

HOW TO SOURCE CONTENT

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO SOURCING
QUALITY CONTENT EFFICIENTLY AND
INEXPENSIVELY FOR YOUR CLIENTS



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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INTRODUCTION

CREATING CONTENT FOR
YOUR CLIENTS: WHAT'S
IN IT FOR YOU?



CONTENT FOR YOUR CLIENTS / INTRODUCTION

As a marketing firm today, you already know all the powerful benefits custom content offers your clients. It is undeniable. Great content will help your clients:

1. Generate **targeted traffic** from search and social media
2. **Build trust** with their visitors
3. Drive lots of **quality leads & sales**



So what's in it for YOUR marketing firm? By creating great content for your clients on a regular basis, you stand to get:

1. Higher client satisfaction
2. Higher spend per client
3. Higher retention rates



THERE FOR THE TAKING / INTRODUCTION



Seth Godin recently claimed: “Content marketing is the ONLY marketing left”. While this may seem like a stretch, most studies do actually show that content marketing is, and will continue to be the dominant form of marketing. You need to make sure your agency has the pieces in place to take advantage of these trends.

A recent study by the [Custom Content Council](#) found that:

- 35% of CMOs surveyed believe that custom content marketing is the future of marketing, versus 19% in 2006
- 73% of consumers prefer to get information from a company in the form of a collection of articles over an advertisement
- 61% of consumers feel better about a company that delivers custom content AND are in turn more likely to buy from that company

Make no mistake...each day, more and more companies are realizing that, in order to compete and win in today's environment, they need to produce lots of great, compelling content. These companies are quickly shifting more of their marketing budgets away from traditional marketing methods, towards content. Who will capture all this budget? Shouldn't it be you? An incredible opportunity has opened up for savvy marketing firms willing to become specialists in custom content development.



THE BANDWIDTH DILEMMA / INTRODUCTION

For all these reasons covered on the previous page and more, you know you **SHOULD** be producing lots of great content for your clients - so why aren't you? If you're like most marketing firms today, you probably have a love/hate relationship with content. You know that content is the key to online success for your clients, but the thought of actually managing content projects makes you break out in a cold sweat. That's because content projects can be notoriously complicated, time consuming, and an overall headache to manage... let alone make a profit from.



Why are client content projects so difficult?

Because most marketing agencies lack three very important things:

1. The right process that makes things simple and ultra-efficient
2. The right system that integrates all the other required tools into one place
3. The right talent to get the job done, without increasing your full-time payroll

The good news is, there **IS** a solution to your content dilemma. There's a way you can offer high quality content services to your clients, without all the headache, time commitment and expense that was previously required. In fact, in a relatively short time period, your content service could become the simplest, most profitable part of your business. All you need is the right system... a system that has the right process and talent built right into it... but before we talk about this ideal system, let's first take a look at the current options you have for creating custom content for your clients, and why they **don't work**.

Let's dig into the reasons... ➤

CHAPTER 1

THE CURRENT OPTIONS & WHY THEY DON'T WORK



THE BANDWIDTH DILEMMA / CURRENT OPTIONS

Let's assume you understand your clients NEED content, and you see the writing on the wall about content marketing being the future. You're 100% committed to making your firm a first-class content provider. So now what? You quickly realize that, in order to scale your content business, you'll need the right tools to make the process efficient and organized. You decide to jot down the various actions required for each client project, along with the tool/program you'll use to get it done:



Required Action / Tool or Program ←

Collaborate on documents / **Basecamp** or similar collaboration tool
Send/store client questionnaires / **MS Word** or similar processing tool
Build list of keywords & page topics / **Google keyword tool** or **Wordtracker**
Brainstorm topics ideas / **Search Google**
Build list of optimized page titles / **MS Excel** or similar spreadsheet tool
Hire full time writers / **Craigslist**
Outsource writers / **General freelance service** like **eLance**, **guru** or **odesk**



KEY AGENCY QUESTIONS / CURRENT OPTIONS



Right about now, after identifying the 7th separate tool you'll need, your initial excitement is replaced with a sinking feeling. There are way too many tools to manage. You have neither the staff nor the time to manage or game plan all these different steps and nor learn the intricacies of the different platforms. And you still haven't even figured important content questions like:

-➤ **How to** detect plagiarism?
-➤ **How to** quickly sample writers and identify the ones you like?
-➤ **How to** get the best writers at the best price?
-➤ **How to** handle the content review and revision process?
-➤ **How to** manage the hundreds (eventually thousands) of email notifications required to keep your team, your writers, and your clients all on track at each step of the project?

You quickly realize this will NOT work. What you need is one comprehensive, yet simple system that combines ALL the necessary tools and writers you need to manage your clients' content projects from start to finish.

.....➤ *Let's imagine what this ultimate content platform might look like.*

CHAPTER 3

BUILDING THE IDEAL CONTENT SOURCING SYSTEM

THE NECESSARY STEPS / IDEAL SYSTEM



If you wanted to build the ideal content platform, the first step would be to identify a simple, yet flexible process. The ideal system would walk you through the process in a simple, step-by-step format, and provide all the tools and people you need to get quality, predictable results every time.

Here are the required steps required for any successful content project you may manage on behalf of a client:

- ☒ **Step 1: Listen and Gather Info From Client**
- ☒ **Step 2: Provide Clear Instructions to the Writer(s)**
- ☒ **Step 3: Build List of Page Topics**
- ☒ **Step 4: Develop List of Specific Page Titles (Headlines)**
- ☒ **Step 5: Assign Titles to Best Possible Writer(s)**
- ☒ **Step 6: Review/Edit Content**
- ☒ **Step 7: Export Content for Publishing**
- ⋮

Let's take a closer look at each of these steps in the process, and see how the ideal system would help you accomplish each one.





THE NECESSARY STEPS / IDEAL SYSTEM

1

Listen and Gather Info The first step with any content project is to find out what your client wants. With the right tools and the right process, you can develop a quick content strategy for each client without a lot of time or stress on your end. It's always a good idea to do an initial kick-off call with the client, but this call usually is not the best way to find out what the client really wants. Instead, the best strategy is to send the client a simple questionnaire that helps them organize their thoughts into a coherent set of instructions you can then convey to the writers.

The Ideal System would...allow you to create custom questionnaires, with text fields, drop downs, multiple choice, and other types of questions. Then, the system would let you send this questionnaire to your client with one click, so he/she could fill it out and submit it back to you.

2

Provide Instructions for the Writer(s) Once your client submits their questionnaire, now it's time to use that info to create some clear and concise GENERAL instructions for the writers. It's important to take a few extra minutes to clearly and concisely explain what you want the writers to do. The better instructions you provide the writers, the better chance your client will be happy with the content they receive.

The Ideal System would...provide you an organized way to convey detailed instructions to your writers.. It would store those instructions for all future titles ordered within that project so you don't need to fill it out every time you want to place another order for similar content in the future.



3

Build List of Page Topics Now it's time to get more specific and come up with a list of all the general page topics you might want to write about for the client – now or in the future. The best way to do this is by researching keyword data. That's because keyword data will tell you what topics people are interested in. If no one's searching for it, then it's probably not worth writing a page of content about it!

The Ideal System would...have an integrated topic research tool that lets you quickly identify the best topics to write about for each client, and then store them in a master topic List. This tool would include the monthly search volume and competition score of each keyword so you can also decide which topics make sense to target from an SEO standpoint as well. The system would then give you the option to send this list to your client so they can approve the topic list before proceeding with the rest of the content development process.





```
<html>  
<head>  
<title>Contact  
<meta http-equiv=  
<link rel="shortcut  
<script type="text  
</head>  
<table class="rowsh
```

4

Develop a List of Specific Page Titles Once you've identified the general topics you'll be writing for your client, the next step in the process is to develop your list of actual page titles you'll be posting or assigning to the writer(s). For article or blogs, this would be the headline for the post. For whitepapers, e-books, or other forms of content, this would be the title of the document. While creating interesting, engaging titles can take time, it's definitely time well spent. Great titles are crucial for 3 important reasons:

- 1.They provide the writers a clear direction for each page
- 2.They get higher click-through rates than plain, boring titles
- 3.The title tag is the #1 most important on-page SEO factor

The Ideal System would...make it easy to create interesting, engaging titles. It would allow you to manually create titles based on your general page topics, and would also have a title suggestion tool which would allow you to see what titles other sites on the web are creating – to give you ideas for titles you may not have thought of yourself.



5

Assign Titles to Writers Now it's time to get your titles assigned to the best writer. This is the stage where most content firms fall short. One of the most important factors that will determine your success as a content agency will be your ability to quickly find, sample, and manage a pool of top quality writers. However, the choices today are less than ideal. Hiring full time writers may sounds good, but this is the most time-consuming and expensive route. Searching for freelancers, or using other general freelance project platforms like elance, odesk, or guru, can also be cumbersome when it comes to managing content projects. These platforms are not designed specifically for content projects and lack many crucial components you'll need.

The Ideal System would...include an integrated writer marketplace that would give you access to thousands of U.S. based, pre-screened writers. The system would make it simple, fast, and risk-free to sample and compare these writers so you can find the ones that fit your needs. It would allow you to set the price you want to offer writers and you'd only have to pay if you like their work. If you like what you see, it would allow you to save that writer to a favorites list so you could assign future titles directly to that writer. The system would have simple communication tools that would let you develop close, long-term relationships with your team of writers, just as if they were working full time in your office, but without having to increase your payroll.





6

Reviewing/Editing Content After posting or assigning your titles to the writers, the next step is to review the content (if required) and forward to your client for their review and approval. The amount of time required for editing will be directly related to the quality of writing you're getting from your writers. As with anything else, the more you pay your writers, the better quality you'll get. The better quality the writing, the less editing time will be required. Once you've built a team of writers you know and trust, you may feel comfortable skipping the editorial review process altogether, and forwarding content directly to your clients. If you want to grow and scale your content development capability, this editorial process is one main reason you'll need an extremely efficient and streamlined system that makes it easy for multiple people to quickly review each page and either approve, request revisions, or reject each page of content.

The Ideal System would...streamline the content review and revision process. It would give you (the agency) the option to either have completed content sent to you for review, or directly to your client, or both. When the writers complete their work, the system would notify you and let you review the content. If it requires revisions, your editor could fix small issues, or the editor could choose to send it back to the writer to fix major issues

7

Publish Your Content The final step is to get your content published. This may be on your client's site, or it could be on a 3rd party site like an article directory.

The Ideal System would...make it easy to export your content in a wide variety of formats so you can quickly publish it to the platform of your choice. It would allow you to publish directly to popular platforms like WordPress and Hubspot with just a few clicks.

CHAPTER 4

OTHER IMPORTANT AGENCY CONSIDERATIONS



AGENCY CONTENT QUESTIONS / KEY POINTS

Any company thinking of selling content to their clients will also need to answer:



- **Question #1:** How to develop content packages and appropriate pricing?
- **Question #2:** How to incorporate SEO into the process?
- **Question #3:** How to use email notifications to keep everyone up-to-date and on track?
- **Question #4:** How to use your own in-house writers?
- **Question #5:** How to detect plagiarism and avoid duplicate content penalties?
- **Question #6:** How to hire editors and other positions as you grow?

1

Pricing Content is no different than any other product or service you purchase. You get what you pay for. Your content packages should take this into account by offering your clients a few simple choices when it comes to quality VS price. The best way to do this is to offer three “Service Levels”, where each level would cost the client more, but would provide them with additional benefits, the most important of which, is a higher-rated writer. Here’s an example of this type of content package offering. You could simplify the selections above by removing any of the columns above you don’t feel are necessary.

Service Level	Writer Rating	Initial Consultation	Research & Time Invested	Target Keywords/Page	Revision Requests/Page	Phone Support	Select
Basic	3/5 Stars(★★★★)	30 mins	Standard	1 Primary	1	20 mins	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Professional	4/5 Stars(★★★★★)	1 hour	High	1 Primary 1 Secondary	2 rounds	1 hour	<input type="radio"/>
Premium	5/5 Stars(★★★★★)	Unlimited	Epic	1 Primary 2 secondary	Unlimited	Unlimited	<input type="radio"/>





2

Incorporating SEO into the Process Over the last decade, SEO has thankfully evolved from consisting of sneaky tricks designed to game search engine algorithms, into simply focusing on creating unique, interesting, and engaging content. Google and other search engines have made it clear that when you focus on quality content, you'll be rewarded in the long run with lots of inbound links, and higher ranks. Therefore, when creating content for your clients, don't worry too much about optimizing and just focus on writing for the PEOPLE that will be reading it! That being said, Google does permit a certain level of basic on-page optimization. There are several on-page SEO concepts, but the two most important when it comes to developing content are: 1) Including keywords in the **title**, and 2) including **keywords** in the body.

Titles In most surveys of SEO experts, the title tag is consistently ranked as the most important on-page SEO factor. Therefore, whenever possible, try to include your keyword in the title of the page and use that same page title as your title tag.

Google sees a benefit to their search engine when you include the **keyword** every now and then in your content. However, don't overdue it or else:

- a. Your content will sound awkward
- b. You'll lose all credibility from your readers
- c. In extreme cases, you could be penalized by search engine

The Ideal System would... build SEO right into the process by providing an integrated keyword research tool to help you find the best keywords (topics) to write about for each client. Then it would give you the option to create optimize page titles around those topics. Finally, it would give you the ability to choose the keyword density you want your writers to use when writing each page.

3

Email Notifications You'll need to have an efficient way of keeping everyone on your team up-to-date on the status of the project, and what needs to be done next, by whom. If you're managing one content project, you might be able to get away with typing emails by hand. If you plan on growing your business, however, you'll need something completely automated that sends the right email template to the right person at the right time to keep the project moving forward at all times.

The Ideal System would...include a sophisticated email notification engine that would immediately notify your team, your clients, and your writers when their action is required for each client project. If the person does not take the required action, the system would continue sending email reminders until that person does take the required action. The system would allow you to have these emails sent directly from an email/domain of your choice. This would save you countless hours of time and would allow your content business to take on an unlimited number of clients in the future.





4

Using Your Own In-House Writers What if you already work with a few writers that you know and trust?

The Ideal System would...allow you to add your writers into the system and assign your work directly to them. This way, you would be using the software as a project management tool. As your business grows and you need additional writers, you could then tap into the integrated writer network to find more great writers.

5

Detecting Plagiarism If you use your own in-house writers, plagiarism may not be an issue, but when using freelancers, it becomes a concern. Imagine sending content to your client, only to have them find the same content on one of their competitor's website!

The Ideal System would...automatically scan all submitted content through Copyscape and show the results of the report to confirm there has been no plagiarism detected for each page. It would practically eliminate plagiarism by showing the results of this scan to the writer before they even submit their work to you, and give them a chance to remove any copied work before continuing.

6

Hiring Editors and Other Positions As your content business grows, you'll find the need to hire help, mainly in the following areas:-Project Managers/Client Support -Keyword Research and Title Development -Editing Content

The Ideal System would...give you access to a network of trained and certified experts that can provide you with the services listed above. You'd be able to assign one of these experts to each project, and pay them either per hour, or per piece of work – whichever you wish. This would save you from having to hire these people full time and increasing your payroll as you grow!

CONCLUSION

YOUR CLIENTS NEED
CONTENT

CLIENTS NEED CONTENT/CONCLUSION

Your clients **NEED** great content to succeed. If they don't understand this now, they will in a year or two when their competition starts passing them by. You have the ability to provide your clients with the custom content they need to compete and succeed in today's search and social media dominated environment.

With the right system, a proven process, and a pool of talented writers and editors at your fingertips, you can develop your firm into a first-class content agency, and develop a profitable source of residual revenue for your business. The opportunity is waiting. The time to act is now!



MORE RESOURCES



ZERYYS / ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Zerys for Agencies is a content development platform, project management system, and professional writer marketplace, all wrapped into one. Zerys was designed specifically for agencies, publishers, and marketing firms who need an efficient, streamlined process to manage their clients' content projects from start to finish as well as the ability to quickly and easily find, and manage affordable writing and editing talent.



Zerys offers a [21-day e-course](#) for agencies, as well as a robust [writing platform for freelance writers](#).



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