



BRANDED CONTENT GUIDE

A Guide for Media Planners
and Buyers



About IAB Canada

Established in 1997, The Interactive Advertising Bureau of Canada ([IAB Canada](#)) is the national voice and thought leader of the Canadian interactive marketing and advertising industry. We are the only trade association exclusively dedicated to the development and promotion of the digital marketing and advertising sector in Canada.

As a not-for-profit association, IAB Canada represents over 250 of Canada's most respected advertisers, ad agencies, media companies, service providers, educational institutions and government associations. Our members represent a diverse range of stakeholders in the rapidly growing Canadian digital marketing and advertising sector, and include numerous small and medium sized enterprises.



Overview

As brands continue to identify new ways to engage with their consumer, the idea of Branded Content remains an area of interest, exploration and even, hesitancy. With questions like: how do I get started? What exactly is Branded Content? When should I consider exploring Branded Content, through to - what do all of these words mean, the IAB Canada's Branded Content Committee wanted to dig deeper.

Building off of [IAB's Branded Content and Distribution Steps for Success](#), the following Branded Content Guide is set up to help myth-bust current perceptions, and allow you to explore the different types of Branded Content, Do's and Don'ts, comprehensive glossary of terms, and more.

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	6
Myth-Busting	7
Branded Content Defined	8
Forms of Branded Content	9
Best Application of Branded Content	10
Examples of Branded Content in Practice	11
Getting Started with Branded Content	12
Best Practices: Do's	13
Best Practices: Don'ts	14
Pricing Models	15
Acceptable Disclosures	16
Glossary	17
About IAB Canada's Branded Content Committee	19

Executive Summary

Branded Content is commonly thought of as being too expensive or carrying too large an additional workload, yet it can fit all budgets and so long as you have outlined your expectations, the workload is never too cumbersome. More myth-busting [here](#).

Building awareness and emotional connection are two of the five reasons why you should consider incorporating Branded Content into your marketing strategy. Read about the other three considerations [here](#).

When considering Branded Content, remember do not go over-board on brand mentions or list prices and features - it will have a negative effect on engagement. Interested in more [Do's](#) and [Don'ts](#)?

Myth-Busting

Myth	Fact
Workload is too High	If expectations, goals, and requirements are clearly set at the beginning, branded content does not add an extensive workload into your day.
Branded content takes too long	As with any budget, branded content also differs with timelines and can range from just a day to months, depending on the type of content. The key is to keep 'content' in mind at the outset of your media planning process.
It's too expensive	Branded content includes several kinds of content, and can span all budget ranges. Choose the cost that aligns to your plan.
No measurement. No result.	Think of content as an upper-funnel tactic; generate awareness so that your audience can take an action or convert. Results can be measured by: views, impressions, brand awareness and brand lift.
It works best as a one off strategy	Branded content can be a one-off strategy, or seamlessly weaved into your media campaign as an integrated strategy to increase effectiveness.

Branded Content Defined

Branded content is a way to speak to consumers about a brand in a more holistic manner.

By telling stories to audiences that extend beyond advertising, branded content offers up a direct connection with targeted audience content. The effect of establishing a greater connection between a brand and its value proposition for consumers creates greater awareness and/or affinity towards a brand.

Within branded content, brand messages are subtle as its purpose is to entertain and/or teach audiences in an authentic way, resulting in better brand engagement.

Branded content can include, but is not limited to: articles, videos, infographics, podcasts, and live events that bring relevant value to the end consumer.

Implementations may be done in conjunction with a publisher/platform, or independently (refer to [Forms of Branded Content](#)).

Also referred to as:

- **Sponsored Content**
- **Native Content**
- **Influencer Content**
- **Custom Content**
- **Advertiser Funded Program**

Forms of Branded Content

Types	Definition	Execution Timelines	Distribution Channels	Content Created By
Sponsorship/ Publisher Controlled Content	Publisher content that is “presented by” an advertiser. Brand mentions are not in the published content.	Shorter Timelines	Paid Channel	Publisher/ Platform
Branded	Custom content created by a brand without publisher involvement.	Medium Timeline	Owned and Paid Channels	Brand
Custom/ Integrated	Content created by the publisher with a focus on entertainment for the intended audience, seamlessly weaving brand mentions into the content and theme.	Longer Timelines	Owned and Paid Channel	Publisher and Brand

Best Application of Branded Content

- 1 Awareness** Help drive awareness - draw new audiences and potentially new customers to your brand.
- 2 Emotional Connection** Storytelling designed to elicit a behavioural change, or provoke an emotive response between brand and audience.
- 3 Attention** Grab and maintain your target audience's attention by using long form content that is of interest to them.
- 4 Influence** Positioning brand as a thought leader (or partnering with publishers that are subject matter experts) by educating the audience about a specific subject matter relevant to the brand.
- 5 Performance** Driving leads by reaching consumers at all stages in the purchase funnel. It is not exclusively a long tail tactic.

Examples of Branded Content in Practice

- 1 Awareness** A bank could discuss the importance of saving instead of “open a chequing account today.”
- 2 Emotional Connection** An automotive brand could create a story about the car being passed down from father to son so as to elicit feelings of nostalgia.
- 3 Attention** A brand can create a web or video series with its own storyline and cliffhangers, hooking viewers week after week.
- 4 Influence** A food and beverage brand could use influencer’s who share their favorite recipe(s) using the brand’s products, while giving the intended audience tips.
- 5 Performance** An article about deforestation could drive readers to an eco-friendly product’s site.

Getting Started with Branded Content

- 1** Determine the marketing campaign's goal, and what story you're looking to tell your audience - does the inclusion of branded content make sense?
- 2** If yes, what types of content does your audience enjoy consuming? Where do they consume this content? What type of budget can you allocate toward a branded content strategy?
- 3** Work with creators and/or publishers to understand what kind of branded content would be suitable for your brand and budget, along with measurement methods.
- 4** Plan the media to promote your branded content and how it can reach more consumers.
- 5** Ensure you have a detailed brief including brand values, communication, etc., that would help in the creation of the branded content.

Best Practices: Do's

- Think about the audience you want to reach first
- Determine budget allocation to branded content strategy
- Collaborate with publishers/ platforms/experts, to ensure that you understand 'their' unique audience, so as to properly align messaging
- Focus on content that adds value to users engaging with it
- Test: A/B headline, images, and call-to-action
- Be authentic to the voice of the medium
- Tell a story, but don't make it an 'ad'
- Include an [Advertising Disclosure](#)
- Use a consistent tone so as to minimize brand confusion
- Ensure that the 'style' of the content is a good fit for the brand
- Speak with publishers directly to see if they have any suggestions and ways to help bring content ideas to life; be very clear with your content strategy at this stage, to avoid less revisions later
- Manage expectations from the start so as to avoid any disappointment along the journey
- Think about the length of content (i.e.: long form vs short form)
 - make sure that the length resonates with the platform in which you are using

Best Practices: Don'ts

- Don't go overboard with brand mentions, as it may negatively impact engagement rates
- Don't list prices and features on your advertised products
- Avoid being too predictable
- Don't just assume that straight translation of content will appeal to different markets; create content specific to the market in which the content will be displayed (i.e.: French content in Quebec).

Pricing Models

1 Flat Fee (Fixed Cost)

WHAT IT IS: All costs are fixed and may include: content production, distribution and any other associated fees.

EXAMPLE: Video creation + posting, 1 e-newsletter insertion, social post and 2 days promotion on the homepage = \$20,000 flat fee

2 CPM (Cost/1,000 Impressions)

WHAT IT IS: Costs are calculated based on the impressions of promotional ad units used to drive viewers to the content.

EXAMPLE: Content promotion includes: 1.2M impressions through native ad units promoting the content -

$\$10 \text{ CPM} \times 2\text{M impressions} = \$20,000$

3 CPE (Cost/Engagement)

WHAT IT IS: Costs are based on the guaranteed number of views of the actual content. It is also referred to as: CPR (Cost/Read) for article content, and CPV (Cost/View) for video content.

EXAMPLE: An article will be read by a minimum of 10,000 people -
 $\$2 \text{ CPE} \times 10,000 = \$20,000$

4 Production Cost + Distribution Cost

WHAT IT IS: Production cost is separately billed by content creators, and the brand handles the distribution through media buys separately.

EXAMPLE: A video series is created by the brand through a production house and then the brand purchases television spots, online media and more to showcase the series.

- * Possible to have a combination of the models, for example, a flat fee for the production and a guaranteed CPM

Acceptable Disclosures

Acceptable Brand Disclosure	Acceptable Ad Disclosure	Unacceptable Disclosure
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Presented by [X]• Brought to You by [X]• Promoted by [X]• Sponsored by [X]	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ad• Advertisement• Paid Advertisement• Sponsored Advertising Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More Content For You• From Around The Web• Promoted• Promoted Stories• Brand Logo

Glossary

Attribute Recall: The extent to which a consumer can remember the Brand attributes communicated in the branded content.

Brand Message Recall: The extent which a consumer can remember the key messages of the branded content.

Campaign Awareness: The extent a campaign is recognized by a potential customer.

Change in Baseline Brand Favorability: The pre-post delta in measuring what the potential customer likes and values about the Brand.

Change in Baseline Brand Loyalty: The pre-post delta in measuring customer loyalty in terms of weight and frequency of usage, and likelihood to switch.

Change in Baseline Brand Perception: The pre-post delta in measuring what the potential customer thinks and feels about the Brand.

Change in Brand Awareness/Familiarity: The pre-post delta in measuring to what extent a Brand is recognized by a potential customer.

Change in Brand Consideration: The pre-post delta in a Brand's inclusion in a set which a consumer would select from.

Change in Message/Attribute Recall and Association: The pre-post delta in measuring to what extent the consumer can remember and associate those branded content messages or attributes with the correct Brand.

Change in Purchase Intent: The pre-post delta in planning or willingness to purchase a Brand in the future.

Clicks: The number of times users clicked on the ad leading to the branded content destination page.

Followed a Brand: Number of users who followed the brand on social platforms.

Gaze Rate: The percentage of users who intentionally looked at the branded content, of all those who could have seen it.

Gaze Time: Amount of time a user looked at the branded content.

Interaction Rate: The percent that total represents of possible interactions. OR The percent of users who purposely enter the frame of the content.

Offline Word of Mouth: After reading branded content, number of users who had an offline conversation

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Interaction Time: The average amount of time users spend with the branded content.

Offline Word of Mouth: After reading branded content, number of users who had an offline conversation

Physiological Response: Extent to which the ad results in changes in respiration, circulation, or other non-conscious physical reactions that correlate with emotion.

Searched for more information:

After seeing branded content, number of users who visited the Brand's website

Swipes: The number of users who swiped an ad leading to the branded content destination page

Taps: The number of users who tapped on the ad leading to the branded content destination page.

Total Interaction: Total number of times a user "interacted" within the branded content (e.g., clicks, hovers, taps, swipes, video plays, shares.)

Total Video Starts, Pauses, Stops, Completes: The number of times a user played a video, and how.

Video Completion View through Rate: Percentage of times a video ad was viewed to completion, of total times it was served.

About IAB Canada's Branded Content Committee

The IAB Canada's Branded Content Committee discusses the incredible growth of content marketing online. From best practices to creating content (with research to support it), to conversation around best ways to distribute it, this committee holds lively discussions around an area that is changing dramatically. This group is excellent for media buyers, marketers and creative agency teams looking to leverage rapidly changing native advertising opportunities.

