A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO

KILLER MARKETING CONTENT

» How to Create Remarkable Content That Converts



A publication of

HubSpot KAYAK

IS THIS BOOK RIGHT FOR ME?

Not quite sure if this ebook is right for you? See the below description to determine if your level matches the content you are about to read.

INTRODUCTORY

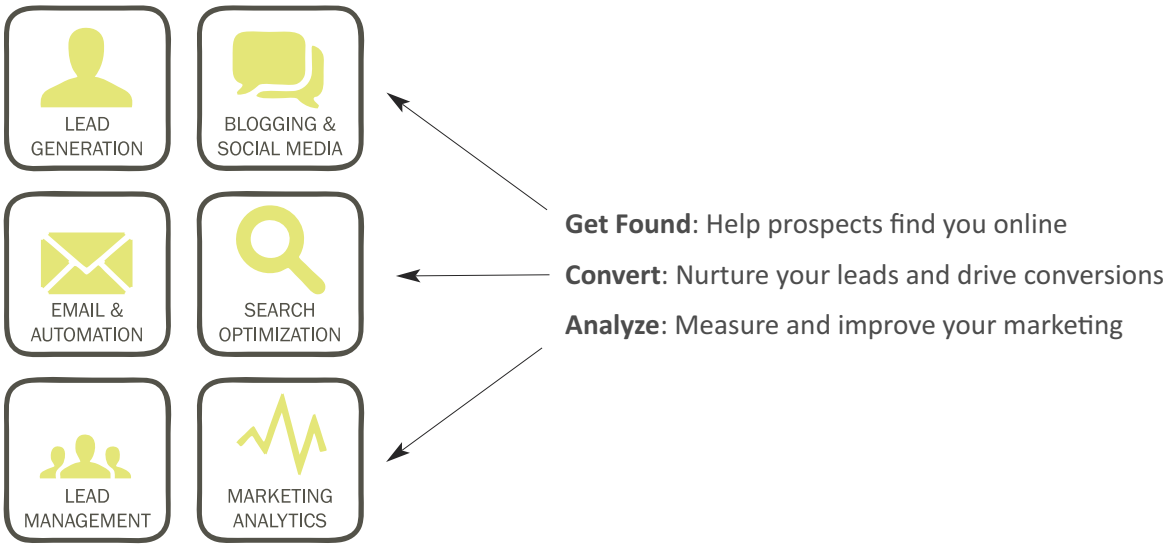
Introductory content is for marketers who are new to the subject. This content typically includes step-by-step instructions on how to get started with this aspect of inbound marketing and learn its fundamentals. After reading it, you will be able to execute basic marketing tactics related to the topic.

INTERMEDIATE » » » *This ebook!*

Intermediate content is for marketers who are familiar with the subject but have only basic experience in executing strategies and tactics on the topic. This content typically covers the fundamentals and moves on to reveal more complex functions and examples. After reading it, you will feel comfortable leading projects with this aspect of inbound marketing.

ADVANCED

Advanced content is for marketers who are, or want to be, experts on the subject. In it, we walk you through advanced features of this aspect of inbound marketing and help you develop complete mastery of the subject. After reading it, you will feel ready not only to execute strategies and tactics, but also to teach others how to be successful.



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It can't be just any content. It has to be relevant, remarkable content.

Pick any day of the week and there's one thing on every inbound marketer's to-do list: creating new content.

Marketers used to create content only when it suited their company's internal needs – say, when they had a new product to promote. Well, inbound marketing forces you to give up that approach.

Now marketers need to produce a constant flow of new content, from blog posts and social media updates to videos, ebooks, and webinars. This content serves them in many ways: it improves their search engine rankings, drives traffic to their websites, and helps to nurture existing leads. But it can't be just any content. It has to be relevant, remarkable content.

Constantly coming up with new content can be overwhelming. When inspiration dries up, you risk falling into two equally dangerous traps. If you stop creating new blog posts, videos, ebooks or other content pieces, you turn off a major source of new traffic and leads. Or, if you panic and start pushing out content that's a bad fit for your audience, you risk attracting the wrong kind of visitor while driving away good prospects. So how do you keep up?

How do you think like a publisher?

To handle the demands of content creation, marketers have been told again and again to “think like a publisher.” It’s great advice, but what exactly does that mean? Just how do you think like a publisher?

This ebook is your guide to creating an editorial strategy for attracting more business. In the coming pages, we’ll discuss the four steps to developing a flow of content ideas that will drive your inbound marketing success: knowing your audience, conducting a content audit, mapping content to the buying cycle, and creating an editorial calendar. We’ll also cover ten important tips for coming up with ideas for content that will help you attract more prospects and convert them into leads for your business.

Ready to ensure you’ll never run out of content ideas again?

Let’s get started!



CHAPTER 1

» KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Personas are fictional representations of your ideal customers, based on real data about customer demographics and online behavior, along with educated speculation about their personal histories, motivations, and concerns.

BUILD YOUR BUYER PERSONA

Like publishers, inbound marketers must have a detailed picture of their target audience in order to create optimal content for them. Who are your ideal customers and prospects? What are their biggest concerns, needs and interests? Where can you reach them – on search engines, social media, or blogs – and what kinds of content do they prefer? These questions will help you develop buyer personas.

Start developing personas by researching your existing customer base to identify the most common buyers for your products and services. You may have several different types of buyers, so give each one a detailed description, including name, job title or role, industry or company info, and demographic info.



Business Owner Bob

For example, a community bank's biggest customers may include small business owners and mothers managing the bank accounts for a family of four. In this case, the bank's marketers might name these personas "business owner bob" and "mary, the busy mom," and extrapolate details about their responsibilities, the typical size of their business or household income, what geographic region they're in, and so on. Based on those profiles, you can outline the pains, needs, and challenges of each persona by asking yourself several important questions:



Mary, the Busy Mom

1. What are the biggest problems they are trying to solve?
2. What does he or she need most?
3. What information are they typically searching for?
4. What trends are influencing their business or personal success?

Analyzing the path that prospects take on the journey to becoming a customer is a great way to get insights about the needs and challenges of your target audience. If you use a marketing platform like Hubspot, you can see which search terms brought prospects to your site, how long they stayed on your site, which pieces of content they viewed, and which forms they've filled out. Such lead intelligence will help you make better decisions when identifying the characteristics of your ideal customers and ways to nurture your new prospects.

FOR EXAMPLE:

In the case of our hypothetical bank, "business-owner bob" may typically be searching for merchant services such as accepting electronic payments and securing lines of credit. Once on the site, he reads articles about how electronic payments can improve cash flow, and researches how lines of credit can fund ongoing operations. Based on that activity, his persona pains / needs / challenges would include:

1. Managing cash flow and achieving cost savings
2. Offsetting the effects of a slow economy

DEVELOP BUYER PROFILE

Next, develop a profile of each persona's typical online behavior. You know who they are and what their needs are, now think about all the ways they research a potential purchase on your site or on others. Here are suggestions of the questions you should ask:

1. What do they do online? Do they read blogs? Are they active on Twitter, Facebook, or other social networks? What kind of search terms do they use? Are they email newsletter subscribers?

2. What kind of information do they tend to consume online? Educational pieces? Trend articles? Interactive tools like calculators or worksheets? Do they watch videos or listen to podcasts?

3. Which of your products do they spend the most time researching? How do they use those products?

The result of this process should be a detailed description of your personas' demographics, needs, and behavior. The more detail you pack into your persona development, the easier it will be to create content for each of your target customers and to know where to promote that content.



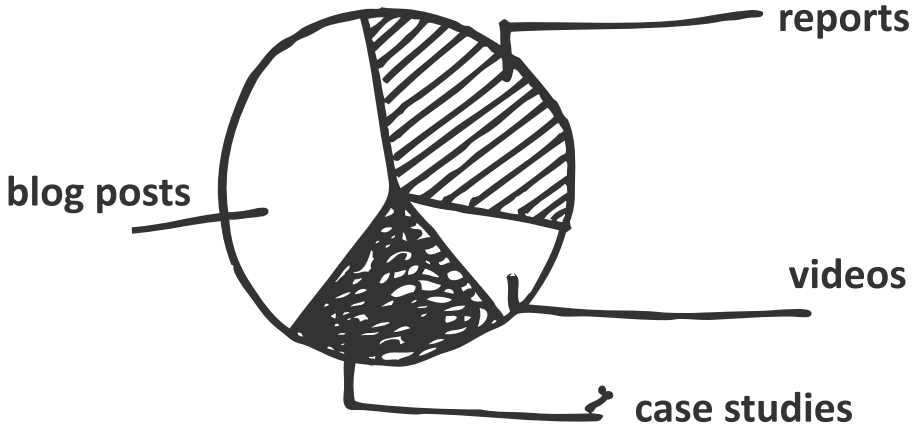
CHAPTER 2

» CONDUCT A CONTENT AUDIT

Auditing your existing content also helps you find holes that you can fill with new content pieces.

Now that you've constructed buyer personas and developed a better understanding of your audience, don't rush to create new content for them. Instead, take stock of your previous efforts by conducting a formal content audit.

Content audits are a great way to see how well you're covering the topics that are important to your audience, and whether you're maintaining a good mix of content types. Auditing your existing content also helps you find holes that you can fill with new content pieces, or identify great pieces of content that can be repurposed into other formats to reach even more prospects.



To conduct an audit, collect and examine all the content you've created in the past year or more – everything from blog posts and podcasts to ebooks, videos and webinars. Create a spreadsheet that lists all these items by their title and label them according to:

1. type of content
2. topic covered
3. date created
4. buyer persona
5. leads / customers

Next, study your spreadsheet for patterns: Are you light on non-text content, such as videos or webinars? Are there certain topics you are writing about too frequently or infrequently? Have you developed tons of content for one buyer persona while neglecting others? Which topics generate the best results for certain types of content (i.e., are there topics that work better for webinars than for ebooks?)

Conducting a content audit and analyzing your results should help you draw up a list of goals and guidelines for future content creation, such as increasing video production, developing more content for certain personas, or identifying a list of future topics for future webinars or ebooks.

CHAPTER 3

» MAP CONTENT TO THE BUYING CYCLE

IDENTIFY YOUR BUYING CYCLE

Content plays a critical role in every stage of the inbound marketing process, from generating awareness about your company to helping convert leads into customers. But the types of content you should use to achieve each of those goals are often very different from each other, which means you need to ensure that you're creating content for every stage of the buying cycle.

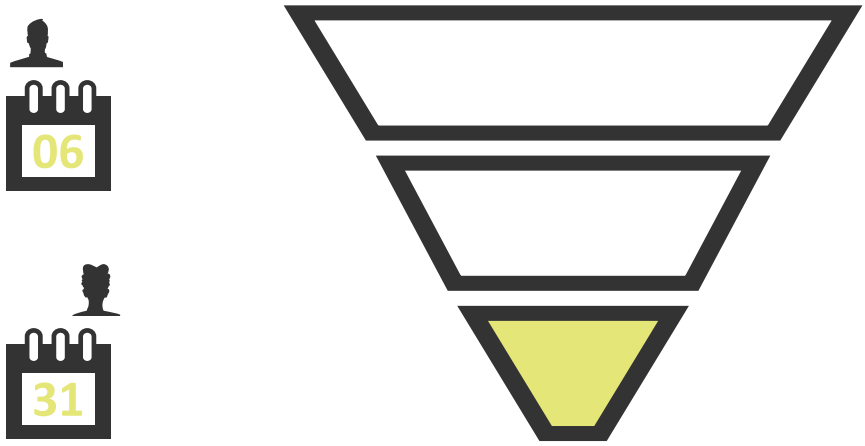
First, consider your buyer personas and study the results of your past marketing efforts to identify the key stages that a prospect goes through before becoming a customer. Here are the four stages of a typical buying cycle:

1. **AWARENESS**
   The prospect gets acquainted with your brand or realizes they have a need for your product / service.

2. **RESEARCH / EDUCATION**
   The prospect identifies the problem and researches potential solutions, including your product / service.

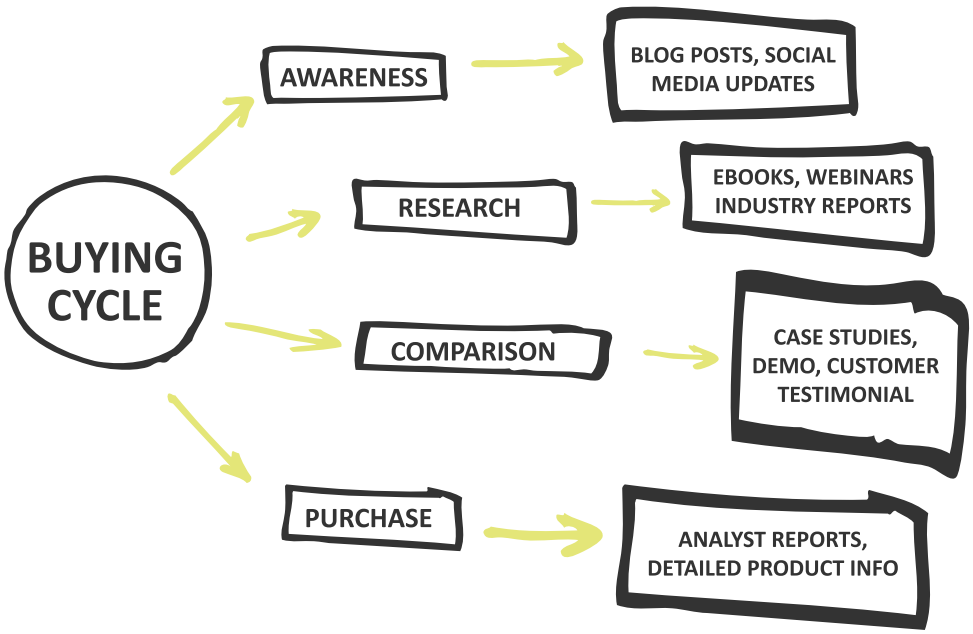
3. **COMPARISON / VALIDATION**
   The prospect examines the options and begins narrowing the list of vendors.

4. **PURCHASE**
   The prospect decides from whom to buy.



MAP YOUR CONTENT

Next, identify the types of content and channels that work best for each stage of the buying cycle. Of course, your prospects may engage with certain channels throughout the entire buying process, such as reading blog posts or following your brand on social media. However, marketing studies have shown that certain types of content play particularly important roles at specific stages of the decision making process. Here's a suggested mapping of buying stage to content type.

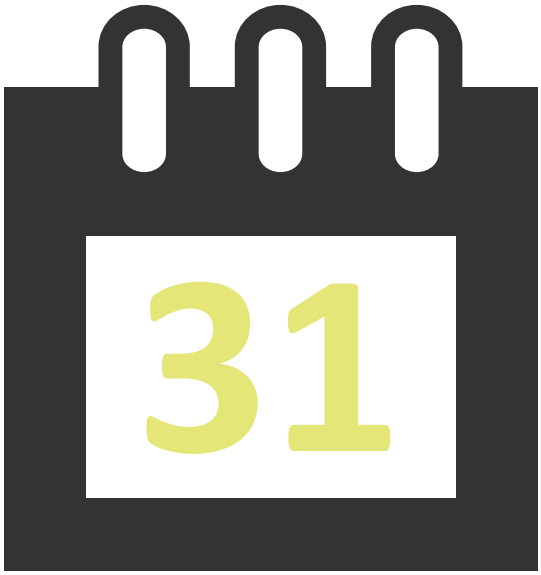


CHAPTER 4

» CREATE YOUR EDITORIAL CALENDAR

An editorial calendar is like a roadmap for content creation.

Once you've completed the fist three steps to developing a steady flow of content ideas, you should have a pretty good sense of who you're targeting and what kind of content you will most likely need to create to drive sales and happy customers. The final step is to create an editorial calendar that lays out when and where to share that content. An editorial calendar is like a roadmap for content creation, showing you what kind of content to create, what topics to cover, which personas to target, and how often to publish to best support your inbound marketing strategy.



SET UP YOUR EDITORIAL CALENDAR

1. Create a Google calendar or a spreadsheet to record your editorial plans. You should plan at least three months in advance, but it's even better if you can develop a plan for the next six months or even an entire year.

2. Work backwards from your marketing goals to guide your plan. Look at how much traffic, how many leads, and how many customers you are aiming to generate each month. Analyze your previous marketing efforts to determine how many pieces of content you typically need to reach those goals.

3. Fill in the dates on your calendar with specific publishing tasks, such as updating blogs or social networks daily, posting new videos or podcasts each week, publishing an ebook or hosting a webinar each month, and so on. For each date, list the topic, the title of the piece, and the targeted persona. The goal is to create a good mix of content types, topics, and personas to make sure you're covering all your segments.

4. Note the SEO keywords, the stage of the buying cycle, the call-to-action, or other inbound marketing goals that each piece of content must address.

5. Make note of important dates or external events that are good hooks for specific topics or types of content. For example, retailers could highlight major holidays such as Christmas, Halloween, or Mother's Day and plan content that fits with the seasonal theme. B2B marketers could note important industry trade shows they plan to attend, and schedule blog updates, recaps, or videos generated at the event.

6. Look for opportunities to repurpose content. For example, the publication of a new whitepaper or research report could generate several weeks' worth of blog posts that each share details or small nuggets of data from the complete report.

7. Create separate tabs for each kind of content you publish, such as blog posts, webinars, ebooks, videos, etc. That way, you can make sure you're publishing enough of each kind of content, and spreading that content appropriately among your targeted personas and stages of the buying cycle.

WHEN TO CALL UP YOUR CALENDAR

By the end of this process, you'll find that you've filled up most of our calendar with detailed plans for content. No more coming to work in the morning wondering what you're going to publish to maintain your inbound marketing goals!

If there are a few holes, that's okay. You want the flexibility to capitalize on news or hot topics as they arise over the course of the year. For those weeks when you can't find the inspiration or, say, another blog post. Calling up your calendar will give you a great visual reminder of what you've covered already and what you're planning to cover next week or next month, so you can at least narrow down your options.

Now that you've completed the four stages of developing your content strategy, let's take a look at some tips for filling up our calendar with content that will inspire your prospects to consume your content, share it, and take action!

CHAPTER 5

» 10 TIPS FOR CREATING KILLER CONTENT

You still have to come up with relevant, helpful, fun content.

An editorial calendar takes most of the guess work out of what to publish each week, but you still have to actually come up with relevant, helpful, fun content. While you may know what topics you need to cover, or which buyer persona to target, you still need to decide exactly how to approach each blog post, webinar, ebook, and every other piece of content you create.

Few of us are creative enough to always have a brilliant idea ready to spin into great content. The best publishers know this, which is why they use a series of story development tricks, tools, and templates to help them create fresh content week in and week out. Here are ten tips to help you fill our backlog with awesome content ideas so you never run out of them.



TIP #1 FOLLOW INDUSTRY NEWS

You must be plugged in with news and trends related to your industry if you're going to create relevant, timely content. It's easy to follow even dozens of news and commentary sources:



1. Subscribe to RSS feeds from bloggers that cover your industry or speak to your target audience.
2. Subscribe to email newsletters from niche publications that cover your industry, as well as your vendors and even your competitors.
3. Set up Google Alerts for non-branded keywords related to your industry, your products, and your persona's pain points.

By checking these feeds every day, you'll find tons of content ideas. You might write a blog post that comments on a major news headline, or explains why a certain event matters to your audience.

For example, a travel agent could use news about economic turmoil in europe as an opportunity to blog about what the euro crisis means to travelers. You might notice a trend burning up the blogs and media outlets in your niche and decide to create a webinar on the topic.

TIP #2 MONITOR SOCIAL CONVERSATIONS

Social media gives you a real-time feed of what your prospects are talking about. If you listen carefully, you'll find plenty of good hooks or new content. Not only that, but content that's generated from social conversations points to the type of information that gets easily distributed via social media.

For example, if you see many people asking the same questions about a product or service you provide, you can create content to provide information regarding those questions. Many people go on twitter or Facebook to ask for recommendations about choosing new vendors or service providers. Why not create an ebook to provide suggestions, which you can then share the next time you see someone asking for a recommendation?

In order to be efficient at monitoring social media conversations, you'll need to use some marketing software that helps you filter the discussions and identify the ones you are most interested in. You can do that using tools such as Hootsuite, TweetDeck and if you want to measure leads and customers, Hubspot's social media tool.



TIP #3 RECRUIT A TEAM OF CONTENT CREATORS

If you are reading this ebook, you are probably the one who creates most of your company's inbound marketing content, but that doesn't have to be the case. You can use many different voices from inside your organization. Technical folks, customer service people, c-level executives, product managers, and others in your organization have a unique take on important aspects of your business. Get your coworkers to contribute by:

1. Asking them to write occasional blog posts relevant to their job functions.
2. Interviewing them and posting short videos that share their expertise.
3. Inviting them to give short presentations or answer questions in webinars.

You can also look outside your own company for help creating content. New online content marketplaces are springing up to connect marketers with legions of freelance writers and editors who will take on blog posts, ebooks, and other writing jobs for you. You can specify the topic, your desired style and tone, and your intended audience, and you typically don't have to pay unless you accept the finished article.



TIP #4 KEEP A CONTENT BACKLOG & STYLE BANK

Regular blogging is a cornerstone of inbound marketing, so make sure you've got plenty of ideas on hand for updating your blog at least daily. Keep a backlog of the topics you want to cover. Style banks present another great tool to facilitate your writing strategy. Style banks generally encompass writing templates and design ideas that result in fresh and compelling content. Ideas for your blog style bank include:

1. Bulleted lists
2. Book, movie, and product reviews
3. Photos and captions
4. Videos
5. How-to guides
6. Interviews

The style bank is a great resource for your occasional blog contributors and ebook authors, who might not know where to start when they've been assigned a piece of content. Your backlog will also help your more frequent contributors get over occasional bouts of writers block.



TIP #5 REPURPOSE CONTENT

Almost every piece of content you create can be adapted, reused, modified and republished in another format. Make a habit of finding multiple ways to package and distribute the same information in different formats. Here are a few ideas:

1. Combine text from an old whitepaper with new videos to create a video (multimedia) ebook.
2. Turn videos into blog posts and ebooks. Each video can form the basis of a new blog post that includes a link to the video along with examples and takeaways.
3. Use webinar questions and comments to create a new ebook. Once the webinar is over, you can compile the most interesting or commonly asked questions from the audience with answers from your team for a nice piece of content that directly addresses your prospects' pain points.
4. Share all company presentations in multiple formats. Post the slides on SlideShare, upload a video of the speech on Youtube, and create a series of blog posts that dive into specific points discussed during the presentation.

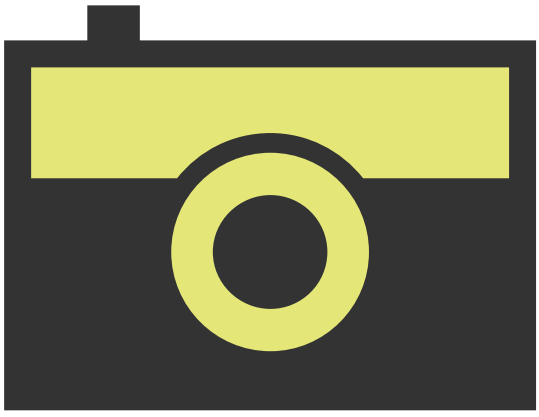


TIP # 6 TAKE YOUR VIDEO CAMERA EVERYWHERE

Creating video content doesn't have to be a big production process. It's easy to shoot new videos if you always carry an iphone or another pocket-sized device on hand. Here are a couple simple video ideas:

1. If you see a question on twitter that someone from your company can answer, film their response and tweet a link to the video.

2. Always bring a camera to trade shows or other industry events and shoot short clips, such as interviews with compelling industry experts or audience surveys. A simple premise, such as asking ten people to share the coolest thing they saw or learned at the trade show, can be edited into a great video blog post.



TIP #7 WRITE ANNUAL AND "BEST-OF" FEATURES

Round-ups, reviews, and look-backs are classic techniques that magazine publishers use to fill their pages – especially at the end of the year or during summer doldrums.

Find places in your own editorial calendar for features, such as:

1. A compilation of your most popular blog posts for a "best-of" ebook each december.
2. A list of top products of the year for a retail niche.
3. A "summer reading" list of great business books for a B2B audience.

Such topics are easy to put together and will most likely appeal to a broad audience. Try to think of some creative and fun lists to put together as that will help you stand out from the rest of the marketing campaigns during a very busy sales period.



TIP #8 CONDUCT ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Customers, prospects, bloggers, and reporters covering your industry love new data. Find ways that you can mine your recent sales information or your audience for unique new research about your niche.

For example, the online luggage retailer suitcase.com created a consumer luggage report by surveying its customers about their luggage preferences. “People responded very quickly to us and told us what they are looking for,” said John Ebb, the company’s CEO. Traffic to the Suitcase.com’s blog jumped five times after the report was published, according to a MarketingSherpa case study.

SurveyMonkey and SurveyGizmo make it easy to conduct online surveys of your audience. But if you don’t want to create a survey, you can look at sales data for interesting trends about your marketplace, such as your top selling products, the geographic distribution of your customers, customer shopping habits (time of day, day of the week, etc.), or demographic breakdown of your customers.



TIP #9 LOOK BEYOND YOUR INDUSTRY & AUDIENCE

Being relevant doesn't mean you can only write about your niche. In fact, looking beyond your niche and making useful connections between seemingly unrelated things is often the inspiration for fun, eye-opening content.

Social media researcher Dan Zarrella calls this concept "combined relevance," and recommends it as a way to create content that gets noticed and goes viral. After all, your customers and prospects have a lot of different interests, so when you offer something that features two of those interests in a surprising way, you've got a good chance of really connecting with the people who care about both of those things.

Keep your eyes open for combined relevance examples wherever you go. A terrible experience with an airline after a canceled flight could spark a blog post about the importance of customer service. A popular movie might inspire you to compare the characters to products that your business sells. If the coach of your favorite football team makes a terrible decision, mull over how that scenario applies to business management.

The possibilities are endless once you get used to looking at the world as fuel for marketing content.



TIP #10 KEEP A LIST OF EVERGREEN CONTENT

Not everything has to be pegged to a major news story, hot new trend, or the latest buzz on social media. In fact, sometimes it feels like you can't find anything hot or new to write about. At these times, it's helpful to turn to your evergreen content. Evergreen content covers topics that are always interesting to your audience regardless of seasonal trends, economic conditions, or other external factors. For instance, some evergreen topics include:

1. Ideas for saving time or money
2. Personal health and fitness advice
3. How-to articles that address universal problems for your audience

Inspirational articles Evergreen topics not only help you fill holes in our calendar, but they are an extremely valuable asset for inbound marketing. Thanks to their evergreen nature, this type of content can continue to drive traffic to your site for months or even years – as long as there's an audience out there searching for the kind of advice you're sharing.



» CONCLUSION & ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Now you should be all set to start developing your strategy and cranking out some killer content. Just remember the important points we covered:

1. Use behavioral and demographic information about your prospects to develop buyer personas based on their interests and needs, then target your content accordingly.

2. Before you start creating new content, conduct an audit of your existing content to identify the topics and personas you should focus on and set up guidelines for new content.

3. Map your content to the buying cycle of your customers to ensure that you're creating content that works best for your readers based on which stage they are in.

4. Create an editorial calendar to build a detailed schedule for creating and publishing content.

5. Find new ways to come up with creative content topics that are relevant, helpful, and fun for your readers, and keep a backlog of these ideas so you always have some on hand when you're ready to create new content.

Of course, content alone can't generate inbound marketing success. The pieces you create have to fit ino an overall strategy of SEO, social media engagement, lead nurturing, measurement, and optimization. But with a well-defined content strategy, a detailed editorial calendar, and a good topic backlog, you'll be publishing content like a pro and be on well on your way to becoming a more effective marketer.

We're here to help. Whether it's a consultation or part of an entire marketing campaign, Kayak can help you achieve the results you need. Visit us at **kayakonlinemarketing.com** to explore the many ways we can help.

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