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Strategy.
Influence.

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# Content Marketing Framework

## A user's guide

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# PART 1
# Why do I need a Content Marketing Framework?

## Why do I need a Content Marketing Framework?

**75% of marketers are increasing investment in content marketing.**

Source: Curata
http://www.curata.com/resources/ebooks/2016-CMStaffing-Tactics-Study

If you're moving into content, you'll encounter a lot of people telling you that you need a lot of things. Writers. Calendars. Strategies. And now a framework. Why are we adding another item to the ever-expanding list?

You can relax: we aren't. You don't need a framework for its own sake, but because it's the best way of developing the thing you really need from that list, which is a strategy. Some 70% of marketers say they lack a consistent or integrated content strategy (Altimeter, 2014), and in a landscape where investment in content is increasing all the time, that's worrying.

Strategies don't just guide the kind of content you create and the subjects you talk about. They help you plan and schedule. They help you take measurement far beyond the broad, click-obsessed metrics that many traditional publishers are stuck on. A good strategy sets global KPIs rooted in clear business goals, and adds a comprehensive list of channel-specific metrics that allow you to monitor and tweak activity as your campaign progresses.

So don't think of the framework as another thing to invest in, but as a roadmap to a solid strategy. In this document we'll guide you through Melt's Content Marketing Framework (CMF). We'll start by outlining the essential components of a strategy, then take you through the development process step by step. Finally, we'll share a list of useful tools – some free, some paid – that we use to develop our own campaigns.

At the end, you'll be materially closer to ticking 'Strategy' off your list. Instead of making it longer, we'll have helped you shorten it…

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# What does a strategy consist of?

For many marketers, content strategy feels like a mythical creature. Everyone agrees it's a big deal, but few people have ever seen it, and nobody's sure exactly what it looks like.
You could sit down in front of your chief executive and explain the benefits of having a strategy, but could you describe one? To put it another way: if there was a file on your desktop titled 'Strategy', what would you expect to see in there?

To help put the CMF in context, let's start with a list of all the things a strategy should define and document. We're agnostic about file types, but when you open that folder, all this information should be in there in one form or another.

## Foundation

### Vision
An overarching vision that will support your broader business goals. What is your shoot-for-the-stars mission?

### Core message
What do you want the user to take away? The core message is the condensed take away message the audience is left with from every asset, article or interaction.

### KPI's
What are your campaign goals and how do you measure success? You should have an overall goal which is then broken down into specific channel or asset-related KPI's. For example, your overall goal might be a cost-effective 15% year-on-year traffic increase. At channel level that might break down to: SEO activity measured by an increase in ranking positions and overall organic traffic; social activity measured by a percentage increase in followers; email activity measured by an increase in click-to-open rate.

### Goal-map
Short term, medium and long term goals outlined with their likely timeframe. This provides an achievable journey from A to B, taking your end goal and then breaking it down into achievable and manageable chunks.

## Audience

### Customer Personas

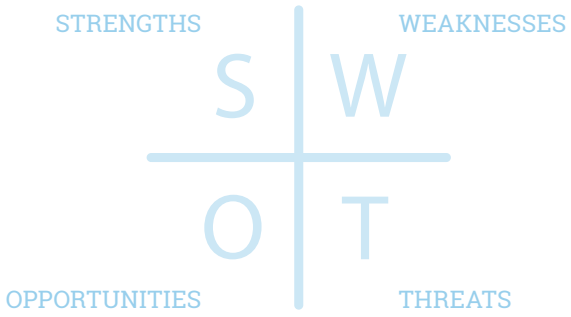
Who you are talking to. These profiles split your ideal customer base into different personas, including information on demographics, behaviors, motivations, goals and pain points.

### Keyword Research

The results of research into queries around your brand, product and themes. This documentation provides an exhaustive list of potential priority and long-tail keywords, breaking them into categories and including search volume and competition information. It helps you identify and refine content themes, prioritise search opportunities, and plan PPC campaigns.

### Social Medial Analysis

A report on social trends within your niche, including hot topics, typical behaviours and important influencers.




# SWOT

## Competition SWOT

Before you create your strategy you should understand what your competitors are doing. What is working well for them? What isn't working? What potential opportunities are out there that the competition has yet to spot and cater for?

## Internal SWOT

Take the opportunity to audit your own resources, in terms of skills, tools and assets. What can you could use or repurpose? What should you bin? What skillsets do you have in house and what will you need to outsource?

## Implementation

### Roadmap / Timeline

A 'helicopter view' of the strategy broken down into stages, and shown against the anticipated timeline.

### Handbook

An internal guide which details every step of the strategy. The handbook will help coordinate efforts around the overall goals and themes of the strategy whilst facilitating creative input from other departments, countries or markets.

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# PART 2
# Using the framework

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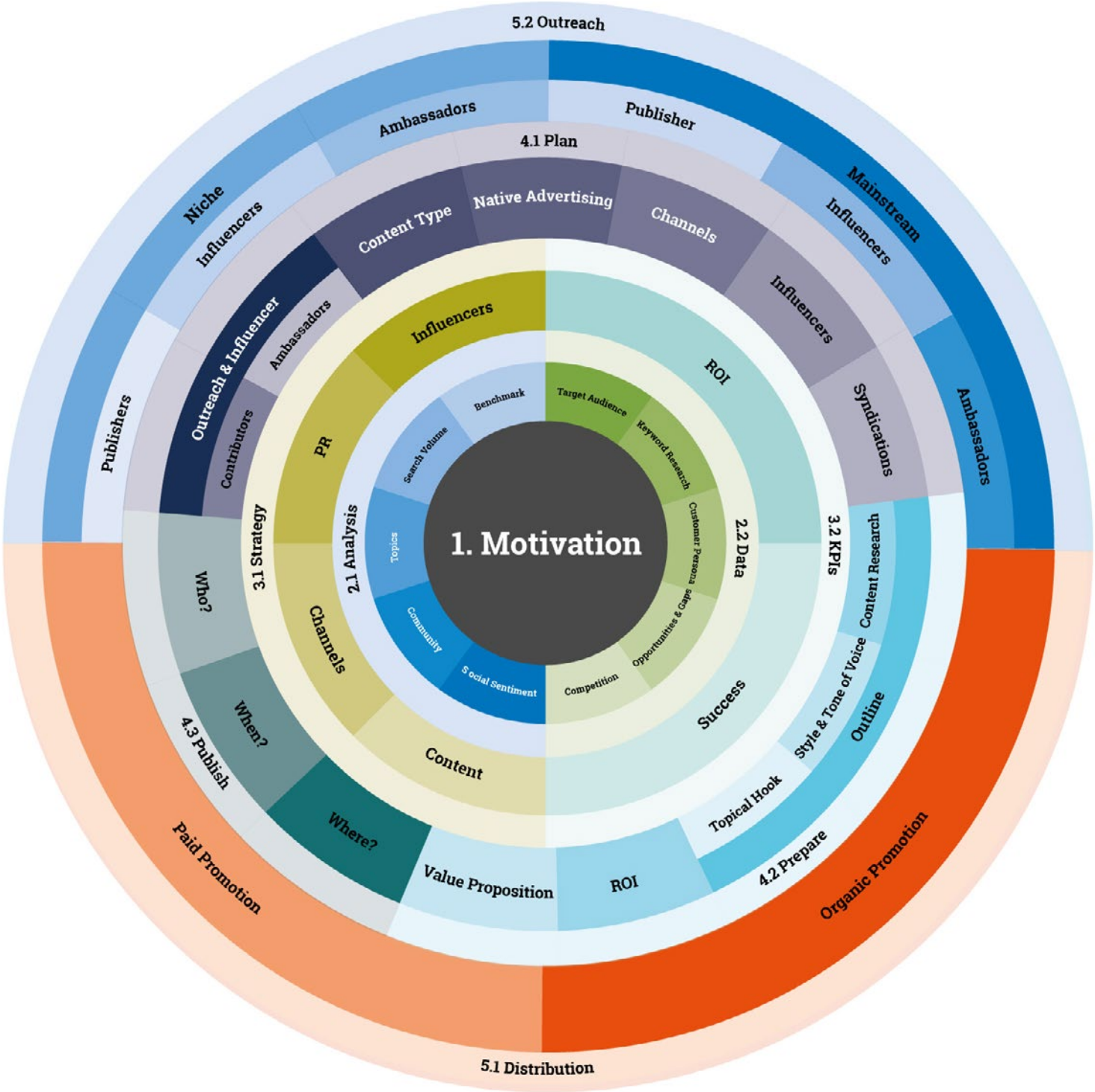


For more information on our
Content Marketing Framework visit
www.meltcontent.com/CMF

## Using the framework

In the following section we'll work through the Content Marketing Framework stage by stage, elaborating on what each element consists of and why it matters. This is a modular framework, so the component parts can be tackled in any order, or dropped in and out depending on your needs and resources.

We'll also use a specific example to show how each phase can build on the last, and what kind of ideas and outputs you should be aiming for. The examples aren't intended as a watertight campaign idea, but a series of insights into how the process works – you could work through with the same data and come up with completely different ideas.

## Example

Our hypothetical scenario:

- **Brand**: Volvo
- **Product**: XC90 Hybrid
- **Challenge**: Boost interest in the vehicle among young, wealthy buyers usually attracted to prestige brands

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# Motivation

What does the brand stand for, and what is it trying to achieve?

What we call 'Motivation' underpins the whole planning process. It has two elements:

### Core values

The emotional connection the brand tries to make with customers. In most cases this is static, and will have been defined by the brand well before any campaign activity takes place.

### Challenge

The business goal the brand hopes to achieve. Does the brand need to boost conversions? Increase acquisition from organic search? Boost brand awareness globally, or in a particular demographic? Usually the business goal is campaign-specific.

## Example

**Core values:**
Volvo's reputation is built around safety and reliability.

**Problem:**
The brand's new vehicle has impeccable safety and sustainability credentials, but is also a stylish, premium product. How does Volvo get the vehicle onto the test-drive shortlist of consumers who might otherwise be looking at prestige brands such as Lexus, BMW or Mercedes?

**Top three content marketing objectives: drive sales or leads; engage customers or influencers; boost brand awareness.**

Source: Curata
http://www.curata.com/resources/ebooks/content-marketing-tactics-technology-planner

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# Data and analysis

What do we need to know to begin tackling the problem?

## Data and analysis

At this stage we begin gathering data and background information, from keyword volumes to industry and competitor analysis. While the approach to data-gathering will be shaped by the problem we're trying to solve, at this point we're still fishing with a fairly big net – for example, we want our keyword research to be broad so that we can spot areas of opportunity to zero in on later in the process. Think of the results of this stage as the sculptor's block of marble: we're sourcing good-quality raw material that can then be whittled down into something detailed and effective.

Below we'll look at each component of the data and analysis stage, fleshing it out and continuing to work through our Volvo example.

## Target audience and customer personas

What do we know about the people we want to reach?

This segment gives us insights into who we're talking to, how they see themselves, what interests them and what their media habits are. It's an important step towards identifying the best themes and channels for our content campaign, and should be undertaken for both existing customers and target customers.

There are a number of potential approaches here, from bespoke market research to self-service demographic tools such as YouGov and GWI (Global Web Index).

To work through our example, we used YouGov's free ProfilesLITE tool to look at basic demographic, lifestyle and media use for people who like the client brand, and people who like competitor brands relevant to the XC90 hybrid.

- **Volvo** (client brand)
- **Lexus** (competitor brand: luxury)
- **Mercedes** (competitor brand: luxury and family)
- **Tesla** (competitor brand: luxury and sustainability)

### Example

While looking through the YouGov data, we see that Tesla fans are far more likely to read New Scientist and play video games. The data paints a picture of a young, skilled demographic that is into tech and innovation, and will probably look for an innovative car when they make their first major vehicle purchase.

Based on that, one of our target personas might be:

The Tesla techie: New Scientist-reading 25-39 year old, working in engineering or IT. Lives London or Midlands. Enjoys video games and cooking. Adventurous and physically active, with a strong interest in science and nature.

## Keyword research

SEO-only work usually starts here. It's a critical piece of the puzzle, but only a part. Here we look at common search terms related to the product and its category. We're looking for a number of things: we want to see how people frame their searches, what search volumes are associated with particular terms, and what the competition is like around them.

For our Volvo example, we investigated the following terms (we left out 'Volvo' as very broad brand terms are difficult to draw any inferences from):

Brand/product terms:

- Volvo xc90 hybrid

Category terms:

- Safe luxury cars
- Luxury family cars
- Luxury hybrid cars
- Luxury green cars
- Luxury low-emission cars
- Low-emission family cars
- Green family cars

## Example

- The monthly search volume against key thematic searches broke down as follows:
  - 1. Family (20,200)
  - 2. Luxury (12,790)
  - 3. Green (10,050)
  - 4. Safety (2,025)

- While each category featured review and price question types, we identified some category-specific search behaviours:
  - Eco searches showed a pronounced interest in understanding and comparison, e.g. "how does X work" and "X vs Y"
  - Family searches were preoccupied with features, e.g. "family car with biggest boot"
  - Safety searches were shaped by passenger categories, e.g. "safe car for families"
  - Luxury searchers were interested in status and investment, e.g. "is [brand] a luxury car", "which luxury car depreciates fastest", "which luxury car lasts longest"

- Within product searches for the xc90 itself, we identified:
  - Specific searches about the model's luxury status: "is volvo xc90 a luxury car"
  - A series of power questions with an accent on outdoor activity: "can a Volvo xc90 tow a boat/a trailer/a horse trailer", "can a Volvo xc90 go off road"

## Competitor analysis

In this segment we take a look at the brand and the product's competitors. It's mostly qualitative work, examining the messaging and content that competitors are deploying. On the quantitative side, we might use tools like Ahrefs or Buzzsumo to gauge the effectiveness of competitor content and campaigns, and see who is linking to and/or talking about them.

Why does this matter? Well, it isn't enough to have identified appealing themes or promising keywords. We need to see whether those things are already being exploited by competitors, and if so, how. Then we can start to assess whether we can approach the same opportunity differently (or better), or whether to focus our efforts elsewhere.

For our example, we did a surface reading of the marketing around both the XC90 and two competing models:

- **Luxury competitor:** Lexus RX450
- **Green competitor:** Tesla Model X

## Example

Volvo XC90: An 'everyman' approach, emphasizing performance and intelligence but without foregrounding statistics or technical specifications. Messaging focuses on safety and on 'simplifying' the driver's life.

Tesla Model X: A tech-heavy approach, foregrounding performance stats and complex features. In comparison to Volvo, there is less of an accent on simplicity – here complexity feels like part of the prestige. Several references to safety too.

Lexus RX 450: A more traditional luxury approach, positioning the model as the 'world's first luxury hybrid'. Foregrounds power and sophistication, deploying statistics (especially around power), though without the fetishisation of tech we see from Tesla.

## Benchmarking

The benchmarking segment doesn't necessarily require any external research. It's all about taking a snapshot of where the product or brand currently stands, so that we can set meaningful success metrics and measure the effectiveness of our activity. Depending on our project, we might look at current site traffic, at the product's ranking for a given keyword, or at the current rate of lead captures through the site.

While we don't necessarily need to look beyond internal web analytics and sales data, we might want add competitors into our benchmarking. For instance, do we want to overtake a particular brand in SERPs for a particular keyword?

Whatever we choose to measure, without solid benchmarking, we won't be able to see whether you've shifted the needle, and by how much.

## Example

For the purposes of our example, benchmarks could be current a reading of:

- Traffic to the XC90 landing page (in total or broken down to focus on e.g. organic search)
- Monthly number of XC90 test drives booked through Volvocars.com

## Themes

In this segment we comb the data we've gathered – keyword research, competitor analysis, audience insights – to nail down the themes our campaign will address. We're looking for patterns: areas of interest that recur across several elements of our data-gathering and research, and that present clear opportunities to capture search traffic, influence the target audience and outflank competitors.

You can tackle themes a number of ways. Try starting with audience and brand insights, then qualifying your ideas with reference to search data, social listening and content and competitor analysis. Or be led by keyword research, and use audience insights to build naked search opportunities into rich themes that align with the target audience's known habits and interests.

## Example

We'll stick with the early themes we used to steer keyword research, but in view of search volumes we'll fold 'safety' into 'family'. In view of our audience and social analysis we'll also add tech, design and performance to the list.

- Family safety
- Luxury
- Green
- Tech
- Design
- Performance

## Social and content analysis

The social and content analysis segments allow us to get the measure of conversations about the client brand or product. There's also some potential overlap with competitor analysis here – we may want to use social listening and content analysis techniques to see what competing brands and products are doing, how successful their activity is and who is engaging with it.

There is a huge number of techniques and approaches you can use within this segment, including:

- Using social listening to analyse online discussions about the brand or product
- Using backlink checkers to see who is linking to content about the brand or product
- Using content analysis tools to identify popular content about the brand or product
- Using social analytics to identify online communities or individuals who might be (or already are) interested in the brand or product

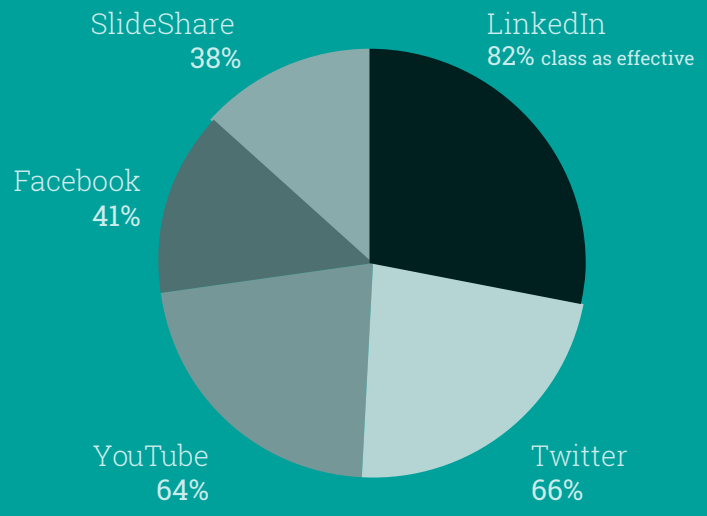
The data and insights you'll gather here can help with benchmarking and theme identification in particular. Official reviews and social discussions provide a window onto perceptions of the brand and product, and onto positives to reinforce or negatives to overcome. Backlink checks and social analytics will guide you towards relevant communities and influencers, which will come in useful later when you begin planning content ideas and outreach activity.

## Example

We used Pulsar to analyse around three weeks of social activity around the Volvo brand and the XC90.

- Sentiment: Positive sentiment towards Volvo contrasted with a more neutral, exploratory sentiment towards the XC90.
- Theme:
  - One-upmanship among owners
  - Photos of premium features, especially grilles and wheels (Instagram)
  - From-behind-the-wheel photos (Instagram)
  - Comparisons between XC90 and other cars, primarly 4x4s
  - Comparison of engine size and efficiency
  - Price, with some negative sentiment around XC90's RRP
  - Teaser photos of new models, both official and leaked
- Demographics and media use:
  - Posters predominantly male (74.6%)
  - Even split of ages (33% each for 18-34, 35-64, 65+)
  - Most activity on Twitter (89.6%)
  - Some activity on blogs and forums (7%)
  - Very little on Facebook and Instagram (3.4%)

### Which social media platforms do b2b content marketers rate as most effective for content distribution?




Source: Holger Schulze
http://www.slideshare.net/hschulze/b2b-content-marketing-report-40688285

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# Strategy and KPIs

We've got our data, our themes and our personas. How are we going to put them all together?

## Strategy and KPIs

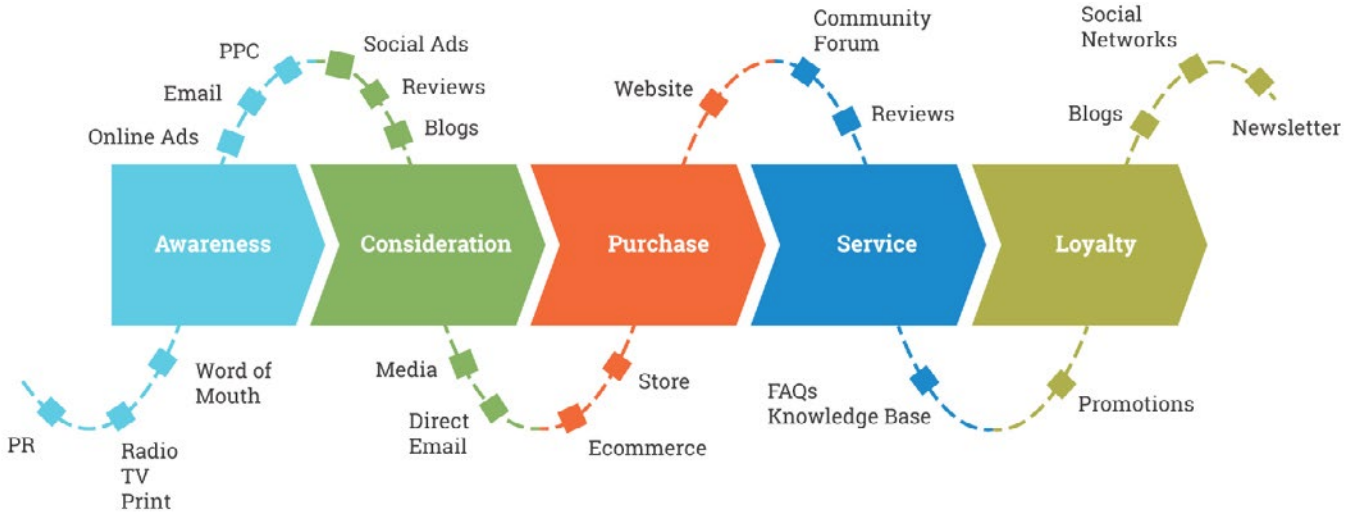
In the third phase of the process, we move from abstract ideas and targets to concrete plans of action. We're beginning to get more specific – that big block of raw material is cut down to the size we need, and now it's time to plan out the more detailed work. How will our themes turn into an extended content plan? How can we map them onto particular channels and parts of the customer journey? How are we going to promote our activity? What will success look like, within each channel and for the campaign as a whole?

Don't throw your original data out. The strategy formation phase doesn't leave it behind, but rather refines it. You'll be returning to your data throughout, and you may even run up against issues or new ideas that send you back to phase two.

Once again, we'll look at each component of this phase in turn, and use our Volvo example to bring it to life.

## Channels

In this segment we begin to map our themes to parts of the customer journey, and think about which channels to use. It helps to have an existing idea of the interplay between customer journeys and channels:



## Example

In our example, we're predominantly focused on the Awareness and Consideration stages – we're trying to get the XC90 onto the shortlist of our young prestige car buyers. Our ideas could be:

- **Awareness**: Use PR and PPC to seed content that foregrounds **tech** and **design**
- **Consideration**: Use email and on-site content to introduce **green** and **family safety** credentials

In addition, we might want to work with some of the Volvo-driving influencers we identified earlier in the process, using the Loyalty stage to generate word-of-mouth that links back to Awareness.

- **Loyalty**: Use social and blog ambassadors to spread messages about **luxury** and **design** theme

## Content

Here we begin to build out our content calendar. Not to the level of complete creative briefs or distribution plans – we don't recommend trying to fully define every single item on the calendar at this stage, as you'll quickly get bogged down. Instead it's about breaking your themes into tighter topics and one-line content ideas, and thinking about the order in which they will be deployed.

For example, if our overarching theme is 'safety', topics within it might be 'safe driving tips', 'keeping young children safe on the road', 'technical innovations making cars safer', and so on. The understanding of audience you've developed in phase two is critical here – if we know we're targeting a family audience, we might focus on 'keeping children safe' over the other potential topics.

Why does this segment matter? Because you need a long-term content plan to work from. The calendar you develop here will go off to your editor or content team, who will begin turning its items into full creative briefs in phase four.

## Example

Here we'd work through each theme, developing both broad and model-specific ideas.

- Tech
  - Charging solutions: at home and on the road
  - How the XC90's three 'modes' make twin-engine tech simple
- Design
  - Interview with XC90's interior designer
  - Swedish design influence inside the XC90
- Safety
  - Complete guide to family safety on the road
  - Safety spec: materials and structures

## PR

Content marketing and PR tend to be set up in opposition. But most of the best PRs use content techniques, and (as you can see from the customer journey graphic, above) we believe PR activity is vital to creating both background and active awareness at both product and brand level.

In this segment we start drawing up a list of our media targets and the messages or content pieces we want to target them with.

## Example

We know from our audience research that Volvo and Tesla fans read the motoring press, particularly Auto Express, Top Gear and Autocar. We also know that some competitor brands' fans read tech and gadget press, from niche (New Scientist) to mainstream (Stuff). And all four brands' fans – Tesla, Volvo, Mercedes and Lexus – read The Economist.

As a starting point, we could match our themes up to those outlets, adding an extra theme to target the current affairs and business press:

- Motoring press: Performance, luxury
- Niche tech press: Green and safety tech
- Mainstream tech press: Interior tech
- Current affairs press: Brand-wide innovation (e.g. link consumer hybrids to Volvo's innovation heritage, including commercial and experimental vehicles)

## Influencers

As content and channel ideas come together, we begin refining the list of influencers and relevant communities that emerged from our social and content analysis in phase two. Think of this segment as cross-referencing influencers, content topics and channels. The priority task at this stage is to identify people you can work with to develop content pieces – so this segment is closely intertwined with the content segment. It's also important to make a note of those influencers who could be receptive to and interested in sharing your final content pieces, but put that list aside for now. It will come into play in phase four.

## Example

During the data and analysis we combined social insights from Pulsar with Buzzsumo content reports to look for some influential individuals and communities:

- **Swedespeed**: Volvo enthusiast network
- **Peter Simoons**: Executive coach who drives a Volvo
- **Nigel Swan**: Freelance motoring writer and videographer
- **The Car Connection**: Model comparison site#

## KPIs

KPIs really matter. And not just because you need to prove the effectiveness of your campaign to the board – you also need them to monitor your campaign while it's running. We split KPIs into two areas: 'Success' and 'ROI'. While 'ROI' is concerned with the overall effectiveness of the campaign, 'Success' refers to the channel-specific metrics you'll need to monitor while the campaign is in progress. Without those, you're flying blind. You don't know what is working and what isn't, so you can't double down on successes or tweak activity that isn't working. Think of 'Success' as the activity in the dugout during the match, and 'ROI' as the final score.

## Example

Let's return to two of our channel ideas earlier and consider what their 'Success' KPIs might be. Remember these will be more useful if you've done proper benchmarking at the start of the campaign – while it helps to know that some items on an email achieved a higher click rate than others, it helps even more to be able to compare those results with pre-campaign email click rates.

- **Awareness:** Use PR and PPC to seed content that foregrounds **tech** and **design**
  - Media coverage achieved (PR)
  - Click-throughs to XC90 landing page (PPC)
- **Consideration:** Use email and on-site content to introduce **green** and **family safety** credentials
  - Email click-to-open rate
  - Content engagement metrics (e.g. video views, brochure downloads)

There could be one global ROI KPI or several. Possible KPIs here could be:

- Test drives booked
- Quotes requested via Volvocars.com configurator
- Sales traceable to campaign activity

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# Content creation

How do we bring the strategy to life as compelling and commercially effective content?

## Content creation

In the content creation phase we start to see some concrete assets. Content calendar items become full creative briefs. Influencers from your research logs become partners. And at the end of this three-segment phase, you finally get to push the button and send some of your work out into the wild.

There's a lot of work in this phase, but if you've followed the three preceding ones you'll be coming to it well-armed: you have stacks of keyword research, personas and content analysis, which you've turned into a comprehensive content calendar complete with channel planning and potential media and influencer partners. On top of that, you've got both strand-specific and global KPIs to underpin your activity.

The key thing to understand about this phase is that it is iterative – while our initial phases are performed once (and possibly returned to in order to fix problems encountered later), the steps in content creation are repeated for each piece of content. Our goal is to create a solid creative brief for each piece we need, then publish it.

## Planning

The planning segment tackles each piece of content's format and route to market.

- Content type: Is it a written piece? A video? A slide deck?
- Native advertising: Will you be using native to distribute your content?
- Channels: What distribution channels will you use?
- Influencers: Will you be working solo or co-creating with influencers?
- Syndication: Will the content be cross-posted elsewhere?
- Outreach: Who do you want to get your content in front of? Whose support would be useful?

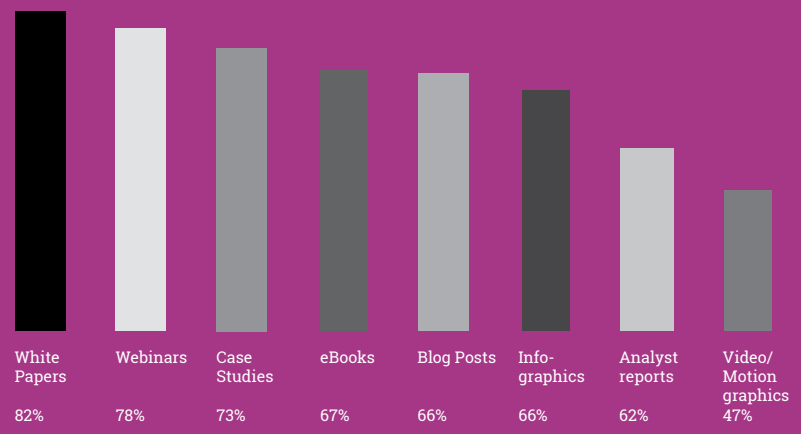
Why does this segment matter? Because it will shape the creative brief that we begin shaping in the next segment. The type, distribution method and target of a piece all affect the way your creative supplier will approach it – the more you can tell a writer, designer or video producer, the better the finished product will be.

## Example

Let's take as an example one of our one-line ideas from earlier: The Complete Guide to Family Safety on the Road.

- Content type: ebook.
- Native advertising: Yes – let's use Facebook social ads and content recommendation units.
- Channels: We'll distribute to Volvo's existing fans through social and email, and target parenting, motoring and tech press with PR.
  Influencers: This is a solo piece, so we won't need to work influencers into the brief.
- Syndication: We'll offer select media the opportunity to publish extracts or full chapters in exchange for an inbound link and CTA to download the original.
- Outreach: We want to target parenting sites and motoring sites. Mum bloggers and power users on parenting forums would be useful supporters.

### Content types used to make B2B purchasing decisions in the last 12 months:




Source: DemandGen
http://www.demandgenreport.com/resources/research/2016-content-preferences-survey-b2b-buyers-value-content-that-offers-data-and-analysis

## Preparation

In the preparation segment we get down to the nitty-gritty of a piece's brief. We outline the piece, thinking about the research required, our style and tone of voice requirements, and any topical hooks we want to include.

But as well as thinking about how the piece is going to come together, we want to think about its commercial purpose. How does it fit into the overall strategy and contribute to global campaign ROI? What is its specific value proposition?

## Example

Staying with the Complete Guide to Family Safety on the Road example, let's begin to break it down into constituent parts. This isn't exhaustive, but represents some of the things we might include:

- Research
  - History: How have safety technology and practice changed over time? Are there significant links to Volvo innovations, or to features in the XC90?
  - Safety specialists: Interview researchers or expert journalists about safety issues specific to families. What are the key risks? Break down into safety features and products on the one hand, and safe behaviors on the other.
- Structure
  - Introduction
  - The earliest 'family' vehicles
  - A history of child safety technology
  - How the roads have changed
  - Practical tips
  - Family safety checklist (graphic)
- Tone of voice
  - Authoritative but informal
  - Avoid academic or highly technical language. If using a technical term is unavoidable, explain what it means.
- Goals
  - Consideration: Capture leads through download form
  - Awareness: Create PRable and shareable assets (e.g. checklists, extracts)
  - Brand: Position Volvo as an authority on family safety

## Publishing

With our content complete, we pull all the segments of the planning phase together and get ready to publish. There are three elements to this segment:

- Where and who: We're no longer talking about channels but specific outlets. The answer to 'Where?' could be as simple as an on-site landing page; it could also comprise multiple publish locations, from a paid page on a publisher site to a series of social posts.
- When: There are several levels to the timing question. Based on our themes and topics, what is the best date to target? Are there particular events we want to align our content with? Beyond that, we need to decide what time of day to publish.
- This is likely to be driven by what we know of our target audience's media habits – for instance, if we're targeting commuters, we might push out social posts around 8am or 6pm.

## Example

We'll start by arranging publish dates with media partners. Let's say Autocar has agreed to run an extract on the history of safety tech, and Parenting has agreed to place the 'safety essentials' checklist. Our own publish date is likely to align with theirs, so we need an on-site landing page with a lead capture form ready for when PR activity goes live.

At the same time, we'll schedule a calendar of social posts that highlight facts, figures and tips from the book, with CTAs directing to the landing page. Since parents are 'snacking' on their phone early in the day, we'll try some early morning posts (6am-7am) to raise awareness, following up later in the evening when downloads and longer reads are more likely.

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# Distribution and outreach

How do we get our content out to the right audience?

## Distribution and outreach

Content marketing has come a long way since the 'publish and hope' approach that characterized many early corporate blogs. The distribution and outreach phase is about maximizing the reach and impact of what you publish, and extending its lifespan. It's worth doing at some level for everything you do, even casual posts – but you'll definitely need a thorough outreach strategy when you're developing high-value pieces like the ebook in our previous example. The good news is you've already done the groundwork – you've identified potential media and influencer relationships in the Data & Analysis phase, and refined the list in the planning segment of the Content Creation phase.

Now it's time to put it all into action, getting your outreach effort up and running and activating organic and paid distribution.

## Outreach

We break outreach down into two broad types: niche and mainstream. In many cases you'll want both, getting broad reach from mainstream outlets and engaged, highly qualified attention from niche outlets. Both niche and mainstream outlets break down into three sub-groups, characterised by level of engagement and support:

- Publishers: A traditional PR relationship. Commercial publications that might run or write about your content.
- Influencers: Freelancers or independent bloggers with considerable influence in their field. Might help you develop content, or write about relevant content you've already developed.
- Ambassadors: Organisations or individuals with which you have a long-term, mutually supportive relationship. Will actively support your brand as well as your content.

So what's actually happening at this stage? If you've co-created with an influencer or ambassador, you're activating their support – you're letting them know the project has gone live and encouraging them to tell their followers about it, backing that up with useful assets such as screenshots and supporting information. You'll also want to issue guidelines to make sure backlinks are correctly tagged, particularly if you've arranged any sponsored posts.

If the piece was developed solo, you're likely to be undertaking PR-style activity. Get your list of people and publications likely to be interested in your project and let them know about it, tailoring the message as appropriate. You may even want to suggest collaborating on a smaller content piece that adds to and refers back to the original.

## Example

Our ebook is out in the wild. We can try sending press releases to a few publishers, but because we've already partnered with Autocar and Parenting to print extracts, we might encounter some resistance. So at the same time, we'll focus on reaching parenting influencers. For example: we might contact a list of popular parent bloggers and invite them to tell us about their safety set-up and routine, or to give us a single 'hack' on keeping kids safe or entertained on the road. Collating those gives a new, rich piece of content that is related to the ebook, and features a number of individuals with existing reach and recognition.

## Distribution

While the outreach segment focuses on mediated promotion – that is, activity which requires the support of an individual or organisation – distribution focuses on activating the channels we control. For instance: owned websites , owned social profiles, owned email newsletters, traditional display advertising and some forms of native advertising. It is broken down into organic and paid activity.

We've done our channel planning work earlier in the process, and now we're following through on that plan. We're putting our social post calendar into practice, setting up paid boosts for certain posts, and pushing the button on display or native ad campaigns.

There's also an important feedback element to the distribution segment. How are our social posts and paid campaigns doing? We'll be reporting on them regularly, and tweaking timings, wording or paid spend accordingly.

## Example

With the ebook social calendar up and running, we take a look at our metrics and see the evening posts are performing far better than the early morning ones. We decide to put some spend behind the evening posts to double down on their success. For the morning posts, we decide to try focusing on influencers' 'safety routine/tips' posts instead of the ebook, presenting a more accessible element of our activity. We set our morning posts up to alternate between ebook and influencer content, and make a note to see which strand is performing better after a few days.

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# Appendix: Useful tools

## Keyword analysis

- Answer the Public: Mines Google autocomplete results to provide a structured list of questions around a particular search.
- Keywordtool.io: Again, uses Google's autocomplete results. But the output here is pure keyword suggestions, not a structured question list. It isn't perfect, but can yield ideas that Google's own Keyword Planner might not suggest.
- Google Trends: Are you chasing a dying keyword? A quick look at Trends allows you to see whether your target terms are becoming more popular or less popular.
- Google Keyword Planner: Google's go-to tool gives you average monthly search volume, suggested keywords, levels of competition, and suggested bid per keyword (amongst other useful stats). Correlating levels of competition and suggested bid will help you to understand how likely the keyword is to convert.
- Quora: Because Quora's content is shaped by user questions, digging around here can be a good way to find "natural" long tail search terms. Doing keyword research this way is a bit trickier, but can yield new keywords that may not have been exploited already.
- FAQfox: Scrapes a given site for questions around a given keyword. If you want to know what users of a particular site are asking about a particular subject, start here.
- Mergewords: A simple way to merge multiple keywords with multiple descriptive words. Creates a quick list which you can then copy and paste into Keyword Planner.
- LSIgraph: Uses 'latent semantic indexing' to suggest additional and alternative keywords. Enter your primary keyword for a list of other terms to include in content

## Audience analysis

- Pulsar: A social listening tool that helps you track a particular keyword or phrase. Offers three different types of search based on keywords, target audience and specified URLs based.
- Buzzsumo: Ranks content based on the number of shares it gets on Facebook, Twitter, Linkedin, Google+ and Pinterest. It's particularly useful for finding successful content, which can help you get a sense of what works and what has already been done.
- YouGov: A market research firm that offers a basic free tool (used in this book) and a premium product. It can help you asses your target audience's demographics, lifestyle, personality and brand affinities.
- Global Web Index (GWI): Another market research firm. GWI provides the world's largest study on digital consumers, and is particularly useful for creating personas and mining media and buying habits.

## Technical SEO

- Screaming Frog: Crawls your website and returns a list of information, including status codes, meta titles and page word count. Useful for content analysis and spotting site problems.
- Majestic: A leading backlink checker. Its "Trust flow" and "Citation Flow" features give you more information about the sites linking to you, helping you see which links are authoritative and which are potentially spammy.
- Semrush: An SEO suite that is useful for competitor analysis, site auditing, advertising research and more.
- Sistrix: Another SEO suite. Sistrix allows you to explore your site's ranking, backlinks, social signals, anchor text distribution and more.
- Advanced Web Ranking (AWR): A rank tracking tool that doubles up as a keyword research tool. It's great for tracking keywords and creating end of month reports.
- Search Metrics: An SEO suite that monitors more than 100 million domains and tracks around 240 million keywords.
- Google Webmaster Tools: Essential tool that allows you to check your site for errors, and in most cases offers guidance on fixing them. It's also great for seeing how many pages you've got indexed and identifying backlinks. Pagespeed Insights: Shows you how fast your page loads, giving a score out of 100 and potential fixes for clear problems. Page speed can make a small but genuine difference to search visibility.

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