

The Marketer's Toolbox Series

# WHAT IS CONTENT MARKETING?

A GUIDE FOR CMOs, MARKETING VPs, ENTREPRENEURS AND ANYONE WHO WANTS TO  
IMPLEMENT MEANINGFUL CONTENT MARKETING CAMPAIGNS

AUSTIN  
LAWRENCE  
GROUP

BUILD  
SOMETHING  
BIGGER

# IN TODAY'S DIGITAL LANDSCAPE, WHERE TECHNOLOGY FADS COME AND GO, IT CAN BE DIFFICULT TO IDENTIFY A WORTHY MARKETING INVESTMENT.

**However, there is at least one trend that we're sure  
is here to stay: content marketing.**

No doubt you've heard the cliché "Content is king" approximately 11,000 times by now. It's true – content's reign over marketing is longer than any human monarch's in history. And thanks to the internet, the overwhelming amount of content currently in existence makes it seem about as tumultuous as King Henry VIII's rule.

Content marketing is not a fad. In fact, content is more integral to marketing strategy than ever before.

# ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide isn't just about content marketing – it frames content against online lead generation through a larger inbound marketing strategy.

If you're reading this, you probably don't need a guide on how to write a blog post. While it's nice to know what the heck “content” actually means, what you should really be interested in is how to fit content into your overall marketing strategy in such a way that it spells success for your business.

By the end of this guide, you will be able to identify several kinds of content marketing. We'll breeze through the definition, then dig deeper into the role content marketing should play in your overall inbound marketing strategy. If you don't know what inbound marketing means, don't worry – we'll cover that, too. Finally, we'll close out with some advice on how to get started building your content marketing team.

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What is content marketing?

Ken Lempit  
203 391 3006

AUSTIN  
LAWRENCE

# THE DIGITAL ORIGINS OF CONTENT MARKETING



## Why we're really talking about the internet

In 1895, John Deere published the first edition of “The Furrow”, an agriculture magazine aimed at farmers. Although it’s still being printed, today you can also find web-exclusive articles, videos and an archive of previous editions in the [online version](#) of the publication.

ONE

## THE DIGITAL ORIGINS OF CONTENT MARKETING

When we think of content marketing, we're more likely to think of web-centric media like blog posts, podcasts and webinars. That's because the internet transformed the nature of content marketing to such a degree that it inspired the term in the first place. The year was 1999 when author Jeff Cannon wrote, "In content marketing, content is created to provide consumers with the information they seek."

Just look at Google's definition of content marketing:

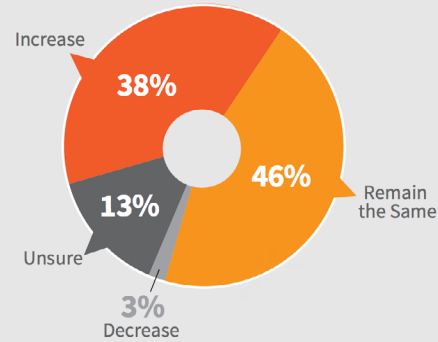
noun: content marketing

1. a type of marketing that involves the creation and sharing of online material (such as videos, blogs, and social media posts) that does not explicitly promote a brand but is intended to stimulate interest in its products or services.

### BUDGETS AND SPENDING

How do you expect your organization's content marketing budget to change in the next 12 months?

**B2B Content Marketing Spending  
(Over Next 12 Months)**



2018 B2B Content Marketing Trends—North America: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs

Base = B2B content marketers, aided list.

Source: [B2B Content Marketing 2018 Benchmarks, Budgets & Trends](#) – North America by Content Marketing Institute

While there are still lessons to be gleaned from offline content, businesses today cannot afford to ignore online content marketing. According to Sirius Decisions, as much as [67% of the buyer's journey](#) is being driven by people doing their own online research. That's over half of the buying process complete before the customer even picks up the phone or fills out a Contact Us form. Who better to give them information than your business?

So it should come as no surprise that 38% of B2B marketers plan to increase their content marketing budget over the next 12 months.

Thanks to the internet, it's never been easier to create and distribute content, which is great on one hand, but on the other it means there's a lot of noise to cut through – for both you and the audience.

If you publish content to the aether, your audience may or may not come. However, if you build it and disseminate it on your best customers' terms, Google will see to it that they come.

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203 391 3006

AUSTIN  
LAWRENCE

# CONTENT MARKETING EXAMPLES



Content marketing comes in many forms – from the shortest tweet to a 5,000-word technical white paper. To let you in on a not-so-secret secret ... even the words you're reading on this page right now are a part of content marketing.

It's not just copywriting either. For every piece of media that exists, you can bet there's been content marketing made: videos, podcasts, comics – even video games. No matter the medium, all content is created to communicate with an audience and inspire action.



TWO

## CONTENT MARKETING EXAMPLES

Below are just a few of the most popular forms of online content marketing.

### Blogs

Consider your blog the place to tell your company's story and display your thought leadership or your industry expertise. When done right, blogging regularly gives people a reason to keep coming back to your site. It's also a relatively low-cost method to build your site's credibility in the eyes of search engines, making blogging a popular type of content marketing for small businesses. Writing relevant and newsworthy blog posts, when combined with an effective SEO strategy, lets your site have a better chance of ranking higher in SERPs (search engine results page), which in turn means more people will find your site.

### Case Studies

Talking about your success is one thing; it's another to show actual results. A case study examines a client's specific challenge and how your business helped solve it. When packaged and promoted correctly, case studies attract potential clients and help you gain their trust. Case studies can come in the form of downloadable PDFs, infographics or web pages.

### Checklists

Checklists are worksheets that outline steps or qualifications needed to achieve an outcome. For example, our client [TVEyes' checklist](#) is a simple list of attributes that should be considered when choosing a broadcast media monitoring service. Checklists are a great content for small businesses because they're easy to make and provide good value for your potential customers.

### Webinars

Popular for B2B marketing, webinars may be live or pre-recorded professional presentations delivered to a preregistered audience. Depending on the webinar platform, hosts can show slide presentations or even video of them speaking live. Webinars usually include interactive elements for the audience like polling questions and Q&As.

### E-Books and White Papers

These are longer form content typically rich in value for your audience. White papers and e-books are similar, but the former are usually more data-driven and information-dense. This content does not sell your product or business directly but rather provides useful information for your target audience. Since they are so valuable, e-books and white papers are great for collecting lead information. This means that they're not given away as free downloads on your site but gated behind a form.

### Premium Content versus Ungated Content

Has a website ever made you fill out a form in exchange for a template, white paper or other piece of valuable content? This is a common technique known as gated or premium content. The form might ask for the most basic of information, such as email address – necessary most of the time to know where the premium content should be sent. Other times, the form may ask for more information like phone number, company name, job title and more questions about you or your company.



## CONTENT MARKETING EXAMPLES

Here's an example of a premium content landing page:

**GET THE SAMPLE CONTRACT:  
AGENCY MASTER SERVICES AGREEMENT AND  
STATEMENT OF WORK**

See the Contract That Executed Tens of Millions of Dollars in Revenues

**SAMPLE  
AGREEMENT  
FOR  
SERVICES**

**DOWNLOAD THE SAMPLE**

First Name  
Kelly

Last Name  
Burke

Email\*  
kbl@austinlawrence.com

Company Name  
Austin Lawrence Group

**SUBMIT NOW**

**SO YOU'VE MADE IT THIS FAR...**  
You've dug into an agency and know it has the capability and domain experience—plus, you like the team—but it's important that it conducts business the same way as you do.

**SEE THE TWO PARTS OF THE AGENCY PROPOSAL**  
An effective **Master Services Agreement (MSA)** and the accompanying **Statement(s) of Work (SOW)** clearly define your business situation—plans, challenges, goals and timeline.

**GET THE CONTRACT THAT EXECUTED TENS OF MILLIONS OF \$ IN REVENUES**  
Our MSA has been refined over the past 25 years. It's been very successful in securing business for us and other agencies (yes, we've shared it before) because it's fair and designed to foster a relationship. Please feel free to use it!

**Share This Offer**

f in G+ e

So, while a blog post is available to everyone for free, an in-depth report that had a lot of work put into it might require the visitor to give up some information about themselves in exchange. This is why gated content represents a sea change for marketing – now we can connect our content marketing efforts to outcome in sales with more clarity and precision than ever before.

When done correctly, gating your content will result in better quality leads. Furthermore, the data you collect can help you understand your audience better and, in turn, help you identify and create the most relevant content for your audience.

So, say you set up a form between your site visitor and a webinar replay video. After that visitor submits his or her contacts details, where does that valuable information go, and how do you use it to track and nurture that lead into a customer? The answer lies in marrying your content to the inbound marketing methodology and leveraging automation to make this an efficient process.

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content marketing?

Ken Lempit  
203 391 3006

AUSTIN  
LAWRENCE



# WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CONTENT MARKETING AND INBOUND MARKETING?

You might have heard the terms used interchangeably, but inbound marketing and content marketing are not the same thing.



## WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CONTENT MARKETING AND INBOUND MARKETING?

### What is Inbound Marketing?

Inbound marketing encompasses all the marketing activities that organically bring site visitors in, as opposed to outbound marketing techniques like cold calling.

Inbound marketing draws potential customers to your brand by aligning original quality content with your customers' interests. In this sense, content marketing is actually just one component of inbound marketing. Content may help fuel your inbound engine, but there are additional inbound techniques – like technical SEO and pay-per-click advertising – that may exist outside of the content marketer's scope. [Read more about the relationship between content marketing and inbound marketing in this blog post.](#)

The term “inbound marketing” acknowledges that content creation and distribution alone are not enough. As marketers or business owners, we also need to think about the way that prospects become customers and tailor our marketing AND sales strategies accordingly.

### What is Marketing Automation?

Imagine that a potential customer is scrolling through Twitter hashtag search results for #fintech and sees a tweet promoting your recently published white paper about the benefits of risk and compliance management software. She clicks on the link, fills out the form asking for her email address and downloads the white paper. A few days later, she receives a targeted email asking her if she's interested in a checklist of attributes every compliance management solution should have. She fills out that form, too, and while she's reading, her phone rings. It's a member of your sales team, ready to both ask and answer her questions about her business needs. By the end of the call, she's made up her mind to buy and an order is placed.

### This is Possible with Marketing Automation.

A marketing automation platform allows marketers to automate repetitive tasks like emails, social media and website updates. You can implement inbound methodology without marketing automation, but this not a scalable approach. There are great SaaS marketing automation solutions available to fit nearly every budget and requirement, but our personal favorite is HubSpot.

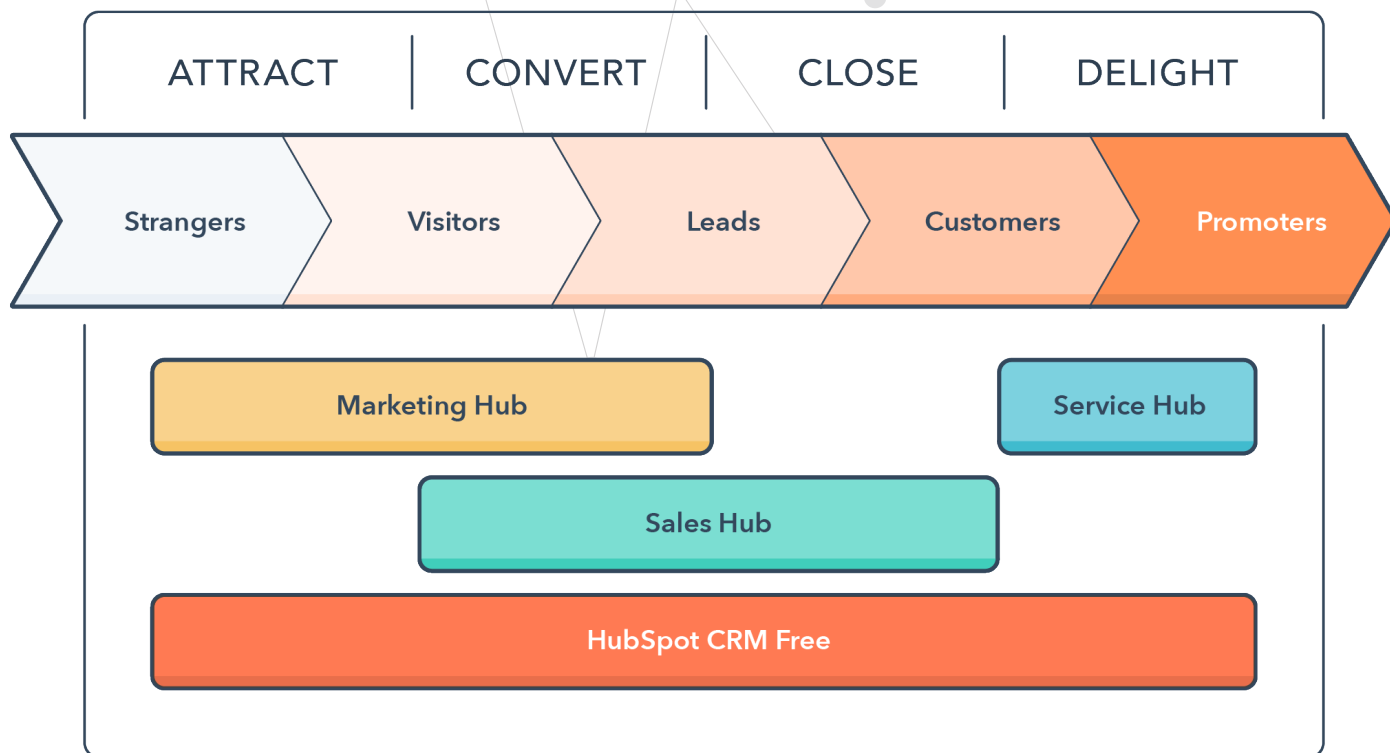
### What is HubSpot?

HubSpot is marketing and sales automation software built on a foundation of inbound methodology. In fact, it was HubSpot CEO Brian Halligan who first coined the term “inbound marketing.”

According to HubSpot, the best way to attract customers is through relevant and helpful content at every stage of the online buyer's journey. Remember, most of this journey takes place online before your potential buyer even attempts to contact a sales rep.

## WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CONTENT MARKETING AND INBOUND MARKETING?

Inbound Methodology



The four phases at top – Attract, Convert, Close, Delight – turn strangers into visitors, leads, customers and finally promoters. Along the bottom is HubSpot's full stack of software for marketing, sales and customer success.

As you might have guessed, there's a role for content marketing at every phase of HubSpot's inbound methodology.

The Attract phase doesn't mean attracting everyone and anyone. You want to attract the people who will become leads and eventually, customers. You'll attract them with relevant content, such as blog posts.

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Ken Lempit  
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## WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CONTENT MARKETING AND INBOUND MARKETING?

The next step is to Convert those site visitors into leads. This may happen, for example, when someone fills out a form to download a piece of premium content, but that's not the only way a visitor can be converted into a lead. Conversing through a chat box on your site or booking a meeting directly on your sales manager's calendar via your personal HubSpot Meetings link also counts as conversion.

In order to Close those leads you attracted with your content, you're going to need effective sales tools. HubSpot's CRM allows you to see which marketing efforts are bringing in the best leads and if your sales team is effectively converting them into customers. Lead scoring allows you to assign points to certain actions your contacts take, including viewing website pages, opening marketing emails, clicking links and converting on forms. Content is crucial at this step, too. With automated workflows, you can

schedule a series of emails focused on helpful, relevant content to build trust with a prospect and get them to view you as a partner or thought leader.

The inbound methodology doesn't stop after your prospect signs the statement of work. The Delight stage is just as important as the others, a fact underscored by HubSpot's newly launched [Service Hub](#). If your customers are happy, then they'll stick around longer and be happy to refer their colleagues to you.

You can see how using the inbound marketing methodology to influence your content marketing strategy helps you attract the right audience, convert leads, close deals and delight your current customers.

# IS CONTENT MARKETING RIGHT FOR YOUR BUSINESS?

At Austin Lawrence, we believe that almost every business can benefit from some form of content marketing, but some businesses benefit from a more robust campaign than others.

The presence of these factors allows an industry to benefit more from inbound and content marketing:

- Specialized and hard-to-find information
- Specificity and uniqueness
- Cycles of innovation
- Longer buyer cycles
- Online presence

**FOUR**

## IS CONTENT MARKETING RIGHT FOR YOUR BUSINESS?

Remember the stat from earlier about how much of the buyer's journey is conducted online? Today's buyers tend to thoroughly research their options before they actively seek engagement with a sales representative. For areas like [B2B and professional services](#), where more time and money are involved in the purchasing decision, the more information the buyer will want to research. This makes those industries prime candidates for inbound and content marketing.

### SaaS

To briefly dive into a specific industry, SaaS content marketing has its own unique challenges. SaaS customers have a high lifetime value, which means there's fierce competition from a lot more companies, including those ready and willing to spend big ad dollars. Your ideal customer's journey is not going to be a straight path, but if you can predict the questions they'll ask, you can prepare the right content to attract them to your site and build trust.

And with so many decision-makers involved in the average SaaS purchase, reps will often only have the chance to communicate with one or two of the buyers and must rely on your content to sell the rest. Content marketing is there for your buyer to find and absorb before they raise their hand. [Read more about SaaS content marketing here.](#)

### E-commerce

Many retailers today create preference with people who spend more of their prepurchase time online, since that's where the decision process starts and often ends. By using carefully crafted content that uses high-search, long-tail keywords and addresses consumer questions, online stores have a high chance of attracting site visitors. E-commerce sites have the opportunity to go beyond the simple online catalog by creating content that directly answers consumer questions. Eventually, you might be able to take your e-commerce media property one step further by monetizing it, and offering partners opportunities to create and co-promote content. [Replay our on-demand webinar to find out how our client KLAFFS achieved this.](#)

The same line of thinking for

e-commerce also applies to local businesses, including retailers, restaurants, repair shops and real estate agents.

### Content Marketing for Small Businesses

The entrepreneur interested in selling their business down the road should not ignore content marketing. Content and inbound marketing become integral to the sales success of the business by aligning sales, marketing and customer experience into a holistic approach to the market. Content marketing, when used within a large inbound marketing strategy, will generate increased brand awareness, website traffic, sales leads and revenue. [Read more about how content marketing can make your company more salable.](#)

To summarize, if your customers are searching for your products or services in your industry online, then you should be doing content marketing. If they don't find you, they'll find your competitors instead.

# HOW TO GET STARTED WITH CONTENT MARKETING



By now you're probably eager to start creating content, but there's a lot to be done before you start writing your first blog post. Remember, your content won't pay off unless you frame it within a larger inbound marketing strategy. This section will help you get started.



**FIVE**



# HOW TO GET STARTED WITH CONTENT MARKETING

## Buyer Personas

You need to know who you will be creating content for before you start planning it. Otherwise, you may attract the wrong type of traffic, resulting in poor quality leads that can waste time for your business development rep or sales teams. That's where your buyer persona or personas come in.

A buyer persona is a representation of your ideal target customer based on market research and interviews conducted with existing customers. A detailed persona includes information like demographics, motivations, pain points and goals. These details, coupled with keyword research, will guide your content strategy and the rest of your inbound efforts, ensuring they won't go to waste. In this way, persona development is crucial to the success of your inbound marketing strategy. After all, not all traffic or leads are created equal. With a solid inbound foundation, you'll ensure that you're getting quality, not just quantity.

## Buyer's Journey

The buyer's journey is the research process buyers go through when purchasing a product or service. While marketers craft content tailored to a specific phase of the inbound methodology chart, your buyer is on a different but parallel journey. We can use the inbound methodology chart to apply and map content to all stages of the buyer's journey so they're nurtured every step of the way.

- 1 Awareness. The buyer is aware of an issue but can't quite define it just yet. Your job as the marketer is to help the buyer identify the problem. The awareness stage is traditionally known as the top of the funnel. Noncommittal content like blog posts work well here, as well as white papers, e-books, checklists and how-to videos.
2. Consideration. The buyer is researching options and possible solutions. Your buyer wants information at this point – he or she's not ready to buy. Content at this stage highlights your business' different products or services that could possibly solve the buyer's problem: product webinars, case studies, demo videos and data

sheets.

3. Decision. The buyer is comparing different options to ultimately make a purchase. As a marketer, you should provide options that persuade the buyer that your solution is the best for them. Content at this stage comes in the form of free demos and trials, consultations, coupons and [model RFPs](#).

## Editorial Strategy

Like any publisher, your business needs a sustainable publishing process informed by an editorial calendar. Your calendar will probably include a mix of gated and ungated content, such as blog posts, curated news articles, webinars, white papers and decision-making tools. A variety of content ensures information at each stage of the buyer's journey.

## HOW TO GET STARTED WITH CONTENT MARKETING

### Reporting

Marketing and sales automation support a closed-loop system approach to content publishing, enabling reporting on near real-time sales and marketing performance. For example, the HubSpot dashboard allows you to track and analyze campaign results, lead generation performance, page performance, web traffic and more.

### Sales Integration

Your inbound marketing campaign could generate a tidal wave of high-quality leads, but it will be all for nothing if your sales team isn't onboard, too. Your sales team should be trained on how to handle inbound leads as well as how to convert qualified marketing leads to qualified sales leads. By using sales automation like HubSpot, your sales team could discover prospects earlier than ever before.

### ROI Model

A solid business case sets apart a successful inbound marketing campaign from other content-without-a-cause marketing strategies. You will need a demand generation plan and a lead pipeline model to measure and report ROI. For example, Austin Lawrence uses a fully functioning funnel methodology, which evaluates traffic, leads, unit sales and revenue, value per visitor, value per lead, value per proposal and value per sale.

### Should You Outsource Your Content Marketing?

You probably see the next question looming on the horizon: Who is going to make all this content? It's not a one-person job. [Should you outsource your content marketing or do it in-house?](#)

### Reality is These Two Options are Not the Easiest to Compare

First you'll need to calculate the costs of bringing your content marketing in-house. It's easy to underestimate these costs. Remember, content marketing isn't

just writing. It's important to have a good writer, but you'll also need a content strategist, editor, designer, media buyer and marketing automation expert.

Consider the costs to outsource versus the costs to bring the capability in-house. If you hire multiple specialists full time, you'll need to make sure you have the staff management skills to make them stay with your company. Continuity of service is a key benefit of outsourcing to an agency, and it's one of the risks you eliminate when you outsource your content marketing.

If you don't have the resources to devote to regularly producing quality content, you can still benefit from content marketing! Start by creating evergreen content – content that's relevant at any time and is less likely to require updates to maintain accuracy.

# WORKING WITH A CONTENT MARKETING AGENCY

Most businesses can hire a content marketing agency for less than the cost of one full-time marketing employee. An alternative to an all-in or all-out approach is to create a hybrid. Using this model, your marketing leadership team provides the expertise of the first three P's: product, price and place, while your agency handles the fourth P: promotion.

Austin Lawrence works on several accounts across multiple clients at the same time. This allows our inbound and content marketing experts to bring experiences from a wide range of companies and industries to each campaign.

You can split the work between your in-house team and your agency in the way that makes the most sense for you. For example, you might hire someone to manage your marketing automation and HubSpot account, and retain an agency to handle content strategy and development.

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Ken Lempit  
203 391 3006

AUSTIN  
LAWRENCE

# CHOOSING A CONTENT MARKETING AGENCY

Once you've made the choice to hire an agency in some capacity, an even more daunting decision appears: Out of the thousands of agencies out there, which one do you hire?

When it comes to such a holistic project as content marketing, assembling the optimal team requires a very personal analysis of your company's goals and challenges.

If you plan on using marketing automation, a good place to start is that platform's directory of agency partners. For example, Austin Lawrence is a Gold Certified HubSpot Partner Agency.

From there, you will need to research agencies and conduct first connect calls. Once you've whittled down your list of potential partners to a short list, it's time to start asking the more discerning questions. For more guidance, read [this blog post on the five things to ask a content marketing agency before it's hired.](#)

# CONNECT CALL AND COMPLIMENTARY CONSULTATION

Although this guide provides the framework for building more effective content, every situation is unique and no content strategy is one-size-fits-all. If you're ready to take the next step and receive a professional marketing assessment, or if you have any questions about this guide to content marketing, please [book an introductory call on Ken's calendar](#).

You should reach out if you're ...

- Already doing content marketing but struggling to connect it to ROI
- Struggling to find opportunities to improve thought leadership and lead generation
- Grappling with your current marketing or sales automation software
- Considering marketing automation but not sure which is best for your organization
- Unable to pinpoint potential pain points, bottlenecks and obstacles to growth
- Seeking a professional opinion on how to best address your marketing challenges and opportunities

During the call, we'll determine if your situation warrants scheduling a complimentary consultation.

This one-hour session assesses your current situation and marketing efforts, and provides recommendations. There is no charge for this service, and you'll come away with a few ideas that you can deploy, even if we don't proceed together.

[Click here](#) to schedule a introductory call on Ken's calendar.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Ken Lempit

kl@austinlawrence.com

+1 203 391 3006

www.austinlawrence.com

300 Main St #600, Stamford, CT 06901

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Ken Lempit  
203 391 3006

AUSTIN  
LAWRENCE