The Marketer's Guide to

DATA-DRIVEN CONTENT MARKETING

seoClarity™ | PERFECT search

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CONTENT: THE CONVERGENCE OF DATA AND QUALITY

The days of blasting thousands of pieces of content to win in content marketing are over. Today, there is more content written and published in a single minute than any one person can consume in a lifetime.

According to Smart Insights, in a mere 60 seconds:

- 1,440 WordPress posts are published
- 448,800 tweets are sent
- 3.8 million Google searches are performed

To put that in perspective, that means there are 86,400 Wordpress posts every hour. In a day, well, that number's astronomical.

Now, these numbers don't mean content marketing is less effective. Rather, they punctuate the difficulty a marketer faces in getting their message to their target audience.

Yet even with all this noise, the 2018 Benchmarks and Trends Reports from Content Marketing Institute and MarketingProfs reports 78% of B2B marketers have found increased success with their content marketing efforts. What is their secret?

It's high-quality, personalized content.

Fortunately, well-targeted, audience-centric content is easier to produce now than ever before. All you need is to leverage the customer data marketers of the past could only dream of having access to!

This guide book will detail the nature of this data and show you 'How to' use it to become an instant subject matter expert and create engaging, successful content. You'll also find a checklist at the end to help you along the way.

THE METRICS OF ENGAGEMENT

Among content marketers today, there's a popular phrase – Less is More.

The days of keyword stuffing and endless keyword variations to get the attention of search engines is over. Quality rules. RankBrain, Google's primary algorithm powered by artificial intelligence, continues to evolve using a variety of metrics to determine SERP results.

The metrics focus on the user experience, like dwell time and click-through-rate. These are the metrics of engagement. Use them to promote the user experience and both your content and your website will enjoy higher SERP visibility. Publish irrelevant, spammy, or misleading content and you'll turn off users and risk getting penalized by the search engines.

A good user experience centers on meeting a user's 'search task accomplishment' goal. Search task accomplishment says it's not enough for content to get a user to your site. For the content to be valuable, it must address your searcher's query. Did you actually solve the problem that the searcher asked?

For example, if someone is searching for "'how to' hem a skirt," they want step-by-step instructions explaining how to hem a skirt. They don't want a landing page directing them to the best deals on mini-skirts.

When your content helps users accomplish their search task, engagement increases. Quite simply, you win and they win. You'll also see measurable benefits such as:

1 LOWER BOUNCE RATES

Content tailored to user intent increases time spent on your site and decreases the number of users who quickly 'bounce' from your site.

2 MORE BACKLINKS

Similar to increased engagement, high-quality content attracts links from other websites. Content deemed informative, entertaining - or both! - motivates websites to reference it in their own content. This produces a stronger backlink profile, an important signal to Google as it demonstrates authority.

3 HIGHER CLICK-THROUGH-RATE (CTR)

Clicks tell Google your content answered the query of user search. A high CTR is good, unless it's paired with a high bounce rate – then it tells Google, you're getting attention, but not delivering.

4 BIGGER CONVERSION RATES

Quality content combined with valuable calls-to-action boosts conversions. This moves users along the sales funnel, builds emails lists and drives revenue. The more you answer the users' needs, the more they'll be glad to take your recommended action.

The only remaining challenge is to understand the tasks users want to accomplish. Fortunately, there's a type of data today that tells you just that. And not only does it tell you what users want to accomplish, it provides you unparalleled detail and insight.

THE MOST POWERFUL MARKETING DATA EVER

In 1923, Claude C. Hopkins wrote *Scientific Advertising*. This book detailed the importance of data for marketing success.

Marketers would start with demographic data – age, occupation, income, and other statistics. Then great marketers would dig deeper and seek to learn the psychographic data – the buyer's underlying motivations and what they aspire to.

These types of data are good as they help build a picture and persona. But it's not ideal. Content marketers are still left developing a strategy based on topics believed to be relevant to the target audience.

Today that's all changed. Content marketers have access to data that reveals exactly what the relevant topics are! In other words, when used, content marketers know what is relevant to the target audience.

By using data, content marketers gain powerful insight into their customers. With it, they ensure their content meets the desired search result at the different stages of the buying cycle.

SEO DATA OFFERS DEEPER INSIGHTS THAN ANY PREVIOUS MARKETING DATA

SEO data reveals your audience to you, **in their own words.**

With SEO data, marketers don't need to infer what their audience wants. Their audience tells them their exact challenges, questions and the problems they want to solve. And today, with the explosion of voice search technology, marketers know more than just the subject matter; they know the exact words their customers use.

And this is no small amount of data.

In 2016, Google confirmed to Search Engine Land that it processed more than 2 trillion searches per year. That averages out to 5.5 billion searches every day.

In other words, users generate 5.5 billion pieces of personal data every day, data that is available to marketers. Is it relevant to you? That depends on the answer to this question…

"If you're not leveraging all the relevant data available to you, then you're missing out on a huge opportunity for growth."

RYAN HEUSER
Product Manager, seoClarity

What do people search for online? Google reports that from 2015 to 2017 mobile searches for:

- T-shirts rose 95%, with 1,345,000 unique searches used.
- "Where to buy" toothpaste increased 410% in 75,000 unique search queries.
- "Best" bakeware searches were up 170% with unique searches topping 130,000.
- Salt rose 155% in "where to buy" and 370% in "best" searches with 70,000+ unique searches.

70,000+ different ways to search for salt? Queries varied from "where to buy sea salt" to "Himalayan pink salt benefits" to "red salt."

Each of these searches are the words used by a potential customer to address a challenge, answer a question, solve a problem or learn something new. More importantly, every search means something to someone.

Quite simply, people search for everything online.

For a marketer, this means each search provides priceless data that you can use to build content, enhance the user experience, deliver more personalized content and connect on a deeper level with your customer.

WHAT SEARCH TELLS YOU ABOUT YOUR BUYER

Search queries, or keywords, are different in 2018.

Mobile devices dominate search creating more spur-of-the-moment, or micro-moment searches. Mobile also prompts more local search. Voice search has also contributed to the evolution of search by creating longer, conversational queries.

Google's RankBrain has introduced contextually - and semantically - related topics. Search isn't only about the specific search topic. It now offers users content that RankBrain recognizes as related to the search topic.

Each type of search query reflects a different topic area. They also reveal user intent. Knowing this, content marketers can see how their audience approaches a subject, as opposed to trying to anticipate it. With this knowledge, content writers can develop topic clusters (and their corresponding content) to answer customer queries at all stages of the buyers' journey.

Search Results for "Flower."

Search Results for "Flowers."

Look at this example, the results on Google change with a simple addition of an 's'. The query "flower" results in more informational content, whereas the query "flowers" results in more transactional results.

It's important that the content on your site matches the correct user intent to engage the user to gain the conversion or to increase time spent on site.

DID YOU KNOW?

Users' search queries can provide valuable insights into where they are in their buyers journey?

See more on page 11.

HOW CONTENT MARKETERS CAN BECOME SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS – FAST!

With SEO data, content marketers can go far beyond topics and keywords. Using the following data and insight, they can be come subject matter experts and deliver audiences the exact content they want.

COMPETITIVE CONTENT GAPS

Competitive intelligence helps content marketers identify content gaps and true competitors. When you analyze competitors' link profiles or the on-page optimization techniques, content marketers learn a ton about what works for other sites targeting the same audience.

One particular aspect of such research focuses on content gaps – identifying queries that already drive traffic to one domain, but not the other.

CONTENT DEMAND

Higher search volume reflects greater demand for content that speaks to the search intent – and possibly to related content too!

CONTENT IDEAS

Ideas can come from different sources, such as:

- A high-ranking site(s) can reveal the content quality customers prefer.
- The frequency of a topic or a highly competitive keyword represents another source for ideas. A Frequency Topic Cloud can be an effective visual in understanding in-demand content.

FREQUENCY TOPIC CLOUD

- Semantically-related topics represent subjects related to each other by customer interest. For example, if someone searches for hotels in Chicago, they may also be interested in activities to do or restaurants to check out while in that city.
- Questions people ask reveal problems that customers are trying to solve. Utilizing 'People Also Ask' from Google, sites like Quora or Yahoo Answers, or even specific sites reveals content your customers demand.

TOPIC AUTHORITY

Language can pose a huge challenge, and opportunity, for new ideas. Topic friction occurs when the language you use doesn't match the language of your customer. You may say 'organic search' but your audience says 'SEO.' Here you have two opportunities for content on a subject important to the audience.

CREATE HIGH-QUALITY, AUTHORITATIVE CONTENT

But, as content marketers understand, there are many challenges in putting all of these pieces together - and putting them together in a way that's successful. Understanding exactly how to find the best fit between your content gaps, semantically related words, and low-hanging fruit terms cast a shadow of doubt over making that next content move.

The challenge that remains for marketers is knowing how to create the most authoritative content when the topic is vast, the SEO data is deep, and the possibilities are seemingly endless.

This is where Content Fusion comes in. Aid your content writing with smart, intelligent, real-time guidance with the first and only AI system built to provide real-time analysis for any topic. Content Fusion returns results custom to your specific industry, leveraging your own machine learning model based on your data. This ensures the most accurate and relevant content to attract your audience faster than ever before.

LEARN MORE ABOUT CONTENT FUSION

NEW TO SEOCLARITY!

CONTENT FUSION

"As an agency, Content Fusion helps us come up with new content ideas for our clients much more efficiently. It's particularly helpful for making granular content optimizations to specific pages on a site."

JUSTIN MCINTYRE | Director of SEO & Content, Perfect Search Media

HOW TO CREATE DATA-DRIVEN CONTENT

STEP 1: ESTABLISH AND DEFINE THE PROCESS

Creating data-driven content is not difficult. But it does require a clear process. And that's the first step – establish and define the process.

The process we recommend to our clients looks like this:

We define it as follows:

ANALYZE

Understand customer trends through data analysis, identify business goals and establish KPIs aligned with these goals. This ensures your effort produces marketing results that meet business priorities.

MONITOR

Track, observe and report on the published content.

TEST

Try new content based on user response to boost conversions such as with A/B split tests.

REPEAT

Analyze test results and do it again.

The importance of the "Repeat" step cannot be over-stated. It establishes efficiencies. It enhances communication. By building a well-defined process, you'll be able to respond to a constantly changing marketplace more nimbly.

The process you develop may be more detailed to meet the specific needs of the different departments and stakeholders whose contributions are essential to the success of the effort.

HOW TO CREATE DATA-DRIVEN CONTENT

STEP 2: RESEARCH AND ANALYZE

Once you've established and defined the process along with roles and responsibilities, it's time to do research.

First, identify valuable keywords. For every brand, there's an abundance of potential keywords your audience uses to search. There are many ways to gather this data. Advanced software tools like Research Grid make it possible to quickly find and identify relevant keywords.

Next, it's time to group the keywords. The best way to make SEO data useful is to sort it by intent. Start by defining the search terms as Navigational, Informational, Commercial, and Transactional.

As you research the intent of your audience, it also makes sense to research the competition. Find out which competitors rank best for the keywords your audience uses. Develop content ideas around these keywords and/or topics. This will position you to capture attention, draw new customers into your funnel, motivate action and drive conversion.

AWARENESS	CONSIDERATION	TRANSACTIONAL	NAVIGATIONAL
Help users find more information about their problem.	Help find more information about potential solutions users consider to buy.	Help find places to buy their selected solution.	Help find a location of a business they want to engage with.
EXAMPLES:	**EXAMPLES:**	**EXAMPLES:**	**EXAMPLES:**
"Chicago movie theaters"	*"Best women's socks"*	*"Buy specialty popcorn"*	*"Coffee shop near me"*
"Flu symptoms"	*"Types of sunscreen"*	*"Cheap nail polish"*	*"Where is the Apple store"*
"Bicycles Las Vegas"	*"Compare eco-friendly cars"*	*"Buy affordable bed frames"*	*"Brunch nearby"*

"Content creation should always start with thorough keyword research. It's the strong foundation that sets you up for success."

KAYLA HAMMERSMITH

Manager of Copywriting & Content Strategy, Perfect Search Media

HOW TO CREATE DATA-DRIVEN CONTENT

STEP 3: PLAN AND CREATE YOUR TOPICS

With the keyword data collected, intent determined, and competitive keyword gaps identified, it's time to plan and create topics. Tools like Content Ideas can help. You can also use a spreadsheet to organize your ideas. Here's how to get started:

"With Google increasing the prevalence of People Also Ask, it's starting to provide a content experience likened to the 'rabbit hole' that Wikipedia dominates."

RYAN HEUSER
Product Manager, seoClarity

IDENTIFY VALUABLE TOPICS

Prioritize topics based on search volume (demand), business priorities (i.e. product launches, seasonal relevance), and competitive gaps and opportunities. Use these topic priorities to create content that will capture the 'low-hanging fruit.'

CREATE TOPIC CLUSTERS

Target keywords on a specific topic your business has expertise in is a content gap. Rather than going after these keywords in a single page or post, develop a series of related posts around the subject. With this approach, you build a core of quality content around valuable keywords while also building expertise and showing Google your authority on the topic.

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ANSWER BURNING QUESTIONS

There are many types of questions. Find out what they are and build content that answers each one. Typical questions include:

VOICE SEARCH QUERIES

Questions that start with "What is…," "Where is," or "Who is…," are common to voice searches. These long-tail keywords follow natural language patterns often have location-specific intent.

HOW-TO QUERIES

Google's Year in Search 2017 centered around "how" queries. From "how to help refugees" to "how to watch the eclipse," users search to find simple, clear instructions. Provide answers for any "how to" queries related to your offering.

INFORMATIONAL QUERIES

Featured snippets, or Answer Boxes, are often seen as "position zero." Brands in this spot are perceived as topical authorities. Platforms like seoClarity can help find terms that your site ranks for that also triggers a featured snippet.

Identify these areas of opportunity and research the current featured snippets. Can you answer the query better than the current snippet? Match the keywords, write better answers, and align your content with the user intent.

seoClarity researched more than 40 million keywords to understand the importance of the featured snippet. You can see the steady increase in the number of queries that included an Answer Box result, topping out at nearly 23 percent of queries.

In February, however, we noticed a huge decrease in frequency. We attribute this to what Google describes as a reintroduction of the featured snippets. In summary, Google says that they are working to improve the featured snippets so we anticipate this frequency continue to build as they refine the accuracy and helpfulness of this section.

SEOCLARITY RESEARCH

[1]Data through March 2018 from seoClarity Research Grid based on a sample size of 40 million keywords.

CONTINUED

"PEOPLE ALSO ASK..."

This section appears right below featured snippets. Google presents the searcher with other common questions related to their original query--along with results that quickly answer them. Like featured snippets, make sure that your content is high-quality and quickly provides all the information the user needs to know.

In looking at the same 40 million search queries, Google returns People Also Ask in about 9-percent (or ~ 4 million times).

[2]Based July 2017 through March 2018 results of People Also Ask on SERP from a sample of 40 million queries from seoClarity's Research Grid.

SEOCLARITY RESEARCH

DID YOU KNOW?

seoClarity offers the largest Answer Box database to understand opportunities to win the coveted "position zero" and the single answer in Google's voice search results.

HOW TO CREATE DATA-DRIVEN CONTENT: CHECKLIST

Use this checklist to gather the data to identify the content needed to produce the biggest impact.

SET METRICS

- Determine the KPIs that will measure your success.
- Will it be rankings (good)? Traffic (better)? Or Conversions (best!)?

FIND "LOW-HANGING' FRUIT"

- Identify search volume in areas you rank in positions 11-40
- Include priorities such as upcoming seasonal business or product launches
- Enhance content of category and product pages that match user interest to capitalize on positive trends., ie. 50% of mobile users willing to buy on a first visit

DO COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS

- Identify the True Competition for your business, and products
- Determine where the competition has content that you don't

MAP CONTENT IDEAS

- Questions clients are asking
- Trends with audience(s)
- Relevant news engaging your audience
- Exact phrases used by audiences to describe the problem
- Semantically-related content to help content writers write on unfamiliar topics. Example 1: Things to do in Chicago, Willis Tower, Chicago River Architectural Boat Tours, Pizza

OPTIMIZE LANDING PAGES

- Link keywords to landing pages that meet user intent
- If no page, create. If page exists, improve. Start with pages most aligned with business goals.

TEST

- Evaluate technical elements to minimize potential effect of non-content variables
- Try new landing page content around areas of greatest impact
- Create content to fill content gaps

REVIEW RESULTS AGAINST KPIs

- Determine ROI of each effort
- Repeat positive outcomes, review negative outcomes

CONTENT CHECKLIST:

- SET METRICS
- FIND "LOW-HANGING" FRUIT
- DO COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS
- MAP CONTENT IDEAS
- OPTIMIZE LANDING PAGES
- TEST
- REVIEW RESULTS AGAINST KPI'S

DISCOVER THE POWER OF DATA-DRIVEN CONTENT

CREATED BY DATA-DRIVEN EXPERTS

- Find out more about how seoClarity can help you scale and drive your data-driven content strategy.
- Find out more about how Perfect Search can help you scale and drive your organization's content strategy.

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