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## InTransition Episode 72 – The Case for content – Hank Jongen

David Pembroke: Hello everyone and welcome, once again, to In Transition, the podcast that examines the practice of content marketing in government and public sector organisations. My name's David Pembroke and I'm delighted that, once again, you have joined me for what is going to be a really interesting session. It is, in fact, the third of the contributions that were made at the case for content event that we held here at the Australian National University in Canberra as part of Innovation Month for the Australian federal government. We'll come to that in just a moment and I'll introduce that third and final speaker. Before we do, I'll just start with the definition of content marketing as it relates to government and public sector organisations as I do each week. Content marketing is a strategic, measurable and accountable business process that relies on the creation and curation and distribution of useful, relevant and consistent content. The purpose is to engage and inform a specific audience in order to achieve a desired citizen and/or stakeholder action.

As I mentioned, the Case for Content, a really successful event that we held here in Canberra, Australia as part of Innovation Month back in the last Friday of July. Our third speaker that day was Hank Jongen. Hank is a legend in Australian government communications. He is currently the general manager and departmental spokesperson for the department of human services. As the primary spokesperson for DHS, Hank regularly participates in Talkback radio and is interviewed on television and is actively engaged across the spectrum of social media channels. Hank has been a senior Australian public servant executive for more than 20 years and he has been responsible for national strategies supporting key government reforms and has had a major role in the creation of Centrelink, which is the Australian system where we manage our social security payments. Hank was awarded the Australian public service medal for outstanding public service as Centrelink's media spokesperson and a leader in innovation and communication. Hank has been around for a very long time and he was a very popular presentation that he gave.

Here is, in fact, an edited version of what Hank had to say that day, because it was Chatham House rules, so there are a few things that Hank said on the day that probably best not said more publicly. Not that they were too provocative, but it's better to be safe than sorry, as most of you people working in the public sector will understand. What we'll do is listen to Hank. It's a little bit shorter than the other presentations, a little shorter than normal, but what I'm also then going to do is answer some of the questions that we got at the Case for Content about how organisations can pick up this opportunity of content marketing in government and public sector organisations. Before we get to the question and answer, here is Hank Jongen.

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Hank Jongen:

*I was very interested in the comments that you made, and particularly the comment about the revolution. I have to say that my experience has been one of evolution. I almost lapse into "Well, I'm the dinosaur in the room." I've been fortunate to see the evolution of the emerging technologies and the adaptations it demands. The good news is that I was flexible enough to embrace them as they emerged.*

*I still remember a conversation within the department many many years ago, about the fact that we should have a webpage, and that someone in IT had created one and I thought "Hmm, I don't think that's right," and that was my first battle with emerging technology. I wanted the webpage, it had to be a webpage because it was a communication tool, rather than an IT tool.*

*I've been through those battles, and I have to say, the other thing about content marketing is when you talk to traditional communicators they say "It's what we've always been doing," and I agree. It is true, because my whole career has been built on right information, right channel, but delayed communication. That's the big difference, because what we're dealing with now is immediacy, expectations from the community that we respond in a timely manner. I have to say that within government, certainly within my department, that timeliness issue still poses some challenges for us. Fortunately, the case studies that I'm going to show you, we were able to get a business area engaged where their timeliness became one of the crucial elements.*

*The other thing I have to say about this is, yes, it is all about the same sort of traditional communication we've always done, but some of the elements that you still need to do it effectively exist, and at the core, it's about having talented people, motivated people, imaginative staff, and a new element is injected, which is a cross-discipline, across the teams that you need, because it's so easy for me to stand here and talk about successful exercises, but at the core, this is about collaboration. This is about staff being driven, motivated, wanting to achieve the outcome, and then engaging the business in order to do it. That's what I'd like to illustrate in this presentation.*

*We have a number of social media platforms that we use to engage with our customers. We have five Facebook accounts, seven Twitter accounts, one LinkedIn and two YouTube channels that we use to target various sectors of our community.*

*The key for us with families is a Facebook presence called Family Update. We know that this has an area of high interactivity. It's an area where friends are tagged and participants answer each other's questions, and when we see that happening, we jump in and say "Mildred, thanks for answering that question, you're quite right, blah blah blah," so we go into the process of encouraging that interaction and exchange of information. We visibly and actively support it to ensure that it's happening.*

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*Those of you that are parents would know the Family Tax Benefit is what it says. It is intended that it should be paid annually at the end of the financial year as a lump sum, but 94% of families choose to have it paid fortnightly in advance. What does that mean? There's got to be a reconciliation at the end of the financial year, and what happens, of course, is massive increase in our business at this time of year.*

*We were able to talk to the business about having a meaningful effect in terms of reducing that call demand and taking the principles of content marketing a step further.*

*We worked with the business area and we identified nine different scenarios, nine different groups of customers that had a different imperative and that had to take different measures in order to resolve their issue. Out of that nine, there are actually only two that need to ring us. The other scenarios, we've got a solution which involves them dealing with it online, getting information online, and understanding what's happening to them online, but you think about it, nine layers of different communication is all part of the challenge that we deal with, and it's typical of the sort of business that we're involved in.*

*The way in which we did that is we developed the nine scenarios, and I might add that those nine scenarios are something that I use in Talk Back Radio, because, again, what we try and do is have a multimedia approach to every aspect of our work, and there is another audience, of course, or there is the same audience where messaging is reinforced, because the scenarios enable me to with absolute certainty talk to people about what they need to do, and in most instances you don't need to call us, the issue can be resolved online and you can actually deal with it online.*

*We promoted, as part of that, there were three key Facebook posts that we heavily promoted via Facebook and social media, and they reached nearly 550,000 people and it was about drawing an additional audience into the Family Update space, where we know people will engage, where our messaging was crucial, and where we know there was interactivity.*

*We specified the call to action for each of the categories of the nine, we set up a dedicated team to meet the demand and promptly answer customer questions. In this case, we built the credibility, which meant that in most instances we were answering questions within 30 minutes, and, in fact, because we'd done the work beforehand, we knew what the questions were going to be.*

*We're still in the middle of this exercise, and we are still facing big demands in terms of the overall evaluation of the family tax benefit stuff, however so far we've responded to 10,000+ questions, and, as I said, usually within 30 minutes, sometimes faster. We've achieved 21,500 new likes on the page. Messaging has reached 1.5 million so far, and, again, the core messaging around each of the*

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scenarios is where we've focused our attention.

*The challenge is always to make sure that your content is interesting and relevant. What we've found in terms of doing that, is, firstly, of course, you've got to make all your comments relevant and timely, but in effect, what it's about also is a subversive approach. Something to underpin your messaging which is much more interesting and fascinating.*

*What we've discovered is you use staff and people as champions to get your messaging across. From our perspective, whenever we're faced with a challenge we look for the people elements. We do the discipline stuff, which is what I've talked about, but we look for the people elements. How can we use people in order to do that? Sometimes that'll be me. The other thing I have to say is we call it good news content, and often we'll use that firstly to champion a cause, but then, in terms of our overall reputation, the other thing we do is we embark on monthly themes, all of which utilise staff in order to capture the imagination of our customers and to show that we're a human organisation, that our people care.*

*Whenever I'm out in the network, I'm amazed at our staff who, in my view, deliver fantastic services, despite us here at the Centre. Bureaucracy can do amazing things to undermine the delivery of effective customer service. From our perspective, we use things like the gift of giving in order to generate that positive content that we need, and what we're finding is that people want to see that content. They actually respond to it, they actually engage in it and they're pleased. This is just an indication of some of the feedback that we get as a result of those sorts of activities that we engage in, so it humanises the department, it reinforces this nuancing. We don't simply give black and white messaging, we go beyond that.*

*The one thing that I haven't talked about is the fact that we're increasingly engaging in the use of much more media content. You made the comment earlier that we all become a production house. We've actually been a production house at DHS for a number of years, we've got a TV studio, we have video capability, so I just need to talk about the fact that our use of video and rich media is also part of the mix that we use.*

*I'm not being too subtle, there's nothing like a puppy to engage. What we've done within the department is we've sponsored a guide dog puppy. The staff donate money towards the puppy. They entered into a contest to name the puppy. I look at this lesson, I was never a dog owner, but I remember when Amanda Vanstone was appointed our minister, she came from the Justice Department, and the first thing she said to me is how disappointed she was that we didn't have an excuse to use puppies, because in Justice she worked with customs and every six months there was a photo op of her with cute puppies. I never quite understood that. Three years ago, I got a dog of my own. I'm captured.*

*Again, the point I'm making is you need to diversify the range and nature of the*

*material that you're getting across. The other side effect, the other aspect of using staff as heroes, which is really important, is it actually has an effect on your staff. Your staff love reading about other staff, it does engender a sense of pride in the organisation, and it also contributes overall to the reputation management of the organisation. We're a department that do a tough job, we're not soft and cuddly, but what we are doing is by engaging with people and demonstrating to them that we're not the cold bureaucracy, slowly but surely we are shaping those perceptions. Thank you.*

David Pembroke: There you go, Hank Jongen, a very, very popular presentation there. Fantastic examples of how to use content in a range of different ways, but my particular favourite was the way that they use it to solve that business problem around the call centre. To be able to use content to explain, to educate, to change that behaviour and actually to have that case study that they're now able to realise and understand those benefits, but also to quantify those benefits to show the direct return of getting involved in content marketing. A very big thanks to Hank Jongen. A very big thanks also to Kim and Trish, who we've heard over the last couple of weeks. There will be more Case for Content events from Content Group in all sorts of different shapes and sizes as well. We want to do smaller ones, medium size ones, but continue the education process as more and more people continue to adopt the practice of content marketing in government and the public sector.

I do want to answer some of those questions, but just before I get to that, something really exciting has happened for content groups and I certainly hope for you as well in government public sector organisations around the world. We have just received a federal government grant here in Australia. It's a research and development grant, because what they've done here in Australia is ... One of the problems that they've identified as part of the innovation ecosystem is the disconnect between business and academia. Academics are great at solving problems and researching and understanding what's going on, but often they're trying to solve the problems that they think are of particular interest to them.

What the federal government here in Australia has done is to say, "Well, that's great and yes, there'll be still money for you to do that elementary research, that really important research that academics have done for a long time." What they've also said is, "Okay, here's a bucket of money now what we're going to put in the hands of business and then business can take their problems across to academic organisations and solve those problems." We applied and we were successful. Essentially, what we've done is, as you know, we have a process and we understand this content marketing process, but it's grown up out of our practice, I suppose and there's not that evidence-based, that theoretical underpinning that we would like to see, to bring the rigor to it, which will help for the further adoption of content marketing as a practice and as a process for government and public sector organisations, not just here in Australia, but indeed all around the world.

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Last week, we got the notification through from the federal government that yes, we believe that this challenge of government's communicating more effectively with citizens and stakeholders is worthy of further investigation. We have partnership with the Australian National University and we've agreed to terms on what that is going to look like. It's likely to take us the next 10 months or so, as we really pull apart and stress test the methodology that we've come up with and try to look to those theoretical and evidence-based underpinnings, to try to really build out this process and make it even stronger, more rigorous and then more able to travel further, because of the framework that it'll be sitting in. That's going to be a really exciting process for us.

I think as part of this podcast series, as well, I think what we'll do is engage our academic partners along the way and discuss some of the things that they're finding and understanding, so we can all learn from it along the way. If, indeed, any of you listening out there might be interested in participating in the program at all, we've got the on the Content Group website info at [contentgroup.com.au](http://contentgroup.com.au) or you can ping me at [david.pembroke@contentgroup.com.au](mailto:david.pembroke@contentgroup.com.au). If you have any interest in being involved, please, let me know. If you've got a project that you'd like to be to put up and being involved, that would be great as well. Yeah, let me know. There are just a couple of numbers or a couple of email addresses that you can use to get in contact with me and we will keep you informed along the way, but that's really exciting development.

I know that I'm also a couple of weeks away now from Content Marketing World. I'll be heading off to run the government and public sector workshop on the final day of content marketing in Cleveland, Ohio, at Content Marketing World, so I'm certainly looking forward to that. Hopefully, a number of you are coming along, so we can talk about that research program, at Content Marketing World. I'm finalising the presentation and I'm very pleased ... Actually, I have some more news next week about a couple of guests who will be joining me during that presentation to talk about their experiences. One European case study and the other is from the United States, so that's pretty exciting as well, I'm looking forward to that.

There is still plenty of time to get to Cleveland. I know, particularly, long-term listeners, you will know how enthusiastic I am about the Content Marketing Institute and the fantastic work that they do, particularly in the business to business, business to consumer area, but obviously, as a government communicator, public sector communicator, what I'm always looking to do is to see what can we learn out of those fast adopting areas and what can we bring across into government and public sector practice that can help us to strengthen communities and improve the well-being of citizens through effective content marketing?

David Pembroke: I would encourage any of you who are listening, who could possibly get to Cleveland in the first week of September, I think it runs 7 through 9. You won't

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regret it, I can guarantee you that, that you will certainly enjoy the community, you will enjoy the learning and hopefully, you would enjoy the workshop if you would come along as well. I'd encourage as many of you as possible to get involved and get to Content Marketing World run by the Content Marketing Institute. It is a fantastic occasion. I think this is the fifth year of Content Marketing World. When I first went 5 ... Say, it's 5 years ago, now I think it was 5 years ago, there were about 600 people from 15 countries and this year there'll be over 4,000, I think they're thinking more like 4,500 from, I think, it's closing in on maybe just over 100 countries as well.

The practice is growing, it's spreading. We, as government and public sector communicators, need to build a bigger presence there, because it is really for the B to B, B to C, but as I said, there's a huge amount of learning there that you can take and apply in your daily practice as communicators in government and the public sector. Just another hint or a tip or encouragement. If you can get along there, particularly for those of you in North America, not that far away or even in Europe, it's not that far to get there. Cleveland's a great place. The people at the Content Marketing Institute are the most hospitable, friendly and they put on a great show. I would strongly encourage you to do that as well.

Okay. Some of the questions that came through our evaluation forms are in front of me now and I'll just try to answer a couple of those in the few moments that we have left for today's show. The first question was, "How can we, as communicators, engage business lines to get them on board for content marketing?" I think the key thing, it's really about ... and this is about anything, really, is that you've got to understand what their needs are? What their queries are? What their problems are? What their pain points are? Understand the language that they use to describe that, but to essentially understand what their problem is, that you can help to solve. That's the first question, is to really ask, "What is that problem you have at the moment? What is the issue that you are dealing with?" It might be a question of regulation. It could be that they're trying to get to a particularly difficult or hard to reach community, so they can deal with that particular issue.

We're working on a couple of jobs at the moment, one of them in an energy and gas retailer and the other one a big federal government department dealing in the environment space. These are specific examples that we've used, where we've gone in and said, "Okay, what's the challenge? What's the problem? What are you trying to achieve?" When you start getting people talking about their problems, they'll articulate them and they'll be able to bring them forward to you. Then, really the notion of getting people engaged is then to describe how content marketing may, in fact, be able to contribute to solving that particular problem.

If it's about awareness of the program or understanding about the particular activity that's taking place, which is contrary to the goals of this particular area and something that has to stop, understanding where the audience is, who is in fact, maybe contravening the regulation or behaving in a way that they shouldn't

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be. Then, taking them through that process and thinking about, okay, what's the story that we need to tell? Who are these people? Where are they located? How do they get their information? Who influences them? These are basic, strong, business principles that are underpinning that content marketing process, which was really an adaptation of strategic communication planning from years ago.

Understand it from their point of view, that's the way that you will build that understanding and then start to find a small opportunity. Don't try to solve the whole thing at once and think that you're going to get the whole thing done. Try to carve off the piece or the smaller part of the challenge or the minimum viable product, if I could use that fast becoming cliché in terms of the way that we develop solutions. Find that minimal viable problem, the smallest possible problem that you can solve and then describe to that client how you're going to solve it with content marketing or how you're going to contribute to solving the problem with content marketing and get the project up. Speak in their language, understand what their problems are, describe how you might be able to help and then find a way that you can improve the case for content marketing. Then, from there you should be able to get great success, but start those conversations and start listening and really hearing what those issues are and seeing what you can do from there.

Okay, the next question that I've got and I've got about 5 minutes to go, I've just got the 5 minutes, so we'll just keep going here for the next 5 minutes or so. "Where does content marketing sit in terms of risk management?" Again, government and public sector organisations, in terms of our project management and our risk management, it's important that we do identify risks. This is one of the things, in fact, in terms of our research program with the Australian National University. What we have done in the last 12 months or so is to understand the context of working in government and public sector organisations. There are large numbers of competing stakeholders with different levels of influence and different levels of capability, so you've got to really understand who those stakeholders are. At the same time, you also need to manage or identify risk and make sure that you are addressing that when you are building your plans.

Our methodology is not too dissimilar to anyone else's content marketing approach as in understanding the objectives, setting the content marketing goals, understanding the audience, the story that you want to tell, the story that the audience wants to hear. Then, building out that content marketing program with offline channels, online channels, the choice of different types of media, be it video, audio, stills, text and graphics. Putting the editorial calendars together and then evaluating against those goals that you'd set yourself, which are related to those objectives and the behaviours that you're seeking to achieve through those objectives.

What we found was what we needed was a more rigorous framework to put around that methodology. We have already done some work with ANU and it was really about wrapping our methodology in a really robust framework, so a project

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management framework. That includes, at the earliest stages, understanding and identification of benefits and benefits realisation. Then, really, very strong project management framework around it, but inside that project management framework is this idea of risk. Risk identification and risk management. In our process now we undertake a very clear identification of what are the risks of being involved in content? Then also how you're going to mitigate those risks? There are ranges of ways that you can mitigate risks through better communication, better understanding, greater awareness. There are sometimes things that you understand that well, okay, that's a risk that we're not prepared to take, so let's make sure that we consider that in all of our planning.

It's also important to understand that with risk, the other side of risk is opportunity. If someone asks you about risk and risk management, be sure to understand that if you're going to go down that path, you also want to be talking about opportunity identification and opportunity management as well, because it is the other side of risk. If you take a particular action, yes, there could be the risk that flows from it, but conversely, there's also the opportunity that's going to drive from that as well. Making sure that, yes, we want to be talking about risk, but we also want to be talking about opportunity and taking up the challenge of identifying what are some of those potential opportunities that could flow from us by engaging in this publishing, this creation and curation of useful, relevant and consistent content that is meeting the needs of those specific audiences that we're seeking to engage in? If we can move them along by producing this great content, by impacting on their behaviour, hopefully we're going to be able to achieve better outcomes, both for the community and also for those individual stakeholders and for ourselves as we are commissioned to do those things.

Just finally, a question there about changing attitudes at the executive level. Really, I think that goes back to my first answer there about engaging business lines. I think the thing that executive levels understand is problems, they understand budgets, they understand priorities. It's so very important that you understand what it is that is keeping them up at night. What are their biggest issues? What are their biggest challenges? How can you bring the content marketing process to the table and present it in such a way that it makes sense to them?

We tend to find that increasingly, having those really strong measurement and evaluation frameworks that can produce numbers that can then be part of that executive level conversation is increasingly important. That we need to take on the challenge as marketers, as communicators, to try to define what we do in as many quantitative measures that we can produce, but also those qualitative measures. Increasingly we're also seeing that there's a massively important role for surveys, benchmark surveys, trying to get some measures around the attitudes that are involved in your particular challenges.

Then, you can understand where that benchmark is, introduce your program, which is based on the best possible insights that can put in place, put those

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content marketing programs together, apply them consistently and effectively over time. Then come back in a 12 month period or a 2 year period and measure if, in fact, you've been able to shift those attitudes. To try get as many qualitative and quantitative measures in place, so once you can get the conversation about the numbers, once you can distil the message. They don't want to know of all your day to day challenges and everything else. What they do want to see is that we are making an impact through our content marketing.

I did say this at The Case for Content, that I've seen the future of content marketing and it involves maths. I know it's not great news for me, because it's not my things and for probably many of you, who have traditionally been in commutations, it's not why you started to go down this path, but unfortunately, that's where we have to be and we have to take up the challenge and we have to get ready to be as accountable as we possibly can. The best way to do that is to try to put together a coherent, strong set of measures, where we can measure the impact of our creativity and our imagination and our ability to tell great stories to impact on the behaviours of those audiences that we're seeking to reach, influence and engage.

Okay, so only 3 questions there. I did get some feedback a couple of weeks ago that people did enjoy the question and answer session as well, so I might do that again in another couple of weeks, just go through the rest of these questions that were there from the Case for Content. If you do have a question ... If you have a suggestion of someone who you would like us to interview, I heard this on the podcast the other day, Ezra Klein's podcast on the VOX Network. He was saying to his audience, "If you've got any suggestions, let me know." I think that's a great idea, so [info@contentgroup.com.au](mailto:info@contentgroup.com.au) or [david.pembroke@contentgroup.com.au](mailto:david.pembroke@contentgroup.com.au). Perhaps you're a listener and you'd like to be on the show, happy for that or if there's somebody else you think that would be great to interview who's got some insights, love to hear about those people as well.

Also, I know, I've said this before about not wanting to impose on the audience to give us a review or to share it around or spread it around, but all the podcasts that I listen to, everyone does it, so if you could nudge somebody and think that there's some value to them to let them know that it's here, that'd be great. If you could sign up to our newsletter at [contentgroup.com.au](http://contentgroup.com.au), that would be fantastic as well. If you could give us a review on iTunes or Stitcher, that would be much appreciated as well. If you can't do it, don't worry about it either, no great hassle, because I like doing it and it doesn't matter whether we get reviews or not, we'll be turning up and seeking to create some value for you in the weeks and months and years ahead. I'm really excited about this research program at the ANU, that's going to be great. I think that can be, as we set to build out this standard that we can all be using over the years ahead.

Anyway, thanks again. Thanks for your time. Thanks again to Hank for his contribution to the Case for Content and I'll be back next week. Bye for now.

