

THE *Fundamentals* OF CONTENT MARKETING



Introduction

It may be a phrase you've heard of before, - and one that many of you could possibly be tired of hearing - but when your business is online, content is indeed **KING**. Besides online advertising options, businesses need to market themselves organically to grow their audience, to increase their number of leads, and to drive sales. Content creation is one of the key ways of achieving this.

CONTENT MARKETING works in several ways to increase your reach online, which in turn helps you earn leads and customers. Of course, it's not just a simple matter of creating any old content and calling it a day. Like any marketing strategy, your content needs to be considered and crafted for results.

In this eBook, I will take you through the fundamentals of content marketing across blogging, offer creation and social media. I will cover:

- What is content marketing?
- Getting started
 - Blogging
 - Offers
 - Social media
- Important tips for content marketing
- Frequency
- Goals & ROI



WHAT IS *Content Marketing*?

As you no doubt surmised, the **KEY ASPECT** of content marketing is **CONTENT**. Online, content is important. Whether this content is being created on your website, your social media pages or any other online channel, you are creating something of value - something that runs deeper and is more enduring than traditional marketing/advertising efforts.

The key to content marketing is that whatever content you create is going to be of **VALUE** to your target audience. This content can be a blog, eBooks, whitepapers, webinars, social media posts, competitions, and so on. You are constantly crafting new content to keep your audience **ENGAGED** with your brand.

Most important, you're giving them more and more reasons to form a positive association with your brand. This association inspires trust, which only serves to elevate your brand in the eyes of your audience. An audience that trusts your brand is going to have far greater incentive to do business with you.

There is a clear causality between content marketing and sales. The more relevant and rewarding content you can offer your audience, the more leads and customers you will earn.

GETTING *Started*

So, where should you start? It's an important question because content marketing can't simply be a haphazard creation of content with no follow-through. Everything is connected. Just having a blog doesn't work if it's not leading to anything. A blog should include **CALLS-TO-ACTION** that lead to **OFFER PAGES** where people can access/download premium content in exchange for some basic contact details - that's how you **EARN A LEAD**.

Similarly, you can't just have a social media presence with no clear purpose of driving people to your site or getting them involved in ways that will earn you new customers. If you don't put all the pieces of your content marketing puzzle together correctly, you'll struggle to get a true return on investment from it.

GETTING *Started*

> BLOGGING

How you set up your blog is an important factor to consider. If your site is run through WordPress, you could introduce a blog through that with relative ease. Otherwise, other Content Management Systems such as HubSpot can be add a blog to your current site with a near-identical look and design. The benefit of a product such as HubSpot is that it will also offer you extensive metrics, calls-to-action and landing page tools, social media integration, and more.

The benefits of blogging are many, and the more you blog, the more pronounced these benefits become. Some key ways in which hosting a blog on your site will assist your business include:

- **SEARCH ENGINE RANKINGS:** The more blogs you create, the more opportunities you have to rank for keywords and build your site's authority. Greater keyword placement, improved traffic numbers, social media sharing of your articles, etc. - all of these help push you up search engine results, making you more discoverable to your ideal audience.
- **INCREASED TRAFFIC:** The reason static sites struggle to drive large traffic numbers is because they fail to offer anything new to people who visit. A blog helps by making your website dynamic, by offering visitors something new every time they land on your page. When people know they'll have something new to read and enjoy on an ongoing basis, it compels them to return and, in turn, inspires a stronger association with your brand.

GETTING *Started*

> BLOGGING (CONT'D)

- **SOCIAL MEDIA WORD-OF-MOUTH:** If you include social sharing buttons on your blog, you allow readers to easily and efficiently share articles with their friends, family, colleagues and followers. Even if your business does not have a social media presence (but it should, for the record), social sharing will still earn you valuable social media exposure. Of course, not all articles will get shares, but those that truly stand out and speak to your audience have a greater chance of inspiring social media word-of-mouth.
- **AUTHORITY / PROOF OF EXPERTISE:** Another important way a blog benefits your business is by building your authority as an expert within your industry. Many businesses can include an 'About Us' or 'Products/Services' page where they offer a basic rundown of what they do and what they know, but a blog allows you go more in depth. With a constant flow of new content coming out, each new piece is an opportunity for you to teach your readers, provide them with unique insights, and prove your expertise.



GETTING *Started*

> OFFERS (E.G. WEBINARS, EBOOKS, SPECIALS)

A substantial part of any good content marketing strategy is to create pieces of content that are classed as **OFFERS** or **PREMIUM CONTENT**. These are anything that your website's visitors can gain access to in exchange for filling out an offer form - this form allows you to source basic information such as their name, email address, and any other fundamental information you may deem important for your lead nurturing strategies (lead nurturing is where you take a lead you've earned and nurture them towards become a customer/sale).

It's the fact offers earn you leads that makes them so important. The blog brings traffic in, offers turn qualified traffic into leads, and leads have the potential of becoming customers. Offers can be a range of different premium content, such as:

- **EBOOKS/WHITE PAPERS:** eBooks and white papers serve similar functions, but achieve them in slightly different ways. White papers are typically more succinct and technical (e.g. a blogging cheat sheet), whereas eBooks tend to be longer in length and break information down into easier-to-understand segments. With eBooks, it's about quality over quantity. You don't need your eBook to be massive to be worth it.



GETTING *Started*

> OFFERS (CONT'D)

- **WEBINARS:** Webinars do require a lot of prep work, but their visual, easy-to-follow style make them very appealing to people who want to learn more about a certain topic. As the name suggests, webinars are web-based seminars. You use a webinar platform, set your slides up, get some recording equipment and can either pre-record your webinar or do it live (which can also be saved and be archived for those who missed the live event).
- **TEMPLATES:** Depending on the nature of your business, you may be able to offer templates. A basic example could be a workplace efficiency template where those who download the template have an easy way of better allotting time to set tasks and necessary actions.
- **SPECIALS:** A more straightforward type of offer, specials can help give you an immediate boost of customers/clients. Your special could be a certain percentage off a product, a trial run of your business's services , or even something for free.



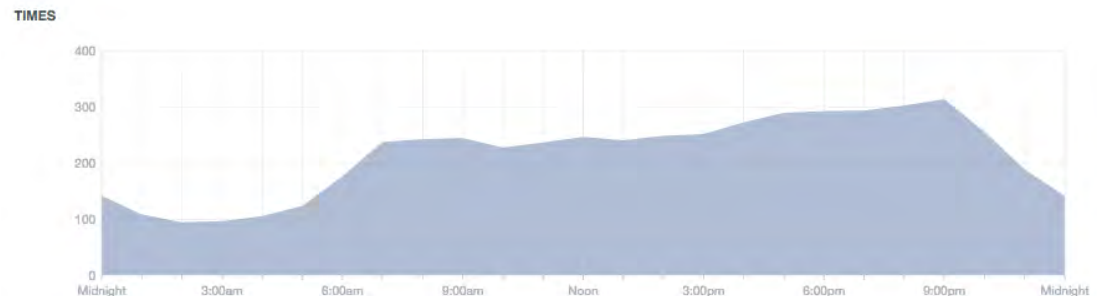
GETTING *Started*

> SOCIAL MEDIA

If you're creating content, then social media should play a **FUNDAMENTAL ROLE** in this process. Just like the blog on your website or the offers you present to potential leads, your social media accounts can be used for content creation, as well. The key difference is that the content you craft on social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter isn't going to be as extensive as the content on your website.

Of course, almost any social network can be used to promote your on-site content (e.g. your blog and offers), but they should also be used to post **NATIVE CONTENT** that will drive engagement with your fans/followers. Social networks such as Twitter and Google+ surface all content you post on users' feeds and timelines, whereas Facebook surfaces content based off its EdgeRank algorithm. You can read more about EdgeRank [here](#).

Your social media pages shouldn't just be used to constantly drive traffic back to your website. They should be used to pose questions to your audience, show photos or videos of your workplace or your team in action, or simply update your audience on what's new. With social networks like Facebook, you can access 'Insights' to see what times of the day most of your audience is active, meaning you can post at ideal times to capture their interest.



TIPS FOR *Content Marketing*

When it comes to content marketing, there are some **KEY TIPS** you'll want to keep in mind. Some differ from platform to platform, but there are others that can be applied in a more universal sense. As long as you account for these basics, you'll be able to keep your content marketing efforts more **RELEVANT** and **EFFECTIVE**.

> RELEVANCE IS KEY

Regardless of the platform you're executing content marketing strategies on, a key rule that applies to all of them is **RELEVANCE**. Your business has a particular purpose. It's B2B or B2C (or it could be both). It could be a restaurant, a toy store, an insurance brokerage, a marketing company. No matter what it is, you have a **SPECIFIC AUDIENCE**. Some audiences will be broader than others, but any content you create needs to speak to that audience.

For example, if you're an insurance company, it would make sense to write about pet insurance, but it probably wouldn't make as much sense to just talk about pets in general (unless you can get that topic to then link back to the importance of pet insurance). If you run a restaurant, it'd be odd to talk about painting pools or the latest in celebrity gossip. It's a very basic logic, but important to remember. Don't go on tangents about subjects or topics unless they at least relate to the nature or culture of your business in some way.

TIPS FOR *Content Marketing*

> SET LIMITS (BLOGGING AND OFFER CREATION)

The trick with content marketing is knowing where to draw a line in terms of **WORD COUNT**. Naturally, on social media most will keep it short and sweet, but with blogs and offers such as eBooks, there's a lessened sense of word restriction. But just because you can write more doesn't mean you should go overboard.

With online content, people prefer it when most articles don't run on too long. You can have the occasional long piece, but keeping your word count somewhere between **600 TO 800 WORDS** at most with blogs is a good cap off point. If you've got something that equates to around 1,500 words, consider turning it into a two-piece article. For eBooks, you can go longer, but aiming for **15 TO 20 PAGES** is a good benchmark. Less is fine, as well, but try to make it so your eBooks can be read in one sitting.

> BE CONSISTENT

The success of content marketing isn't just a matter of the quality of what you create - although that is certainly one of the most important factors. **CONSISTENCY** is also a key ingredient to a successful content marketing strategy. If you fail to upload new blogs on a regular basis, then that lack of consistency hurts your overall strategy. When someone knows a new blog will go up every day, then they know that they'll have something new to read when they revisit your site day after day.

Consistency across all your content marketing is important, from your blogs to your social media activity. It makes it easier to build a more **LOYAL READERSHIP** and a **QUALIFIED AUDIENCE** when you have something new to offer them on a regular and, yes, predictable basis.

TIPS FOR *Content Marketing*

> KEEP REFINING

The key goal of content marketing is to **DRIVE QUALIFIED TRAFFIC** to your website - the type of traffic that has a higher likelihood of converting, becoming leads and, ultimately, customers. You're not going to nail your content marketing straight away, so you need to continuously refine your content.

After the first few months, take a look at what you've crafted and see which types of content are garnering you the biggest numbers in terms of traffic, leads, and customer acquisition. You should primarily focus on content that assists in bringing you leads. So which articles or offers are resulting in the best traffic-to-leads ratios? It's these type of articles or offers that you may want to follow through on in the future. Or, at least, you'll identify the types of subjects and points of discussion that inspire true results.

Whatever you do, don't keep throwing content up **WITHOUT** measuring its **ROI**. Failing to do so means you could be spending hours upon hours crafting content that isn't really benefiting your business at all.

Frequency

As I mentioned in the last section, you need to be consistent with your content output. That said, consistency does not equal **FREQUENCY**. Not every business needs to publish a blog every day, not every business needs to create a new offer every month, not every business needs to send out multiple social media posts a day.

While a frequent, consistent output of content can be very beneficial, what matters most is finding a output schedule that works for you. Only able to write one blog a week? That's fine, as long as you ensure a blog goes out each week and, preferably, on the same day each week. Work with the time you have available to devote to content marketing.

Often, too much content in small periods of time can end up hurting your business anyway. Because if users are hit with a torrent of content on a constant basis, it can start to feel like **SPAM**. This can have an unwanted result of them pulling away. Different businesses will have a different ideal balance. So make sure you work with what you can do, how much your audience wants, and find a happy medium.

Goals & ROI

As with any marketing strategy, you need to have **GOALS**. You should also have a way of measuring whether or not your efforts are garnering any true **RETURN ON INVESTMENT (ROI)**. Having goals will help inform your means of measuring ROI, so the two ultimately complement one another. If your content marketing efforts aren't reaching the customer acquisition/sales goals you've set out, that effectively means they're falling short of your desired ROI.

It is important to be **REALISTIC**, however. For example, it's unrealistic to expect that within a month of starting your content marketing efforts that you'll be able to acquire 20 new customers through those efforts alone. Even if you're a big business, a content marketing strategy will not start working at the flick of a switch. Initial goals should focus on increases in traffic, leads and improved search engine rankings. Yes, you should also have **CUSTOMER GOALS**, but not massive ones. It takes a few months of solid content creation before the true benefits start to show.

By three months, you should absolutely be seeing an increase in your number of leads (provided you have offer-based content) and customers. If you're not, then you may need to revise your current content marketing approach. You could be focusing on the wrong audience, crafting the wrong content, or your lead conversion / offer forms may need some revision. There can be several reasons for an underperforming content marketing strategy, but you need to narrow down where your key problem areas are.

Content marketing is suitable for almost any business, but how well it serves you to reach sales goals and offer true ROI depends heavily on how you're going about it. As I've mentioned, you're not going to nail your strategy straight away. It will require revisions and ongoing changes. But once you get your strategy focused and streamlined, solid ROI should follow.

Conclusion

Now that you have the **FUNDAMENTALS OF CONTENT MARKETING** covered, you can start pursuing a content marketing strategy that will work for your business. Remember, you want to keep your content relevant so that you capture the interest of your target market. More importantly, don't expect to get your strategy right straight away. There is no such thing as a truly flawless first attempt at something as long term and commitment-based as content marketing.

As long as you stick with it and continue to refine your strategy along the way, you should find your efforts are rewarded with more qualified traffic coming to you. This traffic will be more likely to convert and, of course, turn into valued customers.

If you'd like to find out more about content marketing or need help running your own content marketing strategy, **MARGIN MEDIA** can help. Feel free to [Contact Us](#) online or call us on 1300 798 848.