



# ICEBREAKER CONTENT CASE STUDY

PREPARED BY  
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Q1

Brand Storytelling

VOICE

# VOICE

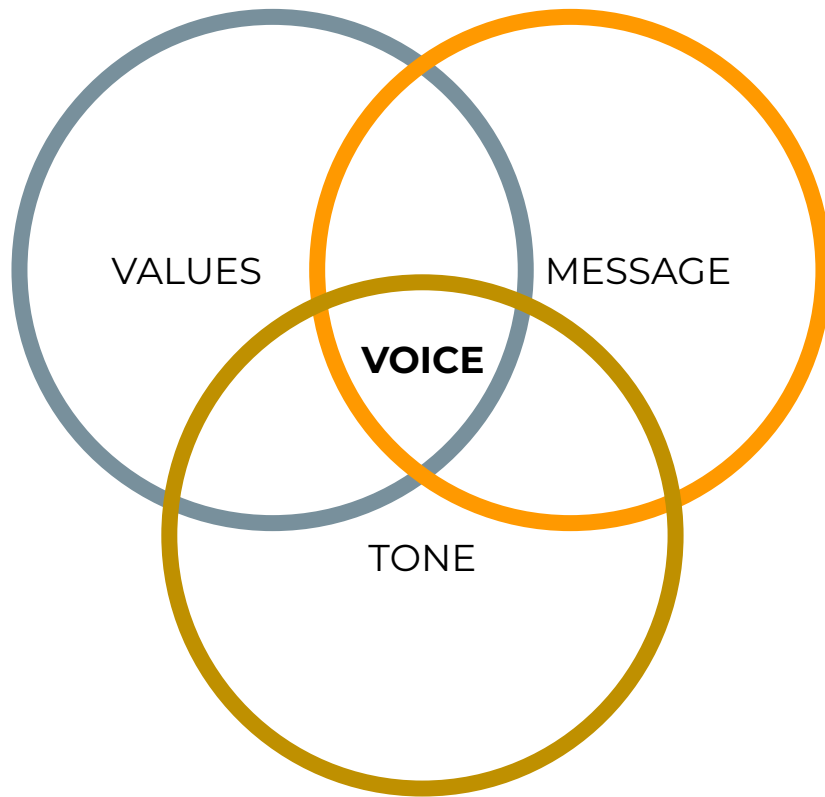
First things first. Developing a brand voice.

There is no shortage of ways to define exactly what constitutes “Brand Voice”. In my mind, though, it is the precise combination of these three things:

**Core Values + Clear Message + Authentic Tone**

Broken down simply, it's the combination of:

**What You Believe + What You Say + How You Say It**



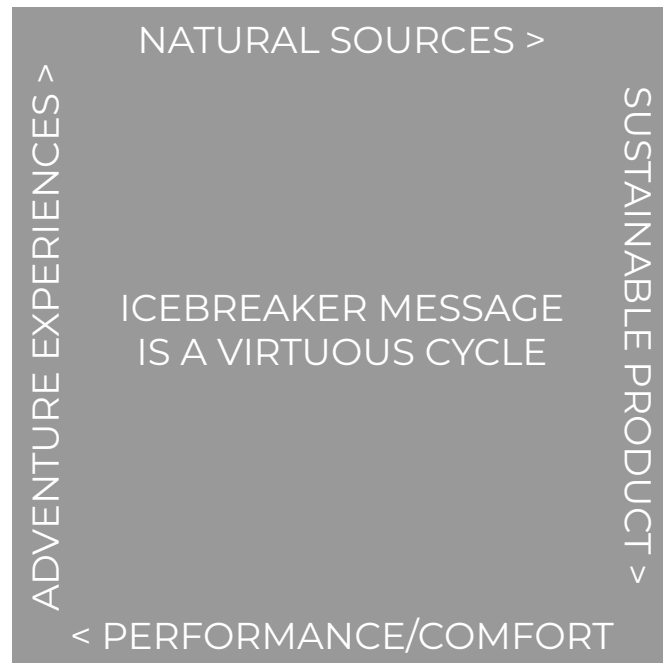
MESSAGE

# MESSAGE

For the “What You Say” component of the Icebreaker voice, there really is no reason to look for inspiration beyond this quote from Jeremy: “People need nature. Nature is the antidote to our crazy city life. It balances our soul and rekindles our spirit. Nature has the answers.”

Put most simply, Icebreaker's message is:  
**“Nature Is the Answer”.**

Lots of brands in the busy market embrace the benefits of natural lifestyles, preach a responsibility as nature's caretakers, etc, but pretty much only Icebreaker can backup the declaration that nature itself can fuel the products that allow you to get the most out of your outdoor experiences.



# MESSAGE

It's important to address the premise that nature is simply the best technology out there, period. It provides the best performance for both the body and the soul.

Icebreaker then joins the community of influential brands who are approaching nature not simply as another well-meaning do-gooder, but as enlightened disruptors who understand that **nature is actually the ultimate killer tech.**

Think this guy >

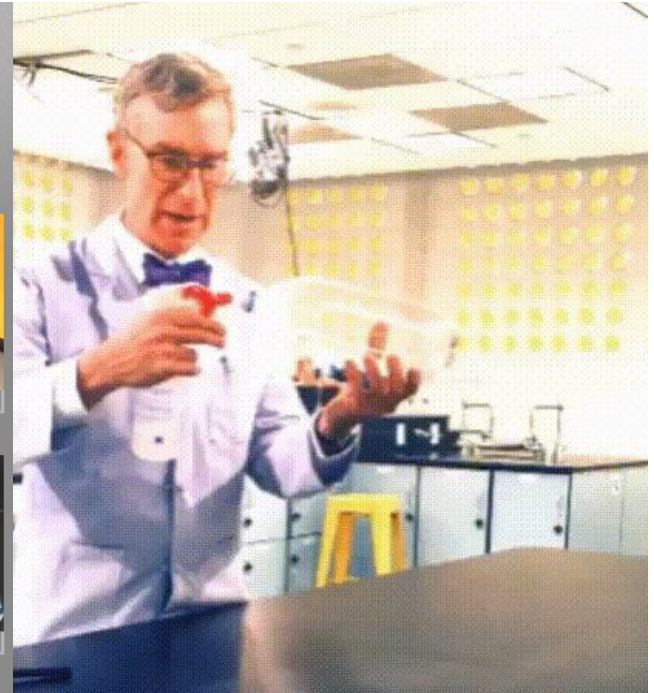
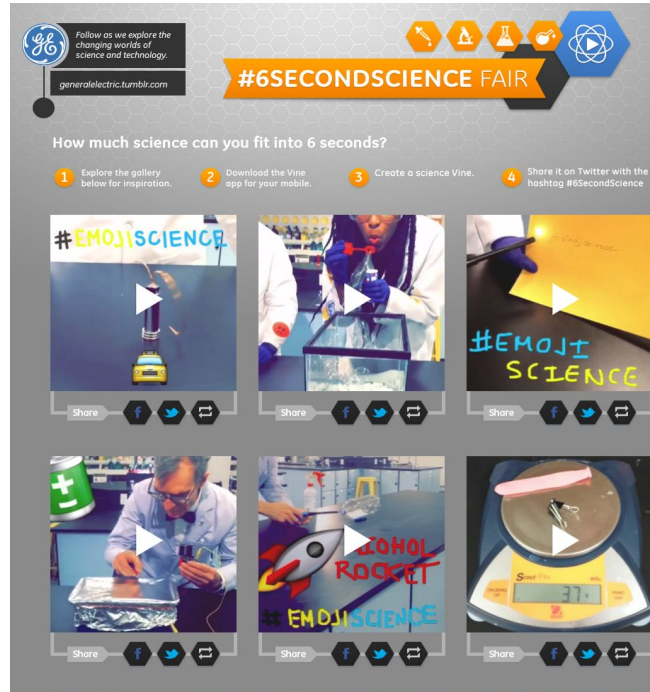


ELON MUSK {ANOTHER "NATURE IS THE ANSWER" DISRUPTOR}



# MESSAGE

For inspiration, let's look at General Electric. Here's an example of a very old brand with a very rusty story — and very iffy legacy as a nuclear arms manufacturer — that has managed to pull off a social media Jedi mind-trick with stellar content that positions the brand in a very modern and relevant context.





# MESSAGE

Instead of trying to promote their disparate portfolio of products — from washing machines to locomotives — they decided to focus on their core DNA strands of Innovation, Science and Technology.

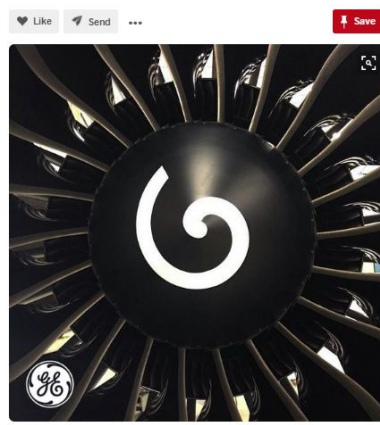
The brand is telling lots of very different stories — from sponsoring “6 Second Science Fairs” on Tumblr to a Pinterest board called “Badass Machines” to partnering with *Thrillest* to create the world’s hottest hot sauce using jet engine technology — that all share the same common theme and message: We are Innovation + Science + Technology.

## Badass Machines

364 Pins

19.4k Followers

Here are the biggest and baddest technologies produced by GE.



# MESSAGE

The result is that GE can now legitimately be considered top-of-mind alongside the most innovative and progressive brands. Quite a feat for a lamp company born in 1892 in Schenectady, New York.

## How General Electric Created The Hit Science-Fiction Podcast "The Message"

GE's chief creative officer Andy Goldberg talks about why the brand got into podcasts, science fiction, and what it means for brand content.



1/10

## GE's CMO on redefining B2B marketing at the 'pretty damn cool' brand

Just over a year into her role as CMO at the world's fourth largest B2B business General Electric, Linda Boff explains how her team are ripping up the rulebook and driving disruption at the '124-year-old startup'.

By Charlotte Rogers 11 Jan 2017 7:00 am



## GE Reports Makes Best Branded Content List

by Tomas Kellner



The brand publishing mavens at Contently included GE Reports on their list of the [best branded content in 2015](#). "If Red Bull is the popular skater-jock at your high school, GE is the hot valedictorian science nerd who everyone should be trying to marry," wrote Joe Lazauskas, editor-in-chief of Contently's Strategist magazine, which just published the annual list. "The brand puts out tons of fantastic podcasts, TV shows, and web series, but my personal favorite is its online magazine, GE Reports, which tells the story of the crazy research going on inside the company."

TONE

# TONE

Authenticity is key here. For starters, how you say your message needs to be unified across all channels and consumer touchpoints. Therefore, it has to exhibit a genuine sense of feeling and emotion that (a) matches the Icebreaker Value/Message and (b) entices people to start a dialogue with the brand.

Put simply, there's no point in having something profound to say if you don't have a good personality communicating it. (And that's the "combination of characteristics or qualities that form an individual's distinctive character" type of personality, not the Kobe, Lance, Kylie, etc. famous-face-for-rent variety.)

# TONE

For Icebreaker's authentically, genuine tone of voice, I suggest the Natural Storyteller persona.

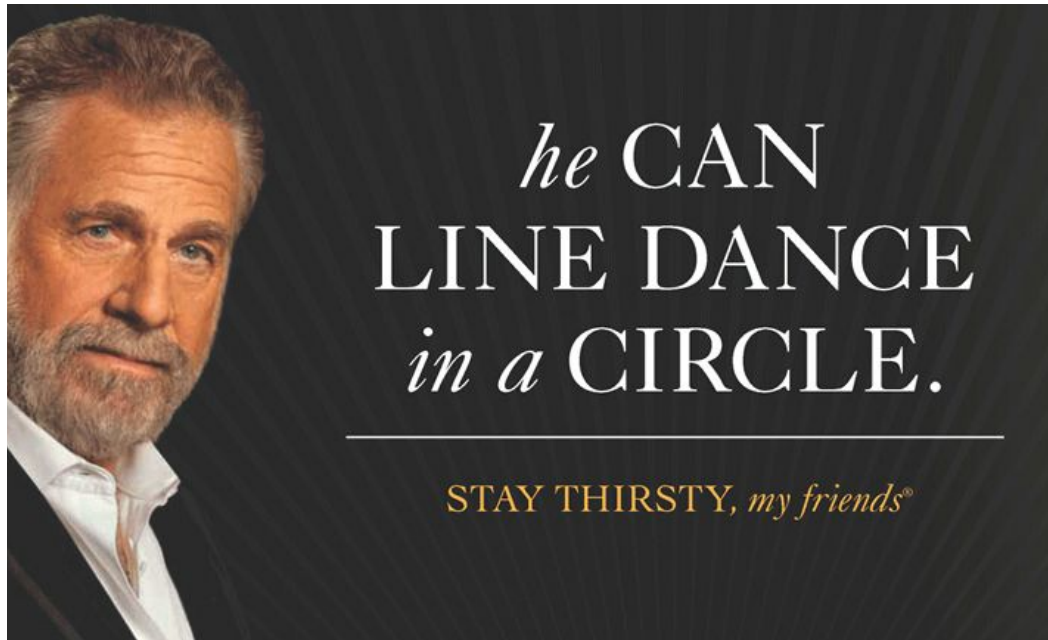
It's the easy-going personality that seems entirely approachable at a party and then looks you in the eye like you are the only person in the world while sharing an oddly compelling story about some random experience/person/place that just happens to relate to a personal interest of yours. It knows how to ask questions that elicit interesting answers, show genuine concern about important topics and have a laugh whenever the moment warrants it.

Here's an example of it used to sell an upstart Mexican beer in brown bottles:



# TONE

I'm not recommending that Icebreaker use this specific tone of voice/personality. Rather, I'm suggesting that we look to the spirit of Dos Equis as an example of how a brand can breakthrough the noise in a crowded marketplace by crafting a tone of voice that combines wit, charm, familiarity and the unexpected to convey an unorthodox message ("I don't often drink beer, but when I do..." = "Nature is the answer in a world obsessed with polyester-fueled performance products").





# LET'S RECAP

Values = We champion nature as nature champions us

Message = Nature is the answer

Tone/Personality = A Natural Storyteller

# THE OPPORTUNITY

# THE OPPORTUNITY

The opportunity for the Icebreaker brand voice to breakthrough all the noise in the crowded market is to exploit a gap between competitor messaging behaviours.

On one side there is a focus on Performance-based messaging.

On the other there is Nature-based messaging that focuses on either (a) outdoor adventures or (b) the environmental responsibility to defend and preserve nature.

The former talks about how outdoor activities are fueled by performance-based technologies.

The latter talks about nature as a distinct destination to be enjoyed and protected.

Other than the occasional discussion about responsible sourcing and eco-impact of natural materials, “Nature” is rarely cast as an active participant — much less “hero” — in the Performance/Quality storytelling. Quality and Nature are treated in separate, distinct types of messaging meant to appeal to the head on one side and the heart on the other.

# THE OPPORTUNITY

For example, take Patagonia. Let's look at the Inside Patagonia tab on their website.

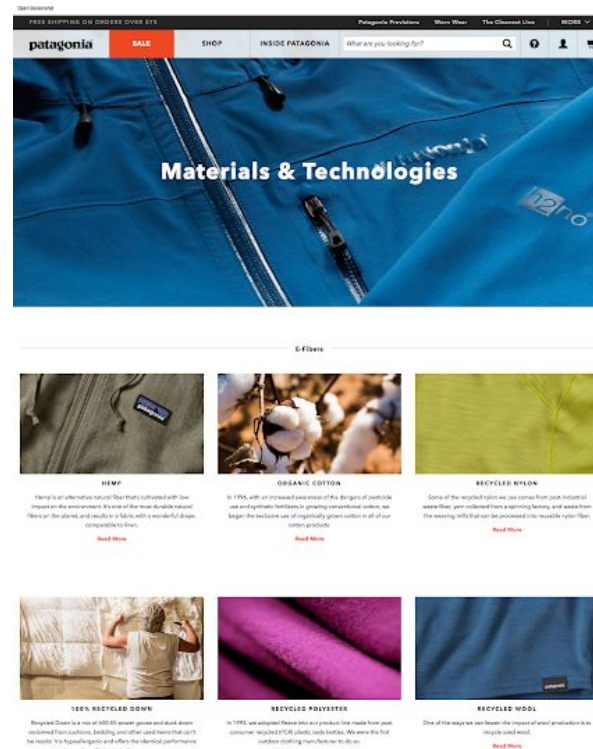
There's a mention of the “best product” and then a commitment to “implement solutions to the environmental crisis”. But in no way is there a commitment — or, much less, a statement of belief — that nature can actually build the best product to start with.



# THE OPPORTUNITY

Now let's take a look at Patagonia's Material + Technologies page.

On the upper “E-Fibers” half of the page, the tone and substance of the messaging ranges from vague to apologetic — there’s a focus on the incorporation of recycled materials in the production process — with a top-note of dread (“impact on nature”, “dangers of pesticide”). For any substantive mention of the performance quality of the products, you have to go down to the “Materials” and “Technology” sections which make almost no mention of the quality benefits of using natural materials, just explanations of the ethical and eco-friendly sourcing techniques employed. But the bottom, unspoken line will always be that “the best products” are still made from some form of petroleum (albeit recycled whenever possible).



# THE OPPORTUNITY

So in-between these two distinct narratives that competitor brands are trying to employ — ie. “We have awesome products that allow you to do awesome stuff in awesome places” vs. “We love doing things in awesome places that we have to treat with respect” — sits a unique opportunity. And, providentially, it's an opening that can only be exploited by a brand built upon the holistic belief that nature is the best source of both outdoor products and experiences.

For that disruption, it takes an Icebreaker. (You see what I just did right there?)



# THE OPPORTUNITY

As for execution, Icebreaker needs to adopt the mantra: Show don't Tell. What that means is the brand voice signature should be one of actively illustrating things vs. passively describing them.

Remember those GE examples a little ways back? In addition to highlighting GE's key Brand Storytelling message, they are also world-class examples of how showing the really cool stuff you do (Rocket ships! Giant windmills! Deadly hot sauce!) is almost universally more engaging than just *describing* what you do ("We are science and technology innovators").

# INSPIRATION

## Poler Stuff

Poler offers a great example of a brand that has successfully exploited a similar hole in the marketplace. In their case, they created a unique proposition to bridge the gap between action sports and traditional outdoor activities, recognizing that a modern active outdoor lifestyle encompasses them both.



# INSPIRATION

## **Poler Stuff**

The result is a uniquely approachable, engaging and entertaining Brand Voice that combines an enthusiasts love of outdoor activities with a shaggy, hipster sensibility.



# INSPIRATION

## HUCKBERRY

Another great example of a brand that has been able to fill a gap in the market is Huckberry. Their Brand Voice is authentically unique and the perfect bridge between the aspirational world of adventure magazines and the staid reality of men's stores. Here's how the Huckberry founders put it: "Nothing out there spoke directly to us — 25-year-old guys who lived in the city but lived for the outdoors — and we envisioned a brand that was equal parts store, magazine, and inspiration to help guys suck the marrow out of life."



# INSPIRATION

## HUCKBERRY

From the beginning, Huckberry has looked to content as their killer app. Most notably, they have gone next level in their savvy use of 3rd party publishers to spread the Huckberry brand voice. From the beginning, they partnered with the Art of Manliness and Outside Magazine to create their stories, and now collaborate to publish content across everything from the usual social channels to Dwell and Spotify. They've created a unique world through content that customers are invited to inhabit.



# IDEAS

For Icebreaker, let's illustrate all the amazing experiences that go into producing the amazing natural materials that fuel amazing experiences in the outdoors.

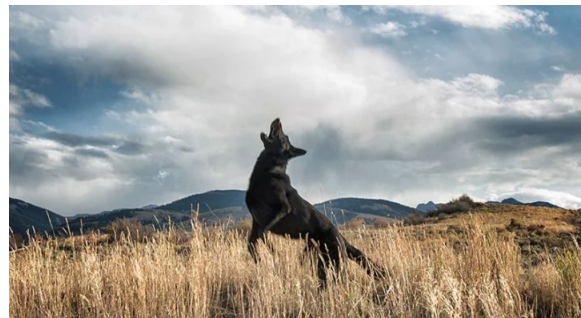
Think: "The Heading Dogs of Icebreaker" coffee table book

"The Science of Merino" infographic on Lifehacker

"The Art of Being Very Very Alone in the Very Very Dark" article on Medium (and Southern Crossings)

Mood and tempo-matched Spotify playlists for all the great trail runs in New Zealand

A "Nature Made" podcast championing all the innovators in the natural tech revolution





Q2

ACQUISITION AND  
DATABASE GROWTH

# NURTURE STRATEGY

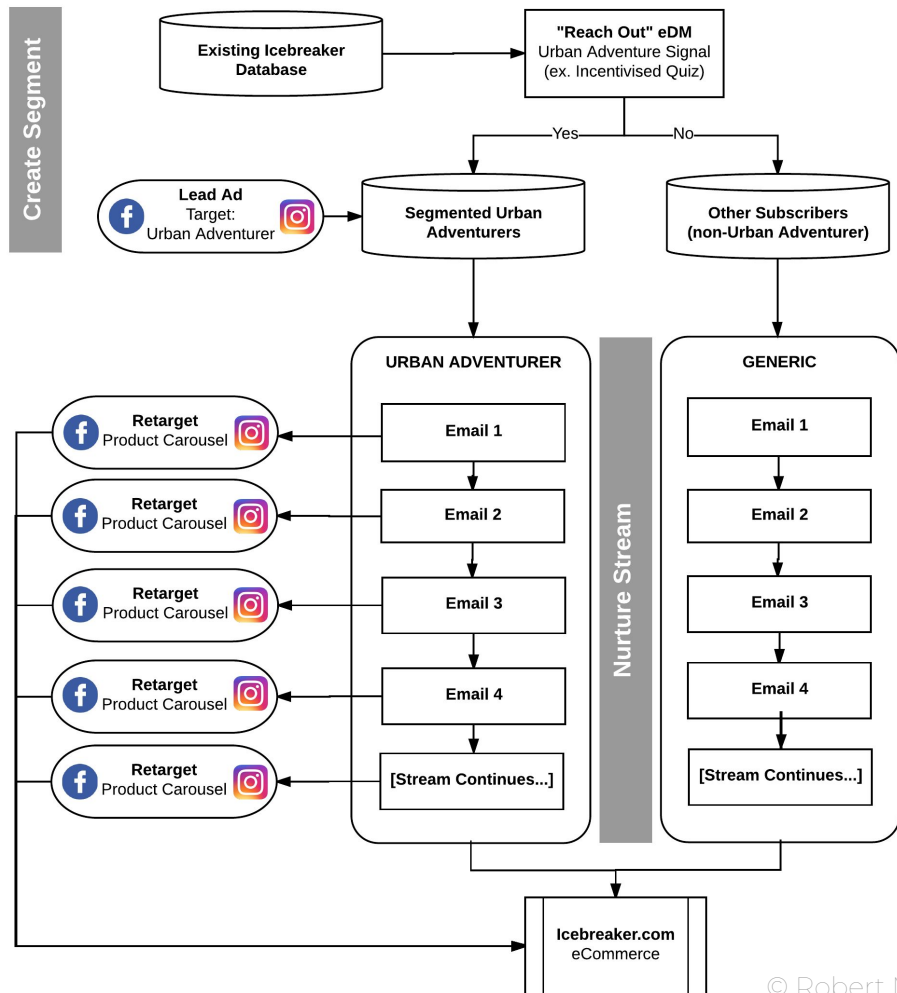
The Urban Adventurer. Love it. Exactly where I believe Icebreaker should be breaking into. That said, before pursuing a tactical campaign targeting a specific consumer segment, we should put together an overall nurture strategy that incorporates the specific verticals we're planning to target. That's the only way to ensure a cohesive user journey that is able to address specific consumer types with personalised content and avoid alienating other key segments.

Here's how I would go about setting-up the overall strategy and campaign...

# Step 1

## Nurture Flow

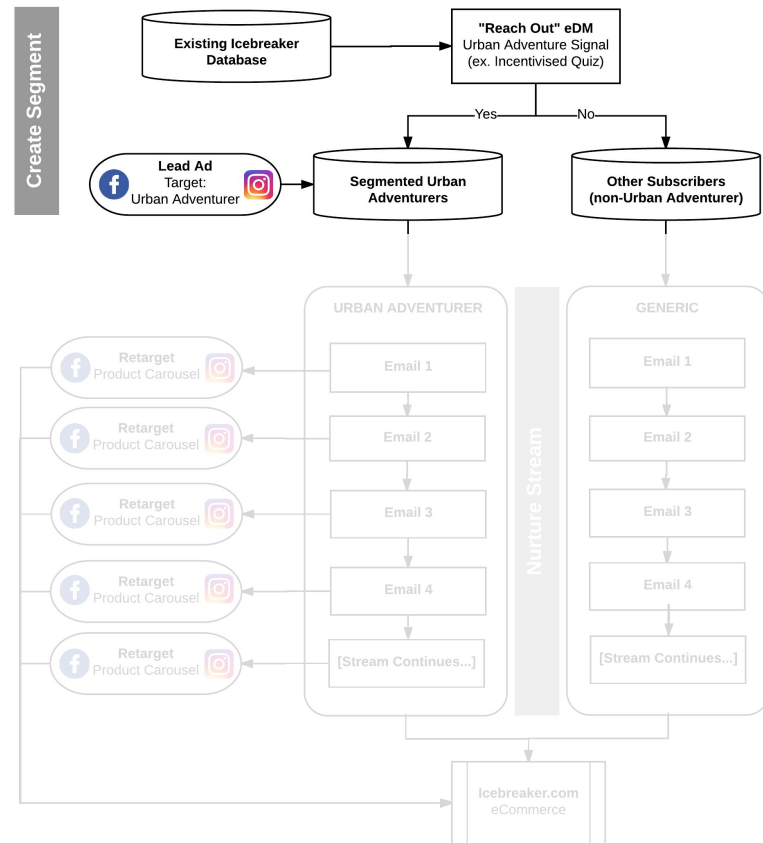
I'd create the architecture for how the overall customer + prospect nurture stream would play out. This would be a high-level journey flow (here is a real basic model I put together).



# Step 2

## Identify Vertical

This is the top of the funnel where we develop the content and targeting that allows us to identify the Urban Adventurers in our current database and attract new Urban Adventurer leads.

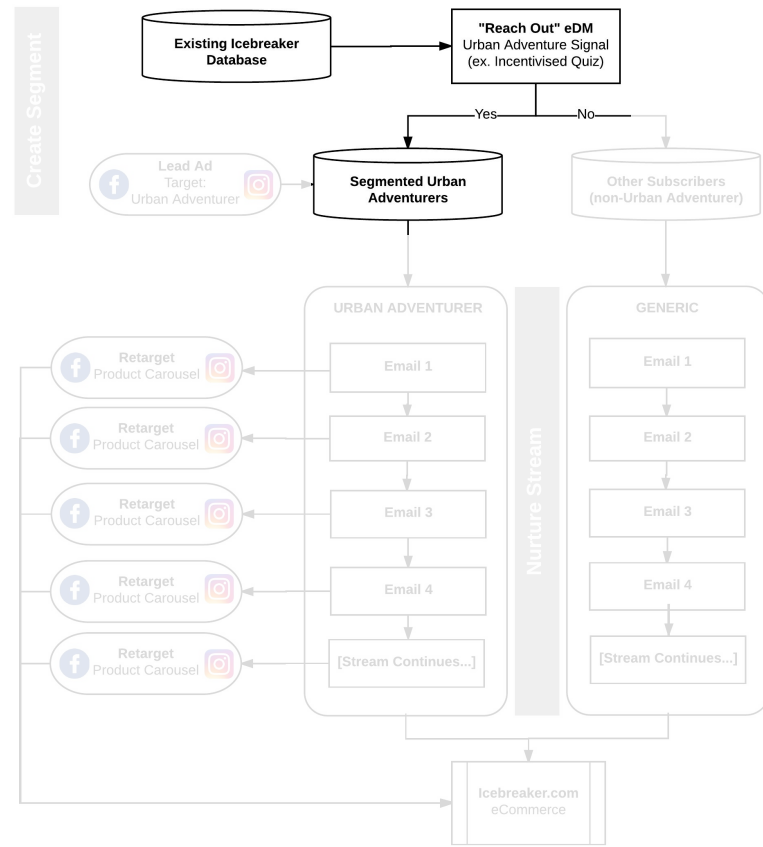


# Step 3

## Segmentation

### Existing Database “Reach Out” eDM

- I'd propose sending out an eDM to the entire database with some sort of simple quiz or question.
- Something along the lines of “My Perfect Saturday is \_\_\_\_\_” with options to choose from that include one or more signals that this person is an Urban Adventurer (ex. “Kayaking the Hudson River”).
- Ideally it would be incentivised. For example, GoPro gives away a product every day to one lucky subscriber.
- Users who pick one of the Urban Adventurer options are segmented in the database.

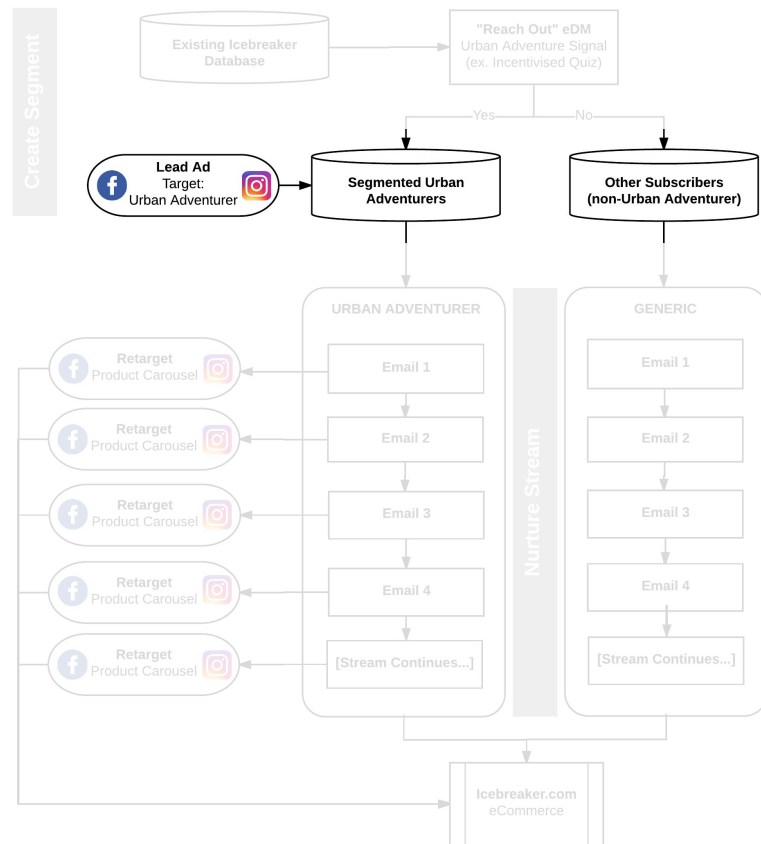


# Step 4

## New Lead Generation

### Social Lead Ads to Capture New Segmented Leads

- This is where we capture our new leads of interested Urban Adventurers using social ads with thumb-stopping video content.
- Targeting: City Fringe, Outdoor Interests, Custom Audience Icebreaker Database Lookalikes.
- Content would be similar to the incentivised “Reach Out” eDM proposition.
- All leads would be added to the Urban Adventurer segment in the database.



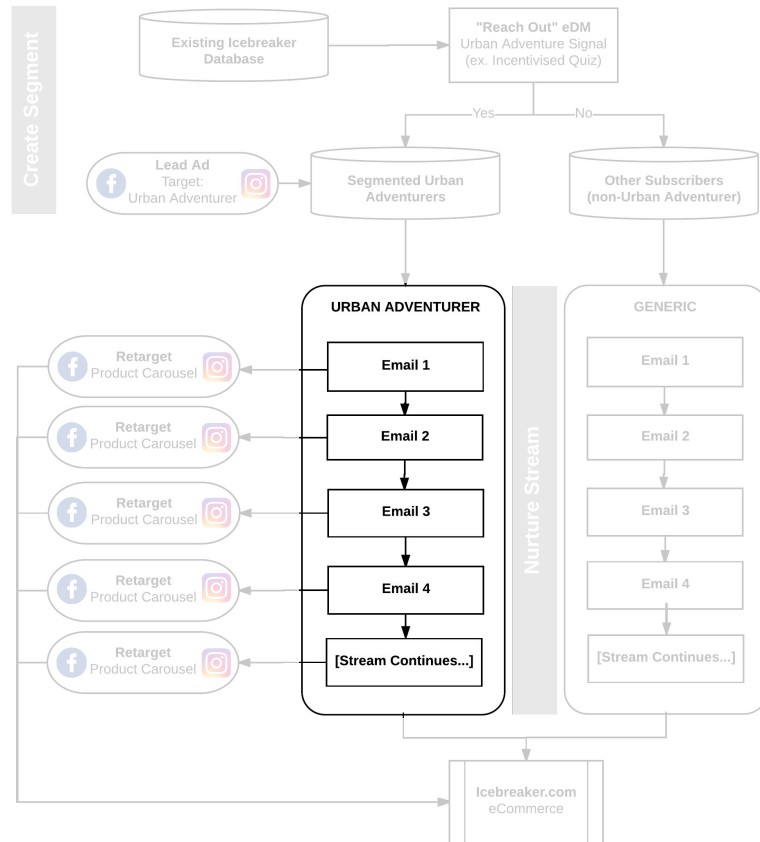
# Step 5

## Nurture Stream

This is where we identify the specific customer verticals we want to target.

We create content that speaks directly to the Urban Adventurer audience. It's lifestyle-based storytelling featuring aspirational content for city-fringe folk with an outdoor mindset.

This is an ongoing series of newsletters featuring teasers for Southern Crossing articles with Urban Adventurer appeal along with calendar-themed items (ex. "Father's Day Gift Guide") that work across all verticals.

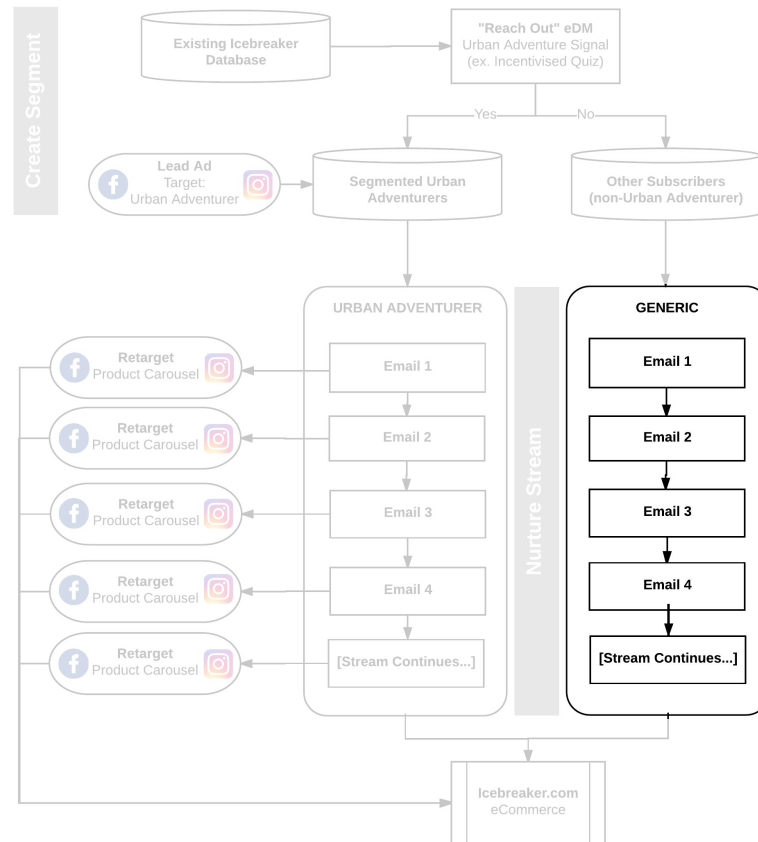


# Step 5

## Nurture Stream

The appeal of creating an always-on nurture campaign with vertical segmentation is that you can isolate the messaging that customers receive.

In this case, we will create a “Generic” segmentation for everyone who isn’t in the Urban Adventure vertical (or any additional verticals as they are added) so there’s limited risk of alienating original core adventure customers.



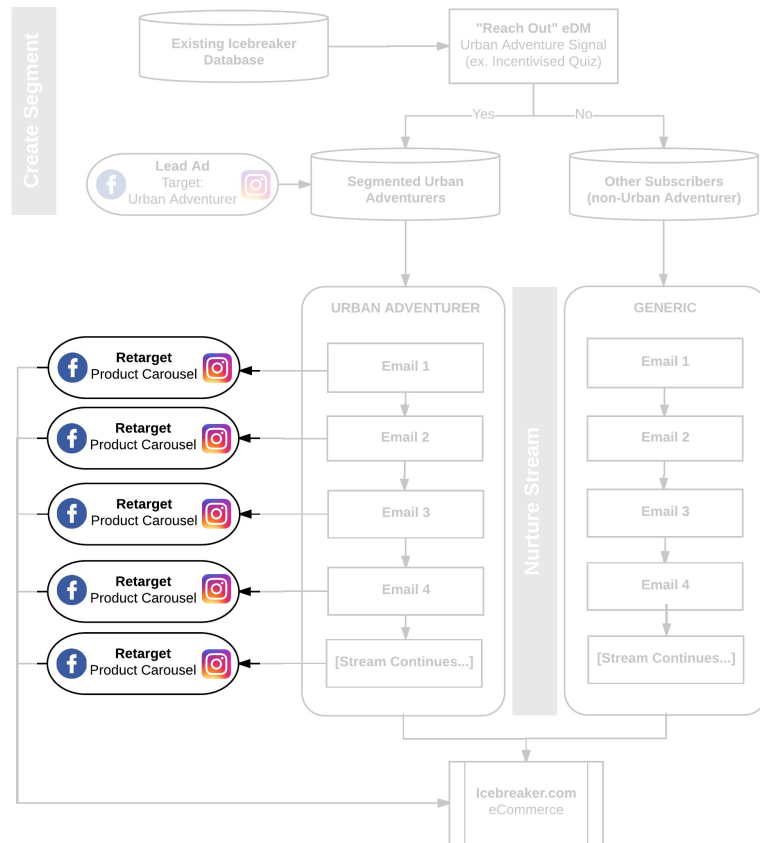


# Step 6

## Social Retargeting

### Carousel Product Ads

We retarget everyone who opens an eDM with a related social post featuring products related to the lifestyle content they have just read (Facebook Business studies state that customers who are retargeted with a post were 22% more likely to purchase than those only reached by email).

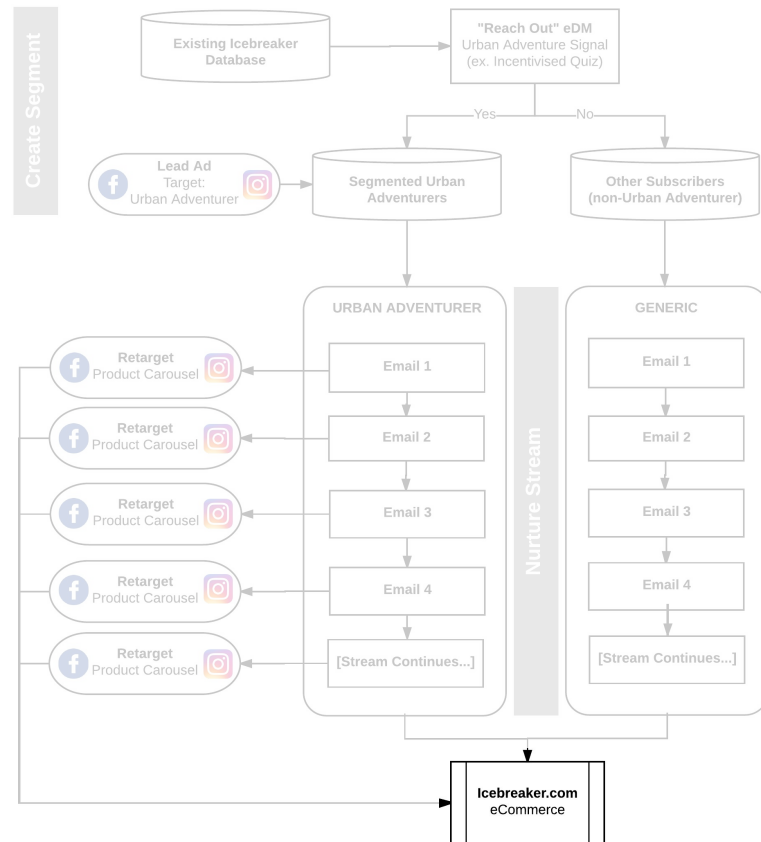


# Step 7

## Web Personalisation

### Icebreaker.com

When Urban Adventurer vertical customers visit the Icebreaker.com site, they will be presented with modules featuring personalised content: Product profiles with Urban Adventure-flavored copy, Urban Adventure-themed experience guides, etc.



# CONTENT IDEAS

So what kind of content should we create to appeal to the Urban Adventure vertical? Like all Icebreaker content, the pieces will focus on stories where nature features as both hero and inspiration, where nature is the answer. Here are some examples of aspirational topics designed to appeal to these city-fringe folk with an outdoor mindset.

# CONTENT IDEAS

## “Unplug & Reconnect with Nature”

A how-to guide for getting offline  
and into the wild for a weekend, etc.



# CONTENT IDEAS

## “The Ultimate Weekend Bugout Bag”

A visual infographic look into the contents of notable Urban Adventurers’ “ready for anything” bags.



# CONTENT IDEAS

## “GREEN GRAFFITI”

Inside the world of Green Graffiti artists who are transforming the urban landscape via all-natural tagging methods like moss graffiti and water-jet cleaning reverse graffiti.



# CONTENT IDEAS

## “60 Minute Adventures”

Great Urban Adventures ideas you can do during your lunch break.







THANK YOU