

Video 1: What is contextual marketing?

Hi, I'm Rachel with HubSpot Academy.

When a person visits your website, whether they're a first-time visitor or a longtime customer, the website experience is the same – the same message, the same content, page after page.

What if there was a way to provide individualized experiences to different people based on their preferences and needs? Can you imagine a great website experience for a visitor who's browsing your website on a mobile device? And can you think of content offers that would be especially helpful for a visitor who came to your website through social media? These are both examples of contextual marketing.

Contextual marketing is personalized marketing based on the context of who a visitor is and what they're looking for.

Take a look at this word ("bow"), and this one ("seal"), and now these ("tear," "read," "change"). It's hard to understand what these words mean and even how to pronounce some of them without context. These words take on a specific meaning in relation to the rest of the sentence:

Take a bow.

Seal the envelope.

She read the note.

There's a tear in this shirt.

I have spare change.

Your marketing strategy can operate in the same way. Contextual marketing takes into account the user's context so that you can provide content tailored to their needs.

There's a chance you've already been creating marketing with context by using personalization. You may have personalized an email, call-to-action, or other content on your website. By adding this individual touch, you've been creating contextual marketing.

With contextual marketing, you can target and address individuals and groups of people with similarities. Think of contextual marketing as part of a larger strategy for the user experience. You'll be able to provide the best experience for each individual visitor by showing them content that's appealing and applicable to them.

This means that two visitors with different needs are presented different things, even when those visitors are on the same page at the same time.

As HubSpot founder Dharmesh Shah said, "We have got to stop thinking like marketers and start acting like humans."

And humanizing the website experience is a top priority for a lot of businesses. A study showed that 94% of businesses agree that a personalized experience is critical to the current and future success of their company.

By creating dynamic content, or content that changes based on the individual, your website becomes a valuable tool for each stage of the inbound methodology:

- Attracting visitors to your website;
- Engaging those visitors so that they turn into leads and customers;
- And delighting those customers so that they become promoters of your brand.

You'll also stand out from your competitors by being the company that shows them something new and relevant each time they arrive on your website. A study found that 73% of consumers prefer a personalized online experience. They like to do business with companies that make their experiences and interactions more relevant. Through contextual marketing, you can provide relevant content that aligns with their interests.

This personalization helps with conversion rates, too. HubSpot ran a study and found that on average, conversion rates are 20% higher when pages use contextual marketing.

In short, content that's shown to the right person has a higher chance of converting them into a lead.

You can also use contextual marketing to provide visitors relevant content based on where they are in their buyer's journey. You'll ensure that your website is providing a great experience to each person every step of the way.

When it comes to conversions, you'll be able to promote new offers to the right person, which will make the conversion process smoother. A visitor won't have to search as much, and you'll be able to ask better questions for each person on your forms, providing you with more insight on your leads.

Ultimately, contextual marketing is a great way to create a personalized user experience. You'll get the right content, in front of the right person, at the right time.

Video 2: What are the fundamentals of contextual marketing?

Using contextual marketing to personalize a visitor's experience on your website sounds pretty exciting, right? You might be tempted to jump right in, but first let's take a step back and consider these fundamental best practices:

- Start small.
- Be helpful to your visitors.
- Optimize content for search results and first-time visitors.
- Don't confuse your visitors.
- Make sure visitors can get to all valuable content.

First, start small with your contextual marketing efforts. Use it sparingly in one area to begin with. Contextual marketing is an advanced marketing tactic. There are many ways to use it, and it's easy to get overwhelmed with all the possibilities.

It's recommended to add context to your content little-by-little, over time, so that you can evaluate its performance and make changes as needed. Like the rest of the content on your website, it's a continuous process to evaluate and update it based on your business goals.

Second, promote a good user experience by being helpful to your visitors. When you create content that has context, you'll start by asking yourself if you're truly helping your visitors.

57% percent of people are okay with providing personal information on a website as long as it's for their benefit. Benefit is the operative word in that sentence, and it should direct how you use contextual marketing.

For example, when you know someone's name, you don't necessarily add value by displaying it. Providing an offer that's relevant to that visitor is more effective than displaying "Welcome back, Sarah."

By understanding your visitor's context, you'll be able to provide content that helps them progress through their buyer's journey and have a good user experience at the same time.

Next, optimize default content for search engines and first-time visitors. Don't focus all your efforts on your contextual marketing strategy and neglect the first-time visitor.

Your website needs good default content so that a first-time visitor can get just as much value out of your site as a segmented group that you've targeted in your contextual marketing strategy.

Much like your website before implementing contextual marketing, your content should educate and inform a broad segment of your audience.

Search engines are also evaluating this default content that you create for the first-time visitor. A search engine won't look through all your content variations. So whenever you optimize for search engines, focus your efforts on the default content since that's what search engines will evaluate.

Now onto the next best practice: Don't confuse your visitors. Since marketers have been using personalization in emails for a while, the general public is used to seeing their name appear in an email.

But most businesses aren't using contextual marketing on their websites, with the exception of ecommerce. Maybe Amazon or Netflix come to mind in how their sites make recommendations based on your interests and display your name. However, it's just not ordinary to see on a home page, "Here's a new offer for you, Matt."

Don't personalize your website for the sake of personalizing. It can be confusing or frightening to a visitor, making them ask, "How does this website know my name?!" Using personalization effectively is a skill you should develop.

Lastly, make sure that visitors can get to all valuable content. There should be a way to navigate to every last piece of content, even if you don't promote it specifically to a particular segment. You don't want a visitor to miss out on a great eBook you've created just because they aren't in the right segment to see it. Users should still be able to browse your website fully and discover information that's relevant to them.

And those are all the best practices for getting started with contextual marketing. Begin by starting small with your contextual marketing strategy, be helpful to your visitors, optimize content for search engines and first-time visitors, don't confuse or frighten your visitors, and make sure that visitors can get to all the valuable content you're creating. Refer to these fundamentals to create a great experience for your users.

Video 3: What does contextual marketing look like?

Contextual marketing is a powerful approach to creating a personalized experience that adapts to a user's needs. Let's see how a couple of different types of businesses could apply contextual marketing.

Here's a CTA, or call-to-action, by LyntonWeb, a HubSpot Partner Agency. This is a CTA on their website that's offering a LyntonWeb social media community manager playbook.

As an example, LyntonWeb has noticed that a lot of users who click on the playbook come from LinkedIn. Since the playbook is for social media community managers, it makes sense that the offer would be interesting to social media marketers.

LyntonWeb wants to target visitors with a social media referral source of LinkedIn and provide them with content that would be most applicable to them.

They can target users from LinkedIn and provide a different offer to them. All visitors that arrive from LinkedIn will see a free eBook for prospecting with LinkedIn. The prospecting eBook is even more targeted and specific to users arriving from LinkedIn.

Here's another example. Spotify's homepage has content at the top of the page with a special promotion to try their music subscription services.

But what about their current customers? The offer isn't applicable to them. Instead, Spotify could segment their customers. For any customer who visits their homepage, they can promote new releases in order to get customers to engage with their content.

Let's take a look at another type of company. Topshop is a clothing company that provides free shipping to some countries. They can segment their visitors by country to relay this information to relevant visitors.

They can also provide different messaging, even in different languages, based on the website visitor's location. This is a great way to target first-time visitors. They haven't filled out a form just yet, but you're able to target them based on their country.

Feeling inspired? Hopefully the examples have given you a few ideas for your own business and how you could use contextual marketing on your website.