

Content

Marketing

101

A direct Path to Jumpstart Your Business with Content



Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-------|
| ▶ Introduction | 01-03 |
| What is Content? | 02 |
| What is Marketing? | 02 |
| What is Content Marketing | 03 |
| ▶ Step One: Clarify Your Story | 04 |
| What Does Story Have to Do With Content Marketing | 04 |
| What is YOUR Story | 04 |
| How Do You Unveil Your Story | 04 |
| Additional Tips | 04 |
| ▶ Step Two: Create a Game Plan | 05 |
| How to Pin Point Your Audience | 05 |
| Deciding What to Produce | 05 |
| Additional Tips | 05 |
| ▶ Step Three: Be Interesting | 06 |
| Key Components to Consistent Storytelling | 06 |
| Additional Tips | 06 |
| ▶ Step Four: Meet Your Goals | 07 |
| Keep Your Mission in Mind | 07 |
| Ways to Gauge Success | 07 |
| ▶ Conclusion | 08 |
| ▶ Next Steps | 08 |



Introduction

Content marketing is still a young industry, but it's growing every day. In fact, a Roper survey of 100 chief marketing officers across 19 product categories showed that 60% of CMOs believe that custom branded content will take up a bigger percentage of marketing budgets over the next few years.

While what we're about to cover might seem basic, these simple steps can set you on the path to a strong and effective content marketing strategy that grows your business for the long term.

Introduction:

What is Content?

Content is about more than words on a screen. It is core information communicated through:



Content serves as a platform for educating people about your industry, products and services, and establishes you as the expert on that topic.

What is Marketing?

Marketing is everything you do to place your product or service in the hands of potential customers, and nurture current customers. It includes public relations, communications, promotions, sales, pricing, packaging, distribution and networking. Basically, if you are in business, you are in marketing.

Introduction:

What is Content Marketing?

Content marketing is a marketing technique of planning for, creating and distributing relevant content (information) to your target audience. The content you create should have a specific goal and provide a way to interact with your company. Whether you provide a download, interesting blog post, informative newsletter, or other content marketing tactic, the information should be relevant and valuable to your buyers and prospects.

By providing valuable content that helps people find solutions and answers, you capture their interest. By capturing their interest, you gain their trust and eventually their loyalty to your product or service. Content marketing is:

- ▶ Creating an interesting and compelling story, telling it well, and participating in the ongoing conversation.
- ▶ Attracting, engage and acquire an audience by providing valuable content (information).
- ▶ NOT...spinning a message, interrupting or delivering information "with a catch."

If you have a story to tell, information to share and products to sell, you can bet content marketing will help you grow your business.



Step One:

Clarify Your Story

What Does Story Have to Do With Content Marketing?

Content marketing is about engaging with your target market and enticing them to take action. How? Tell them a good story. Good stories are memorable and shareable. Stories are the foundation of humankind. Think about the passions that your company is built on. Get excited about sharing that passion with others.

What is YOUR Story?

Every company exists for a reason. If you're reading this, you likely believe there is a bigger reason to be in business than just making a sale. To get the most from content marketing, you have to know this reason, and be able to articulate it clearly.

How Do You Unveil Your Story?

Every brand has interesting details that make it unique. Just saying, "we're unique," isn't an interesting detail. Here are a few questions to help gain clarity on your brand's story:

- **What's your company background?**
- **Why are you in business, and what is your company mission?**
- **What makes your brand uniquely different?**
- **What specific problem are you solving for your client?**
- **What do you provide to make lives easier, better, happier?**
- **When do you see people get excited about using your products or services?**
- **How do people feel about your company?**

Once your story is clearly defined, it's time to begin sharing it through different content channels.

Additional Tips:

For examples of brands using content marketing to tell their story, check out this blog post about 3 companies exposing themselves online.

Step Two: Create a Game Plan

Additional Tips:

Find more information about content marketing strategy and editorial calendars by following these essential steps.

Now that you know your story, how are you going to tell it? It's easy to set up a Facebook account and Twitter handle. It doesn't take much to create a profile in Linked In or pick a theme with WordPress, but then what? What are you going to say in each of these platforms? Before jumping in, think about your action plan.

How to Pin Point Your Audience

As you define your target audience, consider people who authentically care about your company and the topics you're interested in. These are the people most likely to engage in conversations around your services and products.

- Who are your ideal clients?
- Where do they hang out? (websites they visit, social media channels)
- How do they communicate? (email, phone, social media, skype, etc.)
- Who, beyond clients, might be interested in what you have to say? (analysts, professional groups, media, bloggers, etc.)

Deciding What to Produce

A key motivator to creating an effective content marketing strategy is to "think like a publisher." Just as magazines plan editorial calendars to create engaging content that readers will cherish, you should too. One of the most useful tools to keep your content relevant and consistent is to create an editorial calendar that outlines the essential parts of each piece of content you plan to produce, including:

- Publishing Date
- Type of Content (web page, landing page, blog post, newsletter, etc.)
- Topic
- Call to Action (and desired outcome)
- Distribution Plan (post to blog, Facebook, Twitter, Linked In, etc.)

Many tools are available for distributing content once it is created. Hootsuite and Hubspot are two great platforms to help you schedule distribution of your content, and measure the results.

Step Three: Be Interesting

Additional Tips:

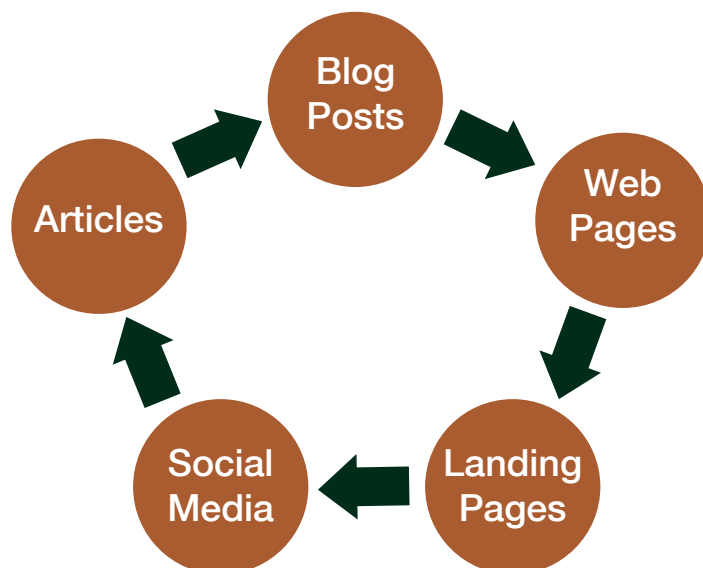
Learn how a content marketing partner can help you stay on top of your content marketing objectives.

The next step in content marketing is sharing your expertise in a way that educates and engages your customers and prospects. Unique storytelling in the form of videos, written content, e-books and blogs keeps people interested and wanting to learn more. So, all you have to do now is create content, right?

Key Components to Consistent Storytelling

Sometimes creating content is easier said than done. Items from the “to-do” list can creep into your daily responsibilities and push content development to the side. Here are 5 ways to jumpstart your content creation:

- 1. Communicate Regularly.** Make sure you communicate on a consistent basis. Talk to your community at least one a week by offering a helpful tip in a blog post and sharing it through social media.
- 2. Mix it Up.** Your clients likely have different forms of media that they connect to best. Writing articles and blog posts is a great staple, but mix it up and leverage the power of audio and video too.
- 3. Stay Connected.** Connect with the people who care about the same things your business cares about. Reach out to industry leaders and like-minded professionals by commenting on their blogs, sharing articles, and joining the conversation wherever it happens. You never know when an opportunity to form a strategic partnership might arise. And, you’ll never find out if you don’t join the conversation.
- 4. Show you Care.** Ask your clients what they want. Send out surveys. Talk to them directly through social media. Dig deep to find out how you (and your company/products/services) can make their lives better.
- 5. Give it Away.** Business owners are sometimes concerned about “giving away” best-kept secrets for free. With the internet, the more secrets you keep, the more you distance yourself from people. If clients and prospects can’t find answers to their questions from you, they’ll certainly find them from someone else. Don’t think about it as giving away, but sharing your knowledge and expertise on a subject. People will value your advice and information, look to you as an authority in your industry and likely want to do business with you as a result.



Step Four:

Meet Your Goals

After you define who you are, clarify your key messages, determine a game plan, and create valuable content assets, take time to analyze the results of your content marketing initiatives.



Keep Your Mission in Mind

Remember, content marketing is about connecting with people. Your content should be accessible, searchable, findable, sharable, selectable, self-aware, portable and usable in many ways. An innovative blog post, game-changing Facebook post or award-winning web page can only gain those accolades through human interaction. Never lose sight of the story you're telling and reason you're telling it.



Ways to Gauge Success

There are many reasons busy marketers and business owners venture into content marketing, which should be outlined in Step 1 when clarifying your story. Those reasons, combined with the strategy outline in Step 2 and the content created in Step 3, will determine which measuring tools are appropriate for you. Here are some of the more common measuring tools to gauge your content marketing success:

- Website Leads (easily tracked through a good stats program like Get Clicky, Hubspot, or Google Stats).
- Blog Comments (set up your blog so you can see comments as they come in)
- RSS Feed Subscriptions (register your blog with Feedburner)
- Newsletter Sign Ups (use an email distribution service like Emma or Constant Contact to monitor sign ups, click-throughs, shares, etc.)
- Retweets or Facebook interaction (These can be tracked by a social media monitoring service like Hootsuite)



Conclusion

The concept of content marketing may seem like a big undertaking at first. It does take more time and effort than tossing down a credit card to purchase an ad in the phone book. But, over time, marketing professionals and business owners see positive results from their content marketing efforts.

By reading this e-book, we hope you've gained an understanding of how content marketing can be an essential element of your overall marketing plan and help you achieve ongoing growth and lasting relationships.

Next Steps:

If you are interested in using content marketing to grow your business, let us know! We're happy to guide you down the path to content marketing success. Take advantage of a free consultation and give us a call:

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