

A woman in a shimmering, sequined dress is riding a bucking horse at night. She is smiling and holding onto the reins. The horse is in motion, with its legs kicking up dust. In the background, there are banners for "WRANGLE" and "LAS VEGAS".

**CONTENT IS QUEEN**



# WHAT IS NATIVE CONTENT?

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A piece of content that has been commissioned or paid by a brand. Also known as branded content or sponsored content. It includes print magazines, websites, podcasts, and television programs.

It is *not* traditional advertising. It's paid storytelling.

# WHY IT MATTERS

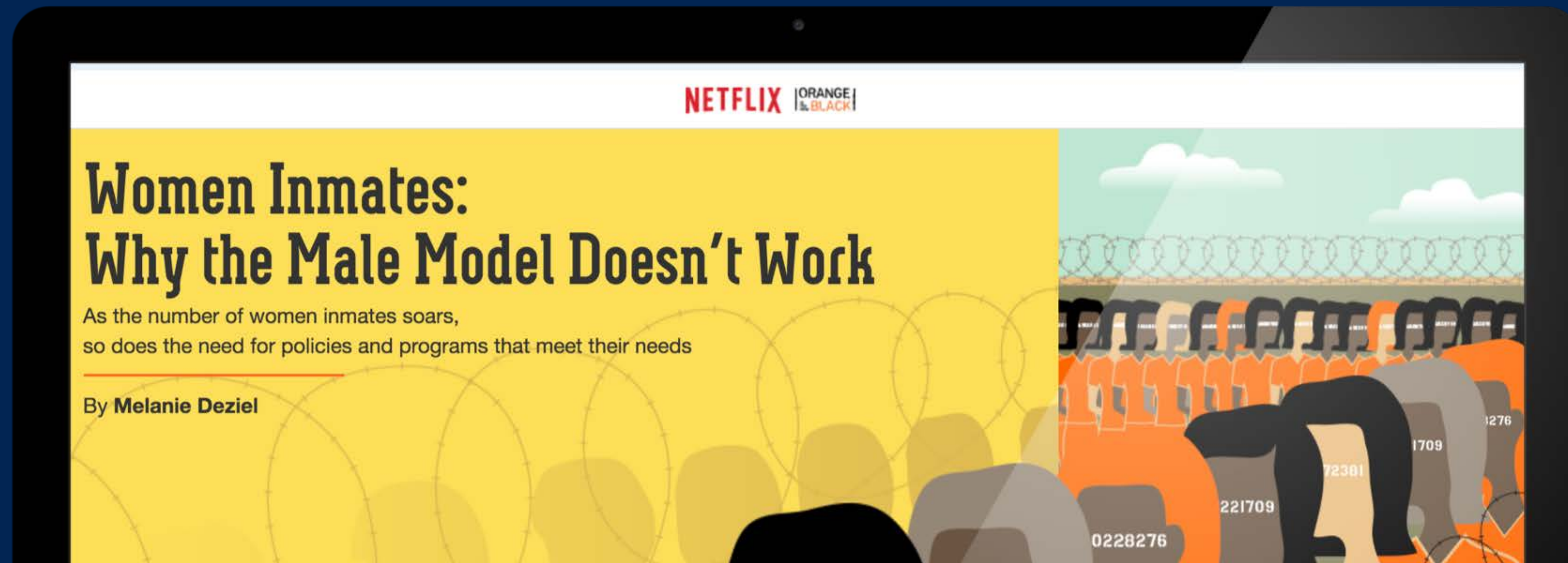
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Excellent paid storytelling creates trust *while* building brand interest and education. It's a supplement to traditional print and web ads.

So what's that look like in practice?

# NETFLIX + NEW YORK TIMES

In 2014, Netflix and *The New York Times* collaborated on an in-depth, interactive online paid post on women inmates—and how the U.S. prison system’s dated policies and programs affect them. The goal: Educate readers *while* building natural interest female inmates and, subsequently, the second season of “Orange is the New Black.”





# DIGITAL BRANDS MOVE TO PRINT

In Spring 2019, digital dating app Bumble launched a print magazine. The goal: Offer stories and advice about dating, careers, and friendship to Bumble's 50 million users.



# HIGHER CONVERSION RATES

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A 2018 branded content report by Pressboard Media found that sponsored content drove average conversion rates of 1.89%. That's *31x* the average click-through rate for U.S. display advertising across all industries.

# STRONGER BRAND RECALL

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Brand recall is 59% higher for branded content than other digital ads,  
according to a IPG Media Lab-led study.

# SHIFTING BUDGETS

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Native advertising is expected to exceed \$402 billion by 2025,  
according to native advertising firm AdYouLike.



# JOURNALISM > SOCIAL

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Only 36% people trust Facebook and Twitter, while 79% of respondents trust premium news sites for honest, detailed coverage.

# THE NEW NORM

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A survey by USC Annenberg Center for Public Relations found that 75% of campaigns include branded content.



# BRAND STORIES > COMMERCIALS

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Approximately 62% of viewers react more positively to branded video content than regular 30-second commercials. Tell happy stories.  
Happy stories lead to happy people who like to spend money.

# LIKE A BRAND? 2X THE SPEND

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Emotional connection wins. Users who feel a connection to a brand spend 2x as much money as those who don't, according to a study by Capgemini's Digital Transformation Institute.



# WHAT'S THAT TELL US?

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Creative, insightful storytelling wins. People want powerful stories driven by human experiences and facts. They don't want re-written press releases.

What's that look like at Catapult? Let's walk through three case studies from outside the equine industry.

# MERRELL MAGIC

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In 2017, we launched Merrell Magic, a nationwide event series in collaboration with *BACKPACKER* magazine to surprise unsuspecting hikers, thru-hikers, campers and trail crews with trail magic. The goal: Gift trail magic back to the hiking community.



# MERRELL MAGIC





Editor’s Letter

Dennis Lewon, editor of  
BACKPACKER, announced  
Merrell Magic to his readers in  
the June 2018 issue.

JUNE 2018

EDITOR’S NOTE

by Dennis Lewon



Sorry, parents,  
now they'll expect  
a lemonade stand  
on every hike.

No Mirage. Magic.

A pop-up lemonade stand in the desert? Believe it. This summer,  
a new kind of trail magic is coming to a backcountry path near you.

THE HIKE TO CORONA ARCH, outside of Moab, Utah, crosses shadeless slickrock and sand. It's a short trail—just a mile and a half—but it's not easy. On a warm, sunny day, the heat reflects off the sandstone, sapping your energy and building a powerful thirst. For a 9-year-old kid who can't see the end of the trail and doesn't really know what's so great about a dumb arch anyway, it can be demoralizing.

That's what happened to Evan, a youngster visiting the Moab area with his family last October. He was just about spent after a mile, and started complaining, the way kids do. *I can't go any farther. I just want to go back. I can't take another step.*

But in this case, some hikers walking in the other direction overheard him. They'd already been to the arch and were heading back to the trailhead, and they couldn't resist offering encouragement. "Keep going," one said. "You'll be glad," said another. "There's a lemonade stand just up ahead!" The boy perked up. A lemonade stand?

Oh great, his mom thought. *Don't tease a tired kid. What am I going to tell him when there's nothing but rocks up there?*

But Evan, energized by the prospect of a treat, picked up the pace. When the trail climbed a rock slope so steep the BLM had to install a cable and ladder, he didn't waver. And that's when I saw him—or heard him, really. He reached the top of the ladder and emerged onto a smooth apron of redrock where he had an unbroken view of what lay ahead.

"There it is," he yelled. "There's the lemonade stand! Right there!"

He hurried over and I handed him a cup of icy lemonade. You could see 110-foot Corona Arch from our perch, but the view could wait. Evan needed a refill.

"I can't believe it's real," his mother said. "People on the trail told us there was a lemonade stand up here but I was sure they were joking. Who puts a lemonade stand in the middle of nowhere?"

We do. This year, BACKPACKER is partnering with Merrell to spread a unique brand

of trail magic across the backcountry. It's called Merrell Magic, and we're surprising hikers and trail crews everywhere. Like the best trail magic, these fleeting aid stations vanish almost as quickly as they appear, leaving nothing behind but surprise and delight. Consider it a big thank you to the trail community.

Already, we've rolled up our sleeves and helped a crew of teenage trail workers move rocks in Mt. Rainier National Park (and then served them pizza and ice cream at their campsite), and treated a group of trail-worn PCT thru-hikers to a night of luxury in a historic Yosemite hotel. And of course, the lemonade: We've served up free drinks at a dozen remote spots and counting. For hikers who have yet to luck into this sort of magic, it might sound too good to be true, but as Evan knows, it's as real as a cold drink on a hot day.

Want to get in on the fun? Learn about the project, where we're going, and how you can spread some trail magic of your own at [backpacker.com/merrellmagic](http://backpacker.com/merrellmagic).

PHOTO BY LOUISA ALBANESE



**JULY 2018**



VIDEO

### **Mt. Rainier**

Filmed, created, and promoted 20 videos via Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Merrell and Backpacker's websites. Videos captured Merrell Magic moments, from surprise pizza parties to a single mom of five being gifted camping gear.





**AUGUST 2018**



CUSTOM EMAIL

## **Making Magic on Wheeler Beach**

A custom email direct to BACKPACKER's audience that told a powerful, positive story about Merrell giving back to the trail community.



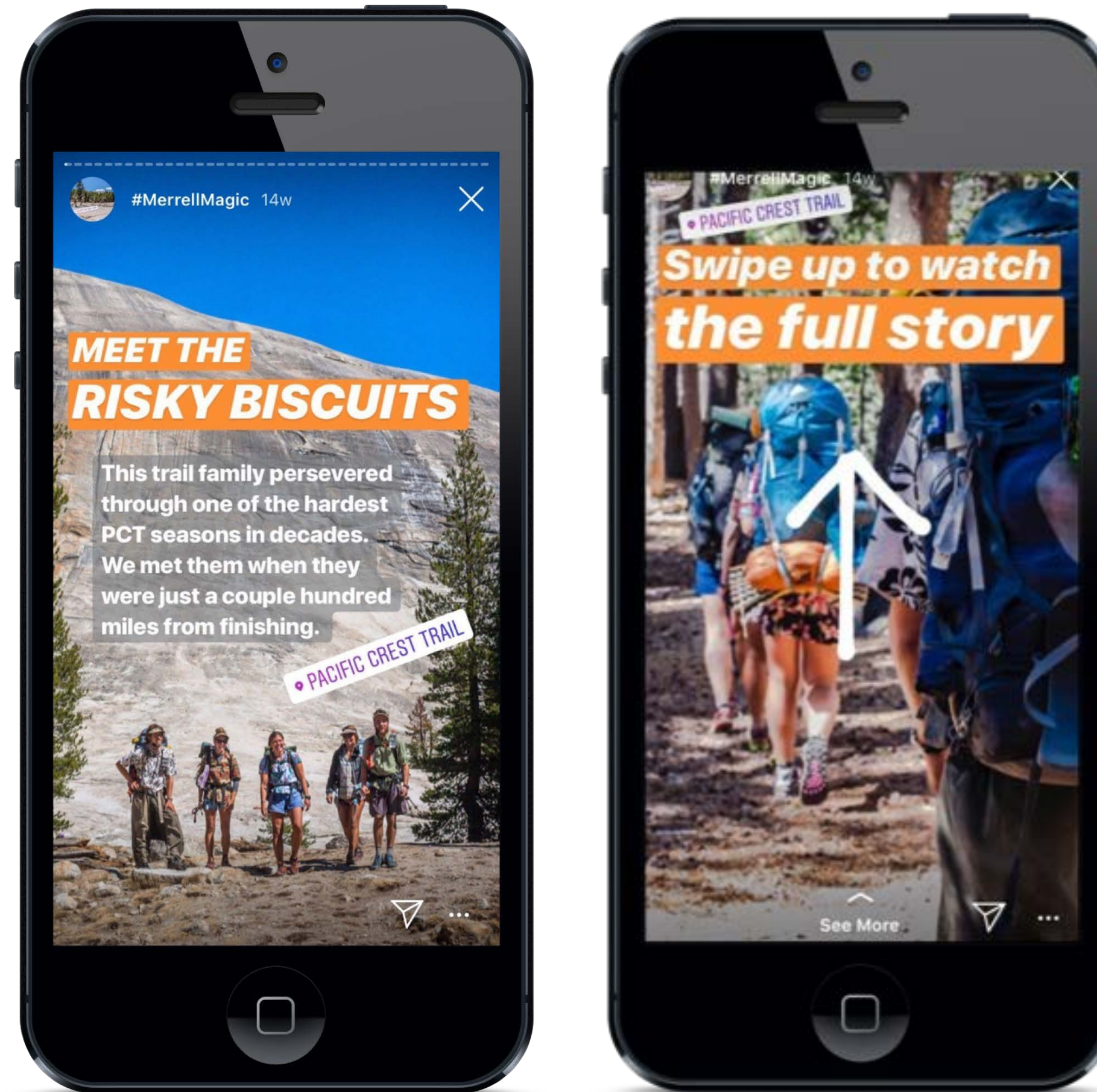


**SEPTEMBER 2018**



**Facebook**

Promoted articles and videos  
via Facebook so target  
consumers could learn—and  
be inspired by—Merrell Magic.





## BIGHT GEAR

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In 2018, legendary alpine guide Peter Whittaker came to Catapult with a single request: make the relaunch of his mountaineering apparel brand a raging success. We answered the call with a multi-channel campaign that included native print articles in *BACKPACKER* and *Climbing*.



## Bight Gear's 100K Promise

We created an annotated photograph that mixed humor with technical, cool facts. Example: Male guides openly jealous of women's stretch waist brands.

# BIGHT GEAR

100K PROMISE

**BIGHT GEAR'S 100K PROMISE**

LEGENDARY ALPINE GUIDE PETER WHITTAKER'S NEW BRAND IS SETTING AN UNPRECEDENTED STANDARD FOR QUALITY. EVERY PROTOTYPE MUST SURVIVE 100,000 FEET OF VERTICAL TESTING BY GUIDES LIKE JESS MATTHEWS.

→ JESS MATTHEWS, 35, has bagged 32 Rainier summits since 2014. She's poured blood and sweat into her job. Literally. Repetitive motions—like pulling a 60-pound sled up to 13,000 feet on Denali—can create raw sores where you have poorly placed seams. "At high altitude, you don't heal," she says. "I had to live with that injury for weeks." That's why she's thrilled to be a designer under Whittaker's new brand, Bight Gear, a line of clothing for mountaineers, by mountaineers.

Whittaker and his crew of 60 RMI guides spend a combined 10,000 days a year at or above treeline and directly contribute their end-user experience. "We're the testers and the designers," she says. "We're not just providing a page of notes after one trip. Peter translates our feedback into the final designs, so it's built right."

[WWW.BIGHTGEAR.COM](http://WWW.BIGHTGEAR.COM)

That's a bight. It's a bend in the rope.

Creaks from 12 years of competitive volleyball.

Extra-long cuffs (with thumbholes) block UV rays.

Post-expedition ritual: copious amounts of beer (any kind) and pizza (with extra meat).

Urged Whittaker to add a yoga pant-inspired waistband to Moraine Pant. Male guides openly jealous.

Leg pressed 300 lbs. 125 times at Penn State.

Like a firefighter, she sleeps in her pants so she can roll out of bed for summit pushes.

Zero bulky snaps or raised seams reduces chafing at altitude. Say goodbye to open sores.

Drop-tail hem provides no-gap coverage.

ADVERTISEMENT | 2018

# CASTOR RIVER FARMS

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The best-tasting rice in the world is farmed in Missouri.  
That's why we worked with Castor River Farms, a third-generation family farm, to create a two-page sponsored story on his agroecological farming practices for *Clean Eating* and *Better Nutrition*.



# CASTOR RIVER FARMS



**Castor River Farm**  
Third-generation Missouri farmer Johnny Hunter is a leader in agroecological practices. The sidebar details why in a fun, readable way.

*Rice So Good You Can Taste It.*

America's obsession with mass food production is over. Today's agricultural heroes are farmers like Johnny Hunter II, who is ditching pesticides and fungicides for radical farming practices that work with Mother Nature. Not against her.

ADVERTISEMENT

## JOHNNY HUNTER'S RICE FIELDS HUM WITH BEES.

Here in the Missouri bootheel, deer herds, raccoons, owls and hawks thrive on the third-generation farmer's 2,200 acres of blended cover crops, popcorn, and long-grain rice.

"In the spring, when the cover crops bloom out, the bees come back," he says. "The crops are like a homing beacon. They just find us."

The mushrooming wildlife population keeps Hunter's crops healthy—and eliminates the need for mass-produced practices like pesticides, fungicides, tillage, and traditional rice flooding. The result: His highly aerobic soil grows 1.5 million pounds of nutritious white and brown rice that his family mills on their farm each year. His customers praise it for its consistently long, thin grains and slightly buttery taste.

That consistency is nearly unheard of among major rice producers. Traditional farming methods can create fluctuating flavor and, more worrisome, higher amounts of arsenic and other harmful chemicals.

The public's growing demand for food that is healthy for their families and the planet has created a watershed moment in American agriculture, one that's led to the birth of the global agroecology movement. Here in the rural Midwest, Hunter is the leader of

this movement, which is typified by small-farm practices that prioritize soil health over mass production. One sign of Hunter's success: His devotion to ecological-driven practices, coupled with his grandfather and father's hard work clearing and irrigating the land, has brought millions of earthworms (a key indicator species) back to **Castor River Farms**.

In 2012, Hunter traded in his grandfather's plough for a blend of cover crops, from cereal rye to crimson clover, to suppress weeds, reduce soil erosion, and naturally infuse the ground with nitrogen. The shift, coupled with like-minded ecological practices like rotational cattle grazing, a zero-

tolerance pesticide policy, and precision-point irrigation, ushered in a new era: One where his farm works with nature. Not in spite of it.

"There's more biology in a tablespoon of healthy soil than there are people on this planet," Hunter says. "Soil health is a journey, not a destination. My land is like a fine wine. It keeps getting better with time."

*"There's more biology in a tablespoon of healthy soil than there are people on this planet."*



## why this rice?

**Your family's next rice dish will be healthier—and better for the planet—thanks to Hunter's agroecological practices, which have set off a cascade of changes on his Missouri farm.**

### LESS WATER

Smarter irrigation has reduced Hunter's water consumption by nearly a third.



### MORE EARTHWORMS

The legumes that cover his fields naturally fixate nitrogen and promote bacteria and fungi that earthworms thrive off. They annually generate tons of casts per acre that have increased worm populations by 100 times while dramatically improving his farm's topsoil.



### HEALTHIER WILDLIFE

Deer, birds, and raccoons benefit from reduced levels of pesticide and insecticide usage.



### MORE BEES

"My fields never hummed before," says Hunter. "Now they do, thanks to healthier returning hives." Plus, more bees mean better pollination for all crops.



### LESS ARSENIC

Southeast Missouri State University research shows that rice watered with precision-point irrigation contains significantly lower levels of arsenic than those grown in flooded fields.



**FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT [CASTORRIVERFARMS.COM](http://CASTORRIVERFARMS.COM)**



# YOUR TURN

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Congratulations: You're just been hired to work at a new creative agency.  
You just landed a huge, new client to boot. Way to hustle!



# HORSERADE SPORTS DRINK

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Introducing Horserade, a new sports drink for horses.

It's the most scientifically researched and game-tested way for horses to replace electrolytes lost in sweat. Variety pack includes Carrot, Hay, and Oat flavors.



# HORSERADE TARGET CUSTOMER

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Horserade is new to the U.S. market. The client wants to increase brand awareness among horse owners and be the drink of choice. Horserade is designed for daily, safe use thanks to its proprietary formula. No more guessing whether forages, commercial feeds, or mineralized salt blocks are enough after a long, sweaty workout.

Their ideal owner is a 30–50-year-old female with two horses and a household income of \$110K. She casually competes.

Oh yeah and the CEO wants to help raise up the next generation of riders.

# \$100K CAMPAIGN

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Horserade wants to launch a multi-channel campaign for 2020—one anchored with a feel-good story—that educates and builds brand loyalty with their target demographic.

How will you spend their \$100K?



# WHAT'S THE STORY?

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Give me goosebumps.

# BUCKETS TO CONSIDER

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Social Media  
Influencers  
Email Marketing  
Lead Generation  
Advertorial  
Video  
Native Stories  
Event Activation

# SOCIAL MEDIA

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Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, Snapchat, Pinterest, YouTube.  
What channels will you use? In what ratio?

How often will you use them?

What language/tone do you want to use?

What's your boost budget?

What's your boost demographic?

# INFLUENCERS

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Who are your target influencers and what are their most successful platforms?

What is the ask? How many posts per month?

What's their messaging?

What is the cost per post?

What is the CTA?



# EMAIL MARKETING

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Who is your target audience? What riding disciplines?

What channels?

How many per month?

What are the stories?

What's the CTA?

# LEAD GENERATION

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Who is your target audience? What riding disciplines?

Who are your media partners?

How many per year? And where?

What's the service you're providing to readers?

How will you leverage the leads generated?

# ADVERTORIALS

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Who is your target audience? What riding disciplines?

Who are your media partners?

How many per year? And where?

What are your stories?

What's the length of the story?

What's the budget?



# VIDEO

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What stories do you want to tell?

Who are the stars of the video? Both human and equine.

Target length? (Think: 30-sec, 90-sec, 5m, 15m)

What's your budget?

What's your goal?

How will you distribute them?

# NATIVE STORIES

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Who are the stories of the video? Both human and equine.

Where do you want to tell them? What media partners?

What's your budget?

What's your goal?

How will you promote them?

# EVENT ACTIVATION

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What event(s)?

Where/When?

What's your budget?

Why will people want to attend?

What does success look like?



# PITCHFEST

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Volunteers, share your plan with the group.

**THANK YOU  
VERY MUCH.**



# SIGN UP FOR OUR NEWSLETTER

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