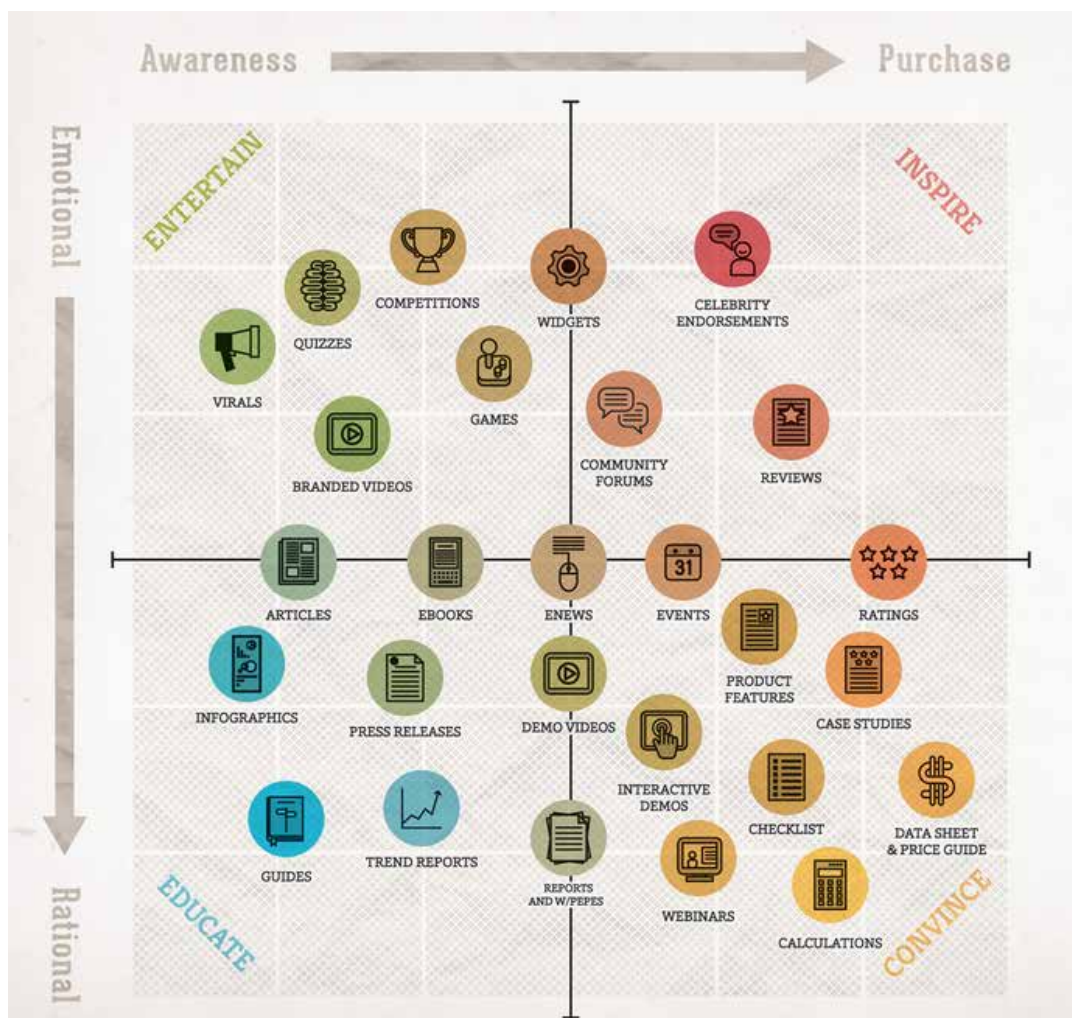


CONTENT MARKETING STRATEGY GUIDE

Create a structured plan to reach and convert more using the power of online content

Author: Stephen Bateman

Edited: Dr Dave Chaffey



Content Marketing Strategy

Seven Steps to Success Guide

Contents

Introduction.....	5
Why is content marketing important?	5
Defining content marketing	5
How content marketing supports marketing goals	5
Create a content hub to give sustained, integration communications	7
About this guide	11
ONE. Content Marketing Capability Audit and Setting Goals	14
Introduction	14
The content explosion	14
Why it's important to audit your content marketing capability.	15
How to set goals for your content marketing strategy. What do you want your content marketing to deliver?	18
Getting buy-in for content marketing	23
Making the business case and getting buy-in for content marketing	25
TWO. Define Audiences and Personas	29
Discover your "content marketing sweet spot."	29
How to create personas for content marketing	30
THREE. Define your content marketing strategy	40
Define the key parts of your content strategy.....	40
Link your strategy to goals	41
Define the value you will offer your audience through your content.....	43
Specifying the value your content offers	44
Content types and formats.....	44
Content Matrix.....	46
A closer look at different content formats.....	47
How to audit and inventory your marketing content	55
Get effective editorial governance in place	64

ONE.
Audit and Goals

TWO.
Define Audiences
and Personas

THREE.
Strategy

FOUR.
Editorial Management

FIVE.
Content Hub

SIX.
Content Distribution

SEVEN.
Evaluate and
Measure ROI

Techniques	65
Do you have the right team in place?	67
FOUR. Editorial Management	73
Develop your editorial calendar.....	73
Create your content hub.....	78
Guidance on using a blogging platform as your content hub	84
Running an effective blog or content hub	86
FIVE. Create compelling content for your content hub	89
Review options for creating and sourcing content	89
Great content	92
Content curation.....	97
Hinge content around a 'big hairy audacious content idea' (BHACI)	101
25 Ideas for atomising your content.....	102
SIX. Content Distribution	105
Distribution happens late, but is planned early	105
Recommended best practices	105
The role of influencer in your content marketing outreach	109
Paid distribution	112
Recommended best practices	113
SEVEN. Evaluate and Measure ROI	115
What is ROI?	115
How to measure ROI for content marketing?	116
Using Google Analytics Actionable analytics for content marketing	119
Setting KPIs for content marketing	120
Using Google Analytics: Actionable analytics for content marketing	121
Some examples of how to review content marketing effectiveness in Google Analytics ..	122

ONE.
Audit and Goals

TWO. Define Audiences
and Personas

THREE.
Strategy

FOUR.
Editorial Management

FIVE.
Content Hub

SIX.
Content Distribution

SEVEN. Evaluate and
Measure ROI

Introduction

In this guide, we explain how to use content marketing more strategically to support the growth of a business. Through following a strategic content marketing process structured around our seven pillars of content marketing, your activities will be more closely aligned with your objectives to show demonstrable return on marketing investment (ROMI).

In this introduction we explore the benefits of content marketing and explain the 'Content Marketing blueprint' which will help you explain to colleagues how to create a powerful content marketing machine.

Why is content marketing so important?

We love the focus on content marketing today since we see content marketing as the fuel for all your core digital marketing activities like search, social media, email and landing page marketing. Get it right and it will build an audience and by engaging them, encourage them to buy and share content with others while creating rich insight to help create more relevant recommendations.

A content marketing strategy has the benefit that it doesn't seek to improve one channel in isolation as an SEO, Social media or email marketing or company website 'strategy', instead it gives a multi-channel lifecycle engagement strategy, unifying ALL your digital marketing communications to support customer acquisition, retention and growth goals. A coherent content marketing plan will reduce the need for separate plans for individual digital marketing activities.

A content marketing strategy can also help counter customer engagement which is one of the biggest challenges of marketing today given the range of channels and time-poor audience. Customer engagement is the key to igniting your customer engagement and generating demand using targeted, relevant, discoverable and optimised content that gives you and your business the higher level of visibility and authority needed in search results and everywhere your audiences are researching and discussing their problems, issues, needs and struggles. Of course, as you will see throughout this guide, it is the quality of your content that is critical to driving successful conversion to lead and sale on your website and social presences.

Defining content marketing

Joe Pulizzi, founder of the Content Marketing Institute, defines content marketing as:

"How a brand creates, delivers and governs original or curated content to attract and retain customers, positioning the brand as a credible expert and, ultimately, motivating a change in behaviour"

We agree! An effective content marketing strategy supports buyers at every stage of their buying cycle, leaving no gaps for prospects to fall through. As such, content marketing is the marketing strategy that helps target audiences move through the lifecycle to purchase.

What is it? Content marketing

Content marketing involves creating and distributing different types of content that fuel all your core digital marketing activities to engage and persuade your audience to meet your goals across the customer lifecycle.

How content marketing supports marketing goals

On the next page, our *Digital Marketing Radar* shows why content marketing is so important today. The Radar shows all the different types of site that are content-driven. Increasingly, it's content that's the currency to give you visibility. Content marketing covers all of these.

ONE.
Audit and Goals

TWO. Define Audiences
and Personas

THREE.
Strategy

FOUR.
Editorial Management

FIVE.
Content Hub

SIX.
Content Distribution

SEVEN. Evaluate and
Measure ROI

For us, these are the reasons why content marketing is central to success online:

- ✔ **Share-worthy content creates awareness for your brand.** If your content engages readers they will share it via their social accounts, email or word-of-mouth as a recommendation. Everyone is an influencer today!
- ✔ **Content drives results from SEO.** Google has made this important since 1998 when it launched. Content became, and still is, king since websites are content and being found relies on content.
- ✔ **Content drives purchases.** We base our decisions on online content when shopping online or researching for offline purchases.
- ✔ **Syndicated content drives purchases.** Content marketing strategy is much broader than your site since it includes content on social networks, online publishers, comparison sites, blogs and many other types of influencer site.
- ✔ **User generated content drives purchases.** Buyer behaviour has changed, we now want to reference wider opinion from others like us about products and services, whether rating sites, blogs or social networks – buyers dig out content to help their decision making.
- ✔ **Content on a range of platforms drives purchases.** The importance of the internet continues to increase as technology (especially smart phones and tablets) evolve and we evolve with them.

Content marketing supports and integrates all the core digital media channels

Another way to explain the power of content marketing is simply through the digital channels it can support. We have toolkits in the members area for each of these:

- ✔ **1. Natural Search.** Content on your own site is core to supporting Search Engine Optimisation (SEO), one of the key sources of new visitors to a site. The relevance of keywords and quality of content is what attracts visitors and perhaps more importantly links from other sites which help you site outrank competitors.
- ✔ **2. Paid search (AdWords).** It's also important to give relevant content on paid search landing pages to gain a better quality score in Google and to gain conversions. Both are important to get ROI from AdWords.
- ✔ **3. Online PR.** The stories you share via other sites are ultimately content and increasingly link back to content on a site, for example in a [social media newsroom](#).
- ✔ **4. Social media marketing.** The status updates you share through social networks and other sites are micro-content too and typically will link back to content on your site or blog. So they should be part of a unified content marketing strategy to engage different audiences.
- ✔ **5. Display advertising.** Display ad formats like banners and skyscrapers need to engage and link to deeper content on site like the other channels in this list. There are also great opportunities to engage through [retargeting](#) or [AdWords remarketing](#).
- ✔ **6. Email marketing.** Email marketing is perhaps the Granddaddy, the most established of all these digital communications techniques. Enewsletters have always required quality content to engage and this is even more true today with inbox competition and competition from the social status updates. The content and offers and emails need to be integrated with all these other channels.
- ✔ **7. Mobile marketing.** Mobile marketing gives new options for delivering communications via each of the channels above. Since smartphone or tablet platforms are often used in different contexts this implies new types and formats of content may be needed to engage mobile users.

ONE.
Audit and Goals

TWO. Define Audiences
and Personas

THREE.
Strategy

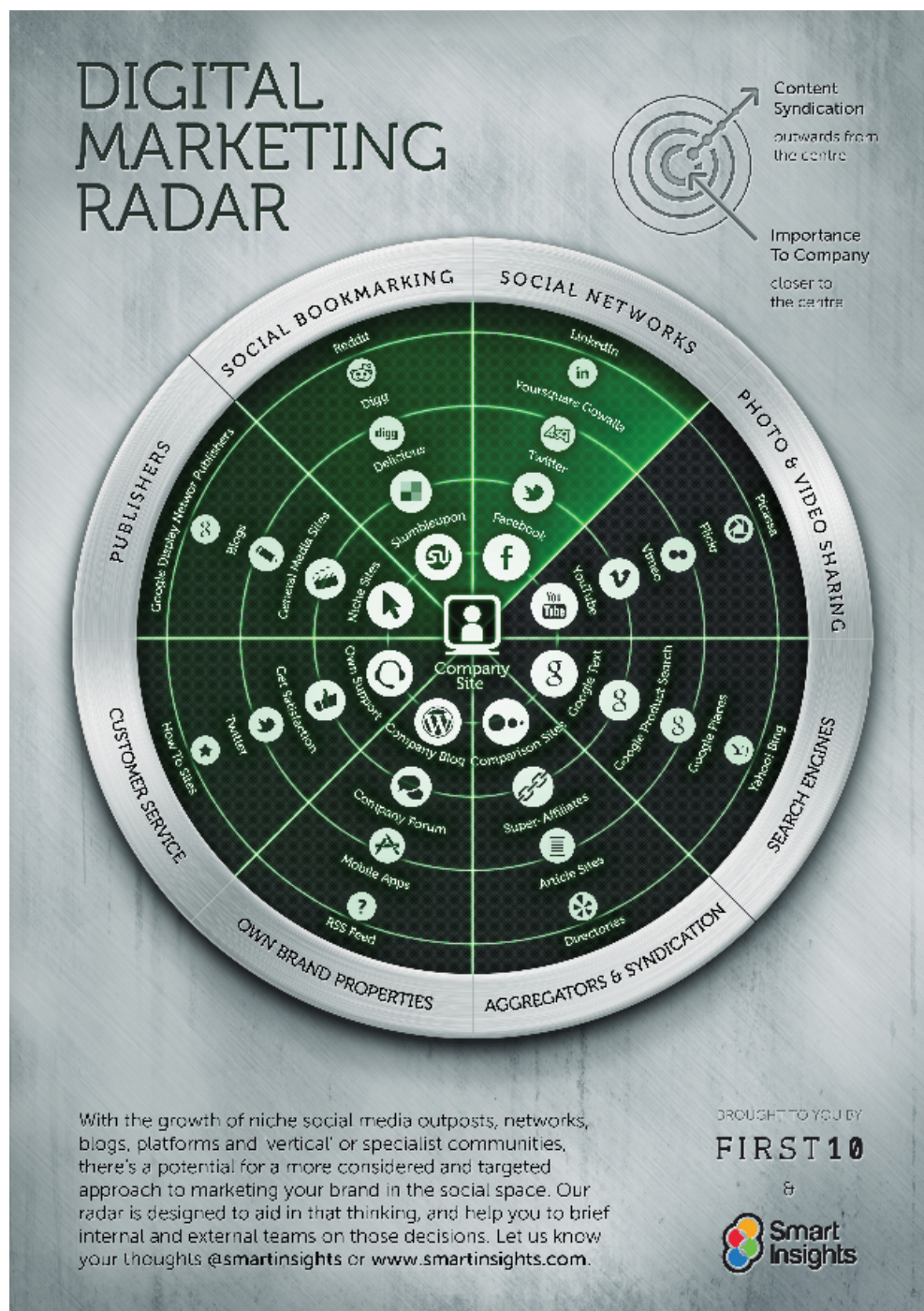
FOUR.
Editorial Management

FIVE.
Content Hub

SIX.
Content Distribution

SEVEN. Evaluate and
Measure ROI

Demonstrate to colleagues how content marketing supports and integrates many core digital marketing activities enabling it to be managed as a whole.



SEVEN. Evaluate and Measure ROI

ONE. Audit and Goals

TWO. Define Audiences and Personas

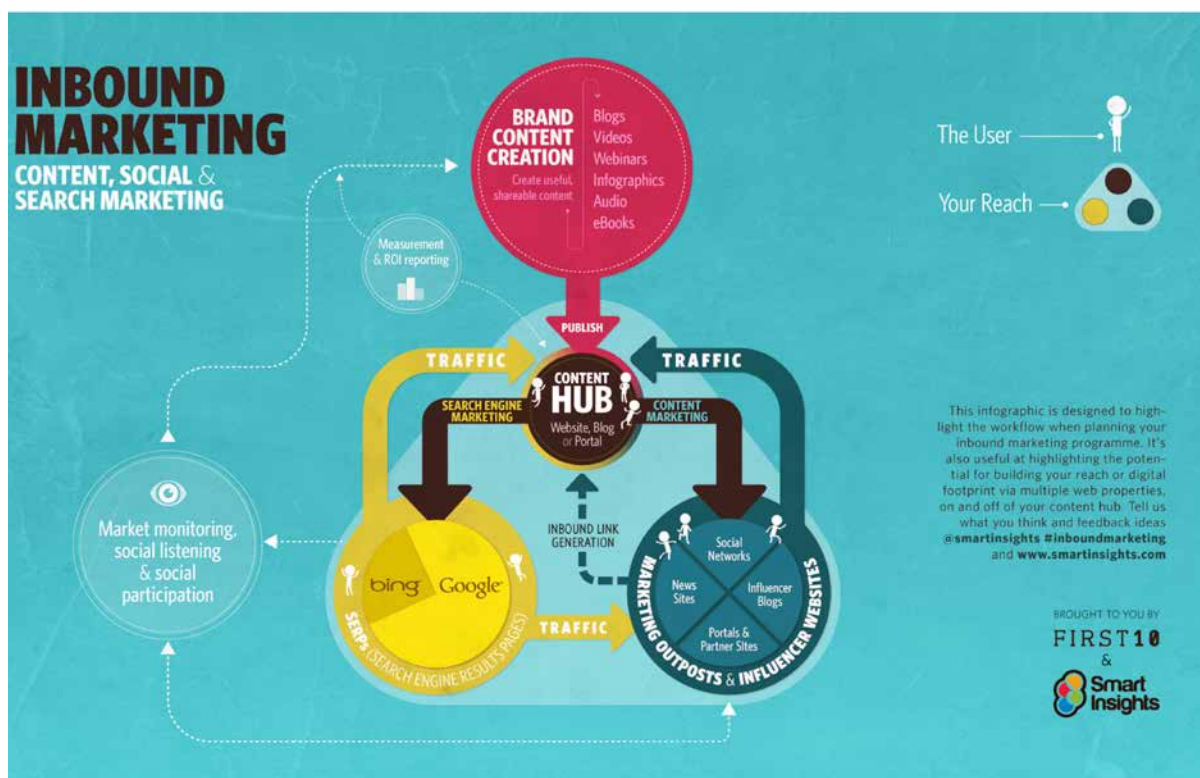
THREE Strategy

FOUR.
Editorial Management

- ## FIVE. Content Hub

SIX. Content Distribution

SEVEN. Evaluate and Measure ROI



your Content Hub to engage your audience and encourage sharing. To reach more people beyond organic sharing or 'social media amplification' involves using influencer outreach on Marketing Outposts and Influencer Websites to encourage people or publications who have a following to share your content. The combined effect should be to boost your position in the search results pages (SERPs). Research conducted across Hubspot's customers show that those who publish the most content tend to be most successful. Finally you can use Market Monitoring, Social listening and social participation to boost your real-time marketing and become more responsive to the interests and needs of your audience.

The blueprint is aimed at emphasising the key aspects of content marketing:

1. The quality and range of content must be outstanding and sustained to compete.
2. You need a defined, branded hub to share content
3. You need to invest in seeding content and using influencers to increase awareness and sharing of content
4. If you get the whole process right it will support your overall brand marketing goals
5. You need the people, tools and process to monitor and optimise content and sharing effectiveness.

What if I don't have the resources or time to create a content hub?

A Content Hub won't be essential for all businesses. Very small businesses who don't have the resources to fuel it may find that their Facebook or LinkedIn page acts better as a hub, but larger businesses will want their own website to be a destination for engagement and purchase. Remember you don't have to create new, original content every day, once a week or once a month may be all that's needed and it's best to have this content on your site than on a social network alone.

We will talk a lot about how to create and manage content hubs, plus give examples of them in this guide. For now, here are some well-known, successful hub examples from different sectors:

- ✓ **Car insurance** – [Confused.com](#) blog, now positioned as a magazine.
- ✓ **Consumer brand** – [L'Oreal's Makeup.com](#)
- ✓ **Financial services** – [HSBC Expat Explorer](#)
- ✓ **Retail** – [Mr Porter's Journal](#) blog
- ✓ **Travel** – [Kuoni Travel](#) inspiration
- ✓ **SME B2B** – [American Express Open Forum](#) – advice content incorporating a community
- ✓ **Enterprise B2B** – [Adobe CMO.com](#)

You can see more examples of hubs to inspire you here¹. These examples focus on an audience and we commend them since the brands behind them have invested to sustain them through time.

How content marketing supports customer management

A more strategic way of showing colleagues the power of content marketing is to relate it to supporting marketing objectives across all the stages of the customer lifecycle as defined by the Smart Insights RACE planning framework which we have developed to help create integrated digital plans.

- ✓ **Stage 1 Reach** involves building awareness of a brand, its products and services on other sites and in offline media and building traffic by driving visits to web presences.
- ✓ **Stage 2 Act** stands for interact, your aim is to achieve the initial engagement of your

¹ [Marketing Insider Group : 99 examples of Content Hubs](#)

visitors when they enter your site. KPIs include bounce rates, time spent on site and page views. High page views, long dwell times and low bounce rates are all signs that your audience is engaged.

- ✓ **Stage 3 Convert** – Achieve conversion to marketing goals such as new fans, leads or sales on web presences and offline.
- ✓ **Stage 4 Engage**. Build customer relationships through time to achieve retention goals. Google is less satisfactory in this area since it doesn't have suitable metrics and you may have to derive these through your sales systems.

The role of content marketing in supporting the marketing goals of each part of RACE are summarised in this infographic. You can see the role that content provides in each.



ONE. Audit and Goals
TWO. Define Audiences and Personas
THREE. Strategy
FOUR. Editorial Management
FIVE. Content Hub
SIX. Content Distribution
SEVEN. Evaluate and Measure ROI

About this guide

The Smart Insights Content Marketing toolkit

This guide is a key component of the Smart Insights content marketing toolkit in the members area². We recommend you consult the other resources in the toolkit to support your improvement in content marketing. We recommend:

- ✓ Score your capability using our interactive benchmarking tool which gives you a score for 7 areas of content marketing and then recommends where to focus
- ✓ Complete the e-learning which follows a similar structure to this guide with each section marked off as you complete it
- ✓ Download the editorial planning spreadsheets to create a content plan
- ✓ Download the evaluating content marketing guide which has more details

The screenshot shows the 'Content Marketing' toolkit interface. At the top, it says 'Toolkits > Content Marketing'. The main heading is 'Content Marketing'. Below this, a paragraph states: 'We see content marketing as the fuel for all the core digital marketing activities to engage and persuade your audience. Use our toolkit to develop a more strategic approach and use our templates to manage your content marketing activities.' A four-step process bar is shown: 1. Complete our Content Marketing Capability assessment, 2. Start our Content Marketing e-learning course, 3. Browse the Content Marketing resources, and 4. Unlock all resources with expert membership. The main content area is divided into three sections: 'Content strategy' with a 'Content marketing strategy guide' (last updated 05th Jan 2016, last accessed 08th Apr 2014), 'Content management' with 'Managing content marketing guide' (last updated 05th Jan 2016, last accessed Not accessed yet) and 'Influencer outreach guide' (last updated 09th Jan 2016, last accessed 11th Aug 2015), and 'Content scheduling' with an 'Editorial calendar spreadsheet' (last updated 18th Jan 2016, last accessed 05th Jun 2014). On the right, there are two summary cards: '3.0 Capability score' (5 stars, last taken 30th Dec 2015, with a 'Review capability' button) and '25% Elearning complete' (with a progress bar and a trophy icon, noting 'Your last activity was on 13th Jan 2016').

We also recommend these closely-related toolkits to get improve content marketing:

- ✓ Campaign planning – structure integrated, content-led campaigns
- ✓ Email marketing – use the contact strategy for content to be delivered by email
- ✓ Search engine optimisation – learn the principles to gain evergreen traffic
- ✓ Social media marketing – best practices for social sharing

² [Smart Insights Content Marketing Toolkit](#) (In the members' area, so sign-in needed).

How is this guide structured around the seven pillars of a strategic content marketing approach?

This guide is structured using a tried, tested and trusted content marketing strategy planning process developed by Stephen Bateman. The methodology encompasses five stages, atomised into seven pillars, which make up the steps in this guide:

Diagnose and Plan Create a strategic structure for content marketing.		Ideate Generate a flow of ideas and governance for your content marketing activity.		Produce Create your content.		Distribute and Nurture Market your marketing.		Measure & Report Evaluate, improve and prove content marketing ROI	
Audit Content Marketing Capability Set Goals for Content Marketing	Define Audiences Create Buyer Personas Buying cycle analysis Keyword analysis	Audit Existing Assets Select Content Types Define Mix Define Governance	Editorial management Create Content Hub Use Content Calendar Content Factory	Options for creating content	Content Creation Systems and Tools Content Curation	Options for Content Distribution and Promotion including Owned, Earned and Paid Influencer Outreach	Identify and Set Content Marketing Metrics and KPIs	Track and Report Content Marketing Activity	
Step 1 Audit and goals	Step 2 Audience and Personas	Step 3 Content Strategy	Step 4 Editorial	Step 5 Create content hub		Step 6 Content distribution	Step 7 Evaluate and measure ROI		

Who is this guide for?

This guide is for anyone who is responsible for the quality of marketing content in their organisation, or their clients.

It is for people who are interested in using a planned, strategic approach to making marketing content work harder to compete more effectively in a crowded marketplace, and win more market share. It is for people who want to approach content marketing in a less ad-hoc, and more strategic, planned way.

The planned approach we define is most necessary at medium to large organisations where content marketing must serve different audiences. Smaller businesses and startups seeking to use strategic marketing content to kickstart their growth through a planned approach will also find it gives them a roadmap to grow their business.

What makes this guide different?

There are many, many great books that persuasively explain “why use content marketing”. We’re influenced by many of the specialists on content marketing that we acknowledge below.

But our guide focuses more on the how, rather than why. We have summarised many of the strong arguments for the how already. We’re sure you buy into them, but you still need a strategy, a plan and practical advice on how to implement your content strategy.

About the authors



Stephen Bateman is a career marketer turned marketing consultant, author and speaker, and the contributing Content Marketing Strategy Expert for Smart Insights.

He is a leading specialist on using strategic content marketing to improve the performance of people in business, who want to challenge themselves and their teams to reach their highest content marketing potential.

Based in Exeter, but with clients everywhere, Stephen likes to show people how to do successful content marketing, rather than tell them, which means giving them an understanding of how they can structure their marketing content all along their funnel for a

ONE.
Audit and Goals

TWO. Define Audiences and Personas

THREE.
Strategy

FOUR.
Editorial Management

FIVE.
Content Hub

SIX.
Content Distribution

SEVEN. Evaluate and Measure ROI

more profitable return on content marketing investment.

Stephen is also the author of Smart Insights' Content Marketing ROI Guide, A guide to measuring, evaluating and reporting your content marketing performance and tutor on the Smart Insights content marketing e-learning tool, which together compliment and dovetail with this strategic content marketing guide.

Follow Stephen on Twitter [@concentricdots](#) or connect on [LinkedIn](#).

Dr Dave Chaffey is the editor of all Smart Insights resources. He has advised on content marketing and SEO since he created his first site in 1997 when Altavista was the leading search engine and switched to Google in '99. Ten years ago he ran the SEO training courses for the Chartered Institute of Marketing and for several years was the tutor on the Econsultancy Advanced SEO course and also created the original Econsultancy Best Practice guide to SEO. Today his main SEO focus is improving organic search results for Smart Insights and its expert members. SmartInsights.com generates nearly 80% of its 1/3 million visits a month through SEO.



Acknowledgments – who inspires us?

This guide is our advice rooted and inspired from a number of influential and leading experts on content marketing as well as our own experience. We've listed the best, if you're looking for alternative perspectives. We're sure you know many of these already, but if not, check them out.

- ✓ Joe Pulizzi (www.junta42.com), author of "Get Content, Get Customers"
- ✓ David Meerman-Scott (www.davidmeermanscott.com), author of "The New Rules of Marketing & PR"
- ✓ Ann Handley (www.marketingprofs.com), a co-author of "Content Rules"
- ✓ Lee Odden of the TopRankBlog.com, author of "Optimize"
- ✓ Jay Baer (www.ConvinceandConvert.com), author of "The Now Revolution"
- ✓ Seth Godin (www.sethgodin.com), author of way too many books to mention!
- ✓ Kristina Halvorson (www.contentstrategy.com), author of "Content Strategy for the Web"
- ✓ Chris Brogan (www.chrisbrogan.com), author of "Trust Agents"
- ✓ Michael Seltzner, author of "Launch" and founder of the Social Media Examiner website <http://www.elevationprinciple.com>.
- ✓ Altimeter (www.altimeter.com) including Rebecca Lieb, Charlene Li and Brian Solis (www.briansolis.com), author of "Engage"
- ✓ Hubspot (www.hubspot.com)
- ✓ Marketo (www.marketo.com)

About this revision

This rewrite, dated March 2016, brings the guide up to date and inline with the seven pillars of our strategic content marketing framework in our [Content Marketing Toolkit](#), to dovetail with Stephen's online [e-Learning Toolkit](#) and [Content Marketing ROI Guide](#).

ONE

Content Marketing Capability Audit and Setting Goals

Introduction

We see the need for setting content marketing goals as essential for success.

In our [Content Marketing ROI Guide](#), CEOs and CFOs say plainly that they do not care very much about content campaigns or everyday metrics, but instead want to see proof that their marketers are striving to achieve smart goals that impact improved business performance and positive ROI.

However, many marketers produce marketing content and dubiously dub it “content marketing” without mapping their content marketing activity to business goals or to the customer buying cycle.

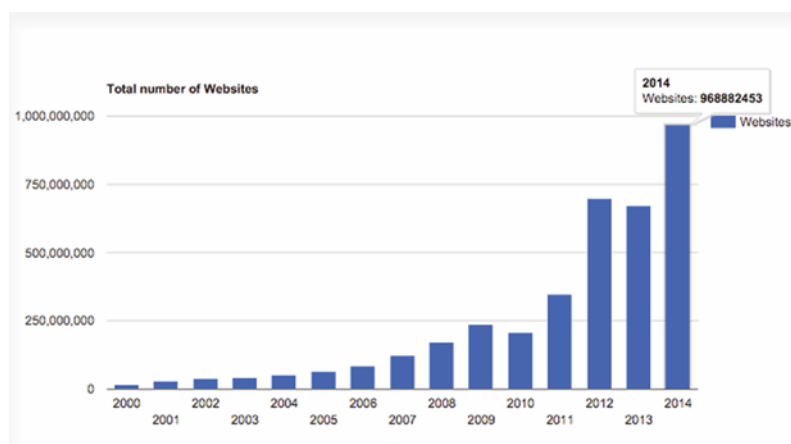
This is evidenced in a lot of social and blog content, which brands churn out for the sake of it, rather than tying content back to business goals. Doug Kessler, sees this as content marketing’s own worst enemy - check out his manifesto against this³.



The content explosion

The last five years have seen the amount of content produced online rise exponentially.

The content explosion proves that barriers to entry are low and that just about anyone with a computer and an Internet connection can create and distribute content.



3 [Doug Kessler, Velocity partners. Stopping the content marketing deluge.](#)

Best Practice Tip 1 Create and distribute marketing content that ties back to business goals

"About 80 percent of the content created by most marketing departments is rarely or never used by the sales team." Sirius Decisions

But the overall quality of that content marketing activity is questionable, since only 32% of respondents in the 2016 CMI UK Content Marketing Benchmark Survey describe their organisation's content marketing maturity level as sophisticated or mature.



Why it's important to audit your content marketing capability.

For organisations to excel in content marketing requires a step change in marketing behaviour. Before you can adjust to change, having a clear picture of your current capability, strengths and weaknesses, and the skills and knowledge that you have and don't have, is essential to bridging it and knowing realistically what you're capable of. This means that you're going to need to develop the content mindset first, before your organisation can. This why we recommend using our content marketing toolkit to first assess your existing content marketing capability

Strategy Recommendation 3 Benchmark your content marketing capability

The first task, if you haven't already is to head over to assess your current content marketing capability using the Smart Insights Content Marketing Toolkit diagnostic available in the members' area.

Review your score to see where you are now and to explain to colleagues where you need to be. You may be at level 1 or 2 and only need to get to level 3.

It's most likely a big re-think, and changing from broadcaster mindset to an influencer and

ONE.
Audit and Goals

TWO. Define Audiences and Personas

THREE.
Strategy

FOUR.
Editorial Management

FIVE.
Content Hub

SIX.
Content Distribution

SEVEN. Evaluate and Measure ROI

publisher hybrid is not easy, but essential.

Assess your Content Marketing capability 2/7

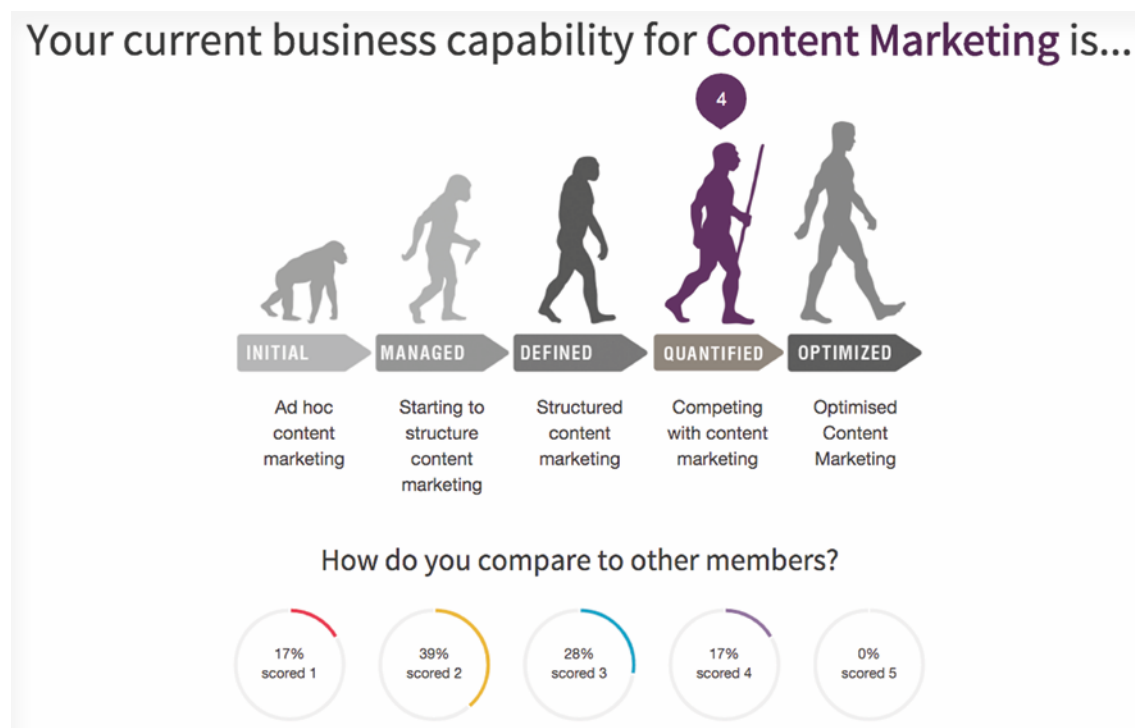
2. Audience and personas

Reviewing how customer-centred your content marketing is

Click a box below to select the current capability of your business.

1. Initial	2. Managed	3. Defined	4. Quantified	5. Optimized
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No personas No defined journeys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outline personas Understand main customer journeys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detailed personas Defined content mapping on-site & off-site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review content relevance and effectiveness across journeys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Optimisation of retargeting
Ad hoc content marketing ★	Starting to structure content marketing ★★	Structured content marketing ★★★	Competing with content marketing ★★★★	Optimised Content Marketing ★★★★★

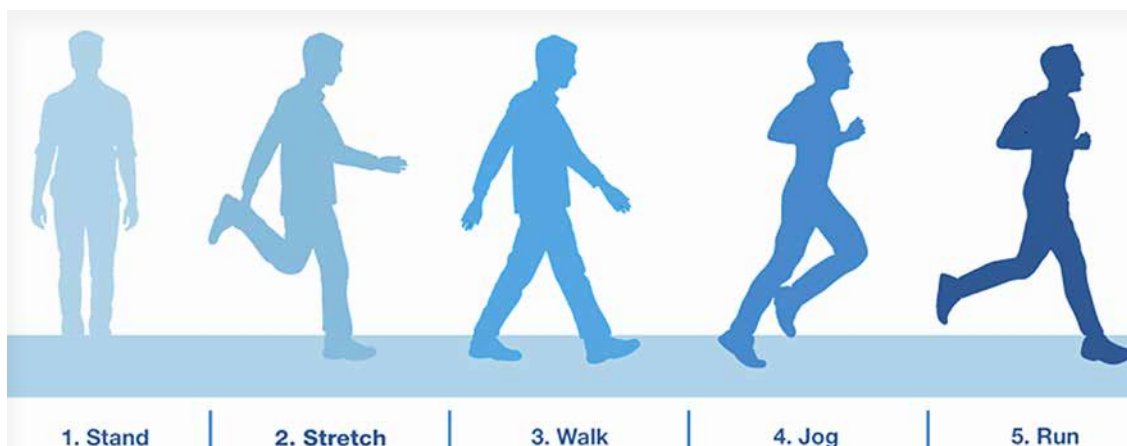
This prompts you to assess and score your capability against the core disciplines, which then generates your content marketing maturity report, with recommended actions for up-skilling



For a more granular assessment of your content marketing capability, you can head over to the self-assessment tool on Stephen Batemans website, which will generate a score card like the one below <http://bit.ly/self-assess-your-content-marketing>.

Content Marketing Self-Assessment Scorecard				
Your results are as follows:				
	Score	Out of a possible	Score	Comment
Goals & Metrics Setting content marketing goals in line with corporate goals and identifying corresponding metrics and KPIs.	10	25	40%	<i>Your strengths are in developing marketing materials to support the sales team. You are doing a good job involving your sales team in that process. However, the focus in your content is biased toward your brand, equipment, staff and the services you offer, because these are easier to talk about than your customer's issues. However, your brand and products are not what interest your customers, who want to see themselves reflected in your communications. You need to counterbalance your bias by getting to know your buyers in-depth, so that you can create and distribute materials to attract, engage, reengage, convert and retain your buyers to higher value purchases.</i>
Marketing Communications Identifying and articulating the appropriate marketing message and electing the content formats and channels.	23	50	46%	
Customer Centricity Your ability to gain and lever deep customer insights so that your content resonates deeply with your audiences.	22	40	55%	
Lead Generation Your ability to use content to put together an online lead generative marketing funnel that attracts, engages and converts your visitors into leads.	38	80	48%	
Sales & Marketing Materials Your current ability to converse closely with the sales team on content development and to create material that supports the customer buying journey through to purchase.	15	30	50%	
Staff Resources, Skills and Training Your organisation's content marketing skill set, buy-in and ability to work together to identify, plan, create and distribute valuable content.	50	90	56%	
Technology Your ability to use technology to assist the different workflow and processes in your content production and delivery activities	12	25	48%	
Overall Total	170	340	50%	

Another helpful capability review is from Altimeter, by Rebecca Lieb, which we recommend downloading if you're completing an audit – it involves these nicely named stages of capability:



The stages in the Altimeter capability model are:

- ✓ **Stand:** you haven't yet realized the value of content marketing as a key component of your marketing strategy.
- ✓ **Stretch:** you understand the benefits of content marketing and have started to create content.
- ✓ **Walk:** now with a solid foundation organizationally that supports content creation, your content strategy is more fully refined and tweaked. There is also a concerted effort to connect content development with all parts of the organization's communication teams.
- ✓ **Jog:** your company is seriously committed to content marketing and has a clear strategy.
- ✓ **Run:** companies at this stage have production and creative as full, standalone business unit, and your company is creating content that is sold and licensed based on its standalone merit.

The following Altimeter Group content marketing maturity framework can help you assess

ONE.
Audit and Goals

TWO. Define Audiences
and Personas

THREE.
Strategy

FOUR.
Editorial Management

FIVE.
Content Hub

SIX.
Content Distribution

SEVEN. Evaluate and
Measure ROI

your content marketing efforts:

Content Marketing Maturity Self-Audit						
Score	0 (Stand)	1 (Stretch)	2 (Walk)	3 (Jog)	4 (Run)	Your Score
Organizational Structure	No executive sponsor or formal structure to create and distribute content	Executive sponsor and a small, part-time support team	Executive sponsor leads small team of dedicated content producers	Content managers lead teams focused on different content types and channels	Chief content officer integrates content into all communication groups	
Internal Resources	No internal resources dedicated to content creation or strategy	Assess colleagues' capabilities to produce content and create a small team	Expand responsibilities and size of the content production team	Formalize content team and hire dedicated talent; incentivize creativity and contributions	Content creation is a responsibility of all marketing and communication teams	
External Resources	No external resources engaged to make the case for or create content	Consultants make the case for content marketing	Establish relationships with agencies for content creation and production support	Agencies assume a larger role in creating more advanced types of content, e.g., video and mobile apps	Working with cutting-edge agencies to explore new types of content	
Measurement	Very limited measurement of website traffic; no formal strategy	Form a measurement strategy; begin a basic listening program	Track basic KPIs, such as page views, fans, likes, comments	Connect metrics to meaningful business objectives	Advanced sentiment analysis and ROI calculations	
Education	No educational programs within the company in regard to content strategy.	Executive education to encourage buy-in	Training for content team	Content marketing training incorporated into the overall employee training program	Continual training on emerging content trends and technologies	
Average Score:						

How to set goals for your content marketing strategy. What do you want your content marketing to deliver?

To make content marketing work, you need to define your marketing and business goals. Then you can create content that serves those goals, instead of just giving your audience something to pass the time.

It's important to understand your goals and objectives, because you need to be clear from the start about what your content needs to achieve.

I like to differentiate between goals and smart objectives, the latter being more tangible and concrete; objectives are more specific, goals top-level aims.

Goals work together with objectives because goals define top-level targets, and objectives define the measurable elements of the goals: Metrics and KPIs .

Goals

A goal is a top-level target showing general aims. Goals are abstract and not easy to measure. For example, a goal for your content marketing could be to increase brand

ONE.
Audit and Goals

TWO. Define Audiences and Personas

THREE.
Strategy

FOUR.
Editorial Management

FIVE.
Content Hub

SIX.
Content Distribution

SEVEN. Evaluate and Measure ROI

awareness.

Objectives

Your objectives translate the goals into specific targets that can be measured. Objectives are more precise and should be easily measurable.

For example, a smart objective for your content marketing with the goal of increased brand awareness would be to increase the number of organic brand searches by 200% from 1,000 to 3,000 each month.

Setting SMART Objectives

Use the SMART criteria in the grid below to tighten up your objectives

Step	Name	Description
1	Specific	This defines exactly what you want to achieve and to what extent. A good objective should set out to answer the who, what, where, why, when etc. It must be clear to everyone involved.
2	Measurable	You must be able to track activity and measure the outcome. It's a good idea to quantify your objectives and agree what evidence is required to confirm it has been achieved.
3	Achievable	You should set challenging objectives but make sure they are relevant to the business and realistic to achieve; if something can't be achieved, it's a pointless objective and may demotivate the people involved.
4	Relevant	The objective must be relevant to your business goals and overall strategic marketing plan.
5	Time based	You should set a time limit within which the objective needs to be realised. This timeline must also be realistic based on resource available and the complexity of the objective.

10 Design Tests to assess your SMART Objectives

To check you are choosing the right objectives, consider using these 10 measure design tests developed by performance management specialist Professor Andy Neely.

For SMARTER metrics, ask these questions for your KPIs as you develop them.

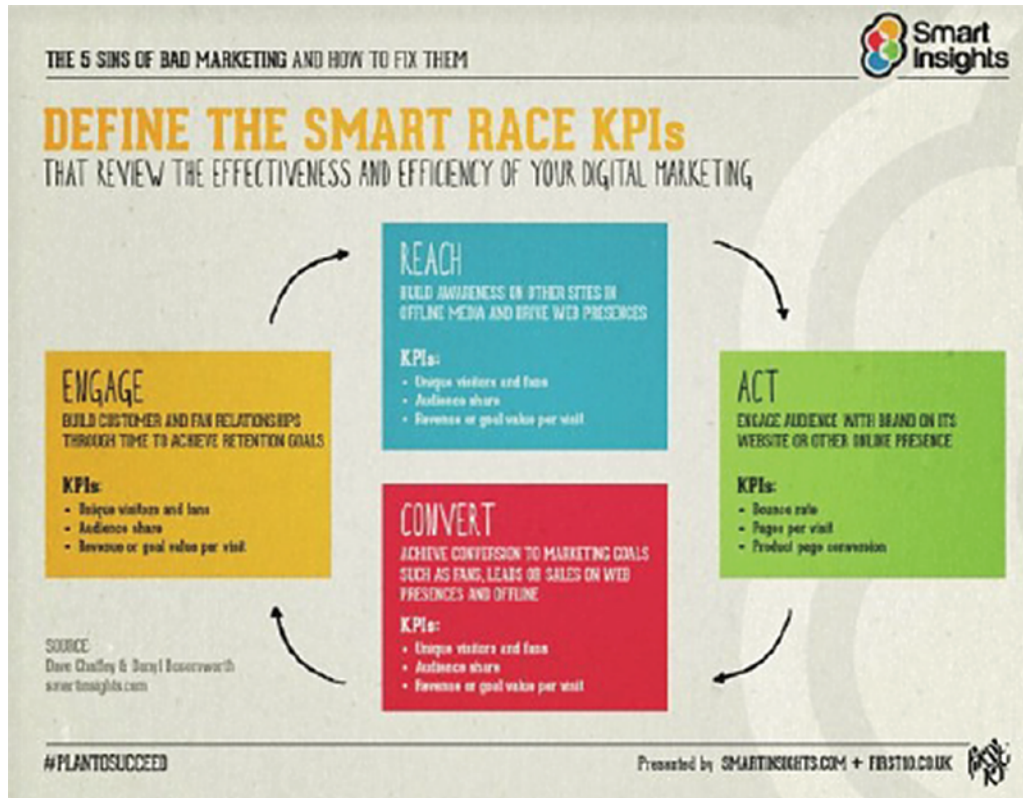
1. **The truth test.** Are we really measuring what we set out to measure?
2. **The focus test.** Are we only measuring what we set out to measure?
3. **The relevancy test.** Is it the right measure of the performance measure we want to track?
4. **The consistency test.** Will the data always be collected in the same way whoever measures it?
5. **The access test.** Is it easy to locate and capture the data needed to make the measurement?
6. **The clarity test.** Is any ambiguity possible in interpreting the results?
7. **The so-what test.** Can and will the data be acted upon, i.e. is it actionable?
8. **The timeliness test.** Can the data be accessed rapidly and frequently enough for action?
9. **The cost test.** Is the measure worth the cost of measurement?!

10. **The gaming test.** Is the measure likely to encourage undesirable or inappropriate behaviours?

These tests show there are additional filters on top of SMART that are useful to choose the best measure, We particularly like the “So-what test”.

Recommended technique: RACE Framework

Use our SMART KPI RACE framework to help you focus your goals and objectives.



Metric	Reach audience	Encourage Action	Convert to Sale	Engage customers to Retain & Grow
Tracking metrics	Unique visitors New visitors Visits Conversation volume	Online opportunity (lead) volume Offline opportunity (lead) volume (online influenced)	Online sales volume Offline sales volume (online influenced)	E-mail list quality E-mail response quality Transactions
Performance drivers (diagnostics)	Share of audience compared to competitors Share of search Brand / direct visits	Bounce rate and duration measures Macro-conversion rate to opportunity and micro-conversion efficiency	Conversion rate to Sale E-mail conversion rate	Active customers % (site & e-mail active) Active social followers Repeat conversion rate
Customer Centric KPIs	Cost per Click and per Sale Brand awareness Conversation Polarity (sentiment)	Cost per Opportunity Customer satisfaction	Cost per Sale Customer satisfaction	Lifetime value Customer loyalty index Customer advocacy index Products per customer
Business Value KPIs	Audience share Share of conversations	Goal value per visit Online product requests (n, £, % of total)	Revenue per visit Online originated sales revenue and profit (n, £, % of total)	Retained sales growth and volume Revenue per 1000 emails sent

In the UK, the top business goals from content marketing are for sales, engagement, lead generation, brand awareness, customer retention, and lead nurturing, as show from this research from the Content Marketing Institute for their 2016 benchmarks report.



Here are some ideas on specific goals, which can be tracked within analytics, for all types of content and optimised to deliver more leads and sales.

The goal comes before the metric: It's important to remember why we need metrics in the first place (see our content marketing ROI guide).

Metrics allow us to measure things, and useful metrics measure the things that show whether your content marketing is producing acceptable growth or not.

For each goal, you want to try to determine metrics that show whether you're succeeding or not.

Let's look at a few example metrics

Best Practice Tip 2 Select your broad goals and specific objectives

List the goals and corresponding SMART objectives that are most relevant for you, and check you have them setup in your analytics.

Goals for lead-generation and email communications

- ☐ Q. Contact Us or phone call-back thank you page goal?
- ☐ Q. Lead-generation thank you page goal?
- ☐ Q. Goals for content marketing pages that generate leads e.g. white papers, guides?

ONE.
Audit and Goals

TWO. Define Audiences and Personas

THREE.
Strategy

FOUR.
Editorial Management

FIVE.
Content Hub

SIX.
Content Distribution

SEVEN. Evaluate and Measure ROI

Goals for site engagement

- ☐ Q. Time on site engagement goals?
- ☐ Q. Pages viewed engagement goals?
- ☐ Q. Videos watched goals?
- ☐ Q. Document download goals?
- ☐ Q. Customer feedback goals?

Goals for top of funnel product engagement

If you can encourage site visitors to go beyond the home page to view product-related pages they're closer to buying, so you should assess the success of the site in getting visitors to these types of goals, which relate to the funnel diagram shown above.

- ☐ Q. Product search page viewed?
- ☐ Q. Category page viewed?
- ☐ Q. Product page viewed?

Goals showing social engagement or participation with the site

Encouraging participation helps develop social proof to new visitors that you're a credible brand to do business with. Goals in this category to set or track include:

- ☒ Blog comments.
- ☒ Product comments, reviews and ratings.
- ☒ Favouriting or sharing of pages through social bookmarking.
- ☒ Sharing content or linking through to social presence like Facebook, Twitter or Linked In.

Recommended technique: Create a simple conversion model

To set realistic objectives, and a budget for your content marketing, use a simple conversion model like this one:

Marketing task	Example	Comment
Write down what the business needs to achieve in next 12 months	Generate £1.6M in additional sales of primary medical care products from ideal buyers on our database by March 2017	This is a 9% growth rate over last year
Identify your average customer value for this target customer group	£2500 average customer value / order size	Customers who purchase from our Advanced programme spend this amount with us on average
Calculate the number of customers you need to convert in order to reach your target?	$\text{£1.6M} / \text{£2500} = 640$ customers	This is a realistic number of new customers for this product class
What percentage of your prospective market do you need to convert to achieve your objective?	$640 / 2200$ prospects = 29% conversion rate	This is a high proportion to convert, but our sales force can do this with the help of content marketing

Marketing task	Example	Comment
Write down what content marketing needs to do to help sales achieve the business goal	Tell compelling success stories from existing buyers, engage interest of prospective buyers and convert interest into consideration with supporting marketing content	The success stories, content types, routes to customers and measurement have been mapped out and the team can undertake this activity
What marketing budget will you put on this goal?	We will allocate 10% of the customer value to generating each sale = £250 for every prospect, which provides a total budget of £160,000	9% of gross revenue is a standard marketing budget for us

More resources to help you set goals and metrics for your content marketing

I provide more advice and practical techniques to help you peg your content marketing strategy to your goals and metrics in Chapter Two (page 10) of the Smart Insights “Content Marketing ROI Guide “Setting Content Marketing Goals & Metrics,” and in Step 1b of the Smart Insights Content Marketing e-Learning Toolkit “Set goals and SMART objectives for content marketing.” You will find more help with defining content marketing metrics and evaluating ROI in Step Seven of this guide.

Getting buy-in for content marketing

Another critical task for a successful content marketing strategy is defining a vision for the future and then specifying more specific goals which will set goals and targets to improve your marketing performance.

Key Strategy Recommendation 4 Create and communicate a vision for content marketing

A focus on content marketing requires a change of direction in many organisations. To help lead this change and show the future, you need to communicate it to colleagues who may not get it.

Recommended approaches to help increase buy-in to content marketing

Q. Approaches to overcome barriers to internal change reviewed?

For most companies, a change towards content marketing is a big ask. It often needs a fundamental shift in the marketing communications process. It’s going to require some level of a cultural shift within the organization that can be a daunting, especially for larger organizations where getting stakeholders around a table is not so easy. So at an early stage you need to find out, what are the main blocks to change, you can overcome them?

The content marketing mission statement

In almost every one of his keynote presentations, Joe Pulizzi covers the content marketing mission statement, because content marketing is not about what you sell but what you stand for and “the why must come before the what.”

His tips on content marketing mission statements include:

- ✓ **Posting it:** Include the mission statement where it can be found easily
- ✓ **Spread it:** Make sure everyone involved in your content marketing process has the mission statement. Encourage them to print it out and pin it up on the wall.

- ✓ **The litmus test:** Use the mission statement to decide what content you will and won't create.
- ✓ Often, a bad judgment in content creation can be fixed by running it by the mission statement.

Here are a few examples from three different types of business. In the left hand column you can read the corporate mission statement and in the right column the content marketing mission statement.

	Company		Content Mission Statement
1	PTC technology-enabled solutions help leading manufacturers transform the way they create, operate and service products for sustained competitive advantage.	A	To deliver non-product-specific, general interest stories that relate, directly or indirectly, to the topic of product development and how it relates to design engineers. The goal is to help design engineers to think differently about innovation and product development.
2	AMERICAN EXPRESS helps small business owners succeed by delivering purchasing power, flexibility and financial control via credit cards, charge cards and travellers cheques.	B	OPEN Forum is an online community to exchange insights, get advice from experts, and build connections to help you power your small business success.
3	REENERGISE is an energy management and energy finance company helping SMEs and homeowners achieve significant energy saving from renewable energy and energy efficiency.	C	ReEnergise shares valuable and impartial information, advice, insights, resources and inspiration to help SMEs and homeowners transition successfully to low cost efficient energy solutions.

Do you have a content marketing mission statement?

Anatomy of a content marketing mission statement

	Component of mission statement		Focus
1	The target audiences:	A	SMEs and homeowners
2	What will be delivered to the audience:	B	valuable and impartial information, advice, insights, resources and inspiration
3	The outcome for the audience:	C	transition successfully to low cost efficient energy solutions.

Here are some problems to watch for:

- ✓ **"We can't do that – it's not what we do":** This is the feeling of fear, or vertigo that many organizations get when they move from the firm ground of the tried and tested (I use that word loosely) to what Seth Godin once called the anti-gravity that comes from leaping into change. It's strange because such companies are not really blowing anyone away with the buyer experience they create, yet it feels safe to be like everybody else and to do "what we've always done" and not move into unproven or uncharted territories.
- ✓ **"We've always done it like this":** With current employees or teams, suppliers, partners or vendor relationships, it can be hard to deviate from the well-worn marketing path, carved by years of doing things the old way. It's like turning a supertanker, even with the best will in the world. Often, in this instance there isn't someone whose job it is to "own" content internally, let alone use it for marketing, so it's not on anybody's agenda. It is also a compounded issue because measuring what content marketing is and is not working has to be done first, to create the stage for a new approach.
- ✓ **"What we do now works just fine...":** This is the worst hurdle to overcome and more often sits with both of the above. It's ignorant to the volume of change in marketing.
- ✓ We think these strategies from the Content Marketing Institute are also useful guidelines

to base your management of change upon:

- ✓ *Respect the current culture.* Leadership guru and pioneer, [Dr. Warren Bennis](#) talks about “Contextual Intelligence,” highlighting that to truly implement change, “you’ve got to know the territory.” Marketers acting as change agents need to make the time and effort to understand the history and traditions that have created the organisation’s culture. Marketers should consider inventing new content and values that support new content marketing programmes in context of what was or is.
- ✓ *Get buy-in.* In almost all cases, culture shift starts with a leader and their vision. The CMI’s B2B content marketing research found that one of the biggest differentiators between effective and less effective content marketing is senior management buy-in: 23% of the least effective marketers cite this as a challenge whereas this is an issue for only 7% of effective marketers. You’ll need to offer strong leadership with the ability to tap into all levels of the organisation and enable collaboration.
- ✓ *Empower change.* Creating a culture that supports content marketing is critical in that content creation and online conversations are viewed as a core competency, at least within marketing. That process might look something like this:
 - ✓ Team managers or supervisors give each of their team members objectives to meet within a shared 90 day time frame
 - ✓ Each team member develops their own unique plan and processes that will allow them to achieve those outcomes
 - ✓ Each plan is required to include a list of resources and support that the supervisor will provide, to help the report meet their objectives
 - ✓ Manager, supervisor and report are held mutually accountable for delivering on their commitments, weekly productive conversations help maintain momentum going toward the objectives.

The whole team needs to appreciate that what got us here, will not get us there. Once this happens then the grounds for change are in place - everybody is facing in the same direction and wondering “what, how and when?”, not “if or why?”.

Making the business case and getting buy-in for content marketing

□ Q. *Business case for change defined?*

Once you have thought through some of the barriers to implementing a content strategy, then you’re in a position to make the business case.

Key Strategy Recommendation 5 Demonstrate the power of content marketing to convince colleagues

To help buy-in, we recommend three main techniques: showing changes in consumer behaviour, improvements to competitor or internal results.

We’ll look at the business case for content marketing from two points of view, use which work best when talking to your budget holders. First we’ll look at the soft reasons and then a more quantitative approach.

Best Practice Tip 3 Combine the soft arguments for content marketing with the hard measures

The soft arguments can win hearts, but to win minds we’ll show how to develop quantitative arguments.

ONE.
Audit and Goals

TWO. Define Audiences
and Personas

THREE.
Strategy

FOUR.
Editorial Management

FIVE.
Content Hub

SIX.
Content Distribution

SEVEN. Evaluate and
Measure ROI

missing URL

Using the soft arguments to make the business case for more investment in content marketing, you need to clearly show the linkage to other channels like social media marketing and SEO plus conversion, which are better known as drivers of performance. These are the arguments we use to show why quality content is crucial:

Reason 1. Little content = little conversation

We know that developing a marketing plan is about firstly understanding your audience's unmet needs. Whether customers, potential customers or influencers. Content allows you to offer solutions to those challenges in a multitude of places. If you cannot contribute to the conversation there is little chance of becoming a trusted source of information, let alone be visible in search engine listings or leverage social networks like Facebook.

Reason 2. Marketing is publishing

It's well documented. If we've learned anything over the past few years, even from a search optimisation perspective, it's that the majority of new marketing efforts rely on an understanding of publishing information to your audiences. So, marketers need to think more like a publisher, and less like sales and marketing folk. We need to give people content that people want to read, not what we want to say. More about "inspire me", less about features and benefits. There's another pay-off here too – you differentiate in the process, your competitors are most likely banging the sales drum and turning people off.

Reason 3. You need clear goals for social media activity and SEO

Being "active" in social media is not a marketing goal, just like "more natural search traffic" can lead to distraction about what matters – getting the right traffic - thinking about the types of people you want to communicate with. This is why you need a considered and integrated content strategy. Questions you must answer include: What is the purpose of your content (and social media marketing)? What are your key messages vs what do I (the customer) want to hear? What content assets do you have and what do you need to originate or gather from third parties?

All the social media participation in the world won't address these questions. When the questions are answered you can consider the Smart Insights digital radar to figure out where best to publish and share your content to power link-building and drive conversation in the right places.

Reason 4. Content is currency

Fascinating, useful, educational and entertaining content is shared through social media. It's the currency, the firewood – whatever you want to call it. So many of us have rushed into social media only to wonder why our Facebook Pages have no comments, there's no Likes, no blog interactions, we don't have the right kind of Twitter followers. The same applies to SEO – if content is not relevant it's not likely to contain the right keywords, therefore you're not going to rank for the search terms that you really need to.

Reason 5. Social media = I hear you + I'm listening to you + I understand

Brian Solis said this, he also said that you can replace "social media" with "publishing" or "content strategy" in that same equation. Be clear that you are producing this content, not only to be shared by your customers and prospects, but to accomplish tangible objectives that can be measured back to sales.

Online interactions have to be fuelled by something, it's about creating valuable, relevant and compelling content on a consistent basis in order that your brand is not only well placed to be trusted (or simply just Liked) but even just to be visible, on a customer's Facebook News



Feed or an influencer's blog, for example.

Social media and search results form the cart, the functional tool(s) we use to share our story and interact. Consider content as the horse, doing all upfront work, in order that we get to join the ride.

Some of the approaches that we have found effective to highlight the business opportunity and/or the threat are, in order of effectiveness:

- ❑ 1. *Demonstrating success through a pilot or existing activity.* This shows real-world results specifically for your company so tends to work best, if you have demonstrable success.
 - You may already have examples of success across different areas:
 - Sales increases through SEO
 - New visitors acquired through social media activity
 - Conversion increases through reviews and ratings
 - Increased existing customer engagement and sales through content shared through email marketing or social media
- ❑ 2. *Showing how competitors have changed and what they have achieved.* Successful competitor activity can strike fear into colleagues or show the opportunity. Find case studies or presentations produced by competitors or benchmark their performance against yours in terms of visits, engagement or sales.
- ❑ 3. *Model improved results through a cost-benefit.* If you can create a model to show how you will increase sales through improvements to visits or conversion this can work well if you can substantiate it.

Best Practice Tip 4 Create a conversion model to show value generated

A spreadsheet conversion model will give you specific ideas for how you can increase sales value or the number of visitors to the site through the customer lifecycle.

The spreadsheet on the next page is an example of one of the [models available via SmartInsights.com](#) to improve performance. You can use this to assess the returns from content marketing.

ONE.
Audit and Goals

TWO. Define Audiences
and Personas

THREE.
Strategy

FOUR.
Editorial Management

FIVE.
Content Hub

SIX.
Content Distribution

SEVEN. Evaluate and
Measure ROI

A	B	C	D	E	F
Home		Online Media Mix model - based on % b			
Input parameter table	Overall budget	£100,000	Blue cells = input variables - vary the values		
	Average order value	£50			
	Gross profit margin	30.0%	Orange cells = output variables (calculated)		
		Advertising		Search	
		Ad buys (CPM)	Ad network (CPM)	Paid search (CPC)	Natural search
Media costs	Setup/ creative / Mgt costs	£0	£0	£0	
	CPM	£10.0	£10.0	£4.0	
	CPC	£5.0	£5.0	£0.20	
	Media costs	£10,000	£10,000	£30,000	£30,000
	Total cost: setup & media	£10,000	£10,000	£30,000	£30,000
	Budget %	10%	10%	30%	30%
Media Impressions & Response	Impressions or names	1,000,000	1,000,000	7,500,000	16,666,667
	CTR	0.2%	0.2%	2.0%	0.2%
	Clicks or site visits	2,000	2,000	150,000	33,333
Conversion to Opportunity (Lead)	Conversion rate to opportunity	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	Number of opportunities	2,000	2,000	150,000	33,333
	Cost per opportunity	£5.0	£5.0	£0.2	£0.9
Conversion to Sales	Conversion rate to sale	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	Number of sales	2,000	2,000	150,000	33,333
	% of sales	1.1%	1.1%	79.1%	17.8%
	Cost per sale (CPA)	£5.0	£5.0	£0.2	£2.7
Revenue	Total revenue	£100,000	£100,000	£7,500,000	£1,666,667
Costs	Cost of goods sold	£70,000	£70,000	£5,250,000	£1,166,667
	Media costs	£10,000	£10,000	£30,000	£30,000
	Total costs (inc media)	£80,000	£80,000	£5,280,000	£1,196,667
Profitability	Profit	£20,000	£20,000	£2,220,000	£470,000
	Return on Investment	25.0%	25.0%	42.0%	39.0%

4. Use benchmarking statistics or change in consumer behaviour to show how the technique is effective.

For content marketing, you should show how consumers use different information types that influence sale (e.g. reviews and ratings, blogs, social media comments), ideally for your industry.

TWO

Define Audiences and Personas

Discover your “content marketing sweet spot.”

Q. Define how content supports your brand and audience needs

This step flows immediately on from Step 1, since with your content auditing and goal-setting done, the next step is to do the research to clarify the sweet spot to engage your audience.



We think defining how content enhances your brand’s ability to engage different types of audiences is one of the most important parts in this guide strategically, and probably the most overlooked in our rush to tell an audience what we know and think, as fast and as cheaply as possible!

It’s important to remember that people don’t buy what you do, they buy WHY you do it.

Best Practice Tip 5 Define your content marketing sweet spot

Your sweet spot lies at the intersection of your business expertise and your audience’s most pressing issues and challenges. If we had to choose one word to sum your content marketing sweet spot, then that word would be “*empathy*.”

Uncovering your sweet spot and creating content focused on the relevancy sweet spot has several key benefits that can be summed up in the following points:

- ✓ It shows people you care and makes you stand out as memorable.
- ✓ It means you won’t create content for a void, but to fill an identified sweet spot, where otherwise there would be a gap.

- ✓ It sets you apart from your competitors, and helps your prospective customers choose you.
- ✓ It's transparent, authentic, credible, and about being more of what you are.
- ✓ It has great emotional impact, and helps your audiences grasp the essence of what you are in a few words. This is often a weakness for small business, and the cause of unprofitable marketing.
- ✓ It's about how much better and more empowered you make your customers feel.
- ✓ Its underpins your content marketing mission statement (see previous chapter.)

To create marketing content that hits home runs with your audience, you need to create compelling, resonant and relevant content for your audiences, which means one crucial truth: You need know your audiences intimately, and the best tool for getting to know your buyers better than anyone else is generating buyer personas, like the ones used in journalism, which allow you to empathise and deliver content that aligns, attracts and engages your audiences, with the bottom line objective of bringing them a step closer to doing business with you.

How to create personas for content marketing

What is a persona?

The original definition of a buyer persona was developed by user experience agency Foviance/Seren, who said: *"A persona is a fictional character that communicates the primary characteristics of a group of users, identified and selected as a key target through use of segmentation data, across the company in a usable and effective manner. This ultimately enables the company to design the best user experience for its customers at all touch points, which is a key success factor in today's business environment"*.

What is it? Web design personas

A thumbnail summary of the characteristics, needs, motivations and environment of typical site users.

Ardath Albee, a persona specialist, puts it another way: *"A persona puts a face on an otherwise faceless segment."*

Key Strategy Recommendation 6 Develop customer personas to support content marketing

Personas are valuable to support all aspects of your web and social presence including content marketing.

Recommended resource

See our [Personas toolkit](#) for more persona examples and key techniques. Many examples from this section are taken from here. So we really recommend you download it if you will be involved in creating or briefing personas.

Types of Personas

You can create personas of these 4 types depending on how you want to use them or the budget available.

1. **Ad hoc personas.** Quick and dirty" created through existing knowledge of the

audience, without in-depth research. May be design or marketing-oriented and be narrative based or based on a summary of goals and characteristics.

2. **Web design or Customer experience personas.** Created specifically to improve the online user experience and improve the results from sites. Ideally they incorporate touchpoint mapping for to support purchase decision-making across channels. Usually based on research.
3. **Marketing personas.** Used to summarise customer segments based on their characteristics, behaviour and perception of a brand.
4. **Buyer personas vs sales personas.** Typically focus on buyers, so are often known as 'Buyer Personas'. Within B2B it can be useful to define sales personas to help develop the selling narrative.

Elements of personas

There isn't one way of creating customer personas. Rather there are common components you should have in mind, depending on the complexity of persona, be they B2B or B2C. The common components include:

- ✓ 1. **Name.** It's usual to give personas a name to refer to them based on their characteristics. Example: Jan Jones
- ✓ 2. **Label.** It helps to give a label summarising the characteristics too. Example: Head of Production
- ✓ 3. **Demographic characteristics.** For example, age, gender, social group. Example: Age: 36
- ✓ 4. **Goals or Motivations.** These can be in the context of reasons for using a service, or more general life goals. Example: Business: Control purchase process and costs; Personal: Improve profile, join a larger company at a more senior levels.
- ✓ 5. **Challenges, barrier or pain points.** A summary of the need for a product or service. Which factors will drive purchase. Example: Reduce time on non-essentials.
- ✓ 6. **Buying decision behaviours.** We will see that different personality types may affect the speed of decision-making or the type of information used to take the decision. Example: Doesn't believe in technology unless clear ROI justifications.
- ✓ 7. **Information needs.** Related to buyer behaviour, the information used to take decisions. This can be summarised on a mental model map. Example: ROI justification with break-even point
- ✓ 8. **Platform usage.** For example, use of device type or social network, usually in the context of purchase.
- ✓ 9. **Customer journey maps.** A separate technique with examples in our persona toolkit and eLearning Toolkit.
- ✓ 10. **Perceptions.** Perceptions of need for product or service or competitors which can be plotted on a perceptual map.



Benefits of personas

1. A Persona works as a Relevance Tool
2. They take the guesswork out of creating valuable content
3. They underpin the success of every stage of content marketing process
4. When shared across a team, with outside contributors, they act as a hymn sheet, getting everyone singing from the same song sheet about what's important to your customers
5. They avoid falling into the trap of writing about what you know a lot about: Your products & product features, from your perspective - not the customers !
6. They help us see commonalities and identify the behaviour patterns that characterise our customer segments.
7. They make it possible to speak to our audiences in a cost effective way.

The Smart Insights Content Marketing eLearning Toolkit describes in detail how to interview buyers with the aim of generating highly detailed B2B buyer personas and customer journeys.

A 5 step process for effective persona creation

Here are some more detailed guidelines and tools to help you develop personas:

Step 1: Research and collate your audience insight data

A. Data your business collects

- ✓ 1. *Profiling from on-site data capture* e.g. online forms – compare to 'offline audiences'...
- ✓ 2. *Customer prospect and sales database* – profile or cluster analysis used to identify groups
- ✓ 3. *Customer surveys* e.g. offline or delivered by email or prompted by an online tool like [Hotjar](#)

- ✓ 4. *Google Analytics now has a demographic assessment.* Under Audience - background.
- ✓ 5. *Social media page profiling*, e.g. your Facebook or Twitter page insights or LinkedIn company page

B. Primary qualitative marketing research

Surveys, interviews and focus groups completed by research specialists

C. Third-party data

Online panel data tracking browser characteristics and behaviour of websites, Comscore, Nielsen, Experian Hitwise.

- ✓ Keyword search behaviour from Google (<https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal>)

Step 2: Cut the cake – define the personas that work for you

The most difficult task in persona creation is “how to cut the cake” – coming from data to a decision of how many personas descriptions to include. This involves more than a group of consultants or project members just handing over some descriptions.

This process is about finding data that supports the initial patterns and at the same time supports the personas descriptions and the scenario writing. This will help generate engagement in the descriptions and support scenario writing e.g. what do the users value and ignore, what is their attitude towards the brand/site/content, and in what situation will they use our content? Each persona needs to be different enough, and also have a representative sample size to warrant your focus – after all you cannot create a persona for everyone. Our experience is that 6-8 is almost always sufficient, indeed 3 or 4 may be fine.

Step 3: Constructing Personas

The typical output is a summary of the needs and wants of a fictional character. For us, these are 5 key areas to the description You may not mention each area specifically, but make it clear for any reader to understand based on your description.

We’ve found that the more human this is, the more value you’ll get from it, ultimately the organisation buy-in will be easier.

- ✓ *Body*: a photo or a description of how the person looks creates a feeling of the person as a human being, posture and clothing tells a lot about the person
- ✓ *Psyche*: we all have an overall attitude towards life and our surroundings which also influence the way we meet technology e.g. is the persona introvert or extrovert
- ✓ *Background*: we all have a social background, education, upbringing which influences our abilities, attitudes and understanding of the world
- ✓ *Emotions and attitudes towards technology* including platforms such as browsers, mobile and social media tools
- ✓ *Personal traits*: this one is tricky, in fictional writing there is a distinction between flat characters and rounded characters. The flat character is characterized by having only one character trait and is difficult to engage in. The rounded character has more than one character trait, is not predictable and easier to engage with.

Few organizations allow for team members to be part of the writing process. More often using external consultants or the usability department to write the descriptions. We think, it’s too important to be outsourced completely. The personas method should rather be perceived as a process where everybody should understand how the descriptions came about and what they can be used for. If you allow different team members to be part of the writing process they will feel ownership for the personas they create. Personas will

of course benefit to be finalised by a single person to ensure homogeneity in writing and presentation.

Step 4: Develop Scenarios

Personas are nothing in isolation, the real purpose of personas is to create scenarios from the descriptions. The scenarios serve to describe in which situations the persona will use and interact with our site or content. Each need or situation is the beginning of a scenario.

A scenario is like a story, it has a main character (the persona), a setting (somewhere the action takes place), it has a goal (what the persona wants to achieve), it has actions that lead to the goal (interactions with the site/content on multiple sites forming the customer journey), and it has obstacles that block the way to the goal. All scenarios are not necessarily happy ones, and often centre on pain points. Questions include:

- ✓ *What are your customers' content preferences?*
- ✓ *How do they discover, consume and share content?*
- ✓ *What are they looking for on search engines and discussing on the social web?*
- ✓ *Can they be grouped into audience segments based on their preferences and content discovery and consumption behaviors?*

Step 5: Generate Profiles, share and get team buy-in

Develop a completed profile format that you can consistently build for each profile, here's a very short example with content marketing in mind:

Demo: Male, 30-35, College, senior management, high earner

Attitude & Behaviors: Read, share, moderate interaction, introvert

Preferences: Tips, opinion gathering, graphic rich content

Publish/Share: Comments, Status Updates, Bookmarks

Top Searching Keywords: CRM software, social CRM

Social Sites: Twitter, Facebook, StumbleUpon, Blogs

Participation: Join, Collect

Often the persona method is viewed as means for communication to others, but as you may imagine it can be as much a process that ensures a customer-centered approach across the entire business – a valuable by product here?

Don't let your effort date. We would recommend always updating information on the personas since technology changes so fast. Consider a personas ambassador, the marketing manager maybe, someone who looks into the descriptions now and then, and who project participants can contact if they find anomalies in the descriptions.

Techniques

1. Mental Model Map Gap analysis

A mental model map is a fantastic, practical tool for reviewing the effectiveness of content and usability of a website.

Start by identifying the questions / information needs the persona has at the top and then, at the bottom note where static or interactive content is used to answer prospects questions.

ONE.
Audit and Goals

TWO. Define Audiences
and Personas

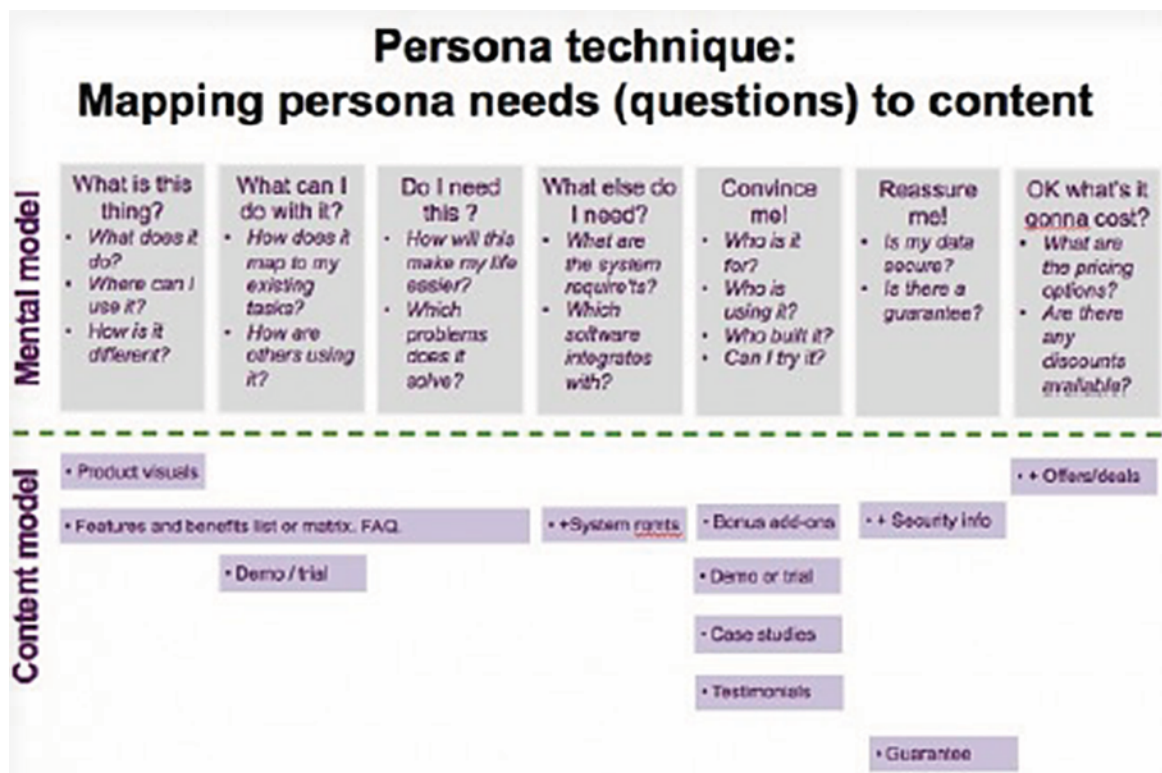
THREE.
Strategy

FOUR.
Editorial Management

FIVE.
Content Hub

SIX.
Content Distribution

SEVEN. Evaluate and
Measure ROI



ONE.
Audit and Goals

TWO. Define Audiences
and Personas

2

THREE.
Strategy

FOUR.
Editorial Management

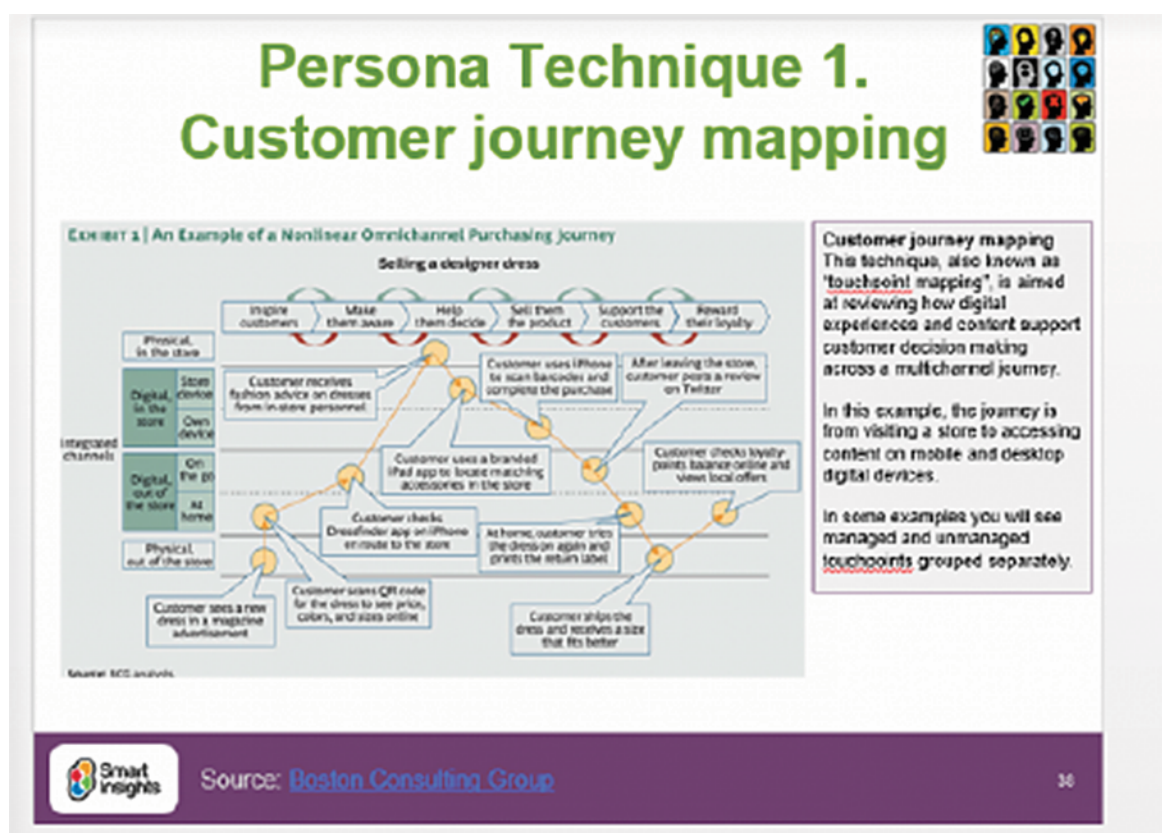
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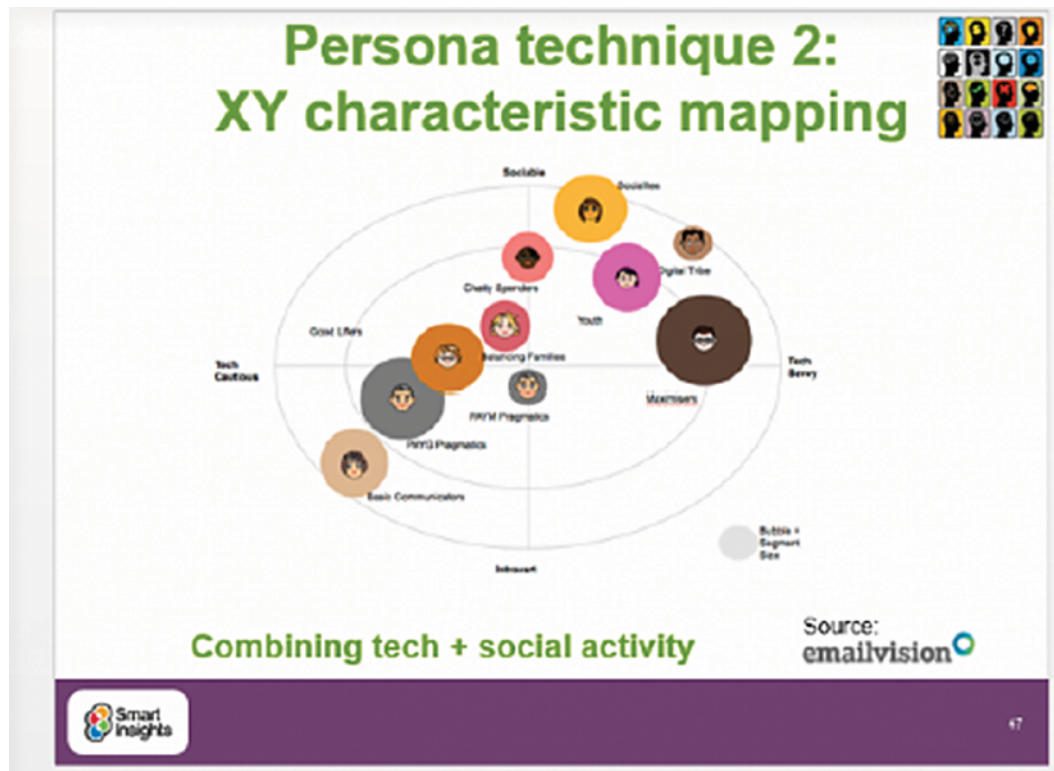
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Measure ROI

2. Mapping content to buying cycle customer journey mapping

A useful technique for showing which touch points personas can be influenced through.

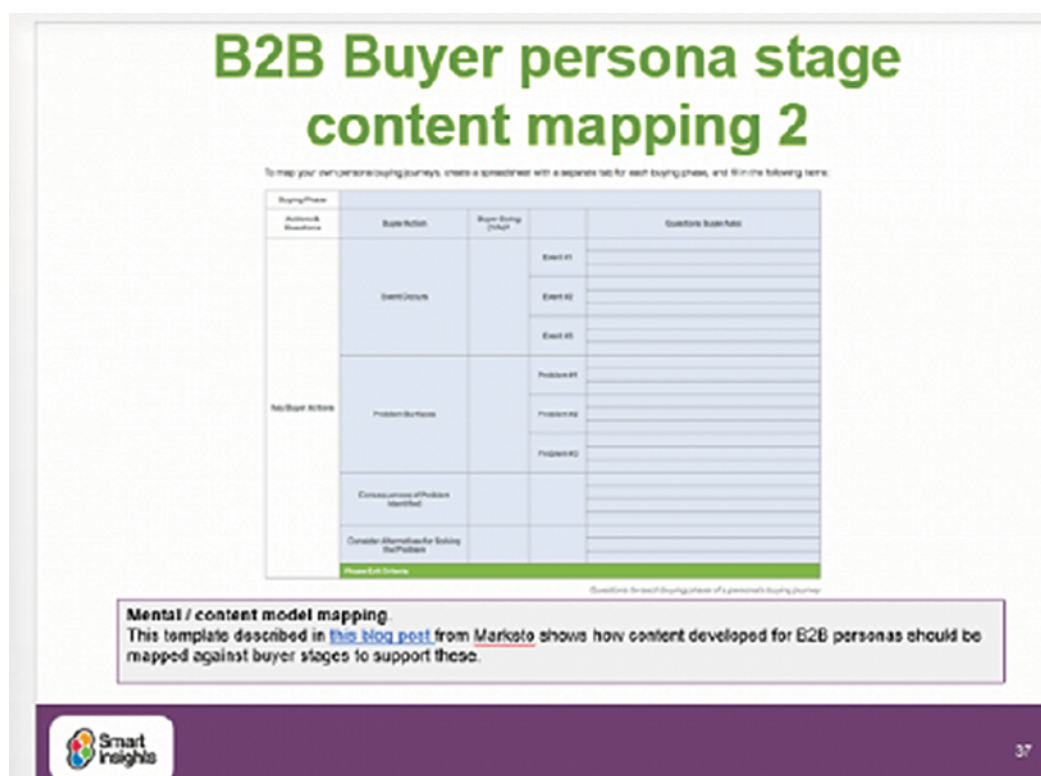


3. XY Characteristic mapping



4. Buyer person content mapping

It's useful to relate personas to the buying journeys or stages and the actions or activities that the persona takes at each step. Then content can be developed to support each stage of the buyer journey.



ONE.
Audit and Goals

TWO. Define Audiences
and Personas

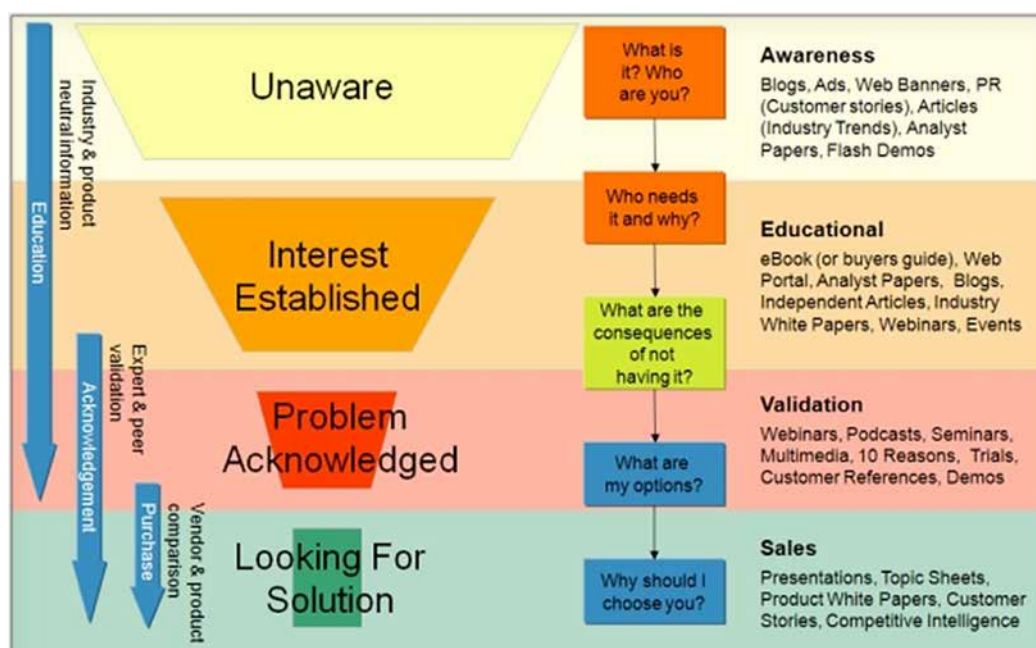
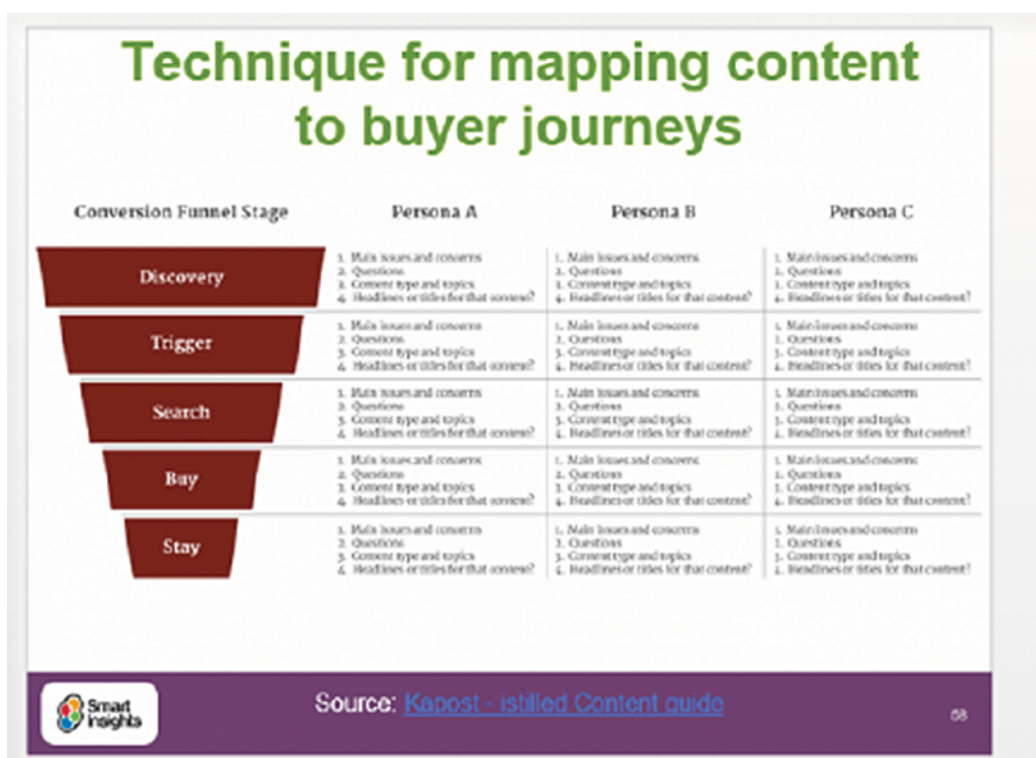
THREE.
Strategy

FOUR.
Editorial Management

FIVE.
Content Hub

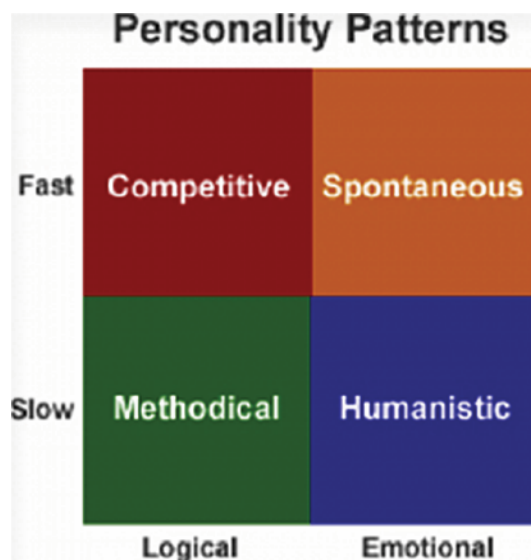
SIX.
Content Distribution

SEVEN. Evaluate and
Measure ROI



5. Buyer personality and behaviour

This technique, first described by Bryan Eisenberg often isn't built into Personas, but is a separate technique that could be applied across personas. It's helpful to show that different personality types can exist within a Persona and that these can affect the speed with which people buy and the factors they consider



Example Personas



Dr. Julian Richard

Age 39, Think Tank Director



I need to know what decisions HFEA has made and all the background evidence.

Goals

1. Know what licensing and policy decisions are likely and when they will be made.
2. Find out what evidence HFEA uses to make decisions, where it has come from and who the HFEA uses for supporting evidence.
3. Achieve greater transparency in HFEA decision making.

Julian Richard lives in St Albans with his partner Beth who is completing her MA on Eighteenth Century Romantic Poetry whilst caring for Sammy their two year old son. Both are involved in the local choral society and enjoy gardening in their terrace house in a street nearby the Cathedral. They are jointly composing their own suite for Clavichord, which they hope to enter into next year's British Clavichord Society awards.

Julian has been Director of ProSci a think tank on bio science issues in the human fertility field for three years. ProSci raises its income from biomedical companies and subscriptions from clinics and selected research grants and has acted as advisor to a couple of research institutes when they appealed against the HFEA's refusal of their project. Julian also acts as a consultant on various legal cases in the area

ONE.
Audit and Goals

TWO. Define Audiences
and Personas

2

THREE.
Strategy

FOUR.
Editorial Management

FIVE.
Content Hub

SIX.
Content Distribution

SEVEN. Evaluate and
Measure ROI

See more examples from other sectors in our [customer persona toolkit](#).

THREE

Define your content marketing strategy

☐ Q. Content strategy developed?

As we've seen, a successful content strategy needs to tell your story as it relates to your customers, and as a part of the wider marketing strategy. It also needs to be rooted in delivering on the goals in Step 1.

Armed with your customer personas, you can now focus your content strategy, which sits at the intersection of your audience and business.

An understanding of your audience means you can define the topics, create a brand story and ensure that your subject matter will enable your content marketing to hit home runs with your audiences.

In short you will have a real purpose for your audience. This will align with your content marketing mission statement.

In his book *"Get Content, Get Customers,"* Joe Pulizzi's recommends you have these questions in mind:

- ☐ Q. *What do our buyers really need to know about your products, about information and anything relevant to what we have to offer?* There's what you want to say (or sell) and what the audience are looking for to make a decision.
- ☐ Q. *What's the intersection between your expertise around the products or services and the information or entertainment needs of your consumer?* Map them to reveal the sweet spots.
- ☐ Q. *How does what they need to know align with your unique expertise to create the best content?* What are the priority areas where there's a really great fit?
- ☐ Q. *How do you position content for maximum impact, and what media types will be most relevant?* Think back to personality and being authentic in how you communicate, it has to be natural too.
- ☐ Q. *What will provide your consumer most benefit personally and professionally?* Your aim is to add maximum value.

Define the key parts of your content strategy

☐ Q. Content strategy components defined?

These are what we see as the key elements of a content strategy:

- ☒ Q. *Define purpose of content to support strategic business goals.* How will content help meet these broader requirements – for example growing a certain market or launching a new product? Keep these in mind so that you prioritise effort and resource.
- ☒ Q. *Define what customer value your content types should deliver.* Using the personas, as described in Step 2, to define the problems and opportunities that your content is going to address.
- ☒ Q. *Define content type priorities.* What are the topics that you'll need to cover in your content and importantly, what are the priorities within those where effort should be weighted? For example, with the Open Forum portal their content focuses on innovation, marketing and finance though it can cover health and lifestyle too.
- ☒ Q. *Differentiation.* How are we creating the necessary differentiation? There are so many ways to approach content generation and aiming to be original and relevant can only help you stand out from the crowd.

ONE.
Audit and Goals

TWO. Define Audiences
and Personas

THREE.
Strategy

FOUR.
Editorial Management

FIVE.
Content Hub

SIX.
Content Distribution

SEVEN. Evaluate and
Measure ROI

- ✓ **Q. Core brand messages.** What are the core brand messages communicated through those defined topics or conveyed through the content?
- ✓ **Q. Content sources.** How will we design and manage the content mix across curated, aggregated, user-generated, co-created, original and even (possible) licensed content? We'll come onto this in the next step, but the point is that there are many sources of content creation so knowing what suits your strategy, budget and resource is important.

Link your strategy to goals

- **Q. Strategy linked to SMART goals?**

In the first section, we recommended that you use the RACE framework to set SMART goals. Since your strategy must support your goals, let's return to RACE to suggest strategies to consider to support your content marketing goals.

Reach - be visible online

Approaches to use to improve your reach through content marketing are:

- ✓ **Target** - ask "who is listening to you already"? Make something for them, ideally something that makes their life a little easier, inspire them to want to talk about you to others. Be targeted in your approach above all else - the first question is not how many, but who - who are your key influencers?
- ✓ **Create good stuff** - ask not what helps spread your message but what content does your audience need or enjoy, where is the intersection of value for your brand (what you want to say) and your audience (what they are trying to solve)? The more that content is based on their needs, the more it's going to be perceived as valuable - use social listening tools, blog researching and search engine keyword research to quickly define those audience pain points.
- ✓ **Publish to outposts** - make your content visible in places where your audience already are. Success comes from employing online listening to the market and doing the hard work too.

Act – encourage participation and sharing of your content

At this stage we are looking to encourage visitors to interact with and share our content, so we need to know the content types that are effective. Approaches to use are to:

- ✓ **Create variety** - with a range of persona types and devices on which content is consumed, varying how content manifests is important in itself. Consider the difference of mobile smartphones to desktop PCs - what is it that fits your audience? There's so many ways to share content - including a daily blog post, a weekly video series on YouTube, quarterly webinars with guest speakers or a bi-annual ebook. You can even go interactive with quizzes and contests, it's all content.
- ✓ **Be human** - when a user hits your website does it make sense, is it organised "for me" and my needs or is it a re-brand of how every other site operates in your market? Using a language that sounds human and is well structured, offers a huge advantage in introducing your ideas to others so you can be quickly understood. Is content in a format that makes sense and does it hang together under topics or categories that speak to the audience, allowing them to find more of the same.
- ✓ **Make it shareable** - Having content that is easy to share matters. There are a wealth of tools that you can use to make it easy for users to pass your story forward into their social networks, the Facebook Like/Send button on Tweet Meme are the most obvious. And, don't forget enabling syndication and bookmarking of your quality information and content. Anyone that is expressing an interest should be encouraged to share it.

Convert - gain permission

At this stage we are building a relationship, converting to a lead or a sale. To help with this you need to:

- ✓ **Value** - Demonstrate value. What do you want me to do, and why would I sign up, follow or connect with you on an ongoing basis? Keep the calls to action appealing, relevant and valuable, what do I need to do – is it offline (attend an event or visit a store) or online (go to your customer community service or Facebook page).
- ✓ **Interact** - The more interactive content is, the better. Can I ask questions, vote on something, take a quiz, use a diagnostic that helps me make a decision or enter a fun contest that entertains. Help “me” get involved with the content and with the subject matter in new ways, teach me something. Consider interaction from your brand’s perspective too, encourage the human to human interaction through commenting on your blog, in a forum or maybe a webinar about a meaty subject area.
- ✓ **Promote** - Selling, at the right time, it’s ultimately why we are in business. Make promotional offers natural and convenient, demonstrate the value exchange. Create social media-only offers – for example vouchers or special notifications only available via Twitter or Facebook – and promote access to those in emails or on brochures, Starbucks are masters of this.

Engage - develop advocacy and referral

This is the long-term engagement. Key approaches to guide your work here include:

- ✓ **Build trust** - work hard to gain customer comments and feedback from all sources including social media – then pool and present them to consumers to help engender trust. Pulling feeds from external sources, like Twitter, as social proof that people like your brand is particularly powerful, though don’t forget to simply ask and reward customers for coming back to your site to share their product story.
- ✓ **Integrate** - share content through extended services that marry marketing with that value exchange - special deals and timely reminders and updates are important for this, think of an ISP reminding you of domain name renewals via email at the exact moment you need to know and appending an offer to that for hosting effective promotional content at the right time.
- ✓ **Social CRM** - social tools are just that, a means to build a better business because we’re now afforded the ability to cost effectively listen and serve the customer better. After years of paying research companies and chasing insight we find it here, right on our doorstep if we’re open to employ it as a process within the business. Only one benefit of that is our ability to continually improve content and communications.

So, for us, content marketing success requires an adoption and integration of simple, but still new, processes. Behaving like a publisher over a broadcaster to create an inbound effect of interested prospects and customers is something that still feels pretty new to marketers. Yet we can see that it’s authentic marketing, meeting market needs and helping consumers make decisions over looking to interrupt and persuade. Having a process in place to create and re-create content in multiple forms for distribution in multiple channels like email, outposts like Facebook or LinkedIn and of course your own web services, will help you scale up and meet these new demands.

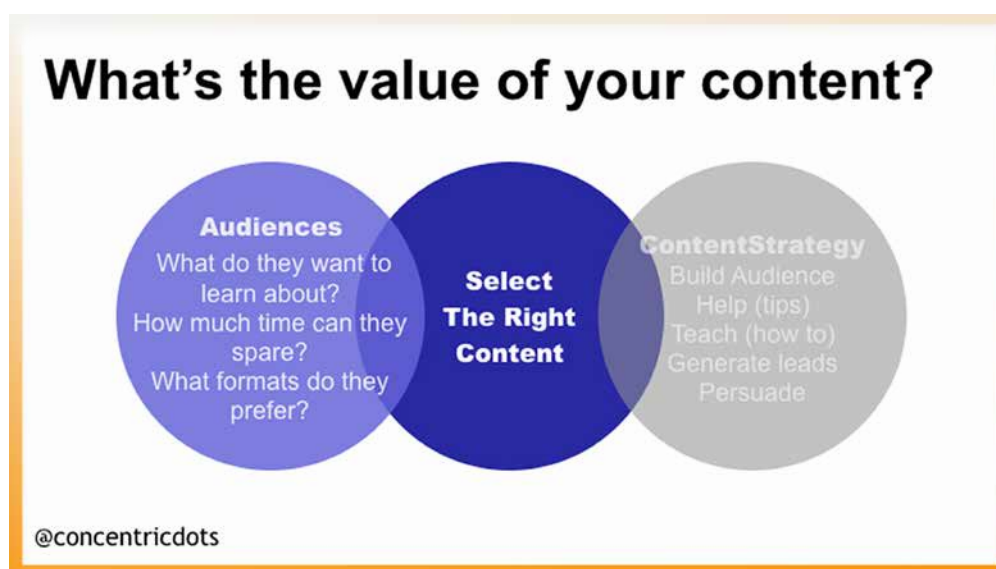
This is extremely important for getting senior team members on board, and more importantly bought in, so that the necessary budget is made available. Here are some key questions to help set those goals:

- **Q. What are the core audience types?** There’s likely more than one, for example the consumer of the product or service, and also key influencers like industry bloggers and

journalists.

- ❑ Q. What is the story or the crucial messages that the content must communicate?
- ❑ Q. What must your content enable the audience to do that helps achieve your goals?
- ❑ Q. How will the content show success – what are the key measurements at the simplest level, for example blog subscribers, newsletter sign-up, or data capture from an ebook download

Define the value you will offer your audience through your content



- ❑ Q. Content value defined?

The need to REALLY understand what customers value is similar to wider digital and marketing planning of course. But here it's content value. You should refer back and summarise each of the persona profiles in clear statements that everybody in the team can understand, for example:

"the potential customer needs evidence that we understand their problem well before they'll buy, share or recommend us"

Then, summarise the solution, for example: "Thought Leadership".

This is an example of the intersection that Joe Pulizzi talks about, along with an approach of how to address it.

A good example of this particular scenario is the American Express Open Forum (<http://www.openforum.com>) web portal, where they garner experts across a range of topics with the sole objective of "helping you grow your business".

Though the example here is B2B, it works just the same for B2C since we want our content to meet a requirement or solve a problem that in its simplest sense leaves the consumer able make a decision about something.

The key element of a strategy is to decide where you will focus your efforts, so make sure your analysis is sufficiently in-depth

"When you start looking at a problem and see a simple solution, you don't understand the problem. You keep looking and you are halfway there. The really great person will keep going and find the underlying principle of the problem, [to] come up with a beautiful elegant solution that works"

Specifying the value your content offers

❑ Q. Do we get the sell-inform-entertain-share balance right?

Next, get more specific about the content value. We think the Sell-Inform-Entertain balance is useful here, because it reflects different content needs for different types of customers in different markets.

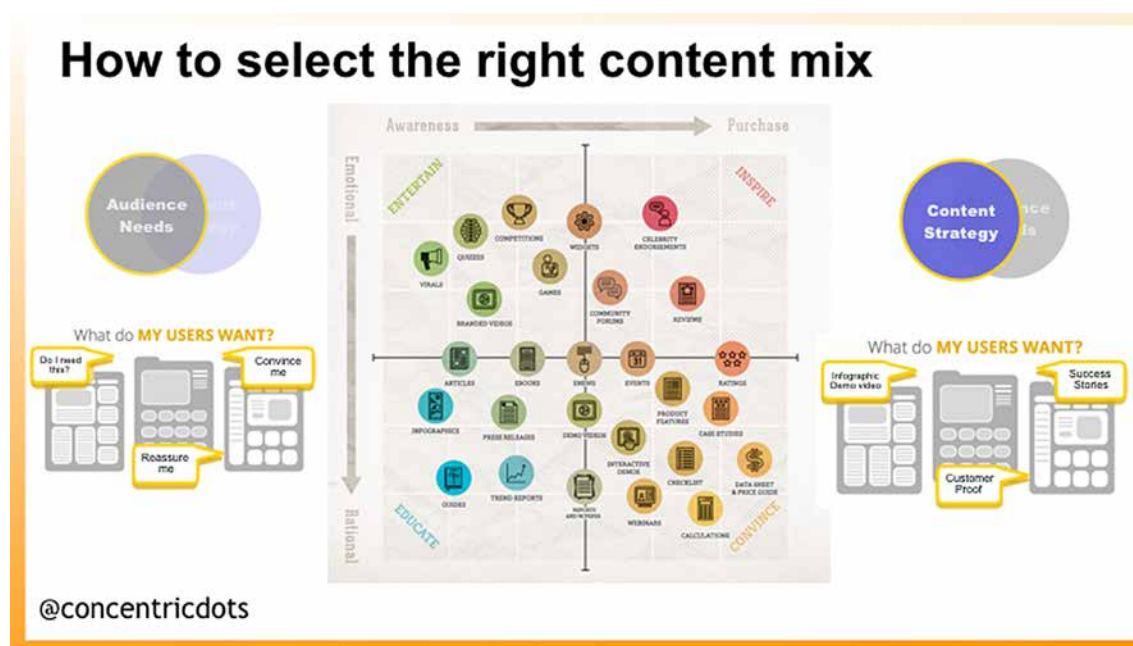
Best Practice Tip 6 Review Sell-Inform-Entertain-Share balance of your content

There's a tendency to focus on one type of content, but you should review a balance.

For example, consumer audiences don't just want entertainment and business audiences may want to be entertained as well as informed. There's not such a different between them:

B2B Proposition	B2C Proposition
Make my work easier	Make my life easier
Help me develop	Help me learn / have fun
Make me look good	Make me look good
Give me a great deal	Give me a great deal

Content types and formats



❑ Q. Different potential content types reviewed?

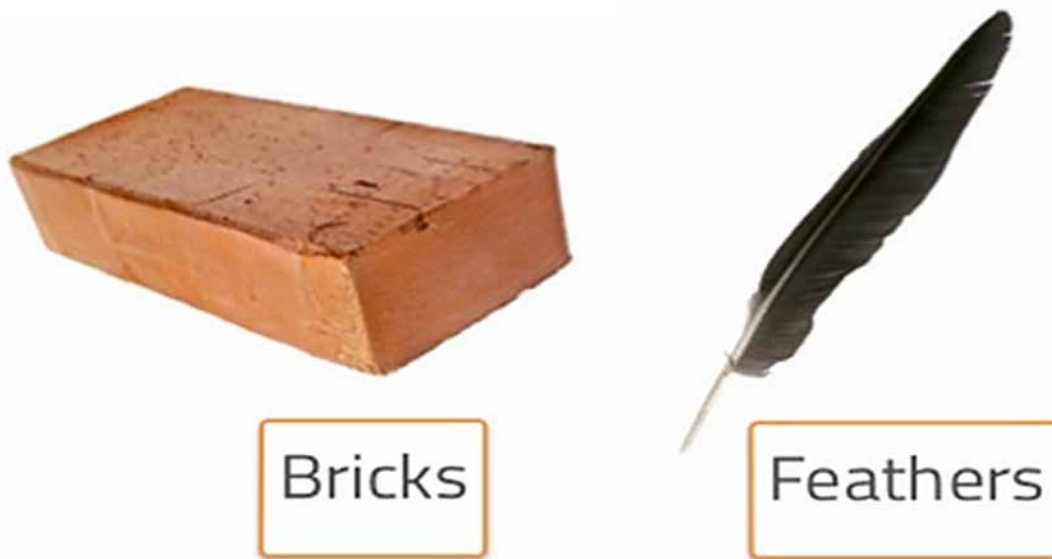
It's time to consider the different types of content that are available to engage different personas.

Content formats vary and choice of content formats is dependent on your goal, and how your target market would find it easiest to consume your content, at their pace and their chosen device and time of day.

Your choice of content types is also determined by your resources, skills and budget since more demanding content like ebooks, webinars, videos and infographics requires time, production, design and more budget.

The advantage of bigger, heavier weight content, sometimes referred to as bricks (Jay Baer)

or “epic” content (Pulizzi) is that it can be repurposed or atomised (Velocity Partners.)



In this sense content can be viewed as being either a) lightweight, frequent and by definition less demanding and less expensive to create, and b) heavyweight, but with greater, longer lasting impact.

Lightweight content	Heavyweight content
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Blog post / checklist ✓ Article / Interview ✓ Press Release (media announcements) ✓ Podcast ✓ Handheld video ✓ Case Study ✓ Price guide ✓ Webcast 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Infographic ✓ White Paper ✓ eBook ✓ Professional Video ✓ Mobile App ✓ Interactive quiz or assessment ✓ Event

Overall, the key is to be efficient with the media chosen, and start with tangible and useful topics that your audience can understand.

In her book “Content Rules”, Ann Handley talks about Content Campfires, Chris Brogan also uses this analogy and it’s a useful in visualising the challenge.

You layer on the twigs, sticks and logs only when the fire is burning on tinder. It’s a useful metaphor to keep in mind when planning.

Seed interest in your content where the discussion is happening

☐ Q. Approach for seeding interest in content reviewed?

Anne talks about finding tinder off-site in other blogs and Twitter, LinkedIn discussion groups and Q&A sites like Quora, you interact and leave comments and invite readers to check out your (relevant, awe-inspiring) content as well. Then, create tinder on your site as well, something shareable and easy to comment on or maybe even interact with (not just text), this is where the social object concept comes to play of course – it could be an interactive tool or video. In the most part this on-site tinder is exactly the role that your blog should cover.



Best Practice Tip 7 Light your content marketing fire with tinder

Spark interest in your content by engaging in conversations on other blogs or in your owned media and pointing back to your content, adding something to the conversation at the same time, not just posting a link.

The goal is to get traction and raise awareness for your content in a multitude of places without being annoying and link-baiting – so “fanning the fire” with a purpose to add value to conversation over blatantly trying to poach traffic. It’s common sense really.

Twigs and logs - With the tinder in place, you can then lay the twigs and logs onto that campfire – here are the major content formats that we’d recommend:

1. Webinars and live broadcast video as well as recorded webinars or streamed media
2. Ebooks or shorter guides including article content (web page, or short documents) and whitepapers
3. Recorded and edited video including animated or explainer videos
4. Podcast and audio shared for iPod or mp3 player consumption. Think about the audio from videos for mp3 consumption as well as turning the audio to transcripts
5. Q&As and FAQs

Content Matrix

Through running workshops we have developed our own content marketing matrix. We recommend the *content marketing matrix* as a key technique to review current use of content marketing and identify new types of content.

Our matrix, is structured to help you think through the dimensions of different content based on how your audience might think and what you’re trying to achieve as a business:

- ☐ Q. *What will work where your audience are more or less impulsive or rational?*
- ☐ Q. *How does content in each sector support your content creation and marketing goals?*
Depending on the quadrant(s) that you feel drawn to for your audience, it offers a starting point for your ideas generation.
- ☐ Q. *What is the potential for content to attract inbound links to your site to help with SEO?*

ONE.
Audit and Goals

TWO. Define Audiences and Personas

THREE.
Strategy

FOUR.
Editorial Management

FIVE.
Content Hub

SIX.
Content Distribution

SEVEN. Evaluate and Measure ROI



ONE.
Audit and Goals

TWO. Define Audiences
and Personas

THREE.
Strategy

FOUR.
Editorial Management

FIVE.
Content Hub

SIX.
Content Distribution

SEVEN. Evaluate and
Measure ROI

The process we use for applying this matrix to companies or brands is:

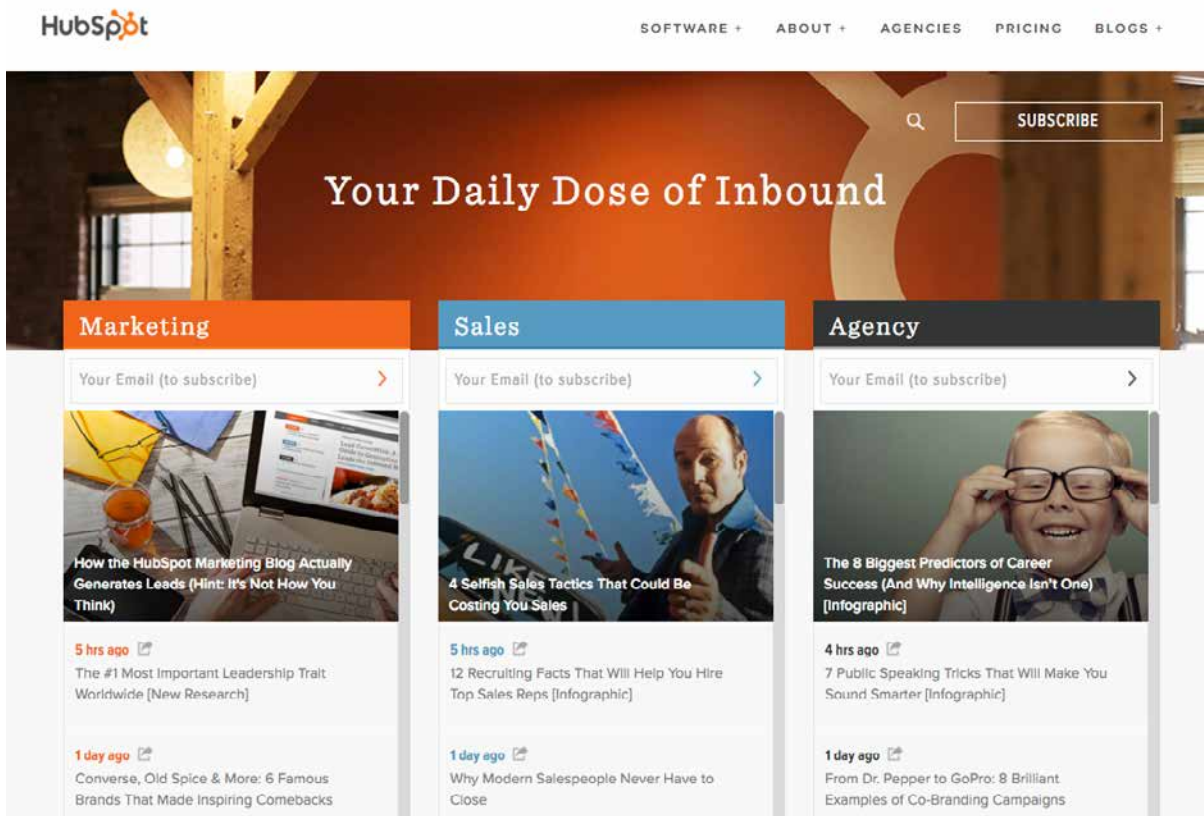
- ✓ Step 1. Review how you assess the value of different types of content.
- ✓ Step 2. Review current use of content within company through plotting on the grid.
- ✓ Step 3. Review competitor use of these content types through plotting on the grid
- ✓ Step 4. Brainstorm future content types possible
- ✓ Step 5. Use your criteria from Step 1 to select new content types to trial in content campaigns.

A closer look at different content formats

We'll now use the example of HubSpot to explain common formats for B2B content marketing, many of which can be applied to consumer sectors. Will give our tips as we look at each. HubSpot combined these techniques as part of a strategic approach to content marketing to build growth that enabled the to achieve a billion dollar IPO.

1. Regular blog posts categorised by audience need and intent

The staple approach. HubSpot have invested in good quality posts enforced through style guides. They are often defined to target specific audiences and search behaviours through posts in different categories. More recently they have segmented a single inbound blog into three and encourage subscribers as shown below. Nice!



ONE.
Audit and Goals

TWO. Define Audiences
and Personas

THREE.
Strategy

FOUR.
Editorial Management

FIVE.
Content Hub

SIX.
Content Distribution

SEVEN. Evaluate and
Measure ROI

2. Webinars and streamed media

The idea of people consuming live content is not new, webinars have been around for years. The quality and practicality of it is rocketing now that broadband penetration is so high.

HubSpot example: Notice how they integrate with business goals through the panels in the left sidebar and clear call-to-action in the main navigation. They “sweat their assets” through making it easy to see webinars on demand and accessing them on iTunes.

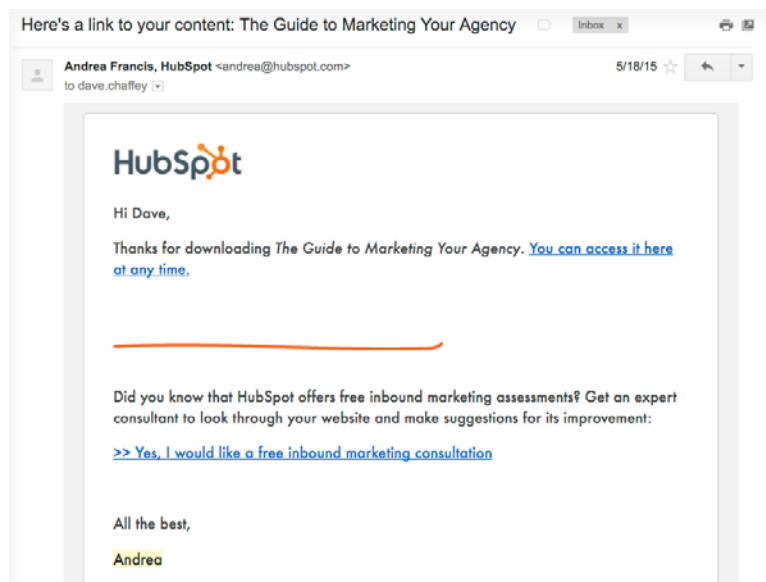


And, of course, they practice permission marketing through profiling all webinar attendees. It's nice they ask the softer question of “what is your biggest marketing challenge” – good for follow-up phone calls.

Best Practice Tip 8 Practice permission marketing

Make sure you encourage sign-up in return for your most valuable content and use this to profile your audience and follow-up by email or phone.

Here's an example of the email follow-up – with a nice additional follow-up consultation.



HubSpot also make all of their content highly shareable – before and after use.

Best Practice Tip 9 Make each item of content shareable

Use the native sharing buttons in the developers library for Twitter or Facebook, or services like www.addthis.com and www.shareservices.com to add buttons in the relevant places right next to your content.

Webinars in particular are due for a revival, we believe, they can often look poor but the principal of them makes sense for people wanting an efficient way to consume information. They're very presentation orientated, just like a conference and so allow PowerPoint, screen sharing and video to be broadcast to multiple, registered attendees. Why do they work? It's really efficiency, anyone at a PC can attend a "lunchtime briefing on lead generation", for example.

It doesn't matter where you are or where the business is the costs and time required to attend are vastly reduced. Importantly – done right – they're interactive and social (otherwise it's a video presentation!) in the sense of any conference or classroom with the ability to message or talk with the speaker. Just as with real world events we're seeing people use Twitter now as well, as a means to message other event attendees and this stream being used as a back drop to the webinar or event.

As with any content, focus on what content is best communicated through a webinar presentation and combine that with what is keeping your customers awake at night.

Here are our top tips for webinars:

1. *First – be clear what you need out of it* – leads most likely or new subscribers, maybe you want your content shared for traffic generation? The "r" in ROI must be clear. Design that in to the process from sign-up and the last slide in the presentation, how

will you follow up with attendees?

2. *Have a good speaker and presenter!* They are going to make this work ultimately – go find new talent with big ideas that fits your thinking and will be motivated to work for free. Remember that being good in webinars requires additional skills to being good in a real conference.
3. *Like any presentation, show don't tell, this is visual so mix up content, share stories, use case studies* – you want it to be compelling, totally different to reading an ebook or blog article. Map the story of the webinar out in advance, just as you would a PowerPoint presentation.
4. *Choose a moderator to work with the speaker;* this is a deal-breaker as well as you want to keep attendees enjoying the experience. This person will get everyone ready, moderate comments and any Q&A at the end of the webinar – what's the question the user is asking, get it out quickly so everyone understands.
5. *This is obvious – but practice!* Make sure the tech works, everyone involved is comfortable and the connection is good. Plan for things going wrong – it will be more likely it will falter at the speakers side, web connection issues maybe so plan how you will keep things going.
6. *Encourage interaction within the platform and across social networks whilst the webinar runs.* Message attendees – are they happy – and also consider polls to get people involved and illicit responses (social objects within the webinar). Event organizers love Twitter, think about creating a short, searchable hashtag for your event to collate a useful stream for users.
7. *Re-create your content from webinars* – there'll be blog posts and articles in the attendee questions or from key concepts in the webinar, a podcast summary afterward as well as a playback (on-demand) version of the full show for everyone that missed out.

2. Ebooks, guides, whitepapers, research and infographics

These are all on a theme – they're based on ideas, or research, customer success stories even. They all seek to solve a problem for the reader, to aid in a decision about something. They contain text, images and charts. The broad difference is that white papers tend to be authoritative, very often co-created to add credibility with a focus on a particular subject.

Ebooks epitomise the idea of content atomization (write a bigger piece and then break it down to a multitude of pieces and re-create / re-work for a new context). They are the high-end of what you might produce and differ in that they are longer, concept centric and a mix of text and visuals, they're also more conversational than white papers and are readily made up of guides when you consider the chapter format in advance.

Hubspot example: Hubspot's free resources have sufficient depth to be useful and they always feature appealing headlines and covers. They also use interactive tools.

Best Practice Tip 10 Make your Ebook content as appealing as possible through headlines and graphics

It's worth investing in these and the overall design and experience to help engage your audience and to make it more sharable.

ONE.
Audit and Goals

TWO. Define Audiences and Personas

THREE.
Strategy

FOUR.
Editorial Management

FIVE.
Content Hub

SIX.
Content Distribution

SEVEN. Evaluate and Measure ROI



Notice that Hubspot (and Marketo) also have kits where they group content together, for example this marketing kit⁴ is a great way of adding value to visitors with relatively little work.

Best Practice Tip 11 Bundle content

Grouping content of different types can add to its appeal and can expand reach through attracting visitors with different needs through search or different scent trails on the site.

Smart Insights have worked with HubSpot on co-marketing, amongst many other partners, to develop joint research and templates to expand awareness and leads from the audience of each partner. HubSpot have dedicated roles for co-marketing in different marketing since they see it as so important.

Best Practice Tip 12 Practice co-marketing

Identify other complementary organisations with a similar or larger reach and similar audience that you can co-develop and co-share content with.

A good consumer example of an ebook is this example guide from i-to-i TEFL who sell TEFL courses, their guide helps the user understand TEFL and if it's for them, using two authors paid to do that for them. One of us helped manage the creation of this page, so hope you like it – it certainly worked well for us!

⁴ [Hubspot: Inbound marketing kit.](#)



Either way, ebooks and whitepapers are great for brands with products and services that require thought before purchase – that is their real strong point. They can be rich and written for multiple audience types involved in the sale, they are shareable and naturally err towards purchases based on quality and innovation, less so on convenience or price. Here are our top tips for ebook and whitepaper creation:

1. *You're teeing up your brand as a reliable source of information, so just as with webinars, start with what keeps your audience awake at night.* You might take different perspectives on that topic in the same guide.
2. *Simplify the complex* – “save me time”. Break it down and make it easy for me to consumer, you're creating great, atomisable content in the process as well.
3. *Add credibility where possible, seek out people to involve for casual comments are as more serious co-authors.* If they don't conflict it will lighten the load and provide a win-win in both credibility and more reach within their network.
4. *Aim for fun and intriguing as well as educational, wherever possible.* Why? Simply because it's more shareable than something that is just informative – you get to bring your uniqueness to the table as well, you're building your brand.
5. *Design it* – it's well worth the fee to turn great content into a great looking ebook that brings the story to life visually – more engaging and more shareable.
6. *Encourage sharing of the content.* Ensure it's Creative Commons licensed and embed share icons into the PDF since most will browse on-screen and it reminds them to share it like they might a web page with the same benefits of populating the tweet for them, for example.
7. Promote and have a strong landing page to download the guide from, incorporate social proof of the ebook's success if you can. Again, ensure that visitors can share the page via social networks and email. You then have to consider, will you require registration to access the ebook, maybe just giving the first chapter free, or will you give it freely as recommended by David Meerman-Scott? What's the right call? It depends, on your priorities right now and your goals in the short to medium term. If

ONE.
Audit and Goals

TWO. Define Audiences
and Personas

THREE.
Strategy

FOUR.
Editorial Management

FIVE.
Content Hub

SIX.
Content Distribution

SEVEN. Evaluate and
Measure ROI

you “want leads” then the answer is there, however if you want to build a brand to generate interested traffic in the medium term... you decide!

3. The importance of video

The cost and ease of creating videos has never been more favourable, in addition to that your users are creating them as well – and, we’ve already mentioned that YouTube is the second largest search engine and we’re still seeing video as the major content trend. Video, like text, is now a tool in your arsenal, you just need to get playing with it and see how it feels. All video is not the same, so consider:

- ✓ User generated video that you edit together or just share – maybe create a contest based on video entries
- ✓ Shoot your own video to help communicate an idea or concept succinctly
- ✓ Think about the new Explainer video trend pioneered by Common Craft where complex concepts are broken down in a visual and animated way – remember the quality of the narrative and voice over is 50% of the success

Hubspot example: which is worth a watch.



They now also have a YouTube channel.

Best Practice Tip 13 Group your YouTube content within a YouTube channel and use video to support the learning and sales process

You likely won't get as many views or subscribers from your YouTube channel, but some prefer to learn or decide on products this way, so conversion may well be higher.

Our perspective is that as far as the ability to view on multiple platforms or devices, ensure shareability and inspire a valuable moment of engagement with the consumer, video is hard to beat. Here are some recommended resources for creating videos:

- ✓ **YouTube** (http://www.youtube.com/my_webcam): Use your webcam to record directly to the YouTube site.
- ✓ **Facebook** (<http://www.facebook.com/VideoApp?v=info>): Use your webcam and the Facebook Video application to record directly to your Facebook Profile or Page. Quickly access this feature via the Video tab on your Profile/Page.
- ✓ **Ustream** (<http://www.ustream.tv>): Record live streaming video from this site. Share via a

unique URL and embed codes. Ustream applications are also available for downloading to your computer and mobile phone.

- ✓ **Livestream** (<http://www.livestream.com>): Record live streaming video from this site. Share via a unique URL and embed codes. A Livestream application is also available to download to your computer.
- ✓ **qik** (<http://qik.com>) Download this mobile application to record live streaming video on the go using your cell phone's integrated video camera and upload to your YouTube account. This app also allows for automated Tweets and live chat.
- ✓ **VYou** (<http://vyou.com>): Video Q&A site, where you can record video answers to the questions other users ask.
- ✓ **Wetoku** (<http://www.wetoku.com>): Create side-by-side video interviews to embed across the web.

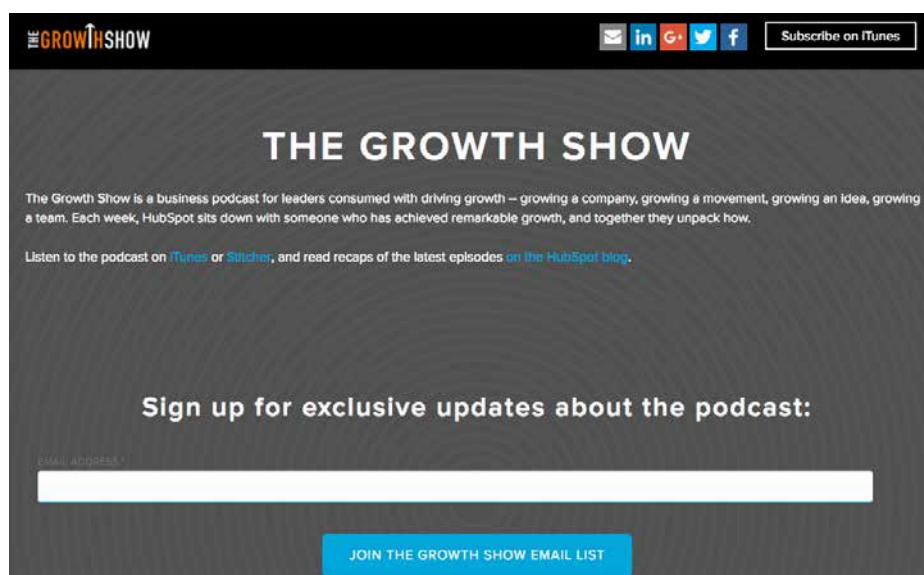
4. Audio, podcasts and video podcasts

Audio podcasts have certainly lost appeal as video has risen but for ease they're well worth trying out and are well suited to people in a place to listen to conventional radio – like commuters, for example, even phones have mp3 players now. Our recommendation is to focus on audio content being a supplemental radio show to your other content marketing. It's the easiest media since you have the equipment and material ready-made to do it – you can form audio content from blog posts, articles, e-newsletters and even take the audio from video. Audio also lends itself perfectly to interview based content, too.

Editing is straight forward and important too. You can cut the waffle and have well formatted 10-30 second sound bites. Consider branding your audio and position it as commute or break based material for people on the move.

Of course – don't forget iTunes – the premier directory for podcast material. Go to iTunes and from there *submit a podcast*.

HubSpot example: After trialling a regular HubSpot.tv spot, they now have a nicely themed podcast to attract the right type of business owner or manager audience.



Best Practice Tip 14 Deliver a regular content stream through your hub

Regular updates delivered at a regular time can help engage your audience through “setting their alarm clock”

Another feature of the audio approach which is common to all of their content marketing is that they attract top quality speakers which is relatively easy given their reach.

Best Practice Tip 15 Include authoritative celebrity or industry figures to endorse or contribute to your content

You may not be able to afford the best, but afford the best you can.

5. Q&As and FAQs

We believe this area is a seriously hot place to invest your time and money. The popularity of Yahoo! Answers shows there has always been a demand for this and growth of Quora.com gives a more social spin to this approach.

There is a difference between the two since FAQs are based upon commonly asked questions that you write ideal answers to from your understanding, they typically save time for you and the consumer so long as you stick to direct and simple answers.

They naturally edge towards people in buying mode who don't want to, or cannot, speak to someone. Done well and categorised for easy dissemination across product pages the FAQ section is a valuable tool, though its down-side is that it's still linear and does not take advantage of the constant new questions or thoughts that the consumer may have. Enter the Q&A.

Q&As are similar in that it's questions and answers, but the difference is that it's live, crowd-sourced and largely user generated. Similar to a forum but with specific positioning, functionality and designed to be Q&A based. Your brand can earn the opportunity to be a resource pre, during and post purchase and so connecting customers with potential buyers. Jay Baer refers to this as a 'social FAQ' where those Q&As can be set free across the internet. That is the value of a Q&A over an FAQ, it's inherently about "me" and so way more shareable. With a blog you are further building community alongside more static web content whilst gaining an opportunity for your internal experts to play a role in the Q&A as well.

There a number of tools helping achieve this to varying extents, check out <http://www.osqa.net> and also <http://www.wordpressqa.com>, both are site instillations so a little harder to integrate.

Either way running an FAQ or a Q&A is a commitment to develop and keep up to date, but well worth the value for the consumer.

HubSpot example: Hubspot bills these as "communities" on different platforms – either owned "inbound.org" or independent – such as the Linked In group for Hubspot

Best Practice Tip 16 Understand common user questions and answer them

Answer them either through the content on your hub, FAQs or a social network group.

How to audit and inventory your marketing content

☐ Q. *Have we audited current content effectiveness and content gaps?*

Auditing your content and its effectiveness is the real start point on the journey to making content more effective, and it can also be crucial for senior managers in proving the value of investment so far in content marketing and getting buy-in and budget for a proper job.

ONE.
Audit and Goals

TWO. Define Audiences
and Personas

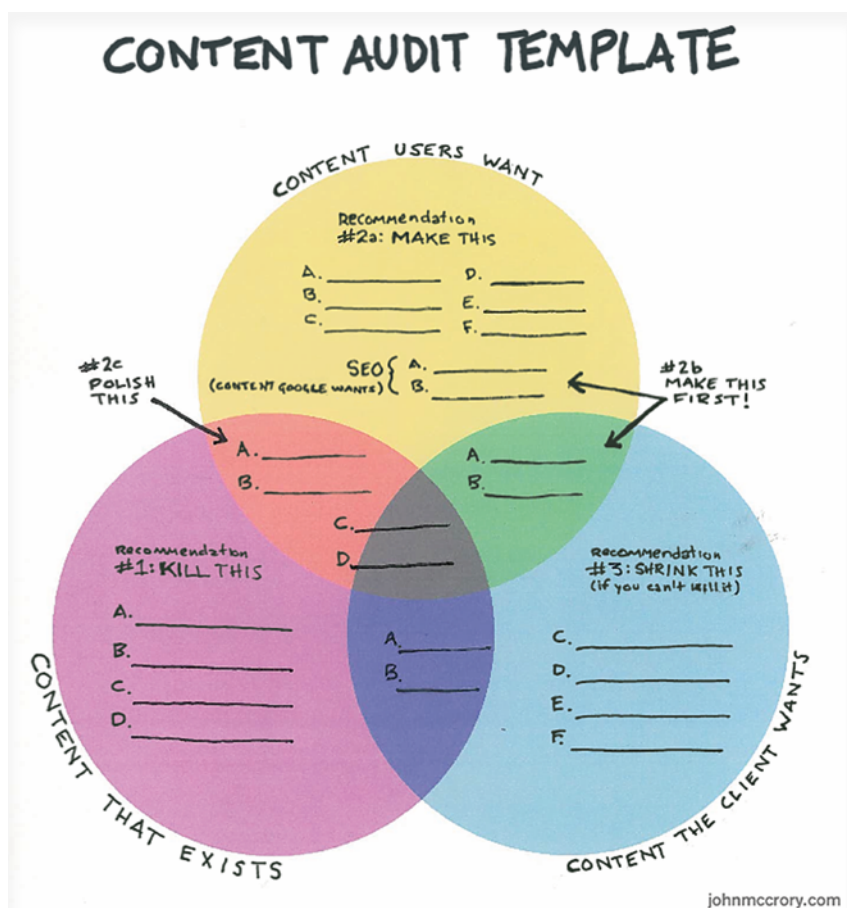
THREE.
Strategy

FOUR.
Editorial Management

FIVE.
Content Hub

SIX.
Content Distribution

SEVEN. Evaluate and
Measure ROI



ONE.
Audit and Goals

TWO. Define Audiences
and Personas

THREE.
Strategy

FOUR.
Editorial Management

FIVE.
Content Hub

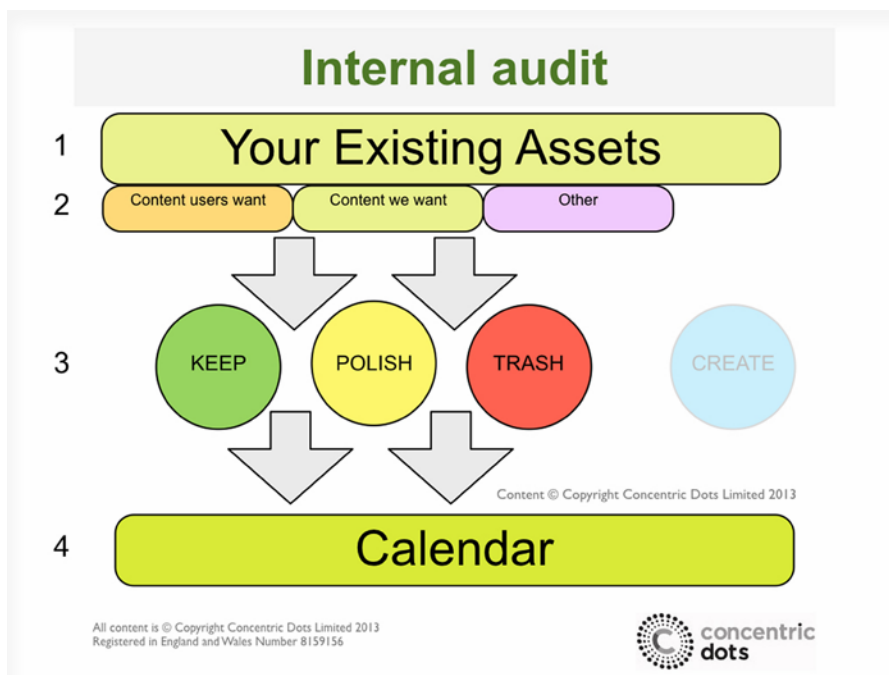
SIX.
Content Distribution

SEVEN. Evaluate and
Measure ROI

3

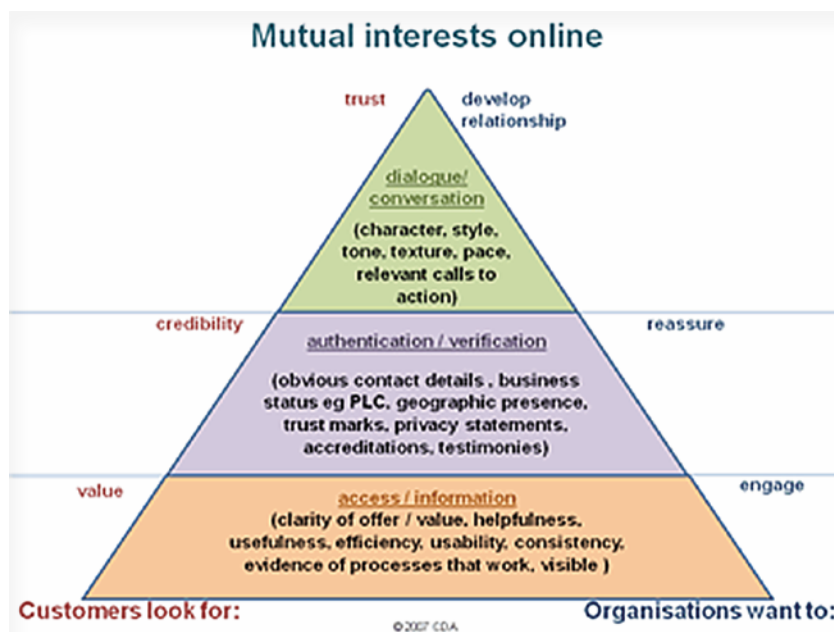
The purpose of your content audit is to

6. See how well you're covering the topics that are important to your audience
7. See whether you're maintaining a good mix of content types
8. Help you find gaps that you can fill with new content pieces
9. Identify great pieces of content that can be repurposed into other formats to reach even more prospects



Technique 1 – Reviewing your internal story

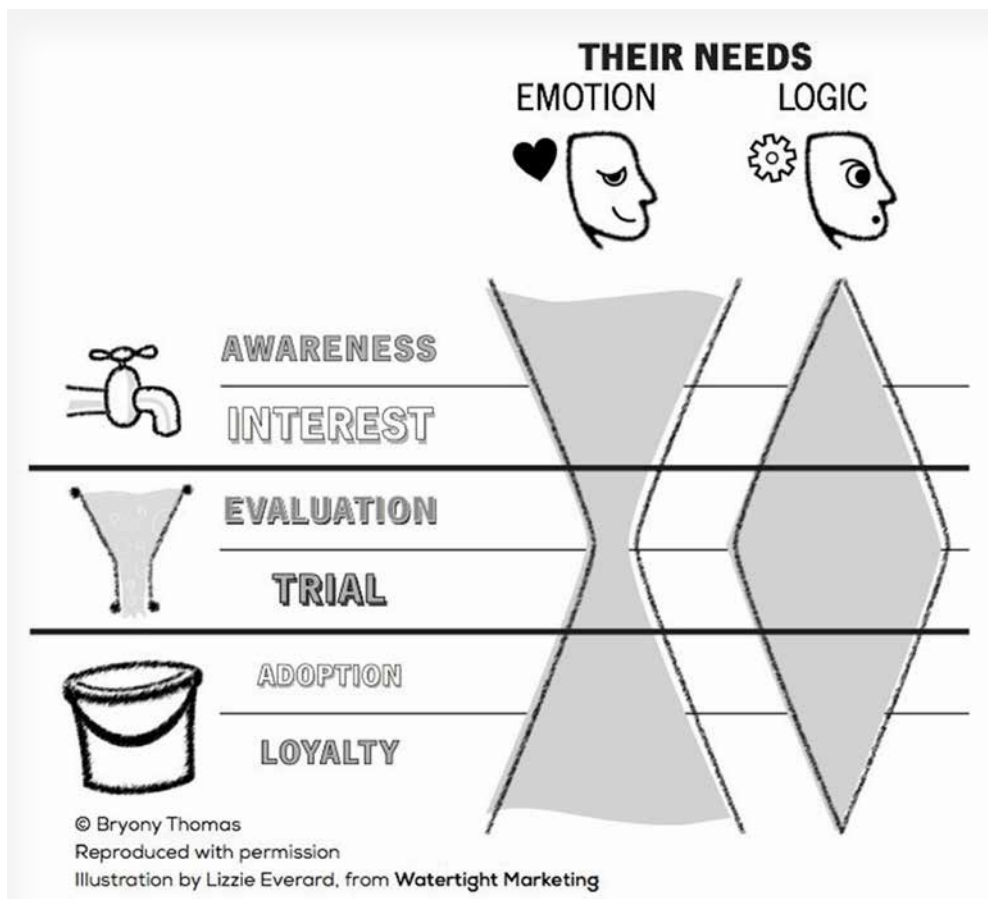
It's essential that your audit covers both the organizational and customer interests. Our friends at CDA have an excellent framework for this two-pronged diagnostic, with what you should review in the three areas of mutual interest:



The CDA pyramid shows the critical importance of having content to support the different rational stages in the customer buying cycle.

Bryony Thomas at Watertight Marketing stresses the importance and role of both rational and emotional content for striking an emotional chord with your potential buyers very early in the relationship (touchpoint 13 on the Watertight Touchpoint Leak Assessment), but also emotional connection, lower in the funnel as your buyers approach a decision to buy (touchpoint 3) provided by the visual and written style of your content that has to be friendly

and allow people to make an emotional connection with your business



A content audit is a job for someone with a head for analytics, since this is a serious and tedious process to ensure that the data gives you confidence and that you emerge with a clear story to make decisions as you move forwards.

Technique 2: Benchmarking and key tools

Before auditing your own content we suggest you start by benchmarking against competitor content, since this will enable you to be more critical about your own content and so find problems and identify new opportunities. Take a look at Step 7 for our detailed suggestions on how you review content effectiveness with Google Analytics.

Perform external analysis to compliment your internal audit

- ☐ Q. Have we benchmarked current content effectiveness and content gaps against competitors?

Once you have the completed the internal story, it's important to perform a similar process externally to see what you're missing.

Undertake an external analysis of your competitors and key influencers through market research, reading blogs and white papers; understand emotional feelings about the brand and topics through social sentiment analysis from social media listening tools; use keyword research to understand words and phrases used in searching for content in Google, using keyword and discovery tools.

- ☐ **Market research** – ideally ensure that somebody different does this so that you avoid confirmation bias. This can get expensive but you need to be able to validate popular sources of content in the market, where it overlaps with yours and learn which audience

ONE.
Audit and Goals

TWO. Define Audiences and Personas

THREE.
Strategy

FOUR.
Editorial Management

FIVE.
Content Hub

SIX.
Content Distribution

SEVEN. Evaluate and Measure ROI

is consuming that content. There's a wealth of information out there including free blogs, free white papers, Slideshare presentations, conferences and of course the premium (paid) industry content.

- ❑ **Social sentiment** - understand how the audience is feeling about brands and topics more generally. There's a range of software available to help automate the auditing of how an audience is feeling, so it's crazy to not make use of that. The software is looking for triggers for sentiment (positive / neutral / negative) alongside mentions of your brand or the categories and topics related to your brand. This automated approach is really valuable for large scale analysis, of course if there's 10 references then simply reading them is better for gauging sentiment. An important point here - of say 1,000 tweets how do you know the 25 that matter? Identify and focus on those with most influence in your market over casual commentators, it saves time and will help tighten your brief. Think about using tools like Social Mention (<http://www.socialmention.com>) and Radian 6 Social Mention (<http://www.radian6.com>) to help with this.
- ❑ **Keyword research** - conduct or hire out keyword research to understand the words or phrases used by your audience when they hit Google. With the right keywords you'll not only learn why some of your content is / is not working, you'll also increase the visibility of your content and drive more traffic to your website. Brainstorm and use web analytics tools to identify valuable keywords sending traffic already to you or known others.

Best Practice Tip 17 Use top keyphrases to identify your content marketing competitors and opportunities

Once you have found the highest volume keyphrases in your market using the Google Keyword Tool, check out the competition and then identify the gaps – which are the niches you can compete in?

Once you have the list bring in to discovery tools to learn what's most popular:

- ✅ Google KeyWord Tool (<https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal>)
- ✅ SEMRush (<http://www.semrush.com/>)
- ✅ WordStream (<http://www.wordstream.com/>)
- ✅ Majestic SEO (<http://www.majesticseo.com>)
- ✅ Ubersuggest (<http://ubersuggest.org/>) for multilingual queries.

We recommend the Google Keyword Tool as your starting point. Here's an example of how you could use it to gain ideas. When you use this tool make sure you tick the "Exact" match type to get a more realistic idea (by default it gives a broad match which overestimates the number of searches). It's best to start broad, with your category, here "seo".

ONE.
Audit and Goals

TWO. Define Audiences
and Personas

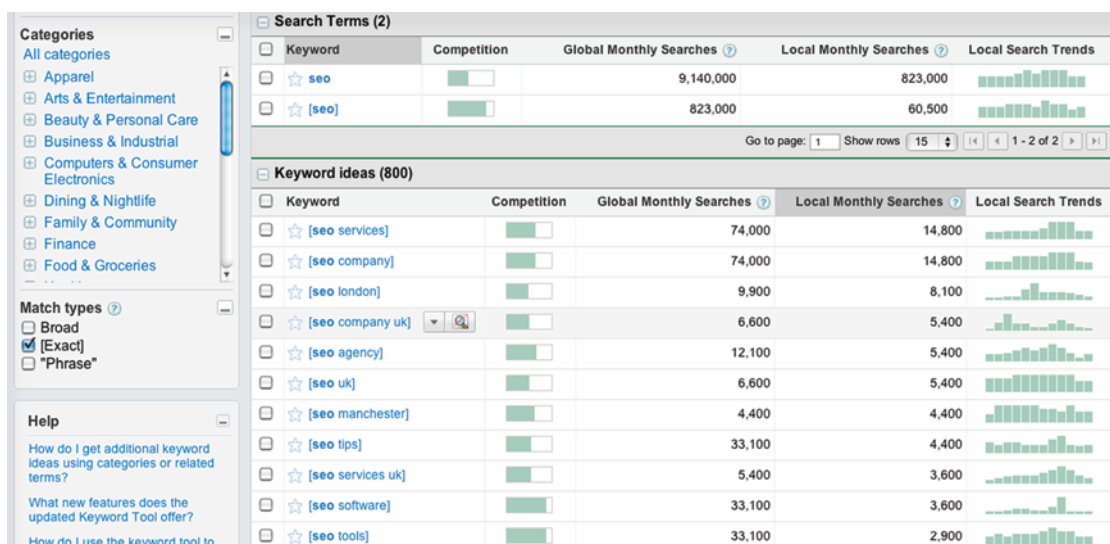
THREE.
Strategy

FOUR.
Editorial Management

FIVE.
Content Hub

SIX.
Content Distribution

SEVEN. Evaluate and
Measure ROI



As an example of the thinking that the keyword tool can prompt, notice that people are looking for “seo service”, so maybe a guide or blog post could be titled “Choosing an SEO service” rather than “Choosing an SEO company”. Of course it will be hard to compete on this term, but when people browsing the web see your guide mentioned in social media or in on other sites it will resonate better with them. Also notice the use of qualifiers like “tips and tools”.

Once you have some ideas at this top-level, get more specific. If we’re writing a guide to SEO, it’s clear from the keywords that people are looking for a basic guide (although here the “starter guide” is a specific guide from Google – we recommend it).

Keyword ideas (49)			
Keyword	Competition	Global Monthly Searches	
[google seo guide]	Medium	1,900	
[seo basics guide]	Medium	210	
[google seo starter guide]	Medium	590	
[seo starter guide]	Medium	390	
[beginners guide to seo]	Medium	170	
[free seo guide]	Medium	170	
[guide to seo]	Medium	170	
[seo google guide]	Medium	110	
[the seo business guide]	Medium	210	

- Competitor research – are your competitors getting it right? What tools are your competitors using and how is their content organized, is there anything to learn there. To illustrate this type of analysis, in Step 3 we look at the example of Hubspot in detail reviewing their content types.

Technique 3. Auditing your content

There are two parts here, quantitative and qualitative. Use a spreadsheet to audit your content.

Quantitative – The plan here is to create a full inventory of the existing web content and then get a sense of what’s available, what’s popular, what is working and what’s not.

You can use something like Excel, making it easy to list each page line by line and then, on separate tabs, any other content (Word Docs, PDF's, PowerPoint, Video, audio) that has been of use in your digital marketing so far. There are tools that help map a site in XML easily and will then export to a CSV file, tools like that include Integrity. Once all data is recorded you need to organise it and get a sense of popularity.

Keep it simple so you can sort the data as needed and then summarise the story in PowerPoint so that it's easy to cut and paste and for others to digest. The page / document inventory will include columns:

- ✓ Unique identifier (for every document, video or web page)
- ✓ URL / document name
- ✓ Page title
- ✓ Topic covered
- ✓ An indicator of popularity:
- ✓ Page views or unique visitors
- ✓ Downloads
- ✓ Bounce rate
- ✓ Content type (text, video, PDF download etc)
- ✓ The owner of the content

Ensure that you also summarise the broader story of peak visitor days and times, broadly the most popular page/topics and least popular, also consider the top entry and exit pages and patterns for what content, by media type, is most interacted with. It sounds a slog, and it is, but it's all about building your confidence and the business' confidence to invest more in the right areas.

Qualitative. Raw data of content usage and interaction alone is only useful to a point. Ask other team members who talk direct to customers like sales and customer service, for their ratings of the top 10 issues or concerns that they deal with on a daily basis, or the common gripes about the website or any downloads or white papers that are available to them as part of the buying cycle. You're looking to identify the pain points of the users in real terms, to see what backs up the data that you've garnered. With enough budget you would logically extend this into simple customer focus groups, and focus groups with leads that never converted to customer (more importantly!). Keep the focus on content though.

Consider these as ways of questioning:

- ✓ Top gripes that customers have
- ✓ Top "eureka" moments for new customers that trigger a buy decision
- ✓ Top questions when in buying mode
- ✓ The question is now simple – what are you currently missing in your content that those customers would really value in knowing?

Define the content topic 'gaps' and priorities

As a result of the above you can now reveal the content gaps and priorities, your areas of focus essentially, where exactly are you are going to invest your no doubt limited resources with tangible proof as to why.

Best Practice Tip 18 Define content gaps and priorities

The output from your keyword research and competitor analysis should show the scale of your opportunities.

As an example, if your audience has a particular set of problems or issues that is clear in the research that your product or service can fix, then you'll want to focus there, maybe there are some immediately clear opportunities to help your product or service become more buyable, assuming your current content does not meet those needs already. It's a not so simple case of listing those priorities for the audience against what content you already have that is either missing or is available but not being used well enough. Maybe you have content but in the wrong media format, maybe it's not findable on the site or just isn't resonating with your audience at all in communications terms.

Develop your Keyword Glossary

Next, create a list of your keywords and phrases to reflect your customer behaviour; then you can map this against content types and use within your SEO. As part of this, you may also wish to look at hashtags for key social media platforms. Sometimes shorter lists are better so they can be grouped. In your spreadsheet consider including:

- ✓ Primary and secondary demand phrases grouped by type of keyphrase
- ✓ Keyword data (popularity, competitiveness, etc.)
- ✓ Competitive research – who is ranking well on those terms
- ✓ Website categories and where keywords sit in relation to them

Map keywords to all site content (downloads, images, video, social content, web pages) – ensure you leverage all the keyword effort!

Best Practice Tip 19 Group and categorise your keyphrases

We've seen many companies develop a long list (actually more often it's a short list), but there's no grouping so it's difficult to manage. Once you have grouped keyphrases in a way that reflects customer behaviour, then you can map these groups against potential content types.

The best way to summarise the types of qualifiers is through writing out the semantics of a sentence like this:

<qualifier> + <core term> + <post modifier>

Common qualifiers for content marketing are:

- ✓ How to
- ✓ Guide to
- ✓ Tips

Common post-modifiers are:

- ✓ Ebook
- ✓ Download
- ✓ Calculator

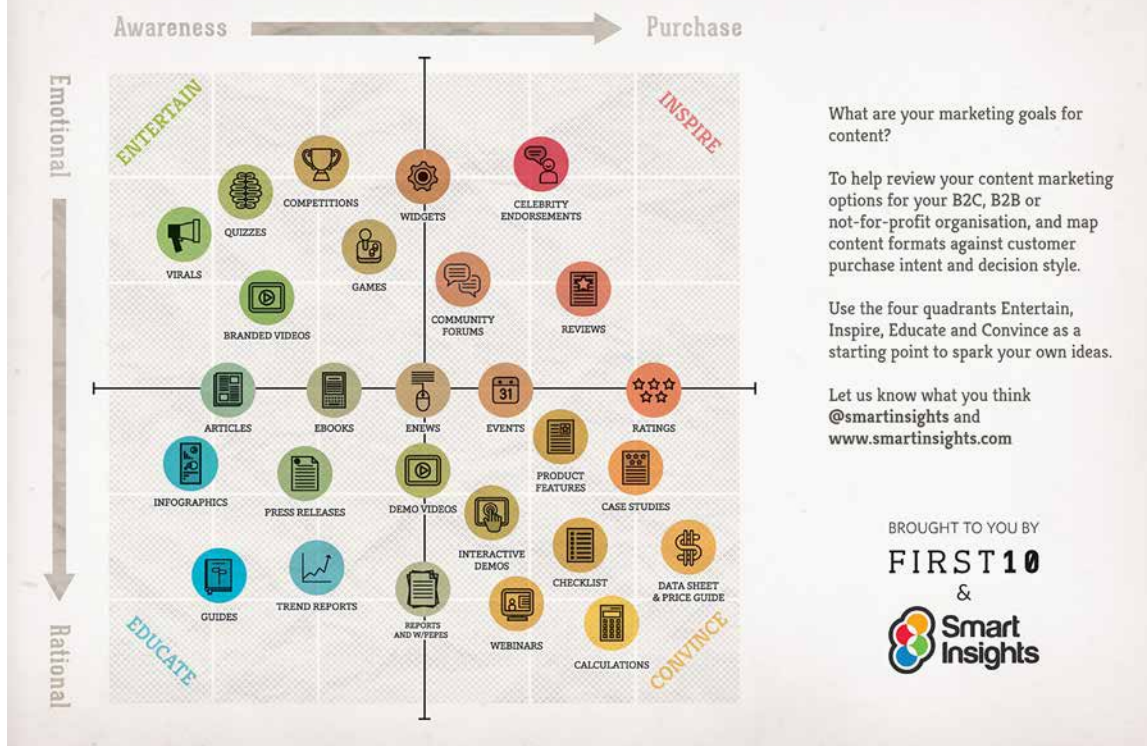
Technique 4. Identifying your content gaps and priorities

You can now reveal your content gaps and priorities, and identify where you are going to invest.

Our content matrix, originally developed to help you produce the right content for the right goal and stage of the buying cycle, also works as a content auditing tool.

You can audit types of content at a top level using the content marketing matrix to identify the gap between what you're doing now and what you could in future.

The Content Marketing Matrix



Our matrix is structured to help you think through the dimensions of different content, based on how your audience might think and what you're trying to achieve as a business:

- ✓ Q. What will work where your audience are more or less impulsive or rational?
- ✓ Q. How does content in each sector support your content creation and marketing goals? Depending on the quadrant(s) that you feel drawn to for your audience, it offers a starting point for your ideas generation.
- ✓ Q. What is the potential for content to attract inbound links to your site to help with SEO?

As we mentioned earlier, in the guide the steps in using this tool are simply:

- ✓ Step 1. Review how you assess the value of different types of content.
- ✓ Step 2. Review current use of content within company through plotting on the grid.
- ✓ Step 3. Review competitor use of these content types through plotting on the grid.
- ✓ Step 4. Brainstorm future content types possible.
- ✓ Step 5. Use your criteria from Step 1 to select new content types to trial in content campaigns.

ONE.
Audit and Goals

TWO. Define Audiences
and Personas

THREE.
Strategy

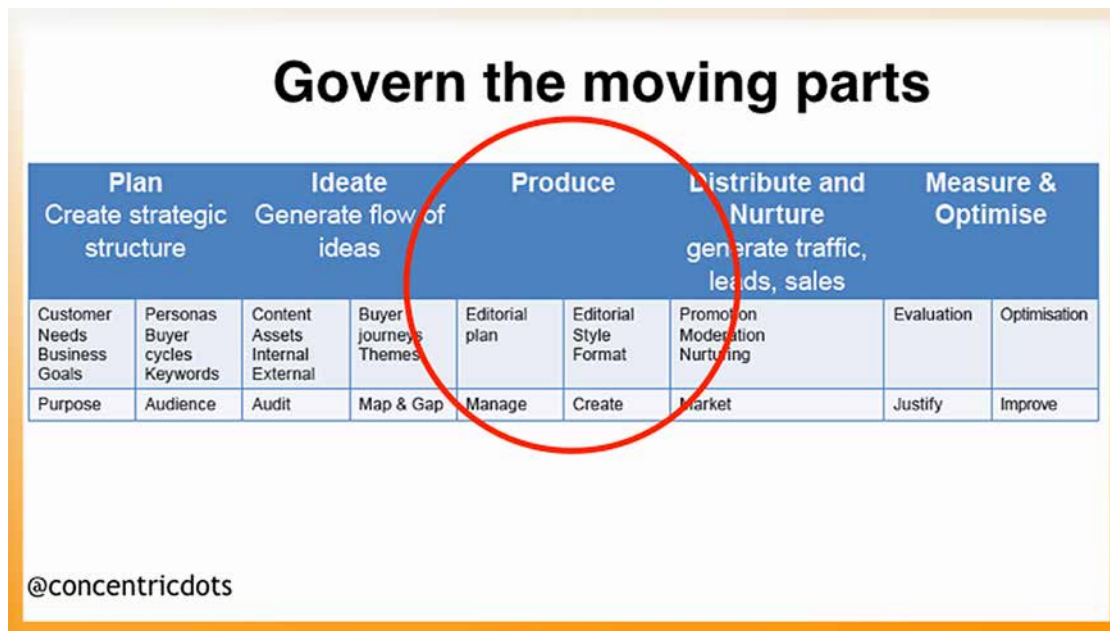
FOUR.
Editorial Management

FIVE.
Content Hub

SIX.
Content Distribution

SEVEN. Evaluate and
Measure ROI

Get effective editorial governance in place



Q. Effective governance in place?

To get to the level of quality needed to make your content marketing work requires a major commitment.

You can see that this commitment needs not only a major investment in content, but also people resources to manage the publication and promotion of this content.

To help you govern this process successfully, you need discipline and clear guidelines to oversee and control the tasks, roles, responsibilities, editorial workflow, deadlines, approval processes, grammar, quality, content style, tone and voice, which are all part of your brand.

These guidelines can be referred to as your 'content marketing strategy governance document,' or you have encountered the term 'style guide' used for editorial governance in the media industry.

Whatever you decide to call your document, it needs to ensure that your content marketing is strategic, and not characteristic of "random acts of marketing."

The number one objective of content governance is to coordinate the efforts of individuals internally and/or externally to help fulfil a consistent brand voice.

Done correctly editorial governance will:

- ✓ Guide writers on how to write for a specific target audience
- ✓ Help writers feel more confident writing
- ✓ Ensure consistent quality & tone across numerous writers / touch points
- ✓ Remove the subjectivity from the review process
- ✓ Lighten the need for editing and correction
- ✓ Make the process repeatable and scalable
- ✓ Improve reader engagement and visitor retention

ONE.
Audit and Goals

TWO. Define Audiences
and Personas

THREE.
Strategy

FOUR.
Editorial Management

FIVE.
Content Hub

SIX.
Content Distribution

SEVEN. Evaluate and
Measure ROI

Strategy Recommendation 7 Get senior management commitment to an ongoing content management initiative

How you achieve this will vary according to the type of company, but we think this is one of the most important strategy recommendations in this guide.

As with supporting all major change in a business getting senior managers to support the initiative is probably the biggest driver of success. If you don't get this it's like other business activities will always take priority and quality of content will suffer.

The questions to ask here are:

- ☐ Q. *Do we have executive support for this content strategy?*
- ☐ Q. *Who is the ultimate authority on your content strategy, and what are the criteria for making changes?*
- ☐ Q. *How will we sustain and evolve your content strategy to achieve your business strategy?*
- ☐ Q. *Which policies, guidelines and standards should be implemented (as simply as possible) and policed to assure all content is aligned with any existing internal and external requirements?*
- ☐ Q. *What are the measures we will use to review content effectiveness and show how content development is supporting the business?*
- ☐ Q. *Are the right resources and structures in place to support content development?*

Once you have developed this information, and the executive team buys into this essential background information for your content strategy, then you can start developing the execution plan.

The final area we will look at in this step is the need for the right management of content marketing, starting with measurement and then looking at the resources needed to run the show.

Techniques

1. Ideas for defining content Tone and Voice

A technique you can use to identify your brand tone and voice comes from Big Brand System. It's designed to make us think about our organisation's brand as having a specific tone and voice that matches brand personality characteristics on a spectrum.

Define your brand tone and voice

BIG BRAND SYSTEM

BRAND PERSONALITY SPECTRUM

Personable and friendly	Corporate, professional
Spontaneous, high energy	Careful thinking, planning
Modern or high tech	Classic and traditional
Cutting edge	Established
Fun	Serious
Accessible to all	Upscale

Where does your brand live on the spectrum?

@concentricdots <http://bit.ly/brand-personality-test>

In the left column we've got brand personalities that are personable and friendly, spontaneous, modern cutting edge, fun and accessible, and on the right we've got brand

ONE.
Audit and Goals

TWO. Define Audiences and Personas

THREE.
Strategy

FOUR.
Editorial Management

FIVE.
Content Hub

SIX.
Content Distribution

SEVEN. Evaluate and Measure ROI

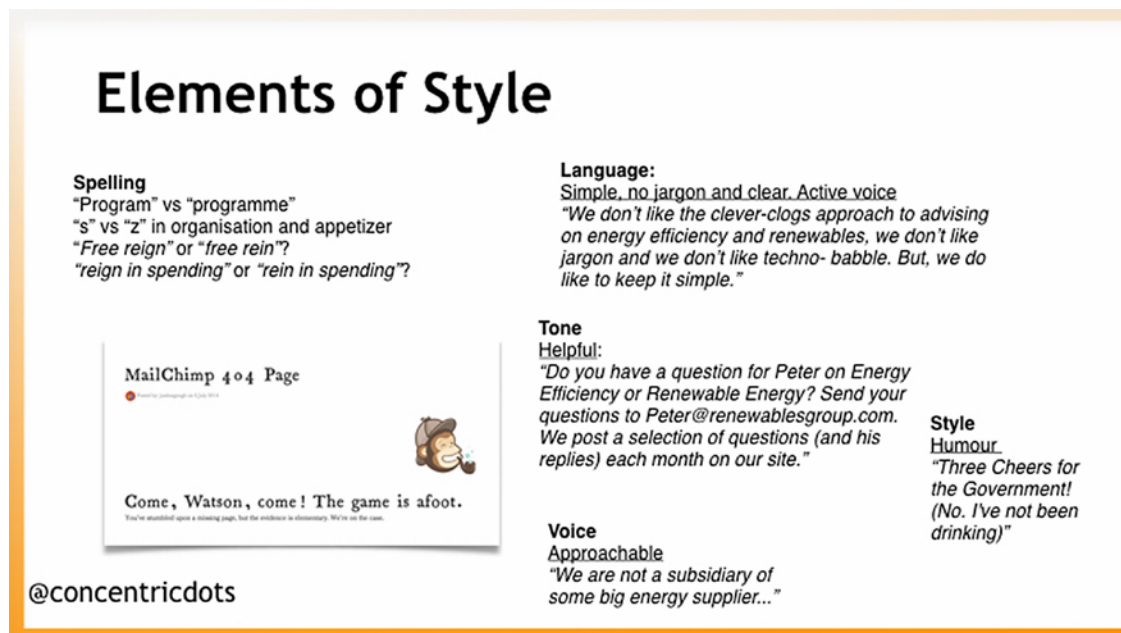
personalities that are rather more formal:

Corporate, careful thinking, traditional, established and serious.

Working with the brand personality attributes on the spectrum's you can position your own brand, and begin the process of generating your own specific brand style guidelines.

❑ Q: *Where does your brand live on the spectrum?*

Developing brand voice guidelines and a style guide is intrinsic to building a coherent brand personality.

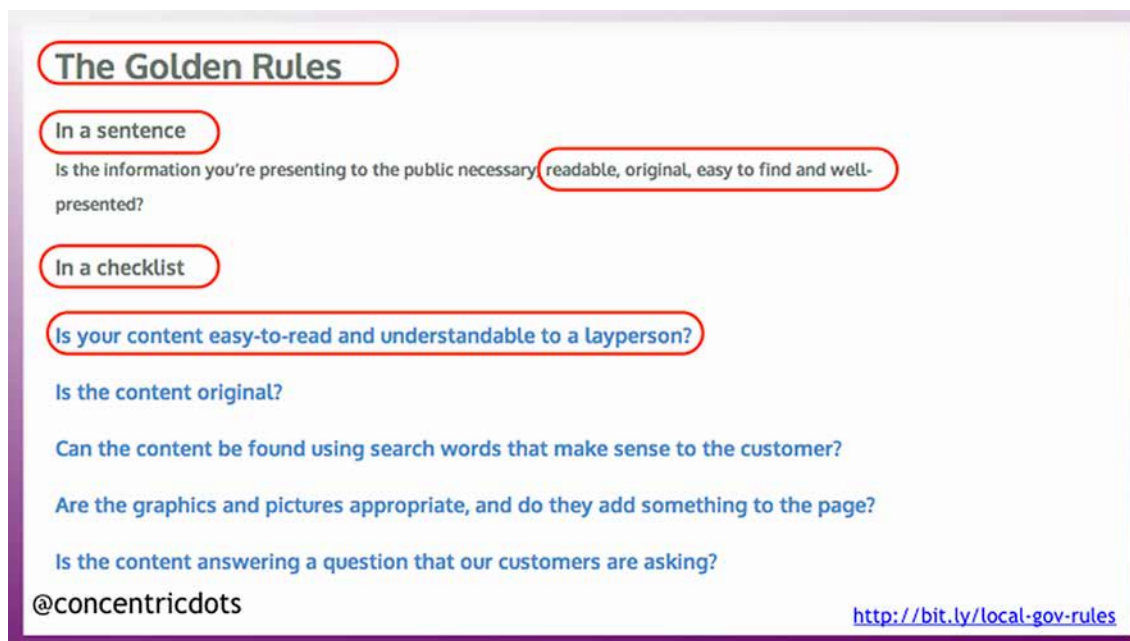


Here is an example of a brand my agency developed a content marketing strategy for, which needed to have a simple, no-jargon, clear active voice, which didn't like "the clever clogs approach to advising on renewable energy solutions using techno babble, preferring a simple style and a bit of humour "three cheers for the government, no have not been drinking."

In essence the brand;s voice is spontaneous rather than careful thinking, which is better suited to a bigger, stuffer energy supplier.

MailChimp are well known for injecting humour into their voice.

UK gov makes use of its online style guide to give local councils content writing guidelines across a multitude of remote sites:



The Smart Insights content marketing eLearning Toolkit has further guidance on managing editorial governance, including setting rules for grammar, vocabulary, spelling, punctuation and syntax.

Do you have the right team in place?

- ☐ Q. *Resource for content marketing identified including responsibilities, roles, structures and process?*

In Step One we encouraged you to review your existing content marketing skills and resource.

Successful content marketing management and workflow is complex, so having the right resource in place is almost always a challenge. It's not just web content either, the remit must be broad enough to cover all content, including on and off your website.

The resource you need depends on what you need to accomplish, by when and to what standards; That could mean a small team, or a very able one-person team, which means someone who can wear all the editorial and marketing hats.

If you look back at Altimeter's Content Marketing Maturity Self-audit grid in Step One, you'll notice that with maturity, more skills are developed in-house and collaboration increases across the organisation.

A content marketer is responsible for the planning, creating, and sharing of valuable content to attract and convert prospects into customers, and customers into repeat buyers. The type of content he/she shares depends upon what is being sold. In other words, the skills are to educate people so that they know, like, and trust your brand enough to do business with you.

Responsibilities

- ☐ Q. *Responsibilities for content marketing defined?*

Below are the broad responsibilities for content marketing to think about:

- ☐ **Strategy development and leadership.** Leads the web content strategy with the wider team, and turning this into a budgets plan with the resource needed
- ☐ **Standards development.** Lead standards creation (maybe working with others in marketing) developing ideas like voice, tone, being relevant
- ☐ **Editorial control.** Deciding the who, what, how, where and when of what gets published,

and ensuring this ties back to the wider organisation (especially marketing)

- ❑ *Managing content creators.* Managing and organising content creators against the plan
- ❑ *Measurement, evaluation and improvement.* Specifying the right KPIs and reports to review and improve. Also relates to social media optimisation

So these are a selection of the main roles, there is not necessarily a single person in each role. In a small content marketing set-up, these roles are often covered by just one or two people.

Roles

❑ *Q. Roles for content marketing defined?*

When you build or review a team consider these role types:

- ✅ *Listening analysts* – ideally before, but even once you start sharing content, it's necessary to get a handle on what your audience are talking about in order to add fuel to that conversation, so listening to the market using free or paid software is important. You want to keep close to the audience and their issues.
- ✅ *Content creators* – these skills may be quite diverse including copywriting or even video animation skills. You will need the most often used skill within your reach and at a low cost. Advanced business will need a dedicated content creator(s) with multiple skills, of course.
- ✅ *Journalists* – this role specifically refers to creating fresh content for a new section, blog or social media presence. I'm a big proponent of David Meerman-Scott's suggestion of the importance of journalism skills being brought into marketing, after all isn't modern marketing based around storytelling, good research and well executed communications? Particularly since the requirement will be to curate, co-create and originate content across pre-agreed topics, that's a skill in itself.
- ✅ *Content reviewers* – these are the managers within brand or marketing who sign-off the content. You need a good workflow system to alert them to what needs to be reviewed so they can suggest modifications and make sign-off rapidly.
- ✅ *Conversation agents* – or more commonly 'community managers', are a unique mix of all of the above with the added ability to interact meaningfully with your audience wherever they reside online. One of their key goals is to develop user-originated content as a part of those conversations.
- ✅ *Team leader* – someone has to be able to captain and co-ordinate this content army internally and also ensure that it delivers to the strategy. The leader will also manage ad-hoc external requirements. This role is sometimes known as a content strategist, this example from a job description from Logitech gives an idea of the scope of this role. The person in the lead role would ideally be an "embedded journalist", someone who understand the audience and has a nose for (and ability to write) a story.

Content marketing has been around for a while, but a content marketer is a newer phenomenon.

Typically, the key content marketing tasks for a small team are the following:

Content Creation Workflow: Tasks

Sample Content Creation Workflow: Tasks



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Which translates into the following roles:

Content Creation Workflow: Roles

Sample Content Creation Workflow: Roles



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It's easy to overlook the range of technical, editorial, marketing and management skills required for successful content marketing. Take the time to research the required activities for your project success and understand your organisational needs. Is your project a pilot project, or is it an ongoing commitment to content creation?

Regardless of whether or not you manage your content marketing in-house or outsource elements of it, members of your content marketing team need to know their role and have a clear line of sight into the process. A cloud-based project management tool like Basecamp, Trello, Content Schedule or Kapost, if you can afford the investment, will help you manage your remote content marketing production and distribution team.

Here is a diagram from our friends at CoSchedule, a popular Wordpress editorial calendar plugin, to help you consider your blogging resource:

ONE.
Audit and Goals

TWO. Define Audiences and Personas

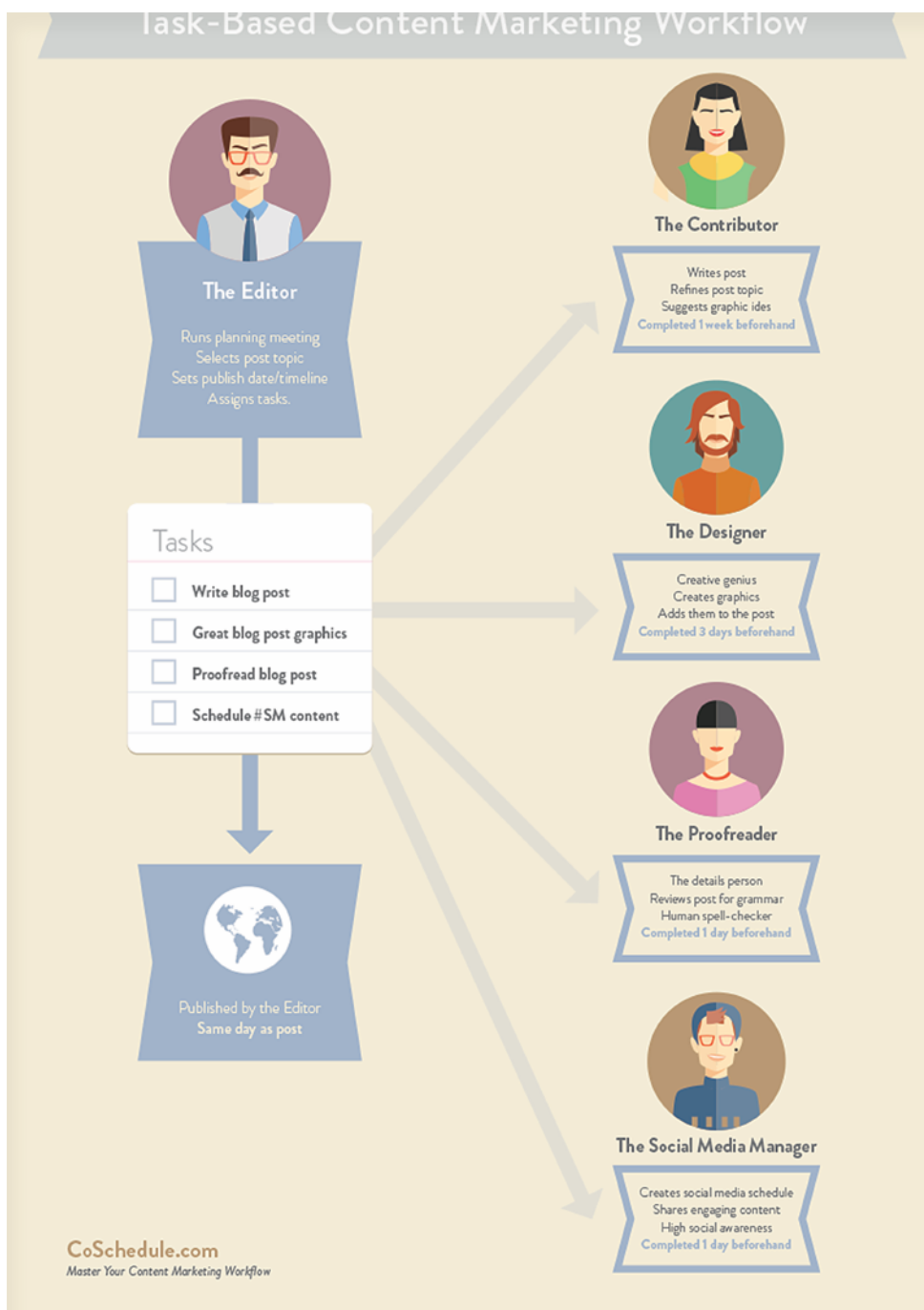
THREE.
Strategy

FOUR.
Editorial Management

FIVE.
Content Hub

SIX.
Content Distribution

SEVEN. Evaluate and Measure ROI



ONE.
Audit and Goals

TWO. Define Audiences
and Personas

THREE.
Strategy

FOUR.
Editorial Management

FIVE.
Content Hub

SIX.
Content Distribution

SEVEN. Evaluate and
Measure ROI

This is fine for blogging, but you'll need a wider skills set if you're going to be producing a variety of content types and formats. Beyond roles, recognise that good content often needs commissioning. That might be article writing, e-book type-setting or video filming and editing, it may be beyond the resource available internally, so plan for those costs (see costing model in our Content Marketing ROI Guide).

To help you plan your resource, keep these key content marketing skills in mind:

Analytical skills to gather strategic business and user insights:

- ☒ Stakeholder interviews
- ☒ Content audits and inventories
- ☒ Content review and analysis
- ☒ Competitive analysis

Strategic planning and design to support long-term vision for content:

- ✓ Content vision and recommendations
- ✓ Content concepts, examples, and samples
- ✓ Content governance and process design
- ✓ Taxonomy
- ✓ Information architecture
- ✓ Content typing and requirements
- ✓ Writing style guides

Project management to keep the project on track and budget:

- ✓ Project plan
- ✓ Content brief
- ✓ Content matrix
- ✓ Content strategy roadmap

Training and presenting skills to educate and inform:

- ✓ Workshop development and delivery
- ✓ Stakeholder presentations
- ✓ Content training programs
- ✓ Editing and mentoring

Technical integration to ensure that technology and content work together:

- ✓ Content management system assessment
- ✓ Content migration planning and management
- ✓ Content matrix
- ✓ Business analysis
- ✓ Content workflows
- ✓ Content modelling

User experience skills to help shape:

- ✓ User research and success metrics
- ✓ Personas
- ✓ User journeys
- ✓ Wireframe development
- ✓ Information architecture
- ✓ Wireframes
- ✓ Content workflows

Content marketing management skills to deliver:

- ✓ Branding through content
- ✓ Search engine optimisation
- ✓ Social media strategy
- ✓ Content mix
- ✓ Editorial and content maintenance calendar

ONE.
Audit and Goals

TWO. Define Audiences
and Personas

THREE.
Strategy

FOUR.
Editorial Management

FIVE.
Content Hub

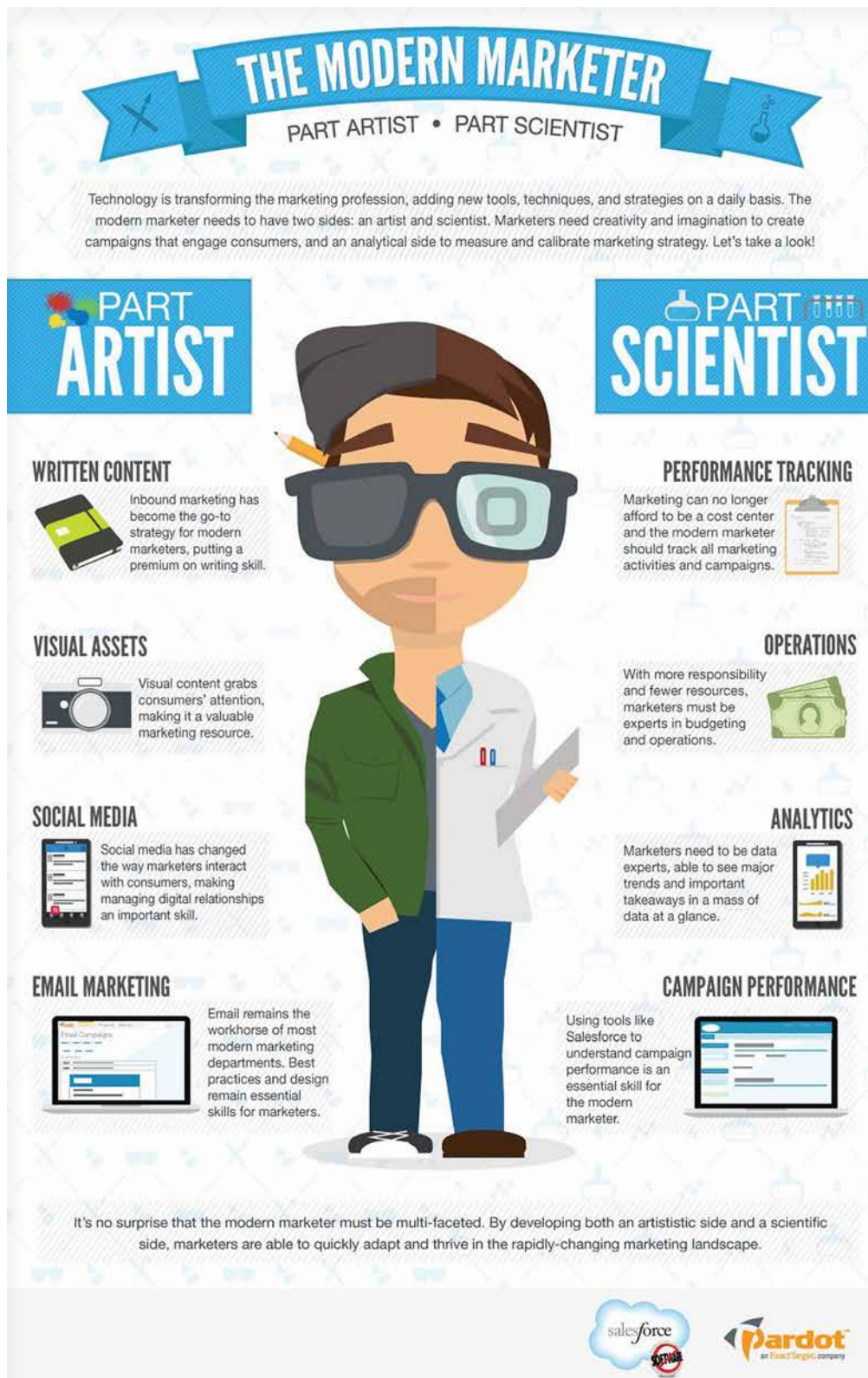
SIX.
Content Distribution

SEVEN. Evaluate and
Measure ROI



- ✓ Targeted messaging
- ✓ Web analytics setup and reporting

Content marketing might be a challenge to one person because it requires a mix of right and left brain skills (artistic and analytical.) The following graphic from Salesforce Pardot provides a nice mashup of that multifaceted person.



FOUR

Editorial Management

❑ Q. Do we have the system to plan your content and the tools to support this?

Now that you have your content hub in place, you need to define what content to share, when to share it, by whom and how. Not easy! So planning a month ahead, quarter or for the forthcoming year is an essential framework and discipline.

There are several different types of calendars you can use, depending on your needs:

1. *Editorial calendar*: to manage production of your content marketing assets.
2. *Timeline calendar*: for visual planning and management of content marketing campaigns.
3. *Content calendar*: a simpler, quicker way of developing ideas for multiple months cascading down to weekly operational blog, social media and e-newsletter updates.
4. *Repurposing calendar*: provides examples of how to show different content formats on a timeline within a campaign.

Strategy Recommendation 8 Stay on track with a sustained content production and sharing activity.

To maintain a strong voice online requires commitment to continuous creation and distribution of content. But there is also a need to encourage conversation and dialogue to maintain interest and sharing.

Another key difference is that communications are two-way – so your communications strategy needs to consider how to encourage and sustain a two-way dialogue. Yet another key difference is that you are not only publishing content on your own site or paying for ad placements, you are syndicating it to third-party sites and encouraging sharing. This third difference requires Social Media Optimisation (SMO) which we will cover in Step 6.

All strategies must be driven by goals and an e-communications strategy is no exception. Make sure your goals are modelled and measured as described in previous sections. The key elements of the content marketing e-communications strategy we'll cover in this section are:

- ✓ 1. Guidelines for regular content update frequency.
- ✓ 2. Guidelines for content types and formats.
- ✓ 3. Create core content marketing resources.
- ✓ 4. Review options for creating and sourcing content.
- ✓ 5. Content atomisation, re-purposing and syndication.
- ✓ 6. Create and update your editorial calendar.
- ✓ 7. Communicate your content marketing proposition.

You can see that the first three steps help you work towards the creation of the editorial calendar.

Develop your editorial calendar

An editorial calendar helps both develop the right types of content and schedules content production.

ONE.
Audit and Goals

TWO. Define Audiences and Personas

THREE.
Strategy

FOUR.
Editorial Management

FIVE.
Content Hub

SIX.
Content Distribution

SEVEN. Evaluate and Measure ROI

4

Without an effective editorial calendar and a person to control it, content quality will suffer. Think of the power of a newspaper or magazine editor like Meryl Streep in *The Devil Wears Prada* – this type of power is needed!

Example editorial calendars from the publishing world

Forbes

2014 Editorial Calendar

Issue	Editorial Theme	Print Close	Print Delivery	Online Launch
Jan 14	60 Under 60	Dec 19	Dec 19	Dec 19
Feb 14	America's Most Promising Companies + 750 Tech Talent	Jan 17	Jan 27	Jan 20
Mar 14	Money Mail	Jan 23	Feb 07	Feb 07
Mar 14	Millennials	Jan 27	Mar 03	Mar 03
Apr 14	Global 100 + Most Valuable Brands + Fortune 500	Mar 03	Mar 10	Mar 10
May 14	Reinventing America	Mar 10	Mar 17	Mar 17
May 14	Global 100: The World's Most Valuable Companies + World's Most Powerful Brands	Mar 17	May 01	May 01
Jun 14	Most Powerful Women	Mar 24	Jun 03	May 27
Jun 14	The Investment Guide II	Mar 24	Jun 10	Jun 03
Jul 14	Power 100: America's Most Powerful Companies + Best Places for Business and Careers	Jun 10	Jul 07	Jul 07
Aug 14	Top Colleges + Best Places for Business and Careers	Jul 07	Aug 04	Jul 28
Aug 14	Top Companies + 100 Most Powerful	Aug 04	Aug 18	Aug 18
Aug 14	Real Estate	Aug 11	Aug 18	Aug 18
Oct 14	Global 100: The World's Most Valuable Companies	Aug 18	Oct 06	Oct 06
Nov 14	Top Entrepreneurs/Powerful Best Small Companies	Aug 25	Oct 20	Oct 13
Nov 14	Most Powerful People	Oct 06	Nov 03	Nov 03
Nov 14	Millennials	Oct 20	Nov 03	Nov 03
Dec 14	The Investment Guide III	Nov 03	Nov 10	Nov 10

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2014 International Editorial Calendar

Issue Date	Multimedia Editorial Specials (Ad Close Date)	On Sale / Online Launch	Ad Close
10/6/14	The End of AIDS / The Connected Life / Travel	9/25/14	9/5/14
10/13/14	Reinventing Retirement II / Health, Wellness	10/3/14	9/12/14
10/20/14	How to Eat: Mark Bittman on Food / Lifehacker / Modern American Family	10/10/14	9/19/14
10/27/14	Travel / Ask the Expert / The Amateur	10/17/14	9/25/14

November

11/3/14	The Connected Life / Health, Wellness	10/24/14	10/3/14
11/10/14	The Dish / Lifehacker / Travel	10/31/14	10/10/14
11/17/14	Mid-term Elections / The Connected Life / Holiday Movies	11/7/14	10/17/14
11/24/14	Health, Wellness / The Dish / The Quantified Self / Holiday Books	11/14/14	10/24/14

December

12/1/15	100 Most Intriguing Photos of All-Time / The Future of Food / Best Inventions / The Amateur / Travel	11/21/14	10/24/14
12/15/15	The Giving Issue / Health, Wellness / Ask the Expert / Lifehacker	12/5/14	11/14/14
12/22/15	Person of the Year (APP)	12/12/14	11/14/14
12/29/15	2015 What's Ahead	12/19/14	11/26/14

A team that communicates the big picture works better together, which is the success behind the big international publishing brands, from whom we can learn a great deal.

Key Strategy Recommendation 9 Create a sound editorial calendar and a person to manage with sufficient authority

An editorial calendar is essential to an effective content strategy to plan for future quality resources from a range of writers. The person in charge of managing the challenge to deliver against publication deadlines will need sufficient resource and power within the organisation to deliver it.

This can get complex, and the challenges are quite different to the normal marketing challenges, so do sit and think this through first.

ONE.
Audit and Goals

TWO. Define Audiences
and Personas

THREE.
Strategy

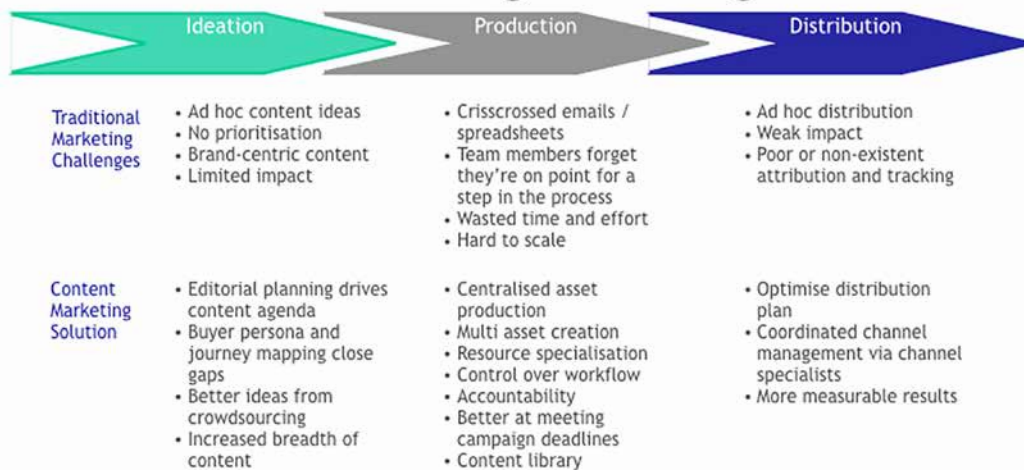
FOUR.
Editorial Management

FIVE.
Content Hub

SIX.
Content Distribution

SEVEN. Evaluate and
Measure ROI

Editorial scheduling challenges



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Tips for developing an integrated editorial calendar

Here are some tips to help you get organised to produce your content marketing engine to keep your audience engaged. These are not rules or an example calendar, just ideas to see what might work for you. The content ideas for different time periods should be overlaid with specific themes or topics which you think will work best to engage your audience.

- ✓ Use a 12 month editorial calendar of your choice: Excel docs, Google Docs or Google Calendar, Smart Insights <http://bit.ly/smart-insights-calendar>, Trello, CoSchedule, (WP plugin)
- ✓ List your audiences overarching themes (sweet spots)
- ✓ Keep in mind key industry events, dates, launches, holidays
- ✓ Plan content formats with content matrix
- ✓ Remember your distribution; Plan this simultaneously

The amount and frequency of editorial output varies enormously from one enterprise to the next. Here is an example of a small enterprise versus OpenView:

Editorial Production Plan

<p>After getting established, a young content factory's content rhythm might look like this:</p>	<p>DAILY</p> <p>1 article or blog post</p>	<p>WEEKLY</p> <p>1 podcast or video 2 pieces of curated content</p>	<p>QUARTERLY</p> <p>1 eBook 1 report 1 case study</p>
<p>As you get more experience, you will be able to take on more. At OpenView, for example, our content rhythm looks like this:</p>	<p>1 article 2-3 blog posts</p>	<p>1 podcast 3 videos 5 pieces of curated content</p>	<p>2 eBooks 2 reports 1 case study 1 infographic 5 webinars</p>

Source: OpenView

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You may choose to plan your editorial production in daily, weekly, monthly or quarterly schedules like this:

Daily (For larger publishers and business with a large audience)

- ✓ At least 1 (ideally 3) new blog posts
- ✓ Tweet updates and ideas
- ✓ As above, for Facebook if that's relevant
- ✓ Respond to others blog posts and comments on your own
- ✓ Keep up to date with the news
- ✓ An article, maybe a how-to
- ✓ Get involved off-site somewhere (at Smart Insights we use LinkedIn for that)
- ✓ Maintain any outposts or web assets you se in your marketing
- ✓ Summarise key news and updates in an e-newsletter

Monthly

- ✓ Produce a webinar
- ✓ Create 2 how-to or interview based videos from an event
- ✓ Write a meatier blog post, maybe 2 or 3 if you can
- ✓ Create several strong customer case studies
- ✓ Most importantly – produce create third-party content, maybe a guest blog post on an influential third party web site
- ✓ Create and post presentations to SlideShare

Quarterly

- ✓ Publish an e-book, guide or white paper (distribute it!)
- ✓ Attend one big event and interview people
- ✓ Produce a video series of 4-5 items
- ✓ Tie in a promotional mechanic, maybe a simple contest where UGC might feature heavily

Managing your content editorial production

In online content scheduling tools like WordPress CoSchedule and Trello, you can manage your editorial production workflows with efficiency, since the content team responsible for drafting, proofing and publishing get 'alerts' and notifications to act on. We love the free Trello tool which enables categorisation and workflow for different team members.

Plan, schedule, draft, publish...

Use a simple workflow management solution to help you manage your people and editorial schedule.

Schedule: The content has a due date.

Plan: The content has a high level outline of what needs creating.

Draft: The writing or creating stage is complete as a draft. This may take a couple of drafts to get it right.

Ready: The final draft has been edited, proof-read and is ready for publishing.

The screenshot shows a web interface for managing content workflow. On the left, there's a 'Due date...' section with a 'Change Due Date' dialog box. The dialog has fields for 'Date' (set to 29/02/2015) and 'Time' (12:00 PM), and a calendar view for September 2013. Below the calendar are 'Save' and 'Remove' buttons. On the right, there's a 'Labels' section with an 'Edit Labels...' button. Below that is a 'Change Labels' dialog showing a list of labels: 'Ready' (green), 'Draft' (yellow), 'Plan' (orange), 'Schedule' (red), and an empty blue box. Each label has a checkbox, with 'Ready' and 'Draft' checked. At the bottom of the labels section are links for 'Change label files...' and 'Enable Color Blind Friendly Mode'.

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ONE.
Audit and Goals

TWO. Define Audiences
and Personas

THREE.
Strategy

FOUR.
Editorial Management

FIVE.
Content Hub

SIX.
Content Distribution

SEVEN. Evaluate and
Measure ROI

4

The value of an editorial board

Running a regular editorial board with key stakeholders is an integral part of your content governance process, ensuring your content is on time and on message. The benefits are multiple and you should really be thinking like a newsroom, or even better the fictional cable Newsroom run by MacKenzie, (Emily Mortimer), who leads an ensemble cast of content producers focused on actual recent events, who take their collective responsibilities very seriously.

This process will help you:

- ✓ Generate the right content ideas for your target audience
- ✓ Co-ordinate many moving pieces / tasks into a structured process
- ✓ Manage communication between multiple people / departments, non-silo, drumbeat-approach
- ✓ Meet deadlines and stay the course
- ✓ Monitor progress toward goal, and create accountability
- ✓ Decide on content that fits your brand and audience's needs
- ✓ Make sure your content fits your brand's themes
- ✓ Ensure that all your personas are having content created for them
- ✓ Get content approved quickly and smoothly
- ✓ Prevent random acts of content
- ✓ Review content that is and isn't working

How to run your editorial board

Stick to the same time and place

Keep a regular meeting slot for the editorial board. A thirty to 60 minute meeting or conference call bi-weekly is good. You can run it more frequently than this, but any less and you'll lose the ability to act quickly on ideas and how well or poorly different pieces of content are performing. You should invite the key players including:

- ✓ A **company exec** who brings the vision of where the organisation is going and what the customers are looking for at the highest level

- ✓ A **marketer** who can check content ideas against strategy and message
- ✓ A **head of sales** who has the customer insight and who will tell you what content is missing / needed
- ✓ A **copywriter** who can garner background information from the meeting to produce the content

Review ROI

This is your chance to make sure your marketing content is doing the job its supposed to, and that you're seeing a return on investment. The whole aim is to create content that gets results and achieves your goals.

Listen to your team

Editorial boards are good for ideation, enabling participants to bounce ideas off each other. The team is reading around key topics, talking to customers and attending in person events, so they have a lot of relevant content to surface.

Your editorial calendar plays a pivotal role in editorial board meetings, allowing everyone the opportunity to see the content ideas, the schedule and the deadlines.

You can examine anything that's bottle-necking in your creation process. The calendar is updated after the meeting.

Create your content hub

□ Q. Content hub created?

What do we mean by a hub? Well we introduced it at the start of the guide where we explained that it's a central home for your content. It includes the whole range of your content: user generated, curated, social etc...

Essentially it's a place around which you can grow a network of interested individuals, *a place where interaction or engagement with your content and your brand can take place*. This interaction will happen because of the quality of your content marketing.

What is it? Content marketing hub

Ideally this is a central branded location where your audience can access your content marketing and interact with it. It should integrate with your other content.

Think of the hub as the home for your content, a place for feedback and dialogue and the connector to a number of out-posts where your brand is present (eg Facebook, SlideShare etc) and being shared and discussed.

You can increasingly use Facebook as the place to manage your interaction around content, but Facebook is not an asset you can truly own in terms of features and functions, so that is risky (your own turf is better as the content repository!). Facebook also remains external to your main brand presence, so we'd suggest that a hub is the bridge between your commercial or main website, and external out-posts like Facebook.

Your hub is where your content marketing can generate leads, sales and engagement, and it intersects your brand with your audience. So it's important that the hub epitomises your brand story, that core message or big idea, and that in the outposts you have a connection back to your story and the wider narrative.

It provides many benefits including:

- ✓ Helping to show you are an authority in your area, which creates trust with your audience.
- ✓ SEO advantages with fresh, updated and relevant content.

ONE.
Audit and Goals

TWO. Define Audiences
and Personas

THREE.
Strategy

FOUR.
Editorial Management

FIVE.
Content Hub

SIX.
Content Distribution

SEVEN. Evaluate and
Measure ROI

4

- ✓ Driving interaction and engagement with your visitors, to help with conversion whether it's a sale, enquiry or specific call to action to drive your audience along the sales funnel.
- ✓ Insight into your content that is resonating with your audience from one central point.
- ✓ Visible, easy access to your content. If the efforts of your content marketing are distributed across different parts of your site or hidden away on a separate microsite you're missing an opportunity to create a destination that visitors will return to.

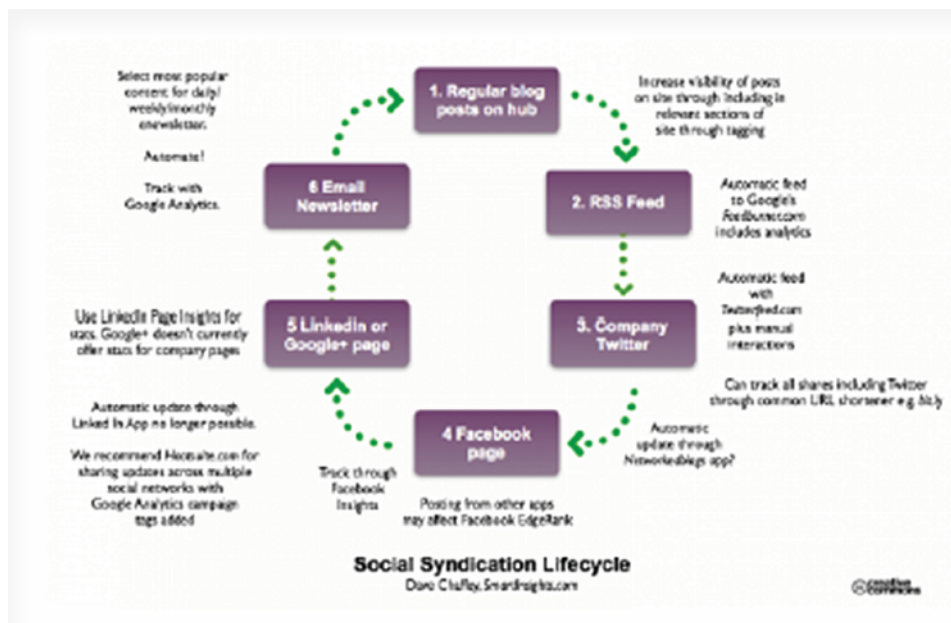
At a physical level the content hub can be:

- ☐ A blog
- ☐ Your news section
- ☐ An online magazine
- ☐ A resource centre

Recommended best practices

Technique 1: Automatically syndicate your content to different channels

When Smart Insights launched we used this process to support content sharing across the main social networks to minimise the resource we needed. Today, we use mainly HootSuite and Buffer to tailor updates for our different social networks.



So when new content is created it is automatically syndicated to the different social channels.

Key Strategy Recommendation 10 Use tools to automatically syndicate your content to the main networks

Use tools to distribute your content, but ensure you have personal participation too. We use and recommend Hootsuite for this.

Although we're advocating saving time here by syndicating, we need to be careful not just to push or SHOUT – the beauty of social media is that it's a two-way street enabling

conversations and dialogue. So manual interactions with each of the social networks to ask and answer questions is also recommended as we've said before.

Although the hub should encourage sharing best at the level of an individual piece of content as shown in the syndication lifecycle, you can also encourage sharing of the entire hub:

Technique 2: Tools to syndicate your content.

There are a range of tools to automatically syndicate your content to your main channels, to distribute your content and still ensure participation.

Social syndication tools include:

- ✓ Hootsuite
- ✓ Buffer
- ✓ Sproutsocial
- ✓ scoop.it – syndication to Twitter and email
- ✓ Using RSS e.g. managed through Feedburner
- ✓ Facebook syndication through networkedblogs

Technique 3: Creating and hosting your hub

We recommend that you use an open source blog platform, of which WordPress is the most popular. Drupal and Joomla are the main alternatives which are popular with charities. With WordPress there are three options:

1. WordPress.com - Blog updates are managed by WordPress. For a fee you can have your own domain name. Different standard themes can be applied plus other plug-ins, but these are limited compared to a hosted version.
2. WordPress hosted by a hosting company - this offers more flexibility and customisation and is used by most agencies when managing client sites.
3. WordPress VIP - Managed hosting of high-traffic sites and brands.

Examples of best practice content hubs

Key Strategy Recommendation 11 Ensure hub encourages conversation

While your hub can work as a static resource, it's better if it allows commenting and conversation between visitors. Comments are the best indicator of audience engagement.



DELL

The main website is good which includes a resources section, highlighting valuable content, but it also has a separate news section which doesn't reference the blog clearly. The blog, developed on a different platform is on the right below and is better at integration since it has the company brand information. It does link back to the main site, but doesn't give a 'reason to click'.

Recommended Tools and Services

Uberflip is an alternative for creating a hub with a collection of resources, such as this example from Monetate. In this example Monetate were able to aggregate content channels including video, eBooks, white papers and blog articles into a single, responsive content hub. This approach can reduce the overall cost of creating content and managing your resource centre, but the monthly fee is fairly high.

ONE.
Audit and Goals

TWO. Define Audiences
and Personas

THREE.
Strategy

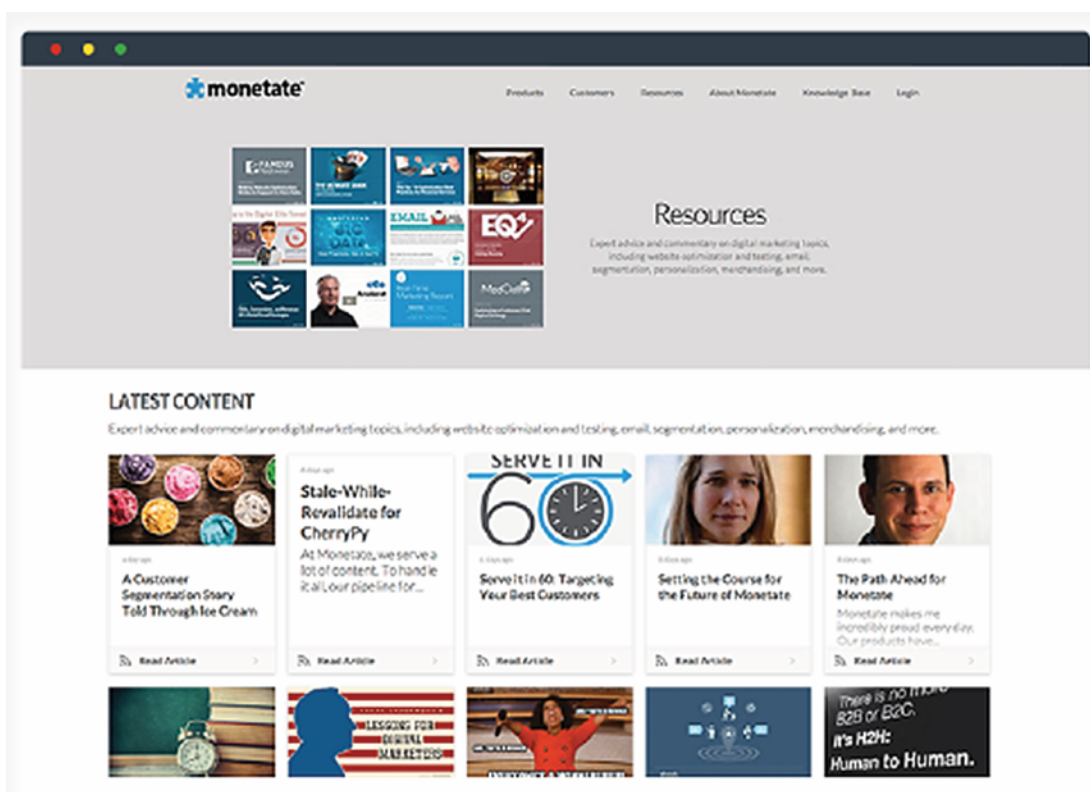
FOUR.
Editorial Management

FIVE.
Content Hub

SIX.
Content Distribution

SEVEN. Evaluate and
Measure ROI

4



ONE.
Audit and Goals

TWO. Define Audiences
and Personas

THREE.
Strategy

FOUR.
Editorial Management

FIVE.
Content Hub

SIX.
Content Distribution

SEVEN. Evaluate and
Measure ROI

4

Atom offer off-the-shelf powered resource centres for banks, professional services firms, consultancies, and business support organisations, as an alternative to creating and delivering their own content from scratch. Something that that solicitors and other so called “boring industries” struggle with, so this can be a beneficial solution providing two key benefits:

- ✓ Quickly acquiring substantial amounts of top quality relevant content by licensing at low cost
- ✓ Supporting content marketing with ready-made tweets and customisable e-newsletters, which can be added to existing marketing channels or completely managed

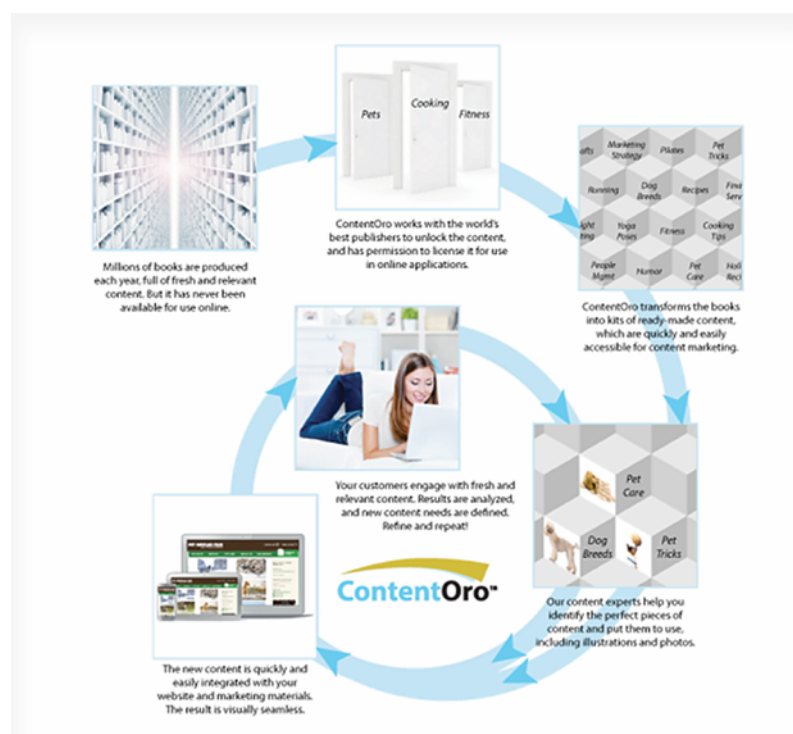
Atom’s content donuts serving Tech, StartUp, Marketing, Small Business and Law each showcase their content resource model:



ONE. Audit and Goals
TWO. Define Audiences and Personas
THREE. Strategy
FOUR. Editorial Management
FIVE. Content Hub
SIX. Content Distribution
SEVEN. Evaluate and Measure ROI

4

ContentOro acts as a content aggregator, but differentiates itself by working solely with publishers to help license content from their books as immediately available, expertly written content for websites that need content fast.



The platform extracts and enhances book content for use on the web and to integrate with e-commerce, a type of business that notoriously fails to produce customer-centric content, and over produce product-centric content that often leads to SEO malpractices.

Benefits:

- ✓ Quickly find expert content and images to fill your production schedule
- ✓ Engage visitors on their interests and issues on your website more easily with expert content that does not sell
- ✓ Build Authority Quickly
- ✓ Create your ultimate guide quickly with access to expert licensed content
- ✓ Jump ahead of the competition from a late start by providing more information quicker
- ✓ Improve SEO and Get Found in Search

As long as there is a strategy behind the selection of expert content, these solutions are legitimate and helpful for brands short on editorial and marketing knowledge and manpower, that need to build engagement and trust with audiences on their content hubs, faster than they otherwise could.

Having these off the peg ready-to-buy solutions is helpful, but they don't beat originating your own content even if this is the most time consuming way to source expert content, and it should really represent a minimum of 20% of what you generate, and in time become the majority of the content that you own, since you are unlikely to own anything you buy or licence for very long, nor have the exclusivity to it. We examine content creation solutions more closely in section five.

Your content hub and SEO

☐ Q. *Have we selected the best location for our blog?*

If you get this decision wrong, you may fail to get the hoped for SEO benefits you have worked hard to convince your colleagues about. But, if you get it right you can almost immediately see new, incremental visits you wouldn't have attracted without the blog.

The 3 main blog hosting options

The three options are straightforward. Let's take some examples:

1. Subfolder – <http://www.domain.com/blog> e.g. <http://www.econsultancy.com/blog>
2. Subdomain – <http://blog.domain.com> e.g. <http://blog.zopa.com>
3. Separate domain – <http://www.newdomain.com>

Our post⁵ explains the pros and cons in more detail, but we would advise that an integrated sub-folder approach is best in most cases.

Best Practice Tip 20 Carefully consider whether you host your blog as a subfolder, subdomain or separate domain

A subfolder of your main domain is best if you want incremental traffic straightaway while a subdomain or separate domain can be best for SEO if you wait a long time to create links and then link back to the main site.

Guidance on using a blogging platform as your content hub

☐ Q. *Suitable blogging platform selected?*

Our suggestion is that everything in this guide can be most easily built up from a blog or a similar method of grouping and sharing content. Blogs are the front line for content marketing – everything else can be added over time in terms of richer features, functionality and of course deeper variations of content.

⁵ [Smart Insights: Which is best for Blog SEO - subfolder, subdomain or separate domain](#)



A blog can and should be the place where your brand can share thoughts, words, ideas and information with the world. There are also a myriad of tools that make this cheap, if not free: Wordpress, TypePad, Blogger and Moveable Type. Here are some issues to consider in using a blogging platform for SEO:

The benefits to making your content efforts blog orientated are numerous:

- ✓ You have one repository to manage and tie content together from other channels or social networks
- ✓ You can listen and interact, and garner feedback from your audience
- ✓ You can inspire and capture comments about the content that you share
- ✓ You have a place to build a schedule and process it
- ✓ Blogs have categories and specialist tags that can help with SEO and help users find interesting topics
- ✓ You're easy to share with others through many free plugins (we recommend Wordpress for the best plugins)
- ✓ You are increasingly more findable in search engines with fresh blog content

Best Practice Tip 21 Use blog categories and topics to help with SEO and findability of content

Carefully define a taxonomy of preferred categories and topics that content writers are aware of (if you don't they may create their own)

Remember the intersection between brand and audience

It's important that the hub epitomises your brand story, that core message or big idea, and that in the outposts you have a connection back to your story and the wider narrative. A great example is Eloqua.com (before they were acquired by Oracle), they centred their brand story, their narrative targeted at marketers, to be all about revenue the word "revenue". So, in turn you'll see that the 'revenue' word is used across their marketing:

"It's all about the revenue" – Their blog

"The revenue stream" – Their Twitter page

"The revenue hub" – Their Slideshare page

It's also more natural to see how that tight positioning influences Eloqua's content choices, curated or otherwise – using considered and tight positioning will naturally help keep you on track.

Social objects and content marketing for interaction

The concept of 'social objects' came about in 2005, coined by Jyri Engestrom, an anthropologist studying human interactions online, who said that those objects are *"the reason people connect with each particular other and not something else"*. The concept has been well popularized by Hugh Macleod at The Gaping Void⁶, he suggested that you might more easily call a social object a 'sharing device' instead. Hugh's material is great to inform understanding of where marketing has come from, and subsequently where it has moved to – and how content marketing fits into the picture.

The problem is that nobody cares about your Brand X, they care about themselves. And, as we know, that issue is compounded by how cluttered the internet is which in turn makes gaining traction or cut-through so hard in digital marketing. Brands no longer have that first communication (broadcast) advantage to steer the conversation like they possibly did twenty

⁶ [Gaping void: Social Objects for beginners](#)

or more years ago – though in truth there was more likely just less choice.

The simple point is that humans require ‘objects’ to interact around, they always have, these objects specifically aid in conversation and so sharing with other people, whether that’s talking about the latest iPhone, Harry Potter movie or the weather yesterday. The interesting thing about the social object is the not the object itself, but the conversations that happen around them that ultimately form social networks. Smart marketers now need to learn how to develop and use social objects in order to be a part of the conversation, to fuel sharing and form networks of people that are interested in their brand.

Social objects, content marketing and your hub

- ❑ You can use valuable information as an effective social object – brands need to provide information to the consumer who wants to learn, make a choice about or discuss something, blogs are an obvious way to do this.
- ❑ You can be worth talking about, ideally the product/service should be but then we don’t all work for Apple, in which case we need to create an object to fuel conversation or word of mouth. Content can do this particularly well when it’s hinged around a big idea. Look at Old Spice guy as a great example, or the Lynx Fallen Angels campaign.
- ❑ Ensure that your content, the social object, is inherently shareable so that the network can easily form around it. The more comments, Likes, shares you can illicit, the better.

Remember, the person that you want to be talking about your brand is not doing it for the money, people will only talk about you if it serves as a social object, a hook to move the conversation along, after all people don’t just talk - they talk about something, they don’t just share - they share something that they perceive to be of value.

Running an effective blog or content hub

So, your hub is up and running, what’s next? There are two main areas to review. First an internal point-of-view looking at managing the blog or content hub to meet business communications goals. Second, and arguably most important to the future of your content initiative, an external approach looking at how to engage your audience.

Managing the blog to meet business communications goals

- ❑ *Q. Approach to managing blog to meet communications goals reviewed?*

There are numerous great guides on blogging so we won’t dig deep in this area, suffice to say there are basics that work, we’ve listed these blog strategy issues here to consider against your current or future blog:

1. **Blog purpose.** Connect back to that brand intersection between your content and the audience – the core message - the big idea. The blog has to have a real purpose.
2. **Plan for outcomes.** What action do you want your visitor to take? It’s better to create the path for people to consume more with well placed calls to action – all a part of effective blog design.
3. **Blog position.** Have a position, what topics will you cover and what voice and tone will you employ? We’d suggest that you write as you speak and generally be human though in some instances (a technical blog maybe) that wouldn’t be so effective. Generally, don’t over think this, be natural.
4. **Maintain the ‘big idea’.** Always focus on that intersection, the ‘big idea’, issue, cause or core message that is bigger than you and your product, the one that your audience is passionate about and can get behind. Illustrate your impact in relation to this idea or cause. When you talk about how your products and services are

connected to the big idea, make sure the focus remains on that big idea.

There's little worse than a blog that starts out great and as you browse, it you find that the last post was 60 days ago, or worse 2 years. Be reliable and factor blogging in every other day as a part of the editorial schedule we cover in Step 4.

6. **Keep it fresh.** Consider a range of topics within the big idea as well as formats – whether it's polls, how-to's or interviews, and of course a blog post does not have to be text based.
7. **Be interesting.** This approach motivates sharing and really requires the creative and journo types in your team to step up. There are proven formats like "10 steps to...", but there's the controversial and creative too – which will most likely help in a more viral nature.
8. **Categorize and tag.** Ensure this is done for every post, it makes your content easy to browse and Google loves it too, append posts with tags too.

Managing the blog to engage your audience

☐ Q. Approach to audience engagement reviewed?

There's a tendency to put the bulk of your personal time and the bulk of your budget and resource into your site but reaching outwards is more important and more challenging.

Key Strategy Recommendation 12 Practice outreach to your audience and influencers to maintain engagement with the blog

Ensure you spend sufficient time interacting with your community outside your blog.

Consider these outreach approaches to use both within your content hub and beyond and on other sites:

- ✓ **Become part of the community.** Find ways to interact with the audience you want to reach. Monitor their online conversations and (crucially) identify the influential active members that are on your hub. Go to other sites that are active, participate in their conversations, and even comment on their blogs. Develop a blogging persona with whom they can connect and relate. Address their experiences and the issues they're facing. Assist them through your content. Talk about your brand, product and service only in the context of that larger topic, demonstrate how your offering is a practical part of the solution.
- ✓ **Shift control to your fans.** Help them expose others to your content, social objects and ultimately your brand. Provide them with the understanding, tools and inspiration to create content with you. Let them comment and write in their own voices, and let that independent perspective shine through. Give them ownership, and trust them to create good content that will resonate with the community. Promote their content, and help them be successful through integrating free tools such as the Facebook Comments plugin or paid versions such as [Gigya.com](https://gigya.com).
- ✓ **Feed your fans.** Give them an incentive to be a fan and to evangelise. Make them feel good about being a fan. Listen to them, interact with them, and relate to their experiences. Use social media tools to converse in real time. Create community, identity and connection. Hear and implement their ideas and requests, and make good use of their contributions. Give them a sense of ownership in your successes. Show appreciation, and make big gestures. Demonstrate that you are thinking about them and their needs.
- ✓ **It's a team job.** Disperse the responsibility for content creation among several individuals

internally, even motivate individuals within your organization to contribute to the company blog by casually discussing potential ideas/topics with them, running contests, and getting key stakeholders (like the CEO) involved. Hire freelance talent to produce a volume of content more quickly on a regular basis – this may be important for a new launch or campaign.

- ✅ **Optimise your content.** It's important to remember why you're doing this, the commercial reasons. So ensure that you're tracking what works, Pay attention to open and click rates to maintain a pulse on whether the content is resonating with your audience and influencing tangible outcomes like reach, fan, follower, lead and customer volumes that you can attribute back to all the content efforts. Link to your content from your various social media profiles to draw people back to your hub and build SEO, at the end of the day we're still marketing.

As well as encouraging sharing and participation within your own community, it's also really important to identify key influencers, which is why we outline this strategy in detail in the Content marketing e-learning toolkit.



FIVE

Create compelling content for your content hub

Review options for creating and sourcing content

Q. Options for creating and sourcing content reviewed?

You will notice that some of the content sourcing options we looked at earlier involve the creation of original content and some are adding value to existing content by summarising and/or aggregating it.

Best Practice Tip 22 Balance creation of original content and content curation

You can create engagement through content curation, but original content tends to be most engaging and most shared.

Let's look at what's involved in content creation, content co-creation and curation.

Content creation

Q. Options of sources for original content creation reviewed?

Originating your owned content is the most effective and most time consuming to create content, and it should ideally represent a minimum of 20% of what you generate, and in time become the majority of the content that you create. The Content Marketing ROI guide has costings for content creation you can use to work your cost of creation out.

Primary fuel and Nuclear fuel

In his book **"Launch"** Michael Seltzer, founder of the **Social Media Examiner** website, attributes his marketing success to two forms of content that he created and gave away to attract customers: **"Primary fuel"**, content he created to keep his business moving forward and **"Nuclear fuel"**, the special content he used to attract the hundreds of thousands of visitors per month, many of whom later gladly purchased his services (to create a \$3 Million turnover business).

At its core Michael's process - **The Elevation Principle** - is all about focusing on the needs of people with content. His formula is simple: **Great content plus other people minus marketing messages equals growth**. The number one reason creating and sharing great content helped Michael grow his business is because it established him as the trusted resource for writing white papers. Winning that trust was his biggest marketing obstacle. **His lesson:** Create primary and nuclear fuel. Don't expect anything in return.

As a strategy creating your own content is much more proactive, focused on being the resource – giving your brand the best chance in both SEO and social marketing programmes. The reason we say this is that you are establishing yourself as the source, not only for your audience, but other influencers seeking content that they can curate and share – so it's so powerful for reach. Also, the more content you create, the more content you have to atomise and share across marketing in different formats, but more on that shortly. The most obvious response when I hear people talk about content origination is "we have nothing to say". This is especially true of people who work in so-called "boring industries" like finance, insurance and law.

The issue is not that they have nothing to say, it's more likely that they've not identified the pain points or problems that their audiences. There is no quick fix to this, hence the extent

ONE.
Audit and Goals

TWO.
Define Audiences and Personas

THREE.
Strategy

FOUR.
Editorial Management

FIVE.
Content Hub

SIX.
Content Distribution

SEVEN.
Evaluate and Measure ROI

5

of this guide, however, our list of 25 ideas at the end of this section will help if you're in that boat!

Overcome procrastination to jump-start your content marketing productivity

In ***Linchpin***, Seth Godin named our inner resistance our **Lizard Brain**, pointing out that “the higher the stakes, the more objections your Lizard Brain will raise”.

Empty pages and blank screens invite doubt and uncertainty, which is the number one enemy standing in the way of content marketing production.

To overcome this form of resistance the brain needs to focus on clear answers to questions about your goals, your audiences and their problems.

Roger C. Parker, founder and CEO of **Published And Profitable** provides an **Express Content Planner** worksheet, which addresses the hardest part of any content marketing project, namely, overcoming inertia and getting started.

Here's how it works: The faster you choose a topic and identify an approach, the sooner you can begin to write. The sooner you begin to write, the more time you'll have for editing and revision, which is where the bulk of your content production time is required.

Adapted from a work sheet Roger C. Parker created for a book on coaching clients, the Express Content Planner works equally well for all types of content marketing projects, including articles, blog posts, eBooks, presentations, list-building reports, speeches, and white papers.

On a single sheet of paper, the worksheet combines a reader persona and space to help you identify a logical series of steps that readers can take to solve a problem or achieve a goal.

ROGER C. PARKER'S PUBLISHED & PROFITABLE

Express Content Planner

MARKET SEGMENT Do-It-yourself homeowners

CHARACTERISTICS	GOALS & PROBLEMS	DESIRED CHANGE
Empty-nesters about to retire	Want to remodel kitchen to increase resale value of home	Learn what's involved in remodeling a kitchen & likelihood of positive return on investment
Ready for a change	No previous remodeling experience	Need to find out options, alternatives, & costs
Want to sell house and move to Florida in 3-5 years	Don't know where to start	
Limited resources		
Both like working on home projects together		

ONE.
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FIVE.
Content Hub

SIX.
Content Distribution

SEVEN. Evaluate and Measure ROI

STEPS NEEDED TO ACHIEVE DESIRED CHANGE	
1	Check project feasibility re: current real estate trends in their area
2	Identify their time & budget resources
3	Explore design options with architects, contractors, & designers
4	Obtain price estimates
5	Find out what they can do themselves to reduce costs
6	Negotiate, obtain financing, & sign contracts

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These steps become the framework for your project.

The above sample worksheet, filled-in for an interior design company, can quickly help develop the framework for helpful, relevant, reader-friendly content. Once you identify the specific steps in the persona scenario, it becomes relatively easy to “fill in the blanks” by describing what needs to be done in each step, as well as adding appropriate details, examples, and tips.

A numbered sequence of steps helps guide your writing, which helps you create “win-win” situations for both you and your reader. The numbered steps also add to the visual appeal of your project, allowing you to break up the paragraphs of your content logically, using oversized numbers and attention-getting subheads.

Sections of the *Express Content Planner worksheet* are:

- ✓ **Call to action:** In the article’s conclusion, readers can either download an information package, visit a showroom, attend an event, or request an appointment.
- ✓ **Characteristics:** This section provides a context for creating an engaging story describing the prospects and the context of their home remodeling in more detail (e.g., improving their living space and, hopefully, increasing their home’s resale price for possible sale in 3 to 5 years).
- ✓ **Goals & problems:** This gives you space to add more details and to narrow the topic from the broad “home remodeling” topic to a specific aspect of remodeling (i.e., “kitchen remodeling”). This section also provides space to describe the reader’s experience and knowledge.
- ✓ **Desired change:** In most cases, once the reader’s characteristics and goals have been identified, the desired change often becomes obvious (i.e., What’s the best way to achieve the goal?). At this point, all that’s needed is to create a title that restates the reader’s goal and how the content is going to help him / her achieve it.
- ✓ **Steps needed to achieve desired goal:** Once the content’s purpose and title have been identified, it’s simply a matter of identifying the steps — or necessary actions — to take the readers on a journey from where they are now (confused, uncertain, owning outdated appliances) to where they want to be (enjoying a new kitchen and, potentially, a higher home resale value.)

For more creative ways to use the Express Content Planner worksheet visit the author's website www.publishedandprofitable.com.

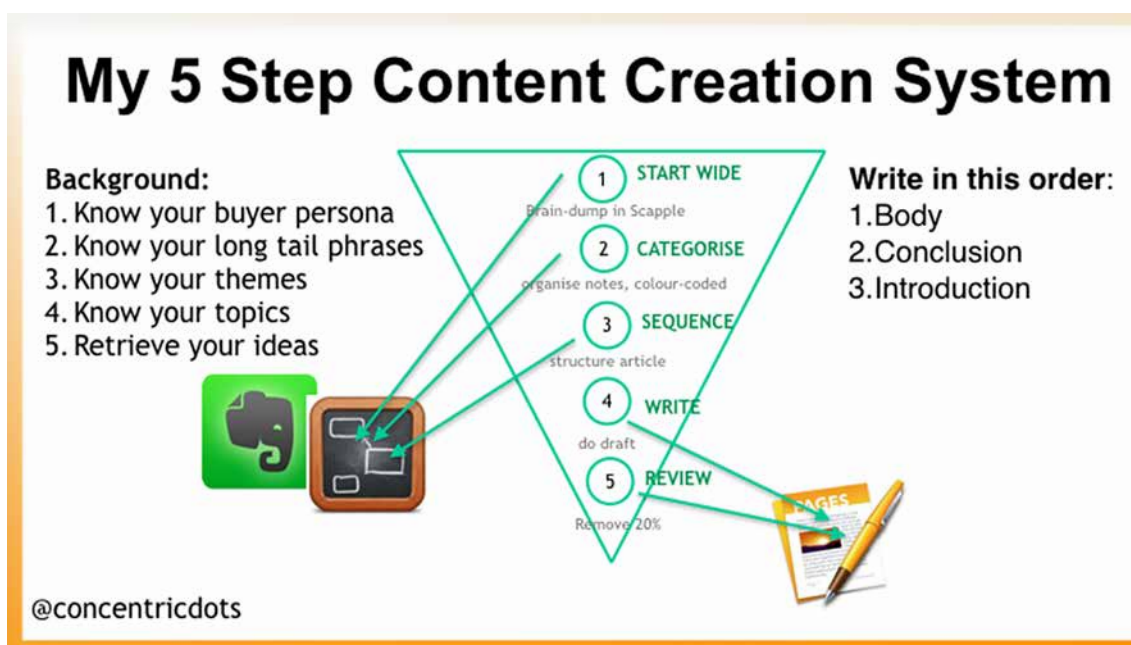
Fundamental content creation techniques

The majority of content entails writing and word smithing, and for this reason we are going to review several writing techniques that work, time and again.

Many successful writers start as copy writers and ad people. Writing adverts seems to teach disciplines that don't come naturally, like being succinct and economical, and using words that have emotional impact to express things in a more memorable way.

It's true that the content in content marketing needs to be conversational and authentic in nature if it's to engage, but that does not mean it should be rough and ready, or too long to winded. On the contrary.

A common technique in writing is to start wide, like an upside down iceberg, and to narrow progressively. Hemingway used to apply the rule of 10, which means get rid of 10% of our words, then another 10%! This sort of approach is demonstrated in my 5 step content creation system below, in which I categorise, sequence, write and then review, first the body text, the conclusion and finally the introduction, in that order:



Great content

Great content starts with creating your story, and to paraphrase Seth Godin in his book "All Marketers Are Liars", you need to create your story based on the beliefs of your audience and then find creative and relevant ways to frame your story in the form of fantastic content that is aligned to your brand.

How to create great content

Great content for content marketing purposes is characterised by six key attributes:

ONE.
Audit and Goals

TWO. Define Audiences and Personas

THREE.
Strategy

FOUR.
Editorial Management

FIVE.
Content Hub

SIX.
Content Distribution

SEVEN. Evaluate and Measure ROI

6 Attributes of great content



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In this section we'll walk through the techniques one step at a time, to achieve these attributes in your content marketing.

1 Tips for creating attractive content

Needless to say the noise competing for our attention on the web is greater than at any previous time, and will only get worse. The web is also a visual environment and we should not skimp on visuals:

Content creation: Don't skimp on visuals



People are visual. The web is visual. Content must be visual. Period.

@concentricdots

Whether it's photographic, iconographic, animation or video, there are tools to help you create better visual content:

- ✓ canva.com for creating images and graphics.
- ✓ Infographic tools including piktochart.com if you don't have a graphic designer
- ✓ Scapple for brain dumps and mind mapping

Words are also key to attracting attention, and David Ogilvy, “the most sought-after wizard in today’s (1962) advertising industry,” did not experience the web, but worked by the principle that five times as many people read the headlines of articles as read the body.

Hence he advocated 20% of time spent on creating content be dedicated to creating a compelling headline.

In the example below, he crafts a headline around the point that “at 60 miles an hour, the loudest noise in a Rolls Royce comes from the electric clock.”

This is even more apposite today with the short ephemeral life of so much content like updates and tweets.

To help marketers make their content attractive, Content Schedule has devised a savvy online tool to analyse the impact of headlines, by scoring them against the choice of emotional and power words.

Here are some examples of words like “*You*”, “*Yours*” and “*How to*,” which are found to attract considerably more than other words, identified in the Rippen survey:

What can we learn about powerful headlines?

Buzzfeed

How Much Of A Film Nerd Are **You**?

Do **You** Actually Have A Sense Of Humor?

What Career Should **You** Actually Have?

What Actress Would **You** Be In The Movie Version Of Your Life?

How Broke Are **You**?

Everyone Else

Quiz: Die Hard – test your film knowledge

What's Your Sense Of Humor?

Dr. Phil's Personality Test

Financial Health Quiz

Which words stand out?

You and Your

- “You” is the 5th most popular word in viral headlines.*
- “Your” is in the Top 20.
- Combined, these two pronouns appear in 16 per cent of all the headlines in the study.*

*Rippen survey: <http://bit.ly/viral-headlines>

Takeaway: Use **You** and **Your** to signal your content is about the reader, not about the writer.

@concentricdots <http://bit.ly/headlines-quizzes>

Other powerful headline words

Two-word phrases in viral headlines “How to Win Friends and Influence People,” Dale Carnegie.

People love a benefit.

“How to Save Money and Retire Rich,” Financial Planner.

People love a double benefit even more.

“Beginner’s guide,” “Introductory,” “Quick & Easy” & “In 5 minutes” are alternative

“Top 10 Ways to Craft a Magnetic Headline,” promises quick to skim. 19% of viral headlines comprise numbers*.

Takeaway: Provide helpful content to position your business as a source of relevant and useful information.

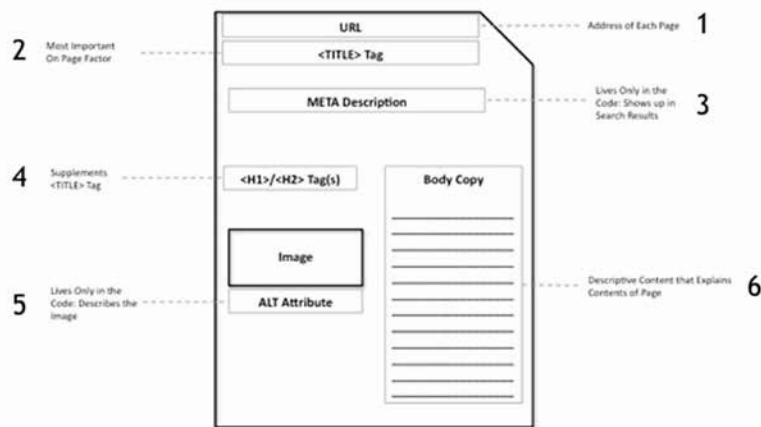
@concentricdots *Rippen survey: <http://bit.ly/viral-headlines>

Phrases	# of uses
this is	114
in the	93
how to	69
is the	55
of the	51
the most	47
what this	44
on the	40
when you	39
you see	38
in a	37
what happened	33
this guy	33
that will	32
at the	32
to be	31
to the	30
the best	30
make you	30

2. Tips for creating discoverable content in Google – See our SEO guide for more detail

1. Focus one content piece on one long tail keyword phrase.
2. Include keyword phrase in your title, 55 characters
3. Add keyword to URL
4. Use only one H1 and several H2s

Techniques for making your content discoverable.

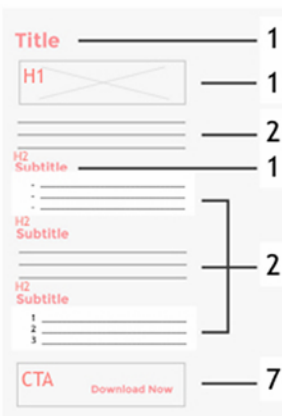


@concentricdots

5. Include keyword phrase in your meta description, 155 characters
6. Optimise image, with keyword phrase Alt tag
7. Write for purpose and a human audience
8. Avoid duplicate content
9. Avoid “keyword stuffing”
10. Add Google authorship

3. Tips for creating consumable content

Techniques for creating consumable content



1. Use headings and subheads to signpost readers
2. Chunk into paragraphs, “rule of 3”
3. Use bullets and numbered lists
4. Use consistent language, your style guide
5. Use legible fonts, down choose design over clarity, size 12
6. Keep it black & white, avoid fluorescent, but reverse-out for low vision
7. Prefer short words & sentences, readability score
8. Bold important information, but selectively

Takeaway: Create easy-to-read content that respects readers’ time

@concentricdots

4. Tips for creating consumable content

Techniques for creating shareable content



1. Reach out to influencers before, reference thought leaders, co-create.
2. Create challenging content for higher engagement / shares*, but use readability devices, not a wall of text
3. Use images, (e.g Infographics)
4. Invoke Awe, Laughter and Humour* (learn from cat memes)
5. Use lists, people love lists
6. Add "Tweet this" call-to-action box to make it easy to share



Takeaway: Create emotion in your content and people will share it

@concentricdots

[*http://bit.ly/what-gets-shared-most](http://bit.ly/what-gets-shared-most)

5. Tips for creating evergreen content

This is one of the most important content creation techniques of all types of all, since evergreen content is not time sensitive and remains relevant for a very long time after it's published. Evergreen content is the content you will put the most effort into perfecting, that will attract the most searches, and that will have the greatest longevity. Evergreen content articles are well researched, authoritative, unbiased, over 1000 words long, referenced and linked, with comments from readers and detailed and in depth views of a particular matter preferable from influencers, unlike newsy or trending content that is time-sensitive.

Content co-creation

☐ Q. Options for co-creation of content reviewed?

Co-created content is worth mentioning here. It's a little different and a great option for quick or first tentative steps into content marketing. Although it's used differently in different contexts, for us, this is where a number of contributors come together under one brand to publish for mutual gain. You could say – "that's just guest blogging" and you'd be right. But it's a more systematic way of doing this.

What is it? Content co-curation

Creation of a content resource using different authors from across different companies or departments.

Two of the best examples are Mashable or the American Express OpenForum.com web site. The brand is leveraging lots of experts to create a site that benefits everyone in terms of business and personal brand building. It really requires one lead in the project, someone with reach or the content who wants to find someone missing (or whom would simply value) more of one of those two things. Of course you're relinquishing some control over message, but it's overall a good win.

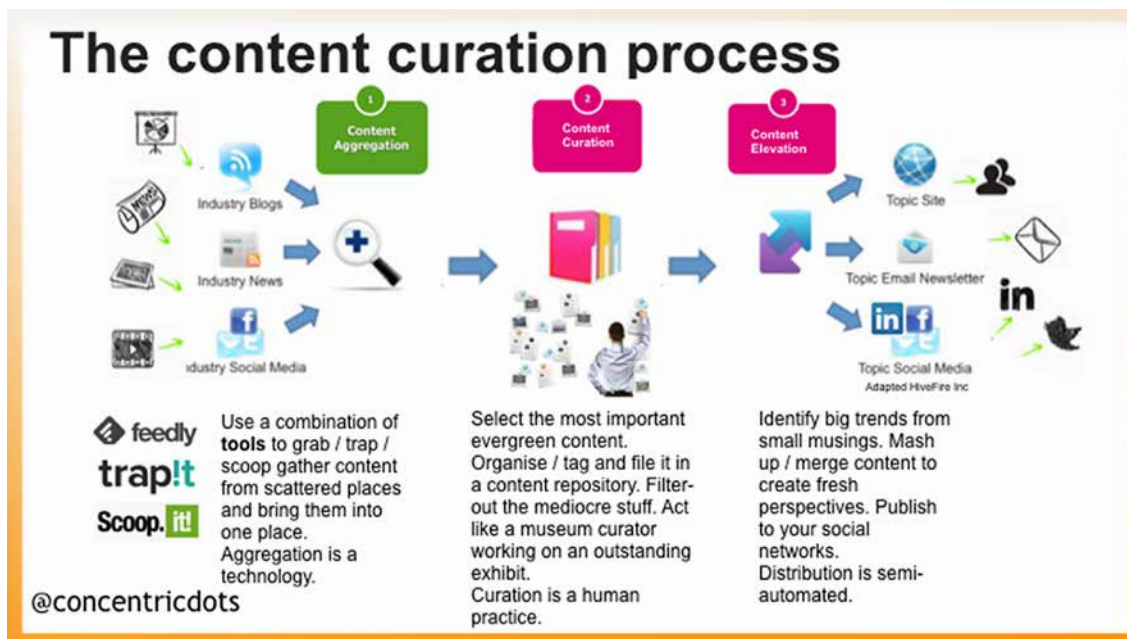
You could say content co-creation also involves getting customers to create long-form user-generated content, so this is worth considering too.

Best Practice Tip 23 Identify trusted partners and customers who can support you in your content generation efforts

Through having a range of authors you can add variety and reach as they promote their content. But you may have issues of managing content consistency and quality.

Content curation

Content curation is the act of continually identifying, selecting and sharing the most relevant online content or resources that match the needs of your audience. It is a proven, painless and cost-effective way to help position your organisation as the go-to resource, for both your content and that which you curate.



Content curation itself is not new, especially using RSS aggregators that have been around forever, but adding the crucial human element – the embedded journalist – and armed with some free or cheap software, you are able to select, filter and judge the truly useful stuff and interweave your own original content.

What is it? Content curation

Creation of new content based on other sources. Through summarizing, aggregating or distilling information you can still add value for your audience and it's less time-consuming than original content creation.

So, you're still adding value, though strategically it's more about being a news destination. The upside is that you can employ this approach along with co-creation and licensed content when you've got limited resources in the creation department.

Curation benefits:

- ✓ Build an element of trust and authority in your market
- ✓ Speed to get up and going if you use RSS, for example
- ✓ SEO benefits
- ✓ Hard to get wrong if you know your market (but conversely easy to copy)

Content curation is still hard work – not least because you still need to generate your own

original work too but because it still costs – it's people doing work. The worst bit of curated content is that there's usually a LOT of people doing (or potentially able to do) the same thing, it's one of the easier options which is why it should be packaged with original work.

Licensed content

☐ Q. *Options for licensing content creation reviewed?*

This content type is very popular in a wide range of industries and has proven to be very successful for many brands. If your content requirements run deeper than your full-time resources, third-party help to create all the content required for the project could be the solution.

Articles, images, videos, and audio are all widely available for licensing purposes online and can be used to support your original or curated options. Alternatively you can outsource content completely. In case you missed them, see our solution providers for licensed content in section four: managing your content hub.

Outsourced content creation

☐ Q. *Have we reviewed our options for outsourcing content creation?*

This is a deceptively attractive option where you can outsource your content marketing completely. You agree an editorial calendar of content, the products or services you're looking to promote and the keyword phrases you're targeting with SEO.

It's not the case that you can outsource and forget though. Licensed content still requires a certain amount of editorial oversight and guidance as your company's standards and guidelines must be met. After experiencing engagement with this type of content we think it's probably best used sparingly in terms of the long term cost / benefit. The disadvantages of outsourcing content generation are:

- ☒ Understanding of customer needs or market is poor giving problems of relevance
- ☒ Can lack passion to give an authentic brand voice
- ☒ Quality of content is poor, so fails to engage or deliver sharing
- ☒ Return-on-investment may be poor if it doesn't deliver for the reasons above!

User generated content (UGC)

☐ Q. *Options for outsourcing content reviewed?*

Though this idea sounds fantastic (free content from users) it's no magic bullet and does need careful management. UGC is the hardest since you are garnering it from people who visit your website.

That said UGC is exciting, varied and often very rich in its breadth, it also "speaks" to other users since UGC is "people like me". Varieties of UGC to consider as part of content marketing include:

Product reviews and ratings. Important for retail sites where systems like www.bazaarvoice.com provide an infrastructure. Think about how you can leverage reviews and ratings in other channels – a trick that is often missed.

Best Practice Tip 24 Use Product reviews and ratings through other channels

Opportunities to incorporate "top-rated" or interesting tips from reviews and ratings into email marketing, blogs and social channels are often missed.

ONE.
Audit and Goals

TWO. Define Audiences and Personas

THREE.
Strategy

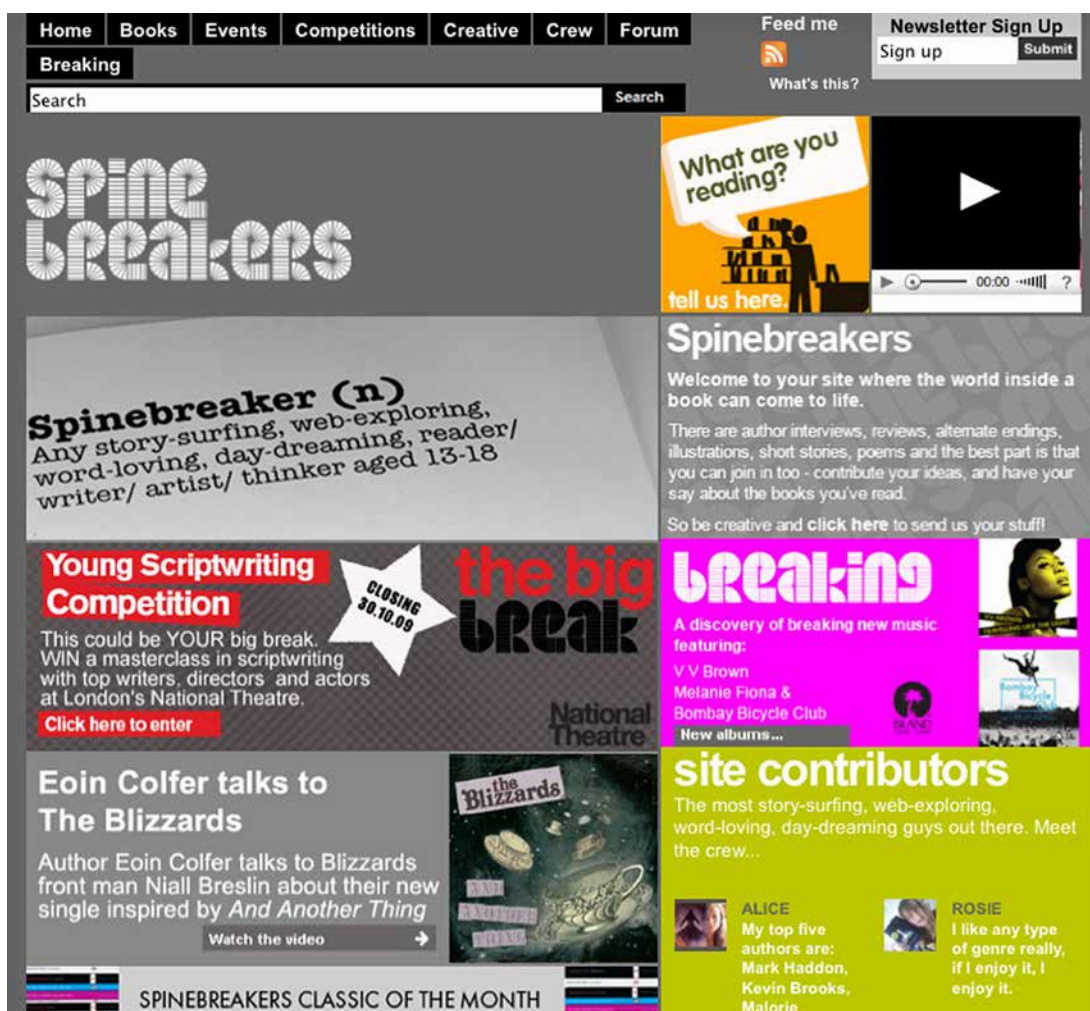
FOUR.
Editorial Management

5 FIVE.
Content Hub

SIX.
Content Distribution

SEVEN. Evaluate and Measure ROI

Curated UGC. Spinebreakers is a great, if extreme, example of this featured on our blog.⁷ Anna Rafferty of Penguin explains the approach: Rafferty explains: “During the website development Penguin recruited hundreds of teenagers from every area and background for focus groups and usability testing. The teenagers made every decision, choosing the URL and the nature of the brand themselves. We decided not to make any assumptions”. The site is now run by three tiers of teenagers, or “crews” as they elected to be called, who have varying levels of control over the site”.

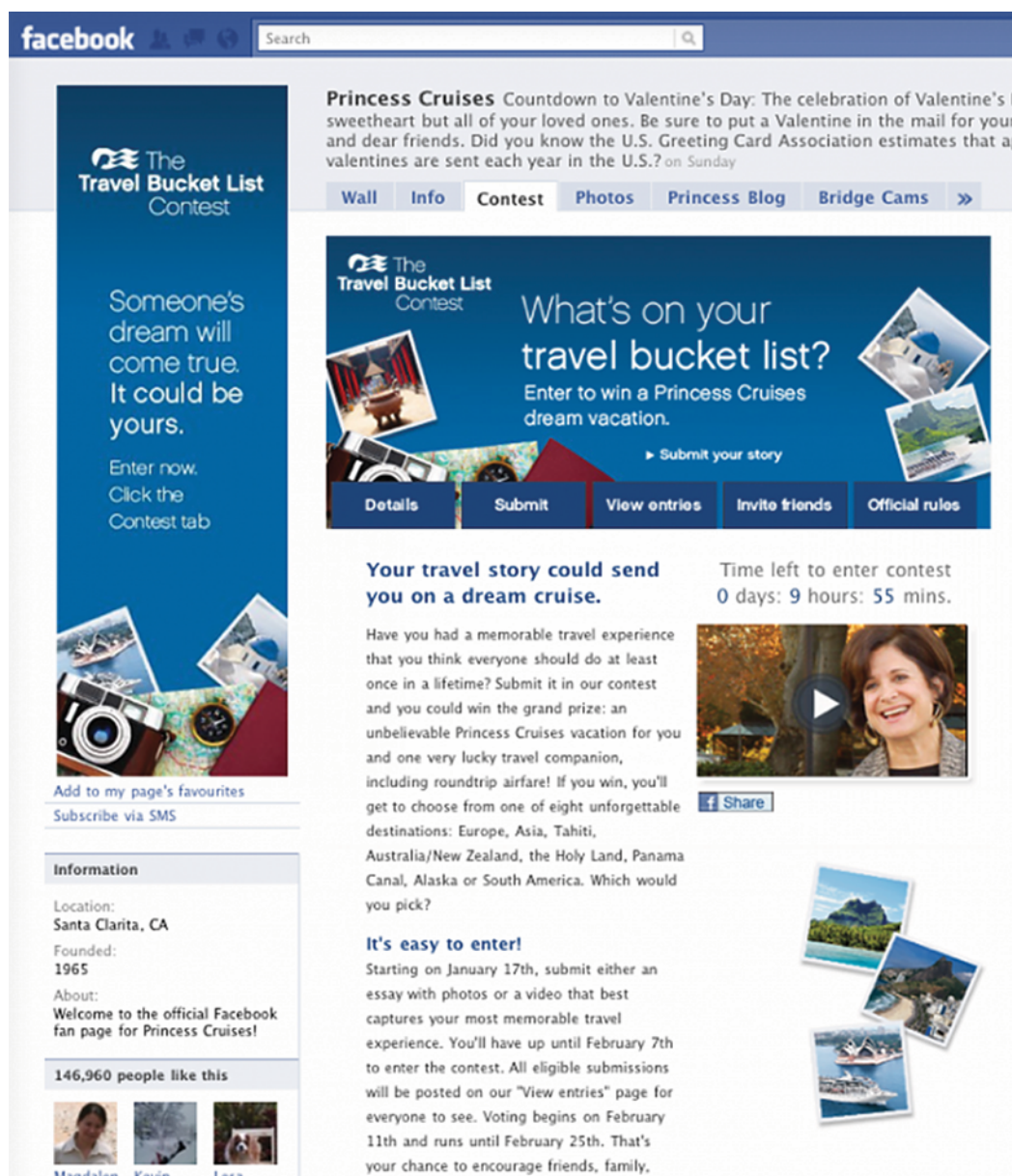


Crowd-sourced ideas. Asking for new product or content ideas can create content. You can use a crowd-sourcing platform like Userve (www.uservice.com) or you can ask more informally. For example Tee-shirt vendor Howies asked the question “What would you want Howies to do for you?” which attracted over 60 responses.

UGC campaigns which encourage writing of content or upload. For examples brands have encouraged users to upload images or media upload, often from mobiles. Vauxhall encouraged drivers to describe their favourite drive and then locate it on a Google Maps (a classic mashup). Princess Cruises used a classic “blog to win” or “share to win” campaign⁸ asking readers about their favourite travel destination.

⁷ [Penguin crowdsourcing example](#)

⁸ [Smart Insights: E-permission marketing](#)



ONE. Audit and Goals
TWO. Define Audiences and Personas
THREE. Strategy
FOUR. Editorial Management
FIVE. Content Hub
SIX. Content Distribution
SEVEN. Evaluate and Measure ROI

5

The campaign engaged the audience through their interest in travel destinations and used Facebook as the heart of this, but encouraging participation through seeding using other digital marketing channels like blogs and email.

With UGC you need to resource to not only build your platform but to also to encourage interaction, respond and moderate. You also need to take the rough with the smooth since a small % will be negative. The point with negativity is that it's happening already so better that you can interact and ensure your own perspective, and rally your fans to share their perspective too.

Content atomisation, repurposing and syndication

Now you're in a place where you know who you are talking to and what content you're creating.

What is it? Content atomization

Breaking down content into smaller chunks and repurposing them to distribute your messages across the web and social platforms.

You should think about how you can make use of this content beyond your site. To “sweat your content assets”. You’ll need to think about:

- ☐ The right partner sites or networks to share content?
- ☐ How to incentivise partners to take your content?
- ☐ Whether repurposing or creation of different formats is required – for articles it may just need a change of post title or perhaps an infographic can be produced summarising a survey?
- ☐ Whether advertising can be used to seed and share your content?

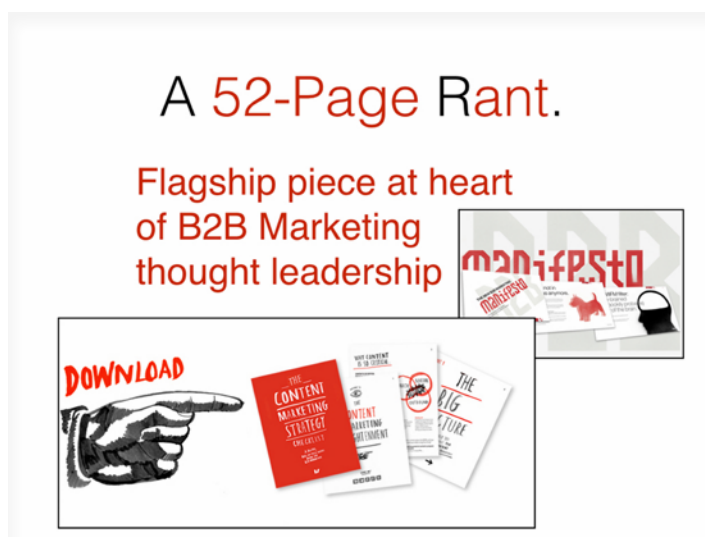
The challenge then is how do you maximise the efficiency of it all? With ebooks, blogs, videos, photos, webinars, podcasts and apps all up for grabs you want to be open to it all – everything that you do needs to work as a part of a whole – avoiding focusing on one thing (just a text based blog) is therefore important, treat these content types as parts of an ecosystem.

Content atomisation or the repurposing of content is an obvious strategy in sharing your story and making content go further – Jay Baer calls this idea “getting more bait in the water” - a word of caution though, we don’t want to literally re-purpose, we’re about re-developing content appropriate for different media so this is planned and not an afterthought to simply “get that blog post onto our facebook page”.

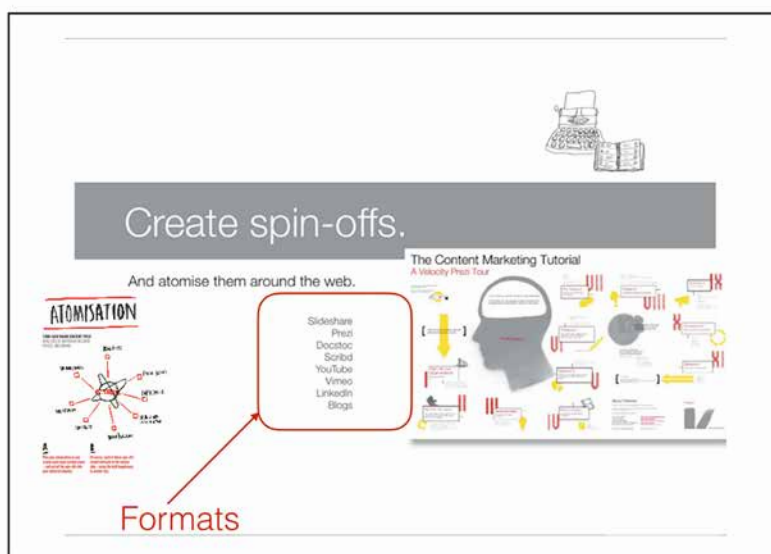
Hinge content around a ‘big hairy audacious content idea’ (BHACI)

The big idea is another concept that comes from David Ogilvy, back in the days of mad men and 60’s advertising, when he suggested marketing needed a single core message, or big idea, in order to be understood by, and motivating to the consumer.

When content marketing is used as a technique for campaigning and driving demand, such as with thought leadership, it too needs a BHACI, or core message, to be powerful enough to fuel a number of different content ideas at the tactical level, and sustain interest over time as in the example of Doug Kessler, at Velocity Partners, who, when he decided he needed to reengage marketers, decided to stir up the world of lacklustre B2B marketing. In this example he chose to put a 52 page rant, which he called the B2B marketing manifesto, at the heart of his content marketing:



Based around the concept of a BUACI, a 52 page white paper or ebook of this kind, can be atomised into a variety of spin offs like blog posts, video and slide decks etc..:



The process is that your BHACI provides the basis for a lot more content in different shapes and sizes, not cut and pasted directly, but with some simple re-purposing into other formats for different channels and different audiences with different learning and consumption preferences. And, each piece of atomised content, used on or off of your web site, provides a reason to link back to the main piece, the original ebook. In the Velocity example, the ancillary workbooks were found to perform extremely well as lead capture devices, which were gated, whilst the larger manifesto was not, since the purpose of the central content item was to drive the demand in open channels.

It may be easier and less daunting to maintain the big idea but start small when implementing it, so develop the blog posts first, run some interviews or webinars and then grow into the bigger piece.

The advantage is you keep costs low and test your messages and concepts, as described in the ROI Guide, this can only be sensible. There isn't a right or wrong way here, only what makes sense, in a larger business already running a big idea in marketing (that's working) it makes more sense to jump straight in.

25 Ideas for atomising your content

- ✅ Create a customer FAQ and also answer audience questions in forums or Q&As – simple and immediately valuable. If you can, film talking with them at events, just generally be close to your customer – they're the gold source for your ideas!
- ✅ Conversations are taking place across the Internet, so listen in and learn more about your brand, competitors and market – this will give you ideas for content in the process and improve the story you are telling
- ✅ Demonstrate your knowledge - tie your story to hot topics, profile new products, services, and provide insight and ideas via your blog
- ✅ You might also provide industry secrets, "behind the scenes" in articles – a short guide or ebook – and do that by attending industry events and summarizing the main take-aways
- ✅ Ask other team members who deal with customers, sales agents and customer

operatives – what are the common questions, pain-points and praise that your organization picks up on?

- ✓ Monitor the referring keywords to your web site and blog – it will reveal or at least allude to what your customers are looking for, some of the more odd search terms might even give you an idea for a blog post
- ✓ Do some research in Google, and using the Adwords Keyword tool to see a broader view of what's going on, of course industry news, blogs
- ✓ Delve deep in social networks like Facebook, Twitter, Slideshare and LinkedIn – they provide rich sources of information as well as content that you can share with your network
- ✓ Review others content – books, ebooks, presentations
- ✓ Tackle the “Top 10” or “7 steps” on topics of real interest – consider these in Slideshare <http://www.slideshare.net>
- ✓ Opt for other opinions such as staff or customer ‘picks’ related to products, services or advice in your industry
- ✓ Develop an interesting or topical slant on a topic or idea to breakthrough the generic mass of information. The Olympics are coming soon – “what are the five lessons digital marketers could learn from top athletes”
- ✓ Involve your community directly. This may be as simple as highlighting consistent contributors on your blog or maybe you can create a contest to garner interaction and a wealth of user-generated content (videos, photos, comments)
- ✓ Develop guides on specific areas of “best practice” – just as Smart Insights does – these are great for giving it structure. Upload selected documents (including how-to's, guides or articles to Scribd (<http://www.scribd.com>))
- ✓ Write ebooks – imagine several guides combined to form one ebook, let alone a lot of blog posts. Ebooks epitomise the idea of content atomization
- ✓ Create templates and simple tools that your audience might use to speed up a part of their job, or make better decisions – maybe an accountant might pre-configure an Excel sheet to attract new clients
- ✓ Expert interviews with influential figures – staff or external experts in video format, with an accompanying transcript in your blog. Think about live videos and interviews using Ustream (<http://www.ustream.tv>)
- ✓ Explainer videos, like text in blogs, or guides, are a great way to cover a series of “How-to”s – these can give valuable context to your product or service. Common Craft (<http://www.commoncraft.com>) have pioneered this
- ✓ Invite guest content from other experts who are independent – guest blog posts are the classic way to do it easily and quickly, you can do this on other blogs as well, of course
- ✓ Open up internal process, explain your product development cycle or supply chain process through photos or graphics
- ✓ Humanise your business by curating content of staff and team members – the tweets of everyone in your team
- ✓ Develop curated feeds of content from others – be the go-to source for industry relevant news. This could be a feed you manage from multiple sources using RSS feeds or tools like Curata (<http://www.getcurata.com/>), Equentia (<http://www.equentia.com/>) and Loud3r (<http://www.loud3r.com/>)
- ✓ Post photos (ideally real time) of events attended and new products on Flickr (<http://www.flickr.com>) and pull the Flickr feed to your web site or blog

ONE.
Audit and Goals

TWO.
Define Audiences
and Personas

THREE.
Strategy

FOUR.
Editorial Management

5
FIVE.
Content Hub

SIX.
Content Distribution

SEVEN.
Evaluate and
Measure ROI

- ☑ Update the Wikipedia (<http://www.wikipedia.org>) pages for your company and products – and, if you can, topics in your market



SIX

Content Distribution

Creating content for content marketing success is only half the battle. The other half of content marketing success relies on great **content promotion and distribution**. In other words, to excel at content marketing, you have to market your marketing.

Rather than trying to produce more or better content, we recommend you focus more effort, time and budget on achieving better distribution of your content. By doing this you can actually step down content production, and step up distribution to get better results.

Studies have found that poor content promotion and distribution is the source of poor content marketing ROI, because insufficient planning and time has been spent on reaching audiences and influencers who play a key role in endorsing, amplifying and extending your marketing reach.

In this section, we will outline techniques to help you:

- ✓ disseminate your content to existing and new audiences, to ensure its being read and shared.
- ✓ plan and roll-out your influencer strategy to maximise reach.
- ✓ consider the options for owned, earned and paid distribution channels to increase shareability and reach.
- ✓ maximise content visibility and share ability through social media optimisation

Distribution happens late, but is planned early

Deciding which platforms and channels to share on, who to target and reach, and whether you should invest in paid media are all important elements that you need to think about early in the game, not once you've created your content, but at the outset, when you are setting your goals and picking your metrics.

Owned, earned and paid distribution channels are important to promote and distribute your content. The goals can vary from generating site visits, to leads, sales or purely raising awareness with a new, broader audience. We all hear that 'Content is King,' but 'Distribution is the Crown Prince'.

Recommended best practices

Technique 1: Understand the 4 key distribution rules:

1. Plan your content promotion strategy before your content creation.
2. Undertake audience and channel research before you begin your distribution. 'Listening first before you promote and identify which channels are being used'.
3. Focus on helpful content: As discussed in other topics, consider monitoring relevant hashtags on key platforms including Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest and Instagram and do your research.
4. Only promote high-impact, high-quality content which has a purpose.

In the early stages you can do the following

- ✓ Spend time watching your existing customers: identify the channels they are in.
- ✓ Search channels for existing communities where your audiences hang out (we call these watering holes.)
- ✓ Monitor hashtags relevant to your industry on Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest and Instagram to identify what is important to your audiences and influencers.

ONE.
Audit and Goals

TWO.
Define Audiences
and Personas

THREE.
Strategy

FOUR.
Editorial Management

FIVE.
Content Hub

SIX.
Content Distribution

SEVEN.
Evaluate and
Measure ROI

Technique 2: Segment your audience

Consider segmenting your audience by type or channels to help you prioritise who to reach and which content will be relevant. Understand where they are in the buyer cycle, their motivations, what content they share and from where and any demographics that are available. Your persona mapping which you did earlier on will help you with this.

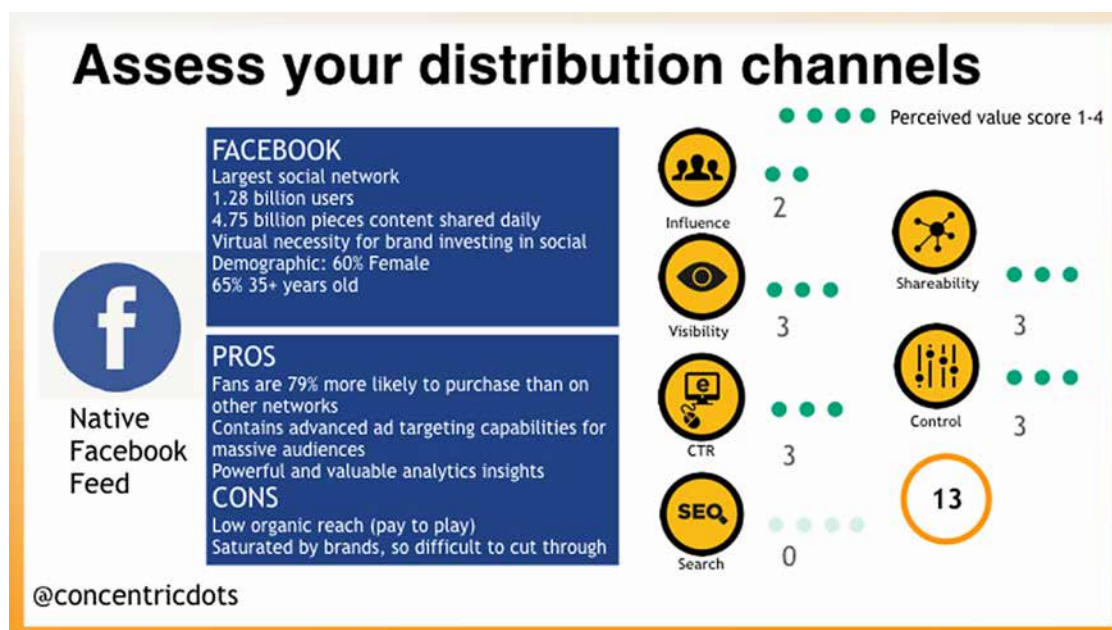
1. Existing subscribers (customers, suppliers, influencers, enquiries etc.) in your own channels. Likely to be quite warm to your content already!.
2. Occasional audiences: Need further convincing and trust creating.
3. Influencers: May not have seen your brand but are key experts in your industry or sector, who would be interested in your content to share with their network.

Technique 3: Set your distribution goal

- ✓ Think about what your promotion should do and if you are looking at influence or / and control over your content? Influence (earned media) and Control (owned and paid media).
- ✓ Like all goals and KPIS, consider if you are looking for Visibility (Awareness), CTRs (Drive enquiries), SEO (Search), Shareability (Likes, Shares, Follows) and Control.

Technique 4: Assess your distribution channels

Using a selection criteria weighting system, assess the opportunity for each channel based on its influence, visibility, response (CTR), search, share ability, and the amount of control it gives you. The following is an assessment of Facebook as a channel for organic reach, since obviously it's paid model is another story altogether.



Technique 5: Audit your distribution channels

The “Why?” template below is another useful tool that will help you to determine both your distribution goals and your corresponding choice of channel(s).

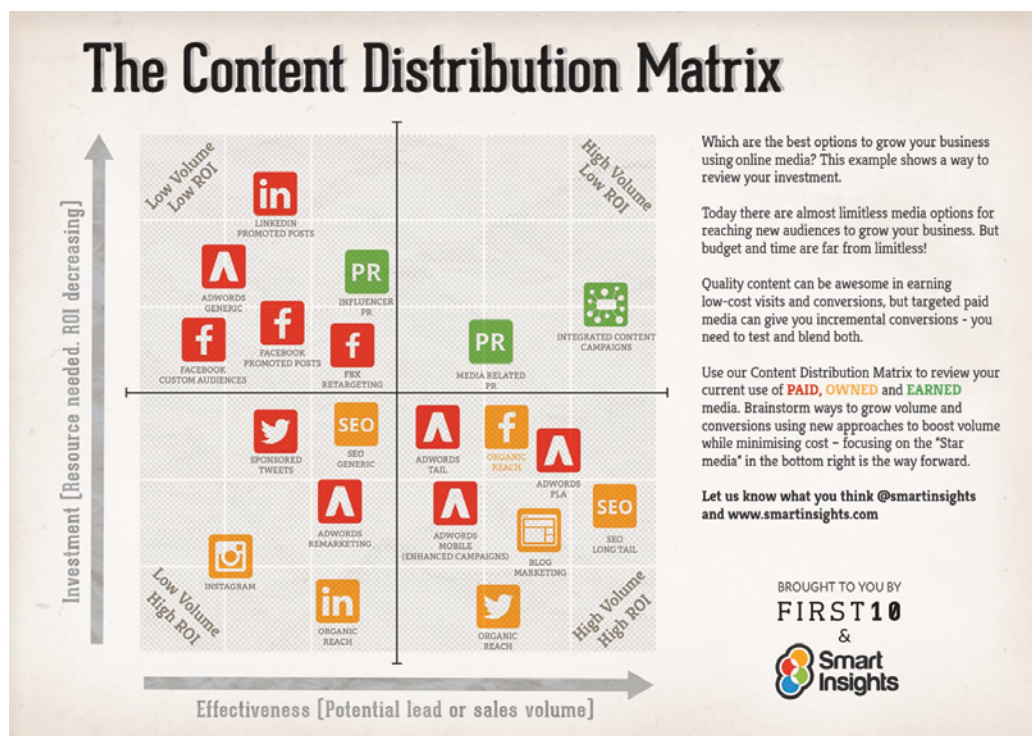


Using the *Why?* template:

1. Put "WHY?" at top of a page
2. List your distribution channels down left side
3. State marketing / business objectives for each channel
4. Do your usage & goal align with the audience / strengths of the channel?
5. Is the channel score optimal?
6. Will channel generate the best ROE / ROI?

Technique 6: Prioritise the content distribution channels you are using

Dave Chaffey created the Smart Insights Content Distribution matrix to help teams and agencies discuss where their priorities for digital content distribution should lie.



This infographic is aimed at helping marketers to review the effectiveness of different types of Paid, Owned and Earned media to promote or distribute their content in generating site visits, leads or sale compared to the level of investment in applying the media measured as paid media costs or the costs of marketing team members.

Here are the steps we recommend to using it:

Step 1. Current use of media for content distribution

Start by marking up the current or past use of different paid-owned-earned media options for your business. Plot each media type on the horizontal axis based on its importance in the number of leads or sales you can attribute to it from a low-level of effectiveness on the left to the highest volume on the right. Next consider cost effectiveness on the vertical axis based on the time or money spent on promotion from lowest cost (or better overall return-on-investment) at the bottom to highest at the top.

To take a couple of examples, in this case, long-tail SEO, shown in the bottom right quadrant, is one of the most effective techniques since it produces a high volume of leads or sales at relatively low levels of investment. Compare this to paid distribution options shown in the top left quadrant, such as LinkedIn Promoted posts which have a relatively low-level of volume, but highest costs/poorest ROI).

Colour-coding can help distinguish the techniques you use.

Of course, using the matrix requires businesses to be already set up to measure content marketing effectiveness as explained in our guides to calculating content marketing ROI and the 7 Steps guide to Google Analytics for marketers.

Step 2. Review promotion gap against competitor or sector use of content distribution techniques

This step is easier to explain, but harder to mark up in practice. Here you review the full range of paid-owned and earned media options available to you, in particular. those you aren't using now. You have to assess what you think they could contribute in advance of a test to prove or disprove your hypothesis.

In this step you can also consider how other businesses are using content distribution in your sector. Since you won't have access to their analytics, this can only be based on an assessment of the types of techniques you see them using and any results you hear them reporting.

Step 3. Select and prioritise new methods of content promotion

Finally, you can discuss which options could be worth trialling in future tests, based on your discussion. There will likely be several new options, so it's a case of reviewing and setting up a schedule of what to trial and test. An additional use of this visual will be to consider new content partners who can be compared in a similar way.

ONE.
Audit and Goals

TWO. Define Audiences
and Personas

THREE.
Strategy

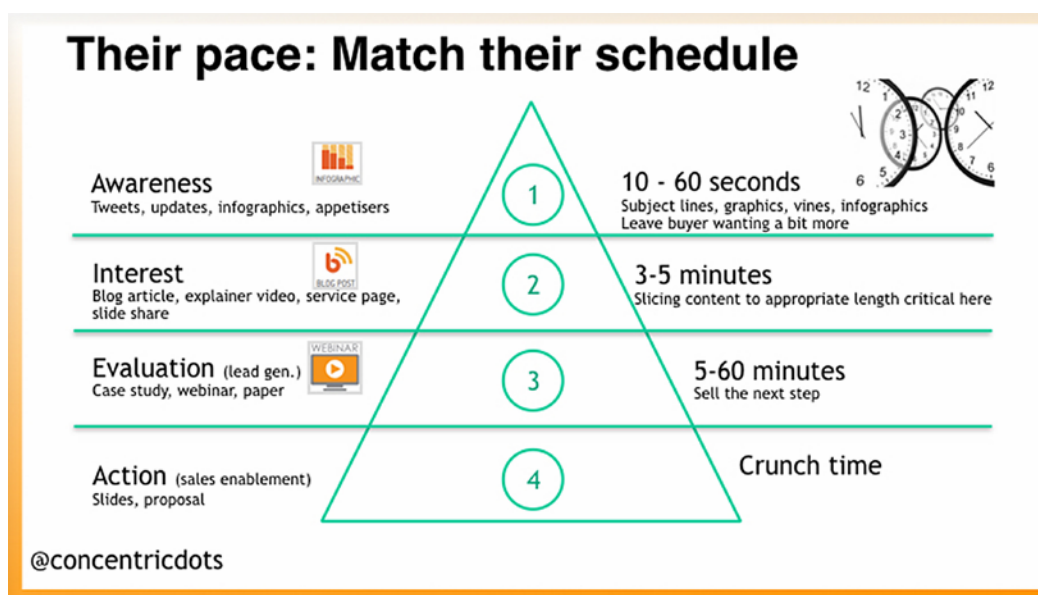
FOUR.
Editorial Management

FIVE.
Content Hub

SIX.
Content Distribution

SEVEN. Evaluate and
Measure ROI

Technique 7: Create a promotion plan, which is mindful of your channels, your audiences, their content preferences and their routines and their willingness to give you their time.



The role of influencer in your content marketing outreach

An influencer is a person who has built a loyal following, whose opinion is trusted, and who is disposed and willing to put your content in front of their audiences. The best way to identify the influencers in your market is to search the bios on Followerwonk, and then sort the results by Klout score. A person's following does not dictate their influence, since it is the engagement they drive with their audiences that matters most.

They can be early advocates of your product or service, consumer groups, customers, professional industry associations, suppliers, business partners, Thought Leaders and Journalists.

Best Practice Tip 25 Segment and prioritise your influencers

Think about different types of influencer and assess the benefits that they will offer you - how influential are they? Is a long-term collaboration possible? Will they be open to working with a company like yours?

Influencers use social media in different ways: Some post comments on user forums; Within Twitter and LinkedIn, they can have conversations with you and mention you to others (LI groups); within Facebook, they can respond to your posts as well as creating their own posts (depending on how you set your permissions); review your services within blogs and link to your articles or for example, in Pinterest can re-pin your content.

ONE.
Audit and Goals

TWO. Define Audiences
and Personas

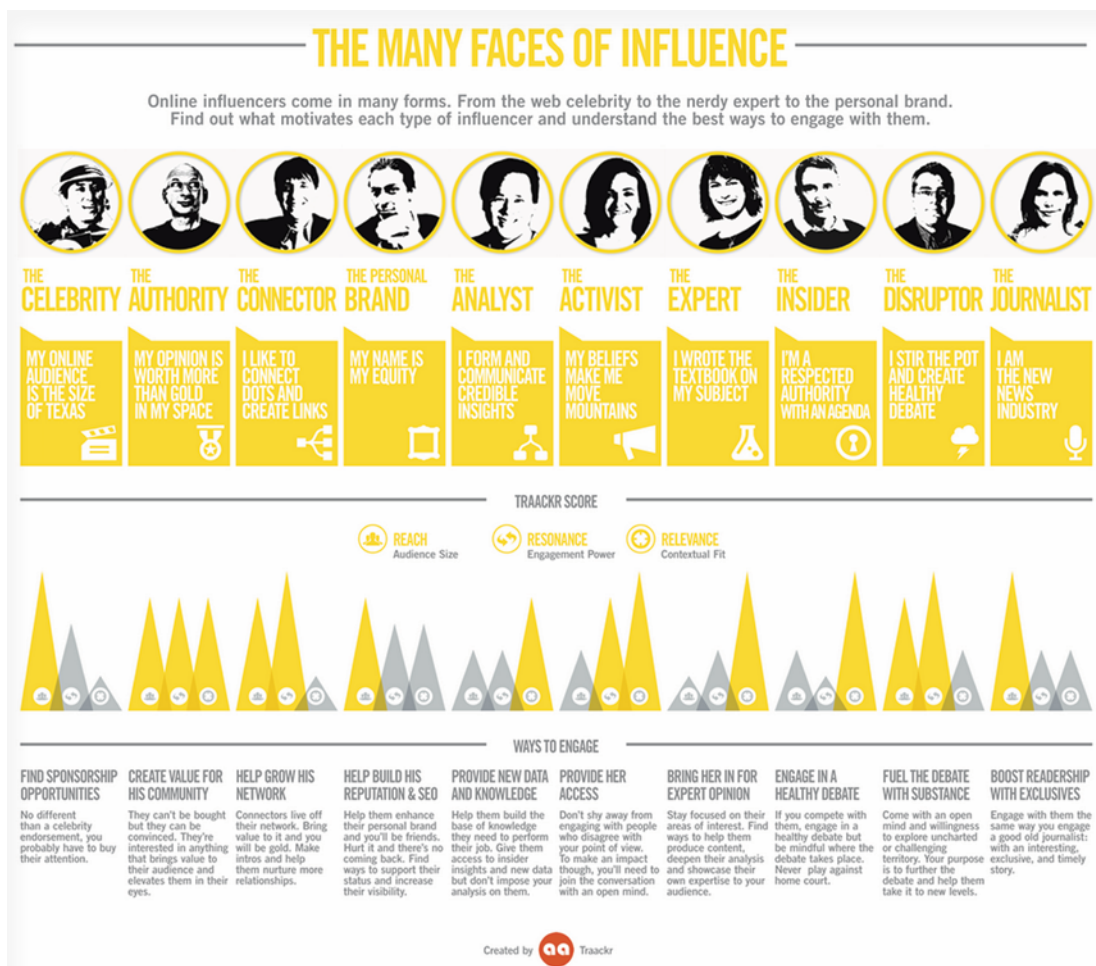
THREE.
Strategy

FOUR.
Editorial Management

FIVE.
Content Hub

SIX.
Content Distribution

SEVEN. Evaluate and
Measure ROI



Some of these interactions can also take place off-line, as Journalists and Editors can then ask to interview you, for editorial or even to be a guest speaker.

Influencers can give both positive and negative comments on your brand, so plan with caution. On a plus note, they are seen to be unbiased and a trusted advocate so can be very powerful in sharing or reviewing your content.

Recommended best practices

Find your influencers and identifying their power

1. Search Twitter "bios" using Followerwonk
2. Categorise Followerwonk bio results for keywords using the Klout weighting column
3. Follow, list, listen, and share influencer updates, and get to know their interests
4. Promote their content
5. Comment on their posts / updates
6. Demonstrate your knowledge - add value
7. Let them know their opinion is valued
8. Ask them to contribute

Here are a few alternative ways to get started finding your influencers:

- ☒ Competitor's fans and followers.
- ☒ Influential industry experts and bloggers.
- ☒ Influencers on LinkedIn and SlideShare.

- ✓ Bitly.com network to see who is sharing content.
- ✓ Hootsuite allows you to create and View Twitter lists to monitor influencer groups.
- ✓ Facebook influence: Identify Facebook influencers based using Page Insights and the 'virality measure'.

How to reach out to your influencers

1. Seek smaller numbers of the right people
2. Offer social share buttons on your blog
3. Repurpose content for different channels
4. Optimise promotion around keywords
5. Ask influencers for opinions
6. Create crumbs & snippets for mega sharing
7. Curate relevant content

How to engage with your influencers

Once you have found your influencers, you need to engage with them. Consider promoting their content, commenting on their posts/updates or asking them to contribute to discussions. Like all social media, it's important to acknowledge their interaction.

5 steps to engage:

Step 1: Identify "conversation triggers" to join in.

Step 2: Reply to content they have posted and share.

Step 3: Check your content strategy is ready to convert them into brand advocates.

Step 4: Identify ways you could partner with them. Now you are ready to ask for advice or ask them to take part in something.

Less is more for mobile:

- ❑ Consider media choice. Select content that makes best use of mobile phones' small screen size. Use alternate content formats such as video and audio to conserve space.
- ❑ Take a short cut. Create shorter 'content bursts' from your existing long-form content, and cut the jargon in the process: Keep copy tight and to the point

Create content for mobile needs. Consider what types of information your audience wants and needs to access, especially when they're out and about.

Lighten file size: Images and other large files can impact accessibility and download times, so use them wisely and in moderation.

- ❑ Encourage sharing: Mobile audiences are tech savvy and avid sharers, so make it easy for users to involve their friends and share content.
- ❑ Design for finger surfing: Remember that users are navigating the screen by pinching and zooming, rather than clicking.
- ❑ Opt for longer pages: Scrolling is much faster than waiting for multiple pages to load, so limit the number of clicks required to fully engage with your content.

Choose one size fits all. Different devices have different screen sizes and resolutions, so create an interface that "scales to fit" different devices.

Seamlessly route users to the right site. Auto-detect for devices and serve up the appropriate interface so that the experience is smooth whether a laptop, smartphone or tablet is used.

Know the limits. Be mindful of technologies that aren't recognized by certain mobile

platforms (e.g., Flash on the Apple iPhone/iPad).

Monitor and measure the impact of your influencer marketing: listen for improvement

After all of this effort you need to be able to keep the content campfire burning, right? As Chris Brogan says, content is the campfire around which conversation take place – you don't want to loose this community so it's important that you maintain relevance and build ideas to grow your content. That's where the listening comes in.

Keep an eye on your influencers' content and how it's being shared as tactics can change. When setting objectives like all campaigns, ensure you set out KPIS to monitor your influencers:

- ✓ Are they sharing your content?
- ✓ Who are they reaching ?
- ✓ Is there interaction with your content?
- ✓ Is traffic being driving to your website etc?
- ✓ Are your CTAS being clicked on?

Set up a listening dashboard. There are many software options available, some paid and many free. Free will often suffice and you can always try some of the paid services for size, such as Lithium, Social Mention and Radian 6, and curated RSS feeds like Eqentia and Loud3r. The key free options are well known:

- *Google Alerts* – simple and effective alerts to newly 'read' content that Google has noticed, all you have to do is set the terms (maybe competitor names, industry terms) and the settings.
- *Google Reader* – a great RSS reader, perfect for pulling all the blog feeds that you want to follow into one place, you can even apply PostRank software to show you which are most popular, a great time saver.
- *Twitter Search* – the “canary in the coal mine” – you can collate search queries easily into an RSS feed and add that to your Google Reader account as well

For more detailed information see our Influencer Outreach Guide

Paid distribution

LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter have each increased the sophistication of their paid models, and decreased the reach and impact of their unpaid options.

There is a range of paid reach available depending on your goals, timeframe and budget:

- ✓ Facebook (lookalike targeted advertising).
- ✓ Twitter (ads, promoted tweets).
- ✓ LinkedIn (Sponsored updates and targeted advertising)
- ✓ Stumbleupon and Reddit to distribute content which can be picked up by keywords.
- ✓ Content discovery platforms including Outbrain Taboola.
- ✓ Display advertising and remarketing.
- ✓ Video content sharing tools: ie YouTube and Vimeo.
- ✓ Google PPC.

Why is it important?

If you are short of time and you have the budget, paid advertising can provide your brand with a fast way to reach a bigger audience. although you must ensure you have relevant,

ONE.
Audit and Goals

TWO. Define Audiences
and Personas

THREE.
Strategy

FOUR.
Editorial Management

FIVE.
Content Hub

SIX.
Content Distribution

SEVEN. Evaluate and
Measure ROI

updated content and a compelling valued proposition for it to be successful to boost your amplification.

Recommended best practices

Technique 1: Choosing the right paid advertising

It's important to have undertaken your keyword analysis and thorough research, before committing your budget and rolling out your campaign.

1. Define your objectives for your amplification plan.
2. Set goals on how to achieve them.
3. Agree your social media platform which would suit your business.
4. Decide what ad suits.
5. Do your buyer insight research and keyword research.
6. Decide what your message and what outcome you want to achieve

Technique 2: Types of paid advertising

We will cover the main ones here in outline only since we have individual guides on each of these you can access from the relevant toolkit.

1. Google Adwords in Search

PPC advertising is used by brands to generate new traffic to their website that may not be picked up by organic search, in a very targeted way. Planning, keyword analysis and ROI evaluation is crucial, along with the message since it can be an expensive but effective way of advertising given you pay for CTRs.

2. Google AdWords – Display network

For some this is known as remarketing, and you can create text or rich media adverts to maximise reach online and position your ads on websites [9] which fit your persona.

3. Google AdWords – YouTube

YouTube is the 2nd largest search engine [10] on the web (2015), so popular for placing ads where you can target by category [11], channel or pages.

4. Display Ad Networks including programmatic

Networks are available to offer content assets to different audiences. These can and should be evaluated for initial awareness and retargeting after a first visit. For example, HubSpot use [Netline](#) for distribution of its B2B assets.

5. Social Networks – Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn

We have guides covering advertising and organic distribution options for each of the main social networks. These offer initial advertising and follow-up retargeting.

Recommended further reading

- ✓ Read our acquisition guide for a top-level view of creating a digital media plan.
- ✓ Our digital media cheatsheet available in the members area will help you review the details of paid media options available.

ONE.
Audit and Goals

TWO.
Define Audiences
and Personas

THREE.
Strategy

FOUR.
Editorial Management

FIVE.
Content Hub

SIX.
Content Distribution

SEVEN.
Evaluate and
Measure ROI

Don't forget retargeting

Retargeting enables you to serve follow-up ads on search engines, social media and publisher sites. It is a powerful way to re-engage visitors who have engaged with your content.

Best Practice Tip 26 Set up retargeting to re-engage site visitors

Retargeting can encourage site visitors to return to your site to consume more content or to encourage them to purchase.

The best known Retargeting options are the Google Display Network used from Google AdWords (and explained in our AdWords guide) and the social media retargeting options from Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn described in our guides to these networks.

SEVEN

Evaluate and Measure ROI

For many business owners and directors on the board of a business, content marketing is not a given. Therefore, making a compelling business case for resources and investment in content marketing is critical.

Getting successful buy-in and budget will include finance, skilled staff, commitment to endorse it from senior management to embed it in the organisation and show **return on investment**.

This means measuring, evaluating and reporting on short, medium and long term results, so it's about being creative, showing strong examples of what's happening in the industry, case studies and tangible figures from success stories that demonstrate a compelling and unequivocal case.

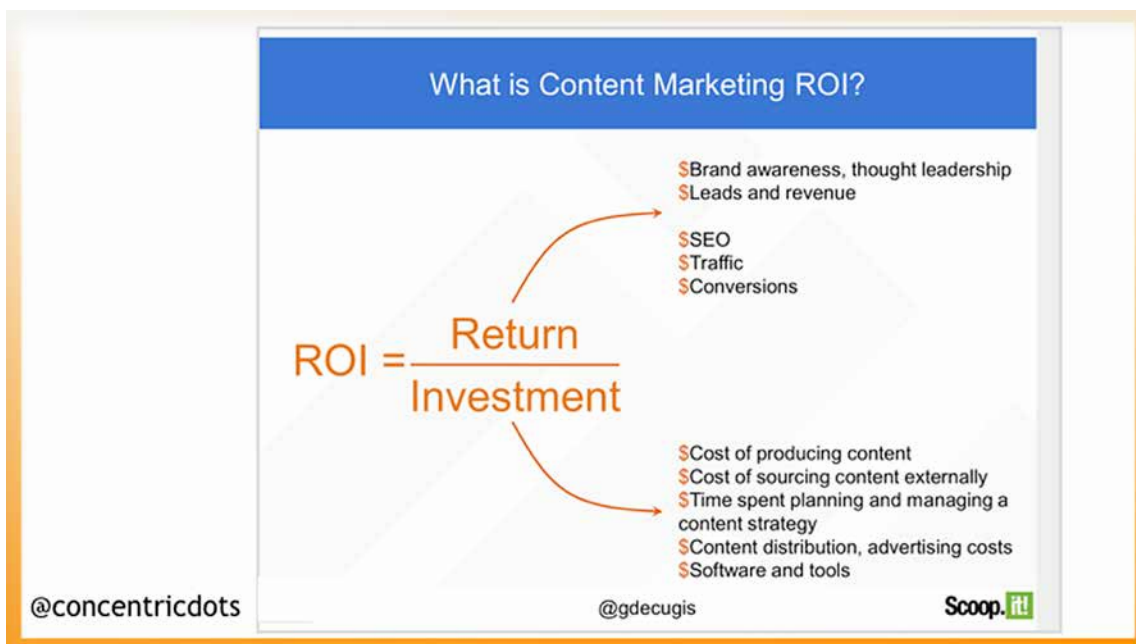
If you don't make the business case effectively then it's likely...

- ✓ You won't have enough resource to manage content marketing
- ✓ You won't have a regular stream of engaging, relevant content
- ✓ You're content marketing efforts will wither and die

We cover content marketing ROI in absolute detail looking at costs of content production and disseminating, in our 36 page specialist Content Marketing ROI Guide, but in this chapter we review the broad strokes of an approach to help you present the business and get buy-in.

What is ROI?

ROI is a hard metric that measures the absolute return on every dollar or pound invested (cost) whilst evaluating a range of hard and softer metrics. This is because content marketing impacts the buyer journey at each stage of the buying cycle from early awareness, through consideration to action.



How to measure ROI for content marketing?

In order to measure content marketing ROI you need to know what you are spending to determine your investment or cost. These costs are covered in detail in our specialist content marketing ROI guide, and you can not begin to evaluate ROI without an accurate record of your costs.

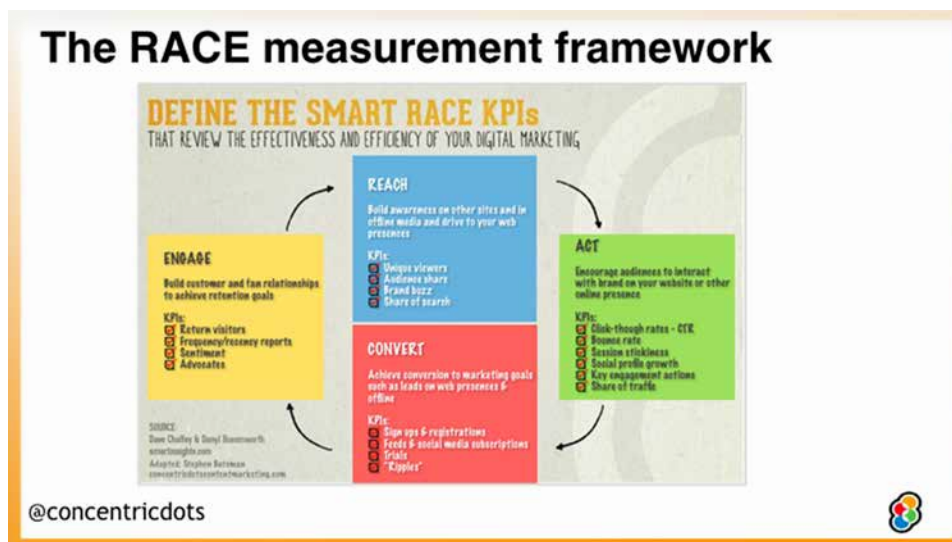
To measure ROI you need to establish KPIs at the start of your plan, without which you will be unable to measure your activity throughout your campaign, to enable you to review, refine and improve your digital marketing activity. The beauty is that measurement is really time and accurate.

KPIs can include:

- ✓ Hard sales, downloads, enquiries and off-line activities.
- ✓ Softer engagement metrics: open rates for emails, views of your LI profile,
- ✓ Commercial measures: Financial indicators.
- ✓ Audience share sales and leads.
- ✓ Satisfaction ratings and reviews. You can use different customer feedback software²⁷ like 4Q and Kampyle so you get overall ratings of your content and feedback on specific content.
- ✓ Tactical measures: Interaction with your brand: To include Views, Clicks, Tweets, Likes, Followers and Pins.
- ✓ Brand measures or keyphrase mentions, sentiment and share of market mentions of competitors or site traffic.

KPIs using RACE

The RACE framework will help you plan your KPIs and outcomes all along the marketing funnel:



1. REACH : Build awareness on other sites and in offline media and drive to your web presences. KPIS:

- ✓ Unique visitors.
- ✓ Audience share .
- ✓ Brand buzz .
- ✓ Share of search.
- ✓ Share of voice.

2. ACT : Encourage audiences to interact with brand on your website or other online presence. KPIS:

- ✓ Click-through rates – CTR s.
- ✓ Bounce rate.
- ✓ Session stickiness .
- ✓ Social profile growth.
- ✓ Key engagement actions.

3. CONVERT : Achieve conversion to marketing goals such as leads on web presences and offline. KPIs:

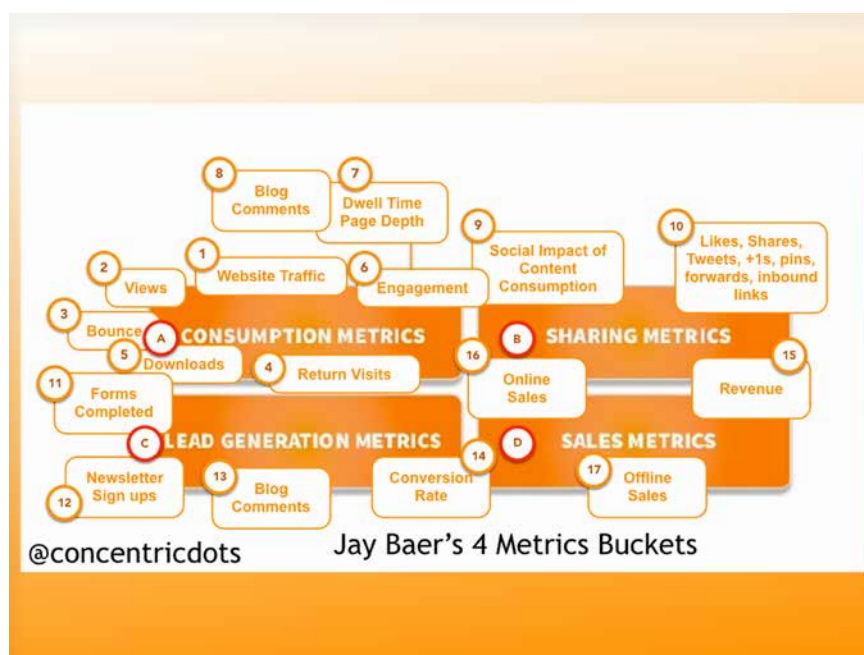
- ✓ Conversion rate .
- ✓ Sign ups and registrations .
- ✓ Feeds and social media subscriptions .
- ✓ Trials .
- ✓ “Ripples”.

4. ENGAGE : Build customer and fan relationships to achieve retention goals. KPIS:

- ✓ Return visitors
- ✓ Frequency/recency reports
- ✓ Sentiment
- ✓ Advocates

Four Buckets

We're big fans of Jay Baer's Four Bucket KPIs.



A. Consumption Metrics

This fundamental data point is easy to derive through Google Analytics, YouTube insights, or similar. The metric tells you how many people consumed your content, measured as page views, downloads, or views.

B. Sharing Metrics

This metric tells you how successful your content is at getting consumers to share it with others through social sharing like tweets, Retweets, “likes”, LinkedIn shares, Google+ shares etc ... Free social sharing monitors like www.sharedcount.com will provide with an accurate realtime measure of how often your content is shared with others across all social networks.

C. Lead Generation Metrics

Whether you require registration before allowing people to read/watch/download your content, or whether you’re measuring leads generated after content is consumed, this is the metric that determines whether or not your content marketing effort is making financial sense. If you host a lead form on your site, you can measure this by determining how many people went to the lead form immediately after consuming your content. You can also set a browser cookie and track when someone fills out that lead form after viewing your content, even if there is a 30 or 60-day interval between those events. If your leads are handled via phone, you can install a simple script that shows a different (trackable) phone number when people have first watched a video, downloaded a presentation, etc. This metric tells you many content consumers on your website turn into leads.

D. Sales Metrics

This metric will tell you how often your content consumers turn into customers. If you’re using a customer and prospect database, such as Salesforce, you’ll want to note in the prospect record that the potential customer consumed content pieces X, Y, and Z. Then, when your sales team turns that prospect into a sale, determine the projected revenue and profit (lifetime value if you can) of that customer, and assign it to the content pieces that drove the sale.

Sales are the ultimate goal of most businesses, and you can find examples of specific outstanding content pieces that have helped businesses convert prospects into sales, by searching the stories of content marketing agencies that have written about their successes online.

One such content marketing agency success story is provided by Lee Odden (TopRank) on SlideShare. The success story details the effectiveness of a piece entitled “*29 Secrets About Content Marketing & The Underground Agents Who Shared Them.*”

Q. KPIs set for content marketing?

To help you select your KPIs, we’ve taken the full range of measures covered, from hard sales to softer engagement metrics, and combined them into the table below.

- ☒ **Commercial measures:** These are the harder business or commercial measures and what usually takes the longest to be demonstrable. These are the measures for the senior managers although they may well also need to know about Likes! Think audience share, sales, leads or at least clear indicators from people such satisfaction ratings or % that fed back. Remember that these need to be incremental and ideally attributable to your content marketing.
- ☒ **Tactical measures:** These include the views, clicks, interactions with your content - so involves the social shares such as Likes and Tweets. You might also use link shortening tools to help measure, at Smart Insights we use PostRank rating and also metrics from

ONE.
Audit and Goals

TWO. Define Audiences and Personas

THREE.
Strategy

FOUR.
Editorial Management

FIVE.
Content Hub

SIX.
Content Distribution

SEVEN. Evaluate and Measure ROI

7

Facebook Insights. These are hard indicators that your content is visible and worth sharing - so very key.

- ✓ **Brand measures:** These are easier for bigger brands or where there's less competition, simply because the tools seem to work better in that space. Think brand or keyphrase mentions, sentiment, share of market mentions over competitors and certainly site traffic. These are the bigger needles to get moving and often require a bit more momentum.

The key evaluation questions to ask are:

1. How will you measure return and what are the measurements that tell the return on content spend? How will you illustrate the value clearly to the wider business?
2. What actions do you want your customers to take as a result of interacting with content?
3. How will you measure audience behaviour in order to know how we will make changes to navigation and content to help them along the way?
4. How will you (at the right time) put them on the path to purchase, and what is the conversion point?
5. What is your process for content marketing optimisation and how does this relate to content marketing optimisation?
6. Which keyphrases related to content are most effective at driving visits and outcomes? Ensure that you have an idea of what audience personas or segments those keywords relate to so you know who you're writing content for. When you identify high bouncing keywords try surveying those users on exit or placing calls to action directly on the page to ask for feedback. Tools like Kampyle can help with that.
7. Which referring partner sites or social networks have helped with link generation and measurement (for SEO) and the driving of traffic, referenced above as a part of SMO?
8. How does content viewed on click-paths or journeys affect marketing outcomes? This reviews the value that a user is finding on your website and whether it's influencing leads or sales.
9. Are you increasing the percentage of engaged users?

Using Google Analytics Actionable analytics for content marketing

- Q. *We're using our analytics effectively to review content marketing?*

Measuring cost

- Q. Full range of costs of content marketing reviewed?

Of course, you also need to factor in the not inconsiderable costs of producing, promoting and distributing the content assets. Online content can also produce cost savings through web-self service as people download promotional material or access support information. If these are important for your type of content these should be modeled too.

Strategy Recommendation 13 Ensure the full-range of costs are reviewed when assessing ROI

Content has many direct and hidden costs across creation, syndication and maintenance, so make sure you use the range of content.

So, don't forget the hidden costs. With content marketing you have:

- ✗ Planning costs
- ✗ Authoring costs – staff time or agencies
- ✗ Design and other production costs
- ✗ Syndication costs
- ✗ Bought media costs for paid-for placements
- ✗ Moderation and curation costs

Setting KPIs for content marketing

Q. Have we set KPIs set for content marketing?

Users need to find your content, share it, or better still use it, before your marketing efforts can be measured for effectiveness. Jay Baer groups content marketing metrics into four easy-to-memorise categories that every content marketer needs to measure to determine their content marketing effectiveness:

Here's the table – mark the ones which are most relevant for you. You'll see that since the measures are commercial they apply across the whole customer lifecycle and across digital marketing activities. That's why we provide blank templates for this tool within our digital marketing strategy toolkit.⁹

Metric	Reach audience	Encourage Action	Convert to Sale	Engage customers to Retain & Grow
Tracking metrics	<input type="checkbox"/> Unique visitors <input type="checkbox"/> New visitors <input type="checkbox"/> Visits <input type="checkbox"/> Conversation volume	<input type="checkbox"/> Online opportunity (lead) volume <input type="checkbox"/> Offline opportunity (lead) volume (online influenced)	<input type="checkbox"/> Online sales volume <input type="checkbox"/> Offline sales volume (online influenced)	<input type="checkbox"/> E-mail list quality <input type="checkbox"/> E-mail response quality <input type="checkbox"/> Transactions
Performance drivers (diagnostics)	<input type="checkbox"/> Share of audience compared to competitors <input type="checkbox"/> Share of search <input type="checkbox"/> Brand / direct visits	<input type="checkbox"/> Bounce rate and duration measures <input type="checkbox"/> Macro-conversion rate to opportunity and micro-conversion efficiency	<input type="checkbox"/> Conversion rate to Sale <input type="checkbox"/> E-mail conversion rate	<input type="checkbox"/> Active customers % (site & e-mail active) <input type="checkbox"/> Active social followers <input type="checkbox"/> Repeat conversion rate
Customer Centric KPIs	<input type="checkbox"/> Cost per Click and per Sale <input type="checkbox"/> Brand awareness <input type="checkbox"/> Conversation Polarity (sentiment)	<input type="checkbox"/> Cost per Opportunity <input type="checkbox"/> Customer satisfaction	<input type="checkbox"/> Cost per Sale <input type="checkbox"/> Customer satisfaction	<input type="checkbox"/> Lifetime value <input type="checkbox"/> Customer loyalty index <input type="checkbox"/> Customer advocacy index <input type="checkbox"/> Products per customer
Business Value KPIs	<input type="checkbox"/> Audience share <input type="checkbox"/> Share of conversations	<input type="checkbox"/> Goal value per visit <input type="checkbox"/> Online product requests (n, £, % of total)	<input type="checkbox"/> Revenue per visit <input type="checkbox"/> Online originated sales revenue and profit (n, £, % of total)	<input type="checkbox"/> Retained sales growth and volume <input type="checkbox"/> Revenue per 1000 emails sent

Combining measurements and social media optimisation

As you can see from the table above, content marketing KPIs go hand in hand with social

⁹ [Smart Insights: Digital Marketing Strategy Toolkit](#).

media marketing; content fuels social media. The two come together when working on social media optimisation (SMO). Since SMO centres on the distribution of social objects and their ability to rise to the top of any related search query it's closely related to content marketing and SEO.

Brian Solis believes that:

SEO + SMO = Amplified Findability in the traditional and social web¹⁰

We think that's a great way to summarise it.

So since tracking within SMO is also important, how do you do it? At the centre of a SMO programme are social objects. Social objects represent the content we market via social media - images, videos, blog posts, comments, status updates, wall posts, and all related activity that creates the potential for online conversations. It follows then, that the goal of SMO is to measure, monitor and improve the visibility of social objects as a means to connecting with individuals who are proactively seeking additional information and direction.

Given that social objects are contextualized through keywords, titles, descriptions, and/or tags so the measures here are not so different to SEO in terms of inbound links, as well as referring web sites where your content, the social objects, are placed. So you need to develop an analytics dashboard that reviews your effectiveness within this content eco-system.

Using Google Analytics: Actionable analytics for content marketing

❑ Q. *We're using our analytics effectively to review content marketing?*

Here are our recommendations on some of the key questions to ask for which you need to review the analytics to get the answer:

- ❑ Q. *Which keyphrases related to content are most effective at driving visits and outcomes?*
Ensure that you have an idea of what audience personas or segments whom those keywords relate to as well, so you know who you're writing content for. When you identify high bouncing keywords try surveying those users on exit or placing calls to action directly on the page to ask for feedback, tools like Kampyle can help with that.
- ❑ Q. *Which referring partner sites or social networks have helped with link generation and measurement (for SEO) and the driving of traffic, referenced above as a part of SMO.* Check for traffic volumes from those domains and how those users (segmented by referring domain) bounce and click through the site - are their needs being met? Of course, you want more of the traffic that's generating results and to understand how you might also improve journeys for those that bounce highest, starting with landing pages. From an SEO perspective you should review the number and quality of links that your content generates using these types of [backlink benchmarking software](#).
- ❑ Q. *How does content viewed on click-paths or journeys affect marketing outcomes?*
This reviews the value that a user is finding on your web site and whether it's influencing leads or sales. In the next section we will show you how to use Advanced Segments to precisely show how content is affecting sales.
- ❑ Q. *Are we increasing the % of engaged users?* Engagement can be short or longer-term - it might be that someone has viewed more than 3 pages on the site, per session, this is better than time on site. You can consider improving that by designing site journeys that are for specific audiences and creating multiple routes to the important content.
- ❑ Q. *What are the satisfaction ratings for our content?* Use different customer feedback software like 4Q and Kampyle so you get overall ratings of your content and feedback on specific content. 4Q is great since it shows you what people were looking for against

¹⁰ [Brian Solis: SMO is the New SEO.](#)

what whether they were successful and how satisfied they were.

Best Practice Tip 27 Assess satisfaction levels with content

Don't forget to assess the value of content through asking customers how they rate your content – you can only tell so much from analytics systems.

The general rule of optimisation is to monitor and test and don't stop! Websites and web based content are not brochures, they're never 'done'. Focus on testing and trying new things where the analytics and customer feedback data indicates the best opportunity to improve.

The screenshot shows the ClickThrough website, which is described as 'the search conversion experts'. At the top right, there is a phone number 'Call us 0800 088 7486' and a link to 'Call for an SEO or PPC Audit'. The main navigation bar includes 'Home > Resources > Reports & Downloads > SEO Book'. The central content area is titled '101 SEO Book: Exclusive FREE Excerpt' and lists four bullet points: '101 tactics that drive real SEO results.', 'Build a site that search engines will love.', 'Harness the power of Twitter and social media.', and 'Preview EXCLUSIVE excerpts from the full book'. To the right of the text is an image of the '101 SEO Book' with a circular badge stating 'Foreword by Dave Chaffey'. Below this is a yellow box with the heading 'Get Your FREE SEO Book Excerpt Now'. It contains a form with fields for 'Your Full Name*', 'Your Company Email Address*', and 'Your Phone Number*', along with a 'Send Me My Ebook Now >' button. A checkbox is also present with the text 'Yes! I would like to hear about your FREE training webinars & EBooks.' To the left of the form is a small image of the book cover labeled 'FREE Preview'. At the bottom of the yellow box is a link 'How we Protect Your Privacy'. Below the yellow box, a text line reads 'Some of the satisfied clients we have helped reach new customers online in over 30 countries.' This is followed by logos for 'WOLSELEY', 'Vonage', 'PEUGEOT', 'DUO', and 'compuTeach'.

Some examples of how to review content marketing effectiveness in Google Analytics

To assess the effectiveness of our content marketing, we need to isolate the effect of particular content you have invested in in creating incremental leads or sales. To help do this, it's best if your site structure is setup right to measure effectively - I use the engineering term DFA "Design for Analysis" to prompt site designers to think about this. I'll take some examples from ClickThrough Marketing who I have helped provide content for – we created a series of printed 101 guides introducing search marketing concepts.

To separate your content marketing content from other product or service content you can use these approaches:

ONE.
Audit and Goals

TWO. Define Audiences
and Personas

THREE.
Strategy

FOUR.
Editorial Management

FIVE.
Content Hub

SIX.
Content Distribution

SEVEN. Evaluate and
Measure ROI

7

- ✓ **1. Setup your content on a separate content marketing campaign domain or subdomain.** This can be the quickest way to get up and running with content marketing, if you want to use a funky design or a simple landing page which isn't possible through your main content management system. At ClickThrough we setup a separate domain initially <http://www.101guideseries.com> with its own Google Analytics tags.

Generally though, the next approach of grouping your content for content marketing in a subfolder is better since then your content is integrated with your main site content and users can view your content marketing and browse and return to view information about your products and services. It's also easier to track with a single domain although you can call the Google Analytics "SetAllowLinker" function to link tracking with cookies across domains or subdomains¹¹.



- ✓ **2. Use sub-folder(s) on your main site to group your content.** This is probably the most common approach for content marketing where you group all your content marketing like PDFs in one or more folders. In a moment I'll show you how to use Advanced Segments to track how this content influences leads and sales.

You can also use this approach if you want to evaluate the contribution of the content of your blog to leads and sales if you have it in a separate folder (/blog/) of your main site. This is the approach that we now use at ClickThrough where we have a /resources/ folder. This folder has sub-folders /resources/blog/, /resources/downloads/, etc. This has the benefit you can easily review the popularity of the different content types using the Google Analytics Content Drilldown approach and use the GA \$Index value to see which content is generating most value through "Assists". But to do this you need to put a nominal value against each content type, e.g. article download = \$1, Webinar = \$2 or simply set them to \$1. See our post on [creating goals in Google Analytics](#).

Best Practice Tip 28 Group content marketing resources to help users and for trackability

¹¹ [Google Analytics tracking reference](#)

Through grouping content marketing resources you can both highlight the value to users and measure it more effectively.



- ✓ **3. Use custom variables to define content value.** This is a more advanced technique, which can work best if your content marketing content is distributed around the site.

You can use a function call on a content page to set page-level custom variables to record a visit to section or group of content. You can also set Visitor-level custom variables to record when content has been viewed across sessions and influenced a lead or purchase.

Using Google Analytics Advanced Segments to determine the value generated through content

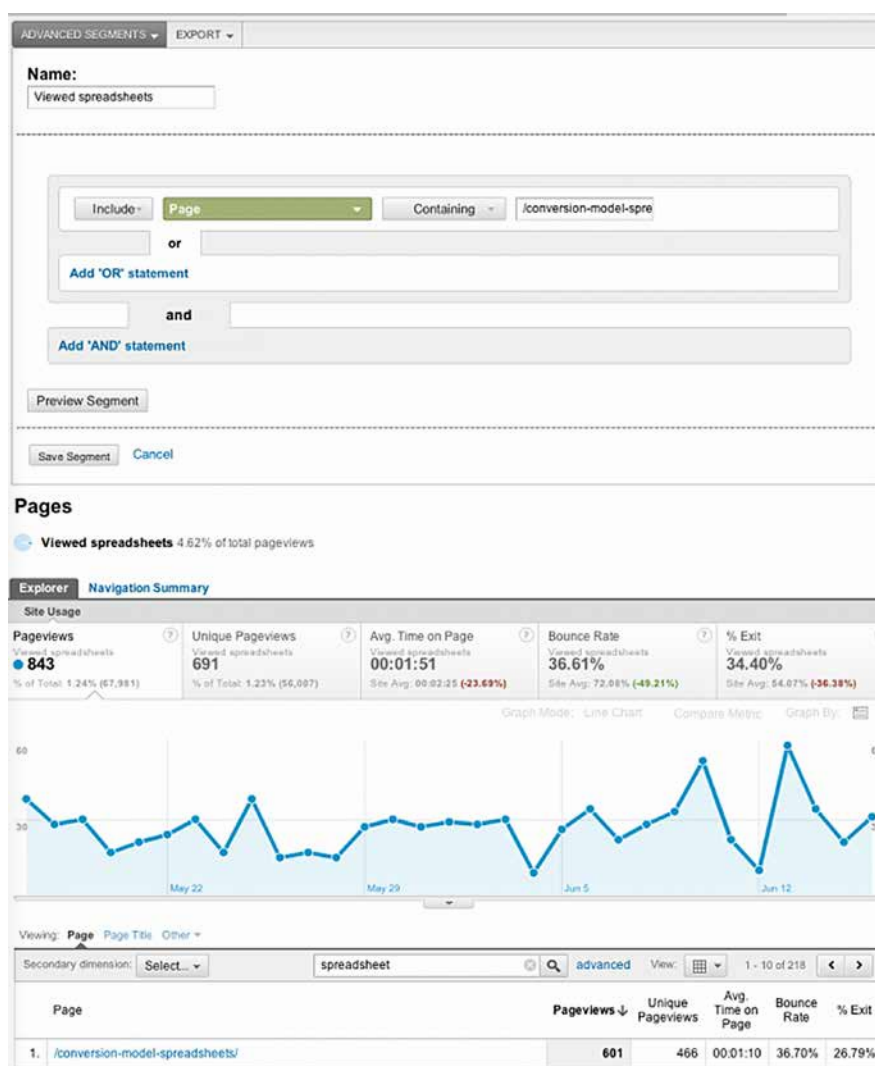
So, how do we use Advanced Segments to determine how the content affects conversion and value generated? The method is to specify the page or pages of our content within a Content Marketing Advanced Segment and then compare the value generated to other content on the site. See our post on using Segments in Google Analytics¹² for more detail.

¹² [Smart Insights: Segments in Google Analytics](#)

Best Practice Tip 29 Use advanced segments to determine the value of your content

Create advanced segments for your different groups of content so you can more easily see how they contribute to site outcomes.

I'll use a different example here, the content marketing content in this example is a website conversion calculator I have made available as a free download on SmartInsights.com with optional sign up to our e-newsletter. I can assess the number of conversions generated by this through creating an advanced segment specifying the page as «/conversion-model-spreadsheets/» (this could equally be all pages within a subfolder) as shown below. Effectively this gives us a segment which only shows visits which included a visit to this page (or folder) - so we can isolate the impact on visitors who viewed this content.



You can see that this page has around 600 visits in this period. Creating the segment also lets us see variation through time of people visiting the subfolder, although we can see that through the Top Content or better the Content Drilldown approach also.

The final step is to see what proportion of goals are delivered in visits which included a visit to the spreadsheets page. To do this, simply go to the goals report available from the left sidebar in Google Analytics and then compared the Viewed Spreadsheets segment to All Visits. Here we can see that c38% of goal completions are generated through the spreadsheet so it is effective in generating a fair proportion of goal completions.

ONE.
Audit and Goals

TWO.
Define Audiences
and Personas

THREE.
Strategy

FOUR.
Editorial Management

FIVE.
Content Hub

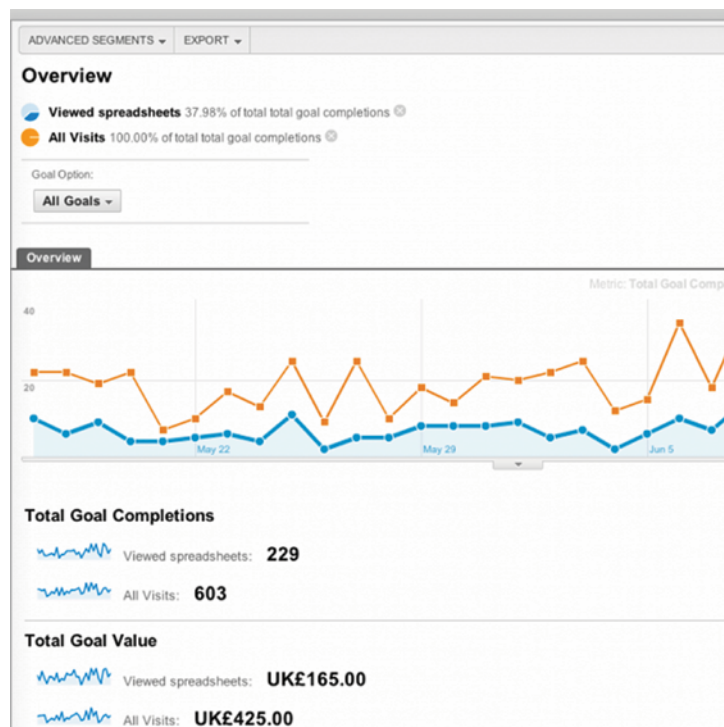
SIX.
Content Distribution

SEVEN.
Evaluate and
Measure ROI

7

You can also see the value this equates to.

So, that's the end of this edition of the content marketing guide. We hope you have found it useful in developing your content strategy. Please let us know how you found it so we can improve in future versions.



If you have any questions, do use the community section in the members area and we'll be happy to answer them.

ONE.
Audit and Goals

TWO. Define Audiences
and Personas

THREE.
Strategy

FOUR.
Editorial Management

FIVE.
Content Hub

SIX.
Content Distribution

SEVEN. Evaluate and
Measure ROI

7