

Manufacturing Serendipity: How to Create Content that Captivates Your Audience

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Fifteen minutes into my first ever flight with my newborn son — a flight that had been delayed for an hour and a half, during which we'd held off feeding him so he could eat on the way up to make sure his little ears wouldn't pop from the pressure and he wouldn't start the flight screeching — fifteen minutes in, we were still ascending and even with his little head concealed beneath a nursing scarf, I could tell he was starting to get full.

I was terrified.

If he started screaming I had no idea how we would survive the four hours left in the flight. My husband and I were not the cool couple who had brought earplugs and coffee cards for all the passengers around us. I was certain everyone would hate us and, even worse, we'd never, ever fly again. I was the worst mother in the history of mothers.

As I was readjusting my son and trying to keep him calm, I noticed this phrase on the back of the nursing scarf's label:



"You're doing a great job!" Were there any words I needed more to hear in that moment? Would anything less perfect have incited me to expose this very personal, vulnerable moment to the vast readership of the Moz Blog? If the makers of the Itzy Ritzy nursing scarf hadn't reached deep into my soul and sent me a message across the universe, would you have ever heard of their product?

You, too, can grab your audience by the heartstrings and build a lasting connection that gets them to come back to you time and again while also evangelizing your business to all their friends. Because while the designers of the Itzy Ritzy nursing scarf did not know specifically when or how this new mom was going to need encouragement and, yes, the kindness of strangers, it was an easy guess to say that every one of their customers would at some point. And with a cheap, but creative, insertion of content on the back side of their label, they won my heart and loyalty.

This is called **manufacturing serendipity** and here's how you do it.

[Understand your audience's needs](#)

We talk a lot about empathy at Moz, and that's because the value of empathy cannot be overstated — in marketing or in life. [Empathy is a super power](#). Dr. Brené Brown describes that super power as "feeling with people," and it creates a spark of connection for the person being empathized with. That spark can be fanned into the burning passion of a long-lasting relationship — in business and in life.

To understand how to empathize with your customer, first [create personas](#). Find out where your audience is emotionally. Figure out what they're insecure about, what scares them, what they most need in the moment that they're visiting your site. It's not rocket science to understand that a new mom might be feeling insecure about nursing her child in public, and if that's what your product is designed to help her with... go that extra mile to connect.

Ways to reach into your customer's soul and speak to their needs include:

- A car insurance company that caters to the accident prone starting their rate page with copy that assures the customer the company will be there *no matter what happens*.
- Creating an ROI calculator after uncovering that your customer needs your software to generate client reports, sure, but she also needs to be able to show her boss the value she's adding to the company with her daily work.
- Understanding that everyone's time is limited, ask the most essential survey question first and then give your customer the chance to expound if he wants to. Like Sears does at the bottom of their two-question satisfaction survey:

Your insights are valuable, but so is your time. We would love to ask you a few more questions, which should take less than 2 more minutes of your time. Would you like to provide additional feedback?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

[Put content in the right places](#)

Are you using all the content opportunities available to you? Reeling from the sniffles, fussiness, and, yes, boogies, that came with my son's first cold, I opened up the lid on a package of Boogie Wipes to find this:



The wise marketers at Boogie Wipes know that many parents will buy almost anything to make their child feel better. So they seized the opportunity to let me know that they have even more products to help me. Serendipity? It sure felt like it. And you can bet someone (not it!) dashed off to the drug store to buy some saline spray.

You don't have to turn your site into the Times Square of the Internet to put content in the right places. Instead:

- Include a call to action at the end of product-related blog posts for a free trial or other promo.
- Send a reminder email to a customer who's filled their cart and then left your site. Bonus points if you can pinpoint and speak to why they might not have finished the transaction. Comparison shopping? Offer a discount. Too busy to finish? Suggest a recurring delivery option.
- Use the mobile version of your site or app to direct customers to your nearest storefront.
- Make sure the link to your next webinar or event is on your homepage so no one has to dig for it.
- Or, like clothing retailer Boden, put an order widget at the bottom of all those reviews so it's super easy to order the item after doing your due diligence:



It doesn't always take a large change to connect your customer with the content they need.

Surprise, delight, inform

Serendipity is the feeling of happy coincidence. If your content sparks surprise, incites delight, and manages to inform along the way, you're more likely to get the response you're looking for from a potential customer. According to Dr. Read Montague, a neuroscientist at Baylor, [surprise lights up the brain's reward pathways](#). And, unfortunately, delight in marketing is still surprising to most people, so by delighting your customer, you're creating a positive association with your brand in two ways.

Some favorite examples of content that's surprised, delighted, and informed me are:

- The way The Land of Nod positions a website error is both amusing and perfectly tailored to their audience:

Our website is currently in a timeout.

Don't worry though, we're just doing maintenance. Once everything calms down, we'll be back to normal.

*In the meantime, if you need assistance placing an order,
give us a call at 800.933.9904.*

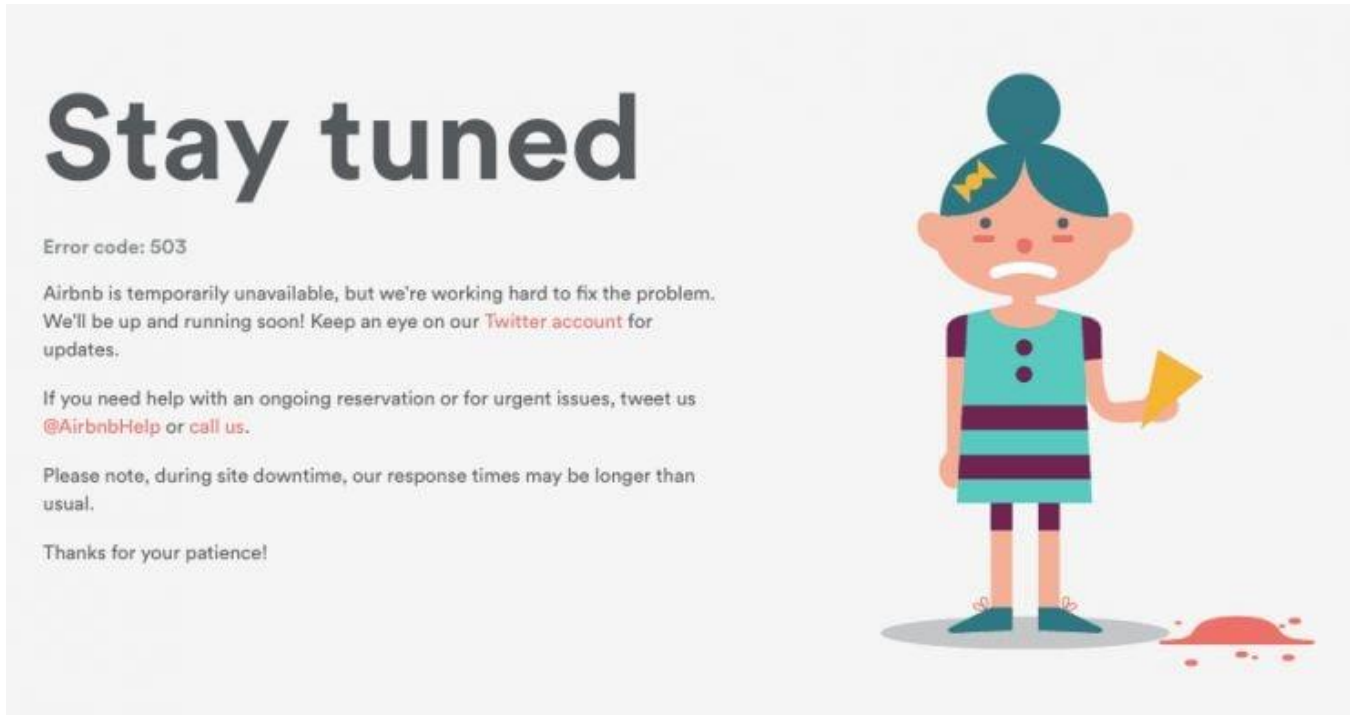
Check back soon. *We hope to be back to our old selves shortly.*

The Land of Nod®

- A "Moments" announcement email from Twitter. Instead of telling me about their new feature, they clued into what I use this account for (live-tweeting The Bachelor) and surfaced content that's specific to my interests:



- The image on AirBNB's 503 error page captures that feeling we have when something gets between us and that sweet treat (or vacation reservation) we've been dreaming about:



- And, finally, because not all content is online, I love the way yogurt maker Brown Cow uses the lids of their yogurt to playfully highlight the many ways a customer could eat the yogurt's cream top. This both signals to

me that the yogurt has a cream top (not everyone's favorite) and shows me new ways to experience it:



Serendipity isn't new. [Rand's been talking about it for a long time](#). But it's important to remember that serendipity sometimes needs a little help.

Now that you understand your customer's needs, are looking at creative content placement, and understand how important it is to surprise, delight, and inform your audience, you have the tools you need to help serendipity along.

So if you're ready to build a lasting connection with your customers, go manufacture some serendipity already. You might just soothe the nerves of a new mom so well that she'll start evangelizing your products the minute she safely steps off the plane with her calm, jet-setting son.

The title for this post may have subconsciously been inspired by an earlier (but much different) [post by Rand](#). Serendipity? You decide.

The author's views are entirely their own (excluding the unlikely event of hypnosis) and may not always reflect the views of Moz.

Written by

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Isla uses her MFA in creative writing to organize words into forms that resonate with an audience and incite action. She co-authored [Clear Out the Static in Your Attic: A Writer's Guide for Turning Artifacts into Art](#). Connect with her on [Twitter](#).