

An easy guide to Developing an Effective Content Strategy



Follow this practical guide to plan and create marketing communications content that your customers value.

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Content creation made easy

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Introduction

How to use this Content Strategy Guide

Thank you for downloading our guide and congratulations on taking steps to plan and organise your content strategy. We have written this guide to help you learn, plan, create and organise your marketing communications content so that you can produce quality information for your potential and existing customers. Following this approach will help you to engage your customers and provide them with communications that deliver real value. They will learn how your products and services can solve their biggest challenges and frustrations at the same time.

To achieve marketing excellence, you need to start with your customer. Customers of today no longer want transactional relationships. They are looking to form valuable relationships with companies they buy from. They want to be understood for who they are as human beings. They want to know not only who you are and what you stand for, but what is your mission and purpose, and does it align with their values.

This is where customer behaviour and content marketing are aligned and why the right communications delivered consistently across different channels will win you new customers.

Your content strategy is central to your success and we hope you find this guide useful. We also have a range of templates you can download to support the planning and execution of your content marketing campaigns.

Please visit our **Content Strategy Hub** to download these resources.



What is Content Strategy and why marketers need one

In today's digital age where everyone is constantly online, publishing your content across the many digital channels available is a cost-effective way to create a continuous dialogue with your target audience. The goal of this easy guide is to help you understand how important your content is in building long term relationships with your customers.

Content marketing when done well is about sharing content that is relevant, helpful, search optimised and provides value to your target customer (or customer persona as we refer to it in the digital world). Content marketing is often also referred to as inbound marketing where the customer comes to you rather than you trying to find them.

A well-defined, documented content strategy is a key part of your content marketing plan and will help you, as a marketer, to:

- Attract your desired audience
- Inform and educate this audience
- Engage with the target audience
- Generate leads and sales
- Convert customers to fans and advocates

Three important things you should know about implementing a content strategy before you get started...

1

Content marketing takes time and resources. It can take three to six months of consistent effort before you see the fruits of your labour.

2

Try to keep your strategy simple. You may want to consider automating, curating and outsourcing your content. Most marketers and small business owners are time poor, so using automation software and external resources to support your internal efforts is a great option to consider.

3

Remember content multiplies. The more personas you develop and the more topics and subtopics you select, each one has a content multiplying effect. 12 topics divided across your personas can mean 72 subtopics and 432 pieces of overall content. It can get crazy, so be prepared!

Step 1. Identify your goals & objectives

Align your overall strategic marketing plan

Your first step is to define the higher-level business goals you are trying to achieve (for example, acquire new customers, retain existing customers, increase brand awareness, increase revenue, improve engagement and so forth) by implementing a content marketing strategy.

To complete this part, you need to review your current strategic marketing plan to get some context for developing your content strategy. Then answer the following questions:

- 1 What products or initiatives will your content marketing program support?
- 2 What core company values and strategic objectives should influence the development of your content?
- 3 What core competencies can you promote or showcase through the content you develop?

If you don't have a strategic marketing plan in place, you should do this first before starting to create your content strategy. Otherwise, you won't deliver consistent messages to your customers which align with your company's overall strategic direction.

Outline your content marketing objectives

The next step is to identify your content marketing objectives so you can make sure they roll up into your overall business goals. A few examples of higher-level business goals are:

- Acquire new customers
- Retain existing customers
- Increase brand awareness
- Increase website traffic

Once you have a good idea of your high-level objectives you can then determine what marketing strategies and metrics can roll up to help you achieve those objectives. These metrics should be specific and measurable and tend to fall into the following categories:

→ Traffic/Visits	Organic • Referral • Social • Direct • Paid
→ Engagement	Bounce rate • Average time on website • Number of shares or comments per post • Inbound links • Email open rate Click through rate
→ Leads and Growth	Number of email subscribers • Number of enquiries Number of webinar signups • Number of leads Number of paying customers

Step 2. Do your research

It is important to do some groundwork before jumping into content creation. It is important to first have a good understanding of your audience and the content landscape that currently exists for them on the internet.

Get to know your audience

Conducting some research prior to developing your content strategy will give you a deeper understanding of your audience, their needs and behaviour, the keywords and channels they use, the current topics which are currently trending and other opportunities.

Analyse your existing customer base and see what information you can use. Study their demographics and behaviour, and try and find out as much as you can about them. You are going to need this when you profile your ideal customers into personas in Step 3.

Understand your competitive landscape

Look at what your competitors are doing and what content they are publishing. Monitor what content is popular on an ongoing basis. You can then use this information to help you develop topics and sub-topics that can add value to your customers.

There are several tools and websites available to help you do this such as:

→ BuzzSumo buzzsumo.com	Tracks social shares and trending content online. It can be helpful to determine possible influencer sites and can provide inspiration for engaging headlines.
→ SEMRush semrush.com	Can help you conduct an audit of your site content to see which pieces perform better. Can also help you with backlinks, content ideas and keywords.
→ Feedly feedly.com	Can help you keep track of popular topics in your industry and provide you with content ideas.
→ Google Trends trends.google.com/trends/	Google Trends can show you what is trending on Google. You can search specific keywords or phrases and see how popular they have been over time.
→ Ubersuggest ubersuggest.com	Helps you find keywords and phrases that relate to your subject. Includes search volume, competition, and cost per click.

Step 3. Build your buyer personas

Create your personas

Download our **buyer persona template** to create profiles for each of your ideal customers in your target market, and then prioritise them as it takes some time to build content sets for each persona.

A few important things to consider:

- Will you develop personas based on your existing customers, potential customers or both?
- Do you have enough information from the research step to create your customer buyer personas?
- Can you identify the biggest challenges or frustrations (pain points) for each persona?

To start the process, pinpoint the customer groups who are most likely to buy your product/service and create personas for each group. A buyer persona is a representation of your ideal customer. They help us understand our customers better. Each persona has unique needs, beliefs, demographics, goals, interests, motivations and pain points. Your personas should be based on market research and insights gathered from your actual customer base during the research step.

Personas allow you to personalise your marketing communications for different audiences. If you know how far they are along in their buying cycle and where they are in the customer journey, you can create highly targeted messages. Understanding your buyers will allow you to create highly relevant content.

To start creating your buyer personas, you need to put yourself in the shoes of your customers:

- Think about who they are as people – are they male or female, what is their age, where do they live, what is their job role, do they have children, are they married or single, what do they like to do in their spare time, what are their interests, how do they interact with others and what are their preferred channels.
- Depending on whether your product or service is B2B or B2C, define their personal or job goals. This could be their KPIs at work, such as to generate sales or on a personal level, getting fit or saving for the future.
- Here are some questions you should be asking yourself:
 - Who is my ideal customer - who is most likely to buy my products/services?
 - Give them an Avatar, which helps you think about and relate to them.
 - How old are they?
 - What is their highest level of education?
 - What industry do they work in?
 - What size company employs them?
 - What is their job title?

Step 3. Build your buyer personas (cont.)

- What are their likely job objectives or KPIs?
- Whom do they report to?
- What are their goals?
- What are their most significant challenges and frustrations?
- What are their primary job responsibilities?
- How do they prefer to communicate with clients, suppliers and other stakeholders?
- What type of professional development activities do they engage in?
- What social media networks do they prefer?
- Why do they want to buy my product/service?
- What are their information needs?
- Are there any influencers who can help reach this audience?

You then need to repeat this for each persona you have created. You shouldn't have too many personas as they need to represent customer segments and be large enough to be a valid marketing audience.

Most companies will have 3 to 5 personas, but you should start with 1 or 2 priority personas and build from there. It often helps to understand the purchase decision-making criteria your personas work through, along with demographic and job function related characteristics to build their profiles. You will need this insight for Step 4 when you build the customer journey map and start to generate content ideas for each buying stage.

Understand the biggest challenges, frustrations or pain points each persona faces and then move on to Step 4 to start mapping content to each stage of the buying cycle.

Getting these pain points right, along with understanding how they affect your persona, will help you to work out your content creation plan. Think about what value in your area of expertise you can provide to address each persona's challenges or frustrations, and what content is best presented to them – for example, video, webinar, article, blog, white paper etc.

Then identify a central topic and sub-topic for this information. Do some research to make sure you incorporate SEO strategies into your content. There are some outstanding online services which offer premium online content writing and editing services like **fileroom.com**. The fileroom team really understand how the big picture works when it comes to content creation for your potential and existing customers.

Step 4. Map content to each persona's journey

Build out a customer journey map for each persona

Each persona will embark on a buying journey. They will hop backwards and forwards between the different stages of their buying journey. They might be close to deciding and making a purchase but then look at other products or come across some new information that cartwheels them back to a different stage of the journey. Their journey also involves different devices, many touch points and different channels through which they interact.

These buying journeys generally have the four stages listed below, and the type of content used for each stage and channel varies along the way.

- 👁 Awareness and interest
- 🧠 Research and consideration
- ↕ Decision and purchase
- 💖 Retention and advocacy

See below for an example of content best suited to each buying stage.

Mapping Strategy to Intent Stages

	👁 See	🧠 Think	↕ Do	💖 Care
Ad creative and target strategy	Broad creative, demographic, geographic, or psychographic targeting.	Narrower creative based on intent targeting on specific sites, content driven ads.	Focused creative based on intent signals. Targeting intent-specific, including retargeting.	Content-driven engagement, targeting based on interests, problems, goals.
Marketing outcome	Drive brand awareness and favourability.	Drive initial engagement and micro-conversions.	Drive sales.	Drive sales.
Marketing channel emphasis	Display, YouTube, Search Engine Optimisation (SEO), Social Media.	Pay-per-click (PPC), Search Engine Optimisation (SEO), YouTube, Social Media.	Pay-per-click (PPC), Affiliate, Email.	Video, Blogs, Content Rich Emails, Gamification.
Metrics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # or % interactions (platforms/ads). Conversions amplification, applause. Indexed increase in awareness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Click-through rate. Page depth. Per visit goal value. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visitor loyalty. Checkout abandonment rate. Conversion rate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repeat purchase. NPS (advocacy). CLTV (value).

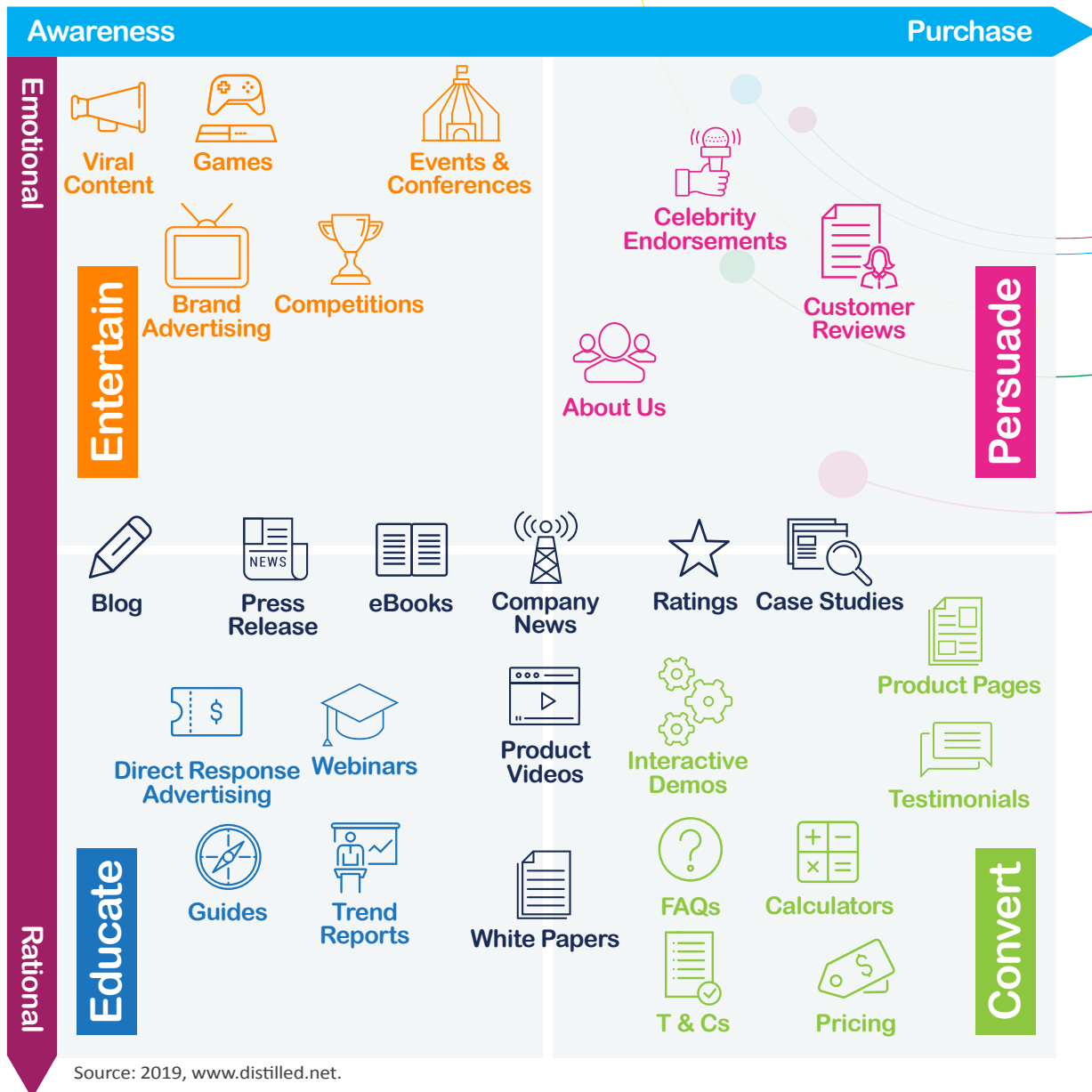
Reference: Northwestern University, Kellogg School of Management, 2019: Digital Marketing Strategies: Data Automation, AI & Analytics, Marketing



Step 4. Map content to each persona's journey (cont.)

Content format also varies according to the profile of your persona along with how emotional or rational the buying decision is for them.

The Content Matrix



Identify key buyer questions/issues and begin to craft content for each phase in the journey by identifying a main topic and a series of subtopics. **Download filerroom's persona content map template** to worksheet a journey map for each persona. Also, use our **content creation checklist** to be confident your piece also delivers to your goals. Make sure you can mention your products/services in passing in the awareness stage and as a solution in the consideration and purchase stages.

Most importantly, remember your research and focus on what your audience wants to know, not what you want to tell them!

Step 5. Conduct a content audit

List all the existing content marketing assets you already have (such as videos, case studies, white papers, webinars, eBooks, newsletters, brochures, tools, templates, guides and so forth). Identify what content will be of interest to your persona at each of the buying stages – what will engage them and build their trust in your organisation?

Assess whether your current content is working for you. **Screaming Frog** is an SEO tool that grabs all the URLs from your site. It allows you to find duplicate pages and identify missing titles and descriptions. Another useful tool is **SEMRush**. It includes a content audit tool that assesses content length, inbound links, and social shares.

These tools will help you see what's working and what is not. You can also quickly identify content gaps; these are places where new content can help achieve your goals.

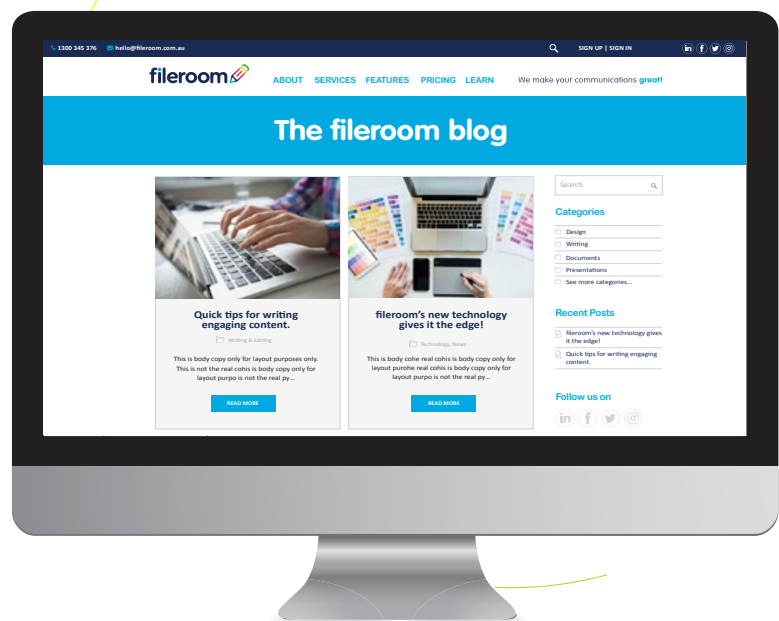
Content ideas can come from numerous sources – customers, staff, sponsors, events, innovations, thought leaders, customer feedback, surveys, market statistics etc. Use tools like **SEMRush** and **Keywords Everywhere** to find out what people are searching for and what content is popular in your space. Weave key messages into your content letting the reader know how your organisation can help them.

Your content should contain:

- Title Tag: 70 Characters.
- Meta Description: 156 Characters.
- Headlines: 55 Characters (or six to seven words).
- Sub-Heads: Eight to 10 Words (or less).
- Sentences: 25 Words or Less.
- Paragraphs: Three Sentences (or less).
- Keyword Stuffing: 1 to 3%.
- Alt-tags.

Use **fileroom's blog template** to make sure you cover the right things every time.

Sharing other people's content is one way to save time when building your own content. If you do this, be sure to give credit and ask permission from the content originator.



Step 5. Conduct a content audit (cont.)

Types of Content

Content Creation Ideas

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 🕒 How-to's | 🏠 "Day in the Life of" Post | 🗣️ Quotes |
| 📁 Content Curation | 📊 Infographics | 📝 Quizzes |
| 🔍 Case Studies | 🗣️ Interview | 📊 Polls |
| 📈 Charts / Graphs | 📋 Lists | 🎧 Podcasts |
| 📖 Ebooks | 🧠 Mind Maps | 📌 Pinboards |
| ✉️ Email Newsletters / Autoresponders | 😄 Meme | 🖼️ Photo Collage |
| 🎨 Cartoons / Illustrations | 🎮 Online Game | 🔍 Original Research |
| 📖 Book Summaries | 🔧 Helpful Application / Tool | 📰 Press Releases |
| 🔧 Tool Reviews | 🗣️ Opinion Post | 📷 Photos |
| 📺 Giveaways | 📄 White Papers | 💡 Predictions |
| ❓ FAQs | 📺 Vlog | 👤 User Generated Content |
| 💬 Q&A Sessions | 🎥 Videos | 📰 Company News |
| 🎓 Webinar | 📄 Templates | 📅 Timelines |
| 📖 Guides | 📊 Surveys | 💡 Resources |
| 📖 Dictionary | 📺 SlideShares | |

Create your content with the distribution channel in mind. For example, a video created for email marketing to existing customers may be different to a video created for your facebook page. Select channels based on who your current customers and potential customers are - see what media they are consuming. Then distribute your content on the platform with the highest concentration of your target audience.

SEO keywords

It is vital to do keyword research and then build keywords into your content. Keywords are the words people use to search for information and they are the words Google uses to identify what your content is about.

There are three basic types of keywords you should incorporate into your content:

- 1 **Short keywords**, words that identify a broad concept or group of items, for example **clothing**.
- 2 **Medium keywords** - two or three words that narrow the subject down, for example **women's clothing**.
- 3 **Long tail keywords**, which are longer still, for example, **women's winter sports clothing for golf**.

Step 5. Conduct a content audit (cont.)

Tools to help you define your keywords

- Google Analytics and Google Search Console will help you see what keywords currently bring searchers to your site.
- **SEMrush** and **Keywords Everywhere** are other useful tools that will help you find the right keywords for your business.

Repurpose your content

To get the most out of your content, try and reuse and repurpose content where possible.

For example, a blog post could:

- Become content for an email
- Become part of an eBook
- Be broken into several social media posts
- Be turned into an infographic
- Be reposted on appropriate groups and industry sites (for example, LinkedIn)

Rising Popularity of Videos

The popularity of video has grown exponentially in recent years with internet users consuming hours of video content each week. The millennial age group (25 to 34 years-old) watches the most video content. According to WordStream, 87% of online marketers now use video content and the average user spends 88% more time on a website with video. This means that you also need to be part of this trend, being there at the right time with the right message makes all the difference.

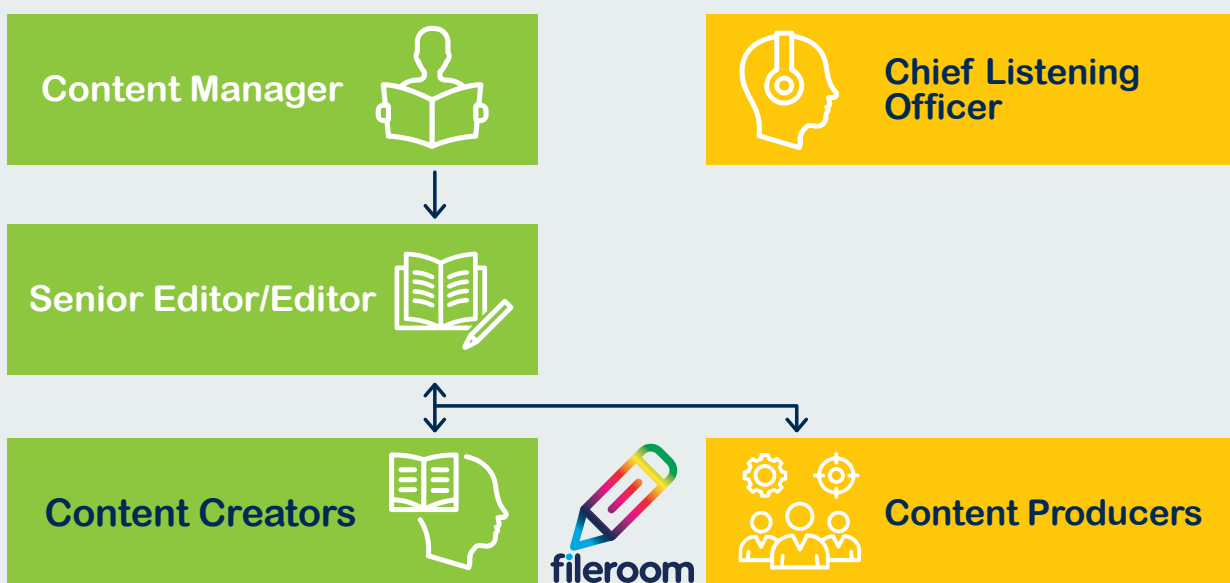


Step 6. Manage content creation & publication

Content Development Resources

You need to think about how you will manage content creation and publication. You will need resources (people and technology) to do this successfully. Creating content is an ongoing process, and it takes time and organisation. Below is one possible structure to follow, depending on the size of your organisation.

Your Content Creation Organisation



Extend your team & save precious time with fileroom.
We deliver content creation & production services when you need them.

Content Management

There are many great marketing automation platforms that come with content libraries such as **Hubspot** and **Marketo**; or you can use other document management platforms like **Dropbox**, **Sharefile**, **OneHub** and **Sharepoint** to manage versions, workflow and library content. There is also **fileroom** where you can work and manage content within your fileroom workspace; or by connecting your other file storage accounts.

Content Distribution

If you can - promote each piece of content through multiple channels. Where relevant, make sure your content is easy to share by including easy to use share buttons or links for your audience to use.

The following channels give you some ideas of how you can promote through different channels:

Organic Methods	Emails, social media posts, tweets, SEO, reaching out to influencers.
Paid Options	Sponsored posts, advertising, SEM (for example, Google Adwords).

Step 6. Manage content creation & publication (cont.)

Content Promotion Techniques

Social Media Marketing	Your content can gain greater visibility by using social media. Be sure to find out what social media channel is a ranking factor for each major search engine. Make sure your content is sharable, has a strong headline and includes an image to grab the reader's attention. Your keywords can be used as hashtags on social networks.
Email Marketing	Emails are a great way to keep your brand in front of subscribers and customers. Keep email content short, scannable and informative.
Link Building	<p>Links are extremely important for SEO. Tools like SEMrush can tell you who is already linking to you. Google uses links to assess the authority and relevance of your site for specific search terms. Google bots find content by following links, so links help Google find your content. The more quality links you can get, the higher your content will rank in search engines.</p> <p>There are three types of links:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1 Internal links – links on your site to your own content. This will help keep users on your site and assist them in finding the information that is relevant to them.2 Outbound links – links from your site to other sites. Be sure to include links to authoritative external sites.3 Inbound links (backlinks) – links from other sites to your site or content. You can read more about backlinking here.
Paid Online Advertising	Google AdWords allows you to display ads when people search for keywords. You only pay when someone clicks on your website or calls your business. This approach can deliver very good qualified leads but can be expensive.
Publish Content on Other Sites	Tools like Outbrain can help you get your content on other sites. Providing sponsored content is another effective way to introduce new customers to your brand.

Step 7. Measure your program

Digital Marketing Metrics and KPIs are values used by marketing teams to measure and track the performance of their marketing campaigns, including content strategy and engagement. Marketers use many channels and tools to promote their products and services and tracking these in real-time is essential to maximising the performance of your campaigns. It also ensures you have enough budget allocated to the right channels.

The top 9 KPIs for modern digital marketers are:

- Web traffic sources
- Brand awareness
- Cost per lead
- Website traffic leads
- Returning visitors
- Online conversion rates
- Lead conversion rates
- Click thru rate
- Customer lifetime value

All of these relate to your content strategy in some way. It is the type of communication and content you provide to your customer that drives them to your website. As your strategy will consist of many different content formats, it is important to know which formats your audience prefers most. Get started with measuring the KPIs above and you can add more as you build out your content marketing program.

Also, have you heard of Agile marketing? Agile marketing is a tactical marketing approach in which modern marketing teams today are using sprints (short, finite periods of intensive work) to execute marketing projects cooperatively. These teams are integrating agile into their marketing execution as it is a great method to continually test, iterate and refine your marketing campaigns to assess their effectiveness until you get the response you need. Then you can scale and maximise campaign performance.

Remember, you can measure persona content engagement in small parts by asking the following questions and analysing the data:

- Did your audience act on your content?
- Did your content move the customer along the buying journey or did they drop off?
- Can you identify where they dropped off and why?
- Can you fix/change the content and try again?

Your content strategy is a dynamic document and should be updated regularly.

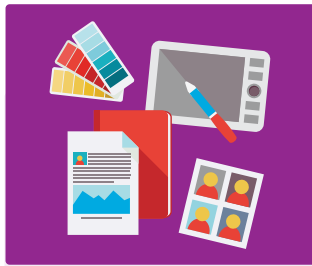
Many of the tools mentioned throughout this guide include some sort of analytics reporting to help you track how your content is performing. Facebook, YouTube, HubSpot and Hootsuite all have built-in analytics dashboards.

Tools like CrazyEgg, Hot Jar and Kissmetrics provide reports showing how many visitors came to your website, what they clicked on and how they moved through your site. Lastly, tools like Klipfolio can bring all your analytics into one dashboard to make it easier.

These are essential tools to use to know how your content strategy is performing.

We did say it was a science!

Content creation made easy



Document & Graphic Design



Professional Writing & Editing



Video Production



Document Formatting

We bring your whole content creation journey together in one, easy to use, secure platform that provides you with collaboration tools and service delivery.

Key platform features



Brand Room

Upload, manage and store all your brand assets in your very own brand room.



Content Room

You can create content and collaborate with your team before ordering a service, or simply upload your files when you are ready to go.



Pricing Calculator

Use our pricing calculator to get a quote and place an order, or submit a quote request form for those more complex projects.



Job Tracker

Use our job tracker to monitor your jobs and confirm they are on schedule.



Secure Platform

Industry leading, military grade protection to keep your information safe.



Live Chat





Live chat with our team members at any time during business hours.

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Sign-up for free today and receive 25 frequent file points to use for your first job. That's \$25.

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