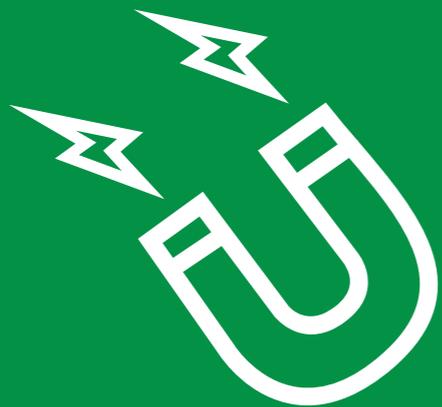


THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO

Content Marketing for Lead Generation



Presented By:

Influence&CO.

The Ultimate Guide to Content Marketing for Lead Generation

Marketers wear a lot of hats. You might be responsible for elevating your company's brand, building an engaged audience, managing communities on social media, creating and distributing content, and/or sharing your company's story, products, and services with the right people — among any number of other major projects.

At the end of the day, though, you're probably held accountable to the same metric most marketers are: qualified leads generated.



According to research from HubSpot, 61 percent of marketers across the globe cite generating traffic and leads as their top challenge.¹

Fortunately, like many aspects of your marketing team's responsibilities, generating qualified leads is made a lot easier with high-quality content.

The thing about content, though, is that it's so versatile that brands often believe that creating any content will work for their goals. In reality, reaching a specific goal requires specific content. To generate qualified leads, you'll need to develop a plan that leverages certain types of content that all work together to bring you closer to your goal.

Read on to discover what makes content marketing an essential tool for generating leads, including what types of content fuel a lead generation strategy, the tools that make it work, the metrics that demonstrate ROI, and the insider secrets that can maximize success.

1. <http://www.stateofinbound.com>

How Content Marketing Works to Generate Leads

The right kinds of content can work together to create a funnel of consistent opportunity for your company. It begins with content published outside your own website, which engages new audiences and helps you build trust with them. That content can guide interested readers back to your website, where a variety of relevant, educational resources can convert visitors into leads who are primed for your messaging via email nurture campaigns.

Who?

A good lead-generation strategy draws in audience members who:

- Trust your brand and the content you publish
- Have a pain point they'd like to solve
- Need something your company offers

What?

Effective content for generating leads is:

- Exclusive, original, and high-quality
- Useful for alleviating or solving audience pain points
- Well-designed and engaging

Where?

For content to generate leads, your audience should be able to access it via:

- Online publications and media your audience trusts
- Your company website and blog
- Clear and compelling forms and landing pages

Who is my company's ideal customer?

- _____
- _____
- _____

What kinds of content should we prioritize?

- _____
- _____
- _____

Where can we share our content to reach our audience?

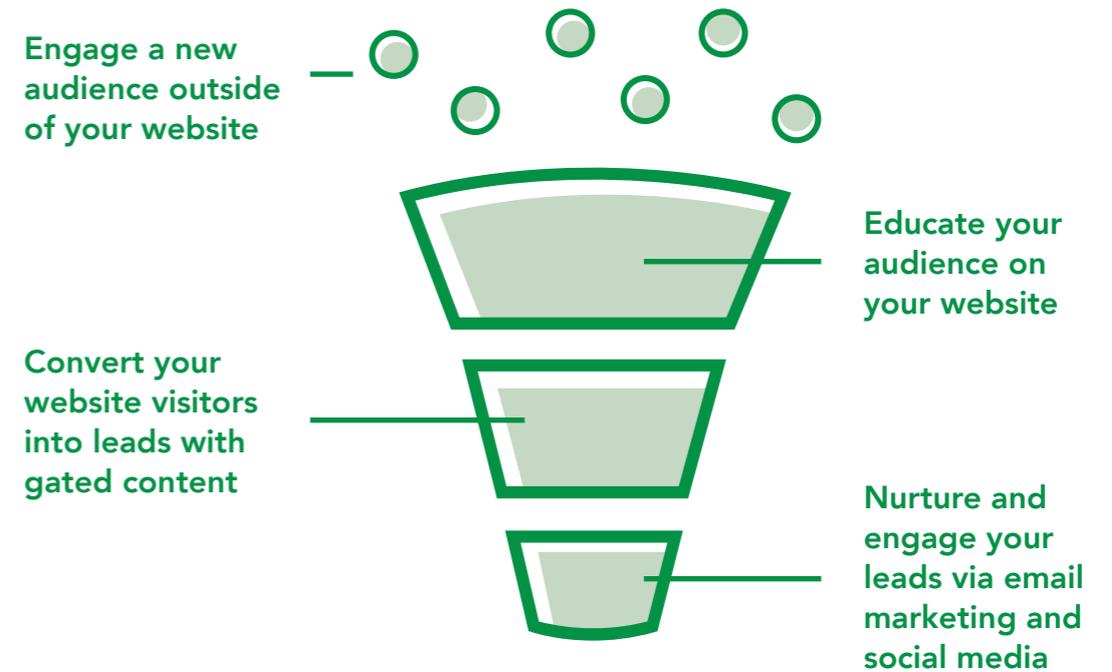
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Content That Fuels a Lead Generation Strategy

Content plays a powerful role in helping your company generate leads. From attracting qualified site visitors to converting, nurturing, and delivering warm leads to your sales team, content marketing for lead generation can help you create a funnel of consistent opportunity for your company.

The secret lies in creating and publishing the right kinds of content for your audience; using all the pieces of your content together as a bigger strategy to attract site visitors, convert leads, and nurture them throughout their buyer journey; and fuel your lead generation over time.

Here's a look at the different types of content you'll need to make your lead generation strategy most effective.



To reach and engage a new audience and establish your credibility, you'll need ...



Guest-contributed articles. This is content bylined by your company's internal experts that offers original insights, research, and opinions. It's then contributed to specific publications in your industry that your audience reads and trusts.



Press mentions. A press mention is exactly what it sounds like — a mention of you or your company by the press. While it's content published in an outside publication, it's not content that's bylined by anyone within your company. Press mentions are references to your company by journalists, contributors, influencers, etc. that provide your audience members third-party validation that they should trust you.

Why it works

This off-site content helps you reach and engage a new audience. And when the media you earn includes links to the media you own, you're able to create a direct path for interested audience members to make their way to your site.

Now, to educate those audience members and convert them into leads, you'll need ...



On-site content. As the name indicates, this is content that lives on your website. It includes all the blog posts, case studies, infographics, and other helpful resources your company creates to further educate your audience and communicate what you do.



Gated content: This is exclusive, high-value content on your site that's housed behind a form on a landing page. Your audience members can download your gated content in exchange for some of their personal information, like an email address, which allows you to deliver that content and nurture your leads with even more relevant content over time (if they opt in to your email).

Why it works

Not only does your on-site content offer more education around the topics your readers are interested in, but it also keeps your site visitors engaged, reinforces your position as a helpful resource, and gives your visitors the opportunity to convert. In fact, 66 percent of B2B marketers say gated content downloads are the content type that generates leads with the highest customer conversion rate.¹

1. <http://www.emarketer.com/Chart/Types-of-Digital-Forms-that-Generate-Leads-with-Highest-Customer-Conversion-Rate-According-B2B-Marketers-Worldwide-Sep-2017-of-respondents/213995>

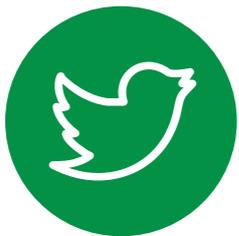
And finally, to help you nurture, engage, and prime leads for your sales team, you'll need ...



Email drip campaigns. Triggered by a certain action on your site, email drip campaigns help you deliver specific content to specific leads at specific times. The ability to customize the content and timing of these campaigns helps you educate and nurture your leads throughout their unique decision-making process.



Email newsletters. These newsletters package up your best content and deliver it directly to your audience members' inboxes. Newsletters are a powerful way to continue driving traffic to your website and promote valuable gated resources.



Social media. If your audience is on social media, then your company should be, too. Social media platforms like Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, and even Instagram are excellent tools for consistently sharing content that engages your audience members where they are online and drives them to high-converting content on your site.

Why it works

Your job as a marketer doesn't end once a lead is generated; not everyone who downloads a piece of gated content from your site is ready for a sales conversation. The variety of resources you produce can be used to continue educating, nurturing, and engaging qualified leads until they're ready to move forward, keeping your brand top of mind along the way.

Let's Get Technical: The Tools and Tech of Lead Gen

Content is essential to lead generation — but it doesn't work on its own. If you want to convert your site visitors into leads, deliver those leads to your sales team, and demonstrate ROI, there are a few tools you'll definitely need to do it.

Before you start creating content and expecting results, make sure you've got the following tools in place:



1. A website with a blog

What good is your content if you have no place to put it? The look and feel of your website are important factors in how your content is received. If your site and blog look outdated, poorly maintained, and inconsistent, readers won't trust your content to be useful to them. But when your site is easy to navigate, your blog is full of great content, and your offers are compelling, you'll be much more likely to attract and convert visitors.



3. A marketing automation system

If you're aiming to increase the number of leads you generate, it's important to cover as much ground as possible with your marketing efforts. That's where automation systems come in. A marketing automation system allows you to automate certain tasks, simultaneously ensuring that your leads are nurtured with the right content and your team has plenty of time for more dynamic marketing activities.



2. Access to that website's analytics

You need insight into the performance of each of your individual blog posts, including number of views, call-to-action (CTA) clicks, conversion rates, and more. Beyond your blog, you need access to the analytics of your entire website. This allows you to assess how well your content is performing in the context of your site and gives you clues as to how you can optimize your conversion rates across your website.



4. A customer relationship management system

If you're successful in generating more leads, it's vital that your company have an effective customer relationship management (CRM) system. A good CRM will enable you to keep track of every interaction you have with a lead or client. This helps teams align their marketing and sales efforts and ensures nobody falls through the cracks.

The Metrics That Can Help You Monitor Progress

Once you have everything in place, you'll want to measure the progress of your content on a regular basis. While page views and CTA clicks are good metrics, they're not the only ways to measure the success of your website's lead generation performance.

Each company is different, so think through your specific goals and how you'll measure your success with metrics like:

Clickbacks to your site.

This metric measures the number of visitors who click through links in your guest-contributed articles and press mentions to your website. Clickbacks, measured via referral traffic, usually indicate that users have found your off-site content useful and would like to engage further with your company. If your site has lots of clicks back to your website from your off-site content, then it's likely that you're doing a great job of engaging the right audience by publishing content in the right publications and enticing them to visit your site for more.

Lead conversions.

Lead conversions give valuable insight into how effectively targeted your content is. If you're generating a large number of leads but very few are actually becoming clients, your content may be misleading or unclear about what you do and whom you serve. On the flip side, if you're generating only a few leads and they're almost all becoming customers, you might benefit from broadening your focus. Use content to expand or restrict the reach of the net you cast.

Average lead score.

To evaluate lead quality, marketers should create a checklist or scoring system based on the type of customer they wish to attract. If you consistently evaluate each lead with an objective scoring system, you'll be able to assess the quality of leads coming through the site and the areas in which leads are consistently lacking. If many of your leads have similar weak points, develop content to combat this.

On-site analytics and engagement.

When you publish content to your company website, you can use your own analytics to monitor its performance — and even make tweaks over time to improve. Look to metrics like time on site, finish rate, and bounce rate to see what pieces of content keep readers engaged on-site, and use conversion rate metrics to see which ones led visitors to take certain actions on your site.

3 Ways to Maximize Your Success

With the right content and technology in place, your lead generation strategy has a solid foundation. Still, generating traffic and leads remains one of marketers' biggest challenges, and overcoming it might require more than a foundation alone. To maximize your success, you need to build on that foundation.

The tactics below can help you make the most of your efforts and effectively grow your lead generation strategy over time:

1. Amplify your content through strategic distribution.

Your content resources will have a hard time attracting visitors and converting them into leads if they're never shared with your audience. Content distribution is a crucial step in ensuring your content reaches the right people. It allows you to engage your current audience members and consistently get your content in front of new potential leads. Get started amplifying your content by considering:



Organic distribution.

Sharing your content on social media is one of the simplest ways to start the distribution process. Fuel your social media efforts, engage your social followers, and attract leads to your content with consistent updates on the platforms your audience members are most engaged with. A consistent flow of content will also help you gain more followers.



Paid amplification and distribution.

Paid distribution is a powerful way to boost the reach and impact of your content among targeted, qualified members of your audience beyond your organic network. Targeted amplification via social media, Google AdWords, influencers, and beyond can help you deliver your content to potential leads and increase your ROI.

2. Optimize your content for search.

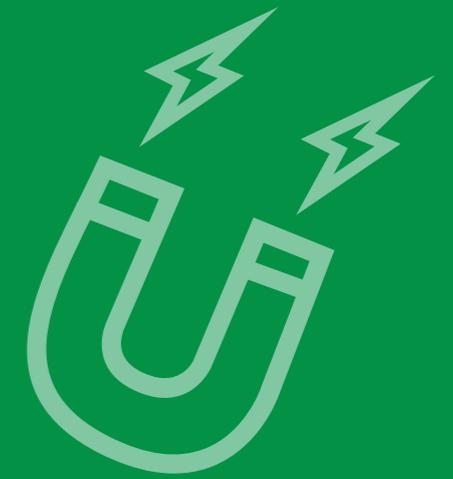
With the internet at their fingertips, your audience members are turning to search engines to find as much information as they can to understand their problems and find the best solutions to them. Investing in search engine optimization (SEO) can help you make sure those potential leads find your solutions.

For example, a technical audit can help ensure that your website is set up to give every piece of your content the chance to be found by search engines. And keyword research can help you understand exactly what your audience is looking for, where your competitors stand, and how you can optimize your content to consistently drive traffic and leads to your website.

3. Diversify the types of gated content you use.

Gated content can be tremendously effective in generating leads, but the proverbial well can dry up if you're not careful. Make sure to offer a diverse array of gated content. This will enable you to reach a number of different audience members at various points throughout their buyer journey. Some might respond well to a checklist or evaluation tool, for example, while others might prefer a detailed guide for more education first.

Variety isn't limited only to types of gated content — it applies to the topics you cover, too. Developing a variety of gated resources can give you a valuable opportunity to link back to specific, relevant pieces of your other content, like blog posts or guest-contributed articles. Take advantage of those opportunities when they arise, and you'll see lead form submissions increase.



Content Marketing for Lead Generation

Now that you know what kinds of content fuel a lead generation strategy and how all the pieces work together, it's time to assess your own efforts. Use the interactive template below to begin mapping out your company's current and future plans to generate leads through content marketing.



[Fill out this form](#) to set up a call with one of our content marketing experts, who can walk you through your assessment and answer any questions you might have.

Content Marketing Assessment

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	Tactic	What It Is	Why It Works		
Top of the Funnel Reach a New Audience	Guest-Contributed Articles	Articles that offer unique insights from your subject matter expert(s) in publications your audience reads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educate your audience Build trust Establish your expertise Earn third-party validation 	Technical Requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ A website with CMS and blog ✓ Marketing automation system ✓ Sales CRM ✓ Access to your website's analytics ✓ Access to your social media profiles 	
	Press Mentions	References to your company in articles published on reputable sites that reach your target audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Earn third-party validation Establish your expertise Create positive associations 		
Middle of the Funnel Educate and Convert	On-Site Content	Blog posts, case studies, infographics, etc., that live on your company's website and address topics your audience is interested in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educates your audience Builds trust Improves your website's SEO Highlights your offerings 		Amplification Tools <p>SEO Audits: Perform technical audit, keyword audit, and competitor analysis to ensure your content is optimized for search engines.</p> <p>Paid Amplification: Amplify content to your target audience through programmatic advertising on social media.</p> <p>Organic Social Media: Engage your social media followers with consistent content.</p>
	Gated Content	Content on your site — housed behind a form — that people can download in exchange for personal information, such as an email address	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educates your audience Generates leads Establishes your expertise 		
Bottom of the Funnel Nurture and Engage	Email Drip Campaign	A series of emails that automatically follow up with a lead after he or she downloads an offer on your website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nurtures leads Educates your audience Highlights your offerings 		
	Email Newsletter	Packaged content, delivered regularly to your audience's inbox, that incorporates both educational and engaging elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educates your audience Keeps your company top of mind Offers company updates Highlights your offerings 		

Content Marketing Assessment

Need help filling this out? [Click here to set up a call](#) with one of our content marketing experts, who can walk you through your assessment and answer any questions you might have

	Tactic	Company Status	Current Cadence	Future Plans
Top of the Funnel Reach a New Audience	Guest-Contributed Articles			
	Press Mentions			
Middle of the Funnel Educate and Convert	On-Site Content			
	Gated Content			
Bottom of the Funnel Nurture and Engage	Email Drip Campaign			
	Email Newsletter			

Content Amplification

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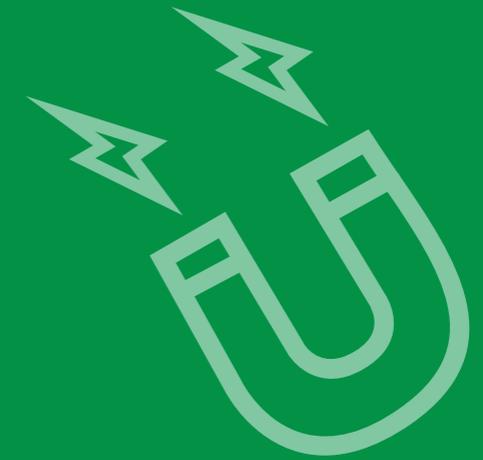
	Company Status	Current Cadence	Future Plans
Search Engine Optimization			
Paid Amplification			
Organic Social Media			

Success Metrics

Goal:	Goal:	Goal:
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Technical Requirements

Website CMS + Blog ✓	Sales CRM ✓	Marketing Automation ✓	Website Analytics ✓
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About Influence & Co.

Influence & Co. is a content marketing agency that combines a team of content marketing experts with custom technology and relationships with top online publications to provide our clients a turnkey solution to content marketing.



Fill out this form to set up a call with one of our content marketing experts, who can walk through your assessment and answer any questions you might have.