



It's easy to picture the act of writing any type of content as simply putting pen to paper (or 'cursor to text document') and pouring words and ideas into whatever format you need. In truth, there's a lot of work taking place behind the scenes long before the first word is written.

This is especially true if the piece of content you are writing needs to achieve a specific goal with a specific audience, thus performing successfully as a marketing vehicle. This guide takes you through the steps to building a content creation proforma to ensure your ideas become well-crafted, meaningful marketing messages.

Defining a subject and objective

What is the content going to be about? Why are you writing it? These questions will typically emerge in your marketing campaign planning. There are usually four simple purposes to content: to earn leads, to rank online, to educate an audience, or to drive social engagement. Of course there are exceptions, but defining what you want the content to achieve will go a long way to helping you craft the right tone of voice. Knowing the distribution will also help: will this be a Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn post? Will it feature on your blog? Is it a press release for local newspapers? A downloadable white paper for email data capture?

Key points and brand positioning

It is possible to write the greatest content to ever grace the internet, but then see it do nothing for your business. This is where brand positioning comes in. The content you're producing needs to use your company's values in a way that resonates with the buyer, compelling them to engage, trust and finally buy from you. This can be done by aligning content to your audience's lifestyle, so that it triggers an emotional response. It can also be done by setting your content apart from that of your competitors, ensuring you stand out from the crowd. Start by speaking to your audience about their pain points to discover what solutions you can offer, then browse the web to find existing solutions so you can define how your brand can stand out with something new.

Keyword targeting

To rank effectively online, content needs to have a target keyword to drive traffic on Google's search engine. Keywords come in two forms: short tail and long tail. Short tail keywords will be single or two-word phrases that tend to be extremely difficult to rank for. For instance, a small shoe retailer would be ill-advised to target the keyword 'shoes', as all major brands will be pouring money into ranking for that word. This is where the value of long tail keywords comes



in. These will be 3 to 5 (sometimes longer) phrases which are much more targeted and niche. Sticking with the shoe retailer, a long-tail keyword such as 'red women's running shoes' will be much more accessible.

So when choosing your target keyword, think about what is niche or local about the content you're writing, and try incorporating that into your choice. Remember also that content can rank for multiple keywords, so you can choose a selection of similar phrases to rank for. For instance, a small bank in Leeds might target 'bank safely in Leeds' as well as 'safe banking in Leeds'. There are plenty of free SEO tools online such as <https://keywordtool.io/> that can help.

Audience

Perhaps the most important part of the proforma, this dictates who exactly you are speaking to, and will inform your tone of voice. If you have a series of buyer personas for your business, your audience will typically be one of them. If, however, you are running a marketing campaign to attract new customers, conducting market studies and customer research will help you define your audience. On the proforma, it's useful to indicate the audience's age group and the problems they face that your content is resolving. Any other information is a bonus, but those two points are critical to ensure you're speaking to the right people.

On the next page you'll find the form we use and complete before producing content - feel free to use it when crafting your next piece of writing, or even add sections to suit your own brand and voice.



Content creation proforma

Subject	
Distribution	
Objective	
Key points, positioning and opinion:	
Keyword targeting?	
Input or requirements from client?	
Copy	