of videos, while the content creators have control over where their videos get played, with both sides having access to analytics.

The video advertising business has seen a big surge in the last year. The continued growth in video consumption has led to an increase in demand from advertisers and agencies for more video impressions. Two of the big five adtech IPOs of last year were Tremor Video and YuMe, both specializing in video advertising. The content creation side hasn't been any slower. One of Yahoo's biggest deals last year was picking up Katie Couric in an attempt to show viewers and advertisers that they are focused on producing original and premium video content.

Greycroft's John Elton thinks that Vidible is taking advantage of this recent growth. "I think it's a new medium," the article quoted Elton as saying, "There are people that do it very well, that are looking for more distribution, and there are publishers looking for content that's appropriate for their site." Elton also finds Vidible's emphasis on monetization attractive. Vidible's current setup has the content buyer pay a set rate based on impressions, then they can either run their own ads with the videos or run ads from one of Vidible's network partners.

Until recently Vidible has been focused on R&D, but with this new round of funding it's clear they will start to build out their business arm and client portfolio.