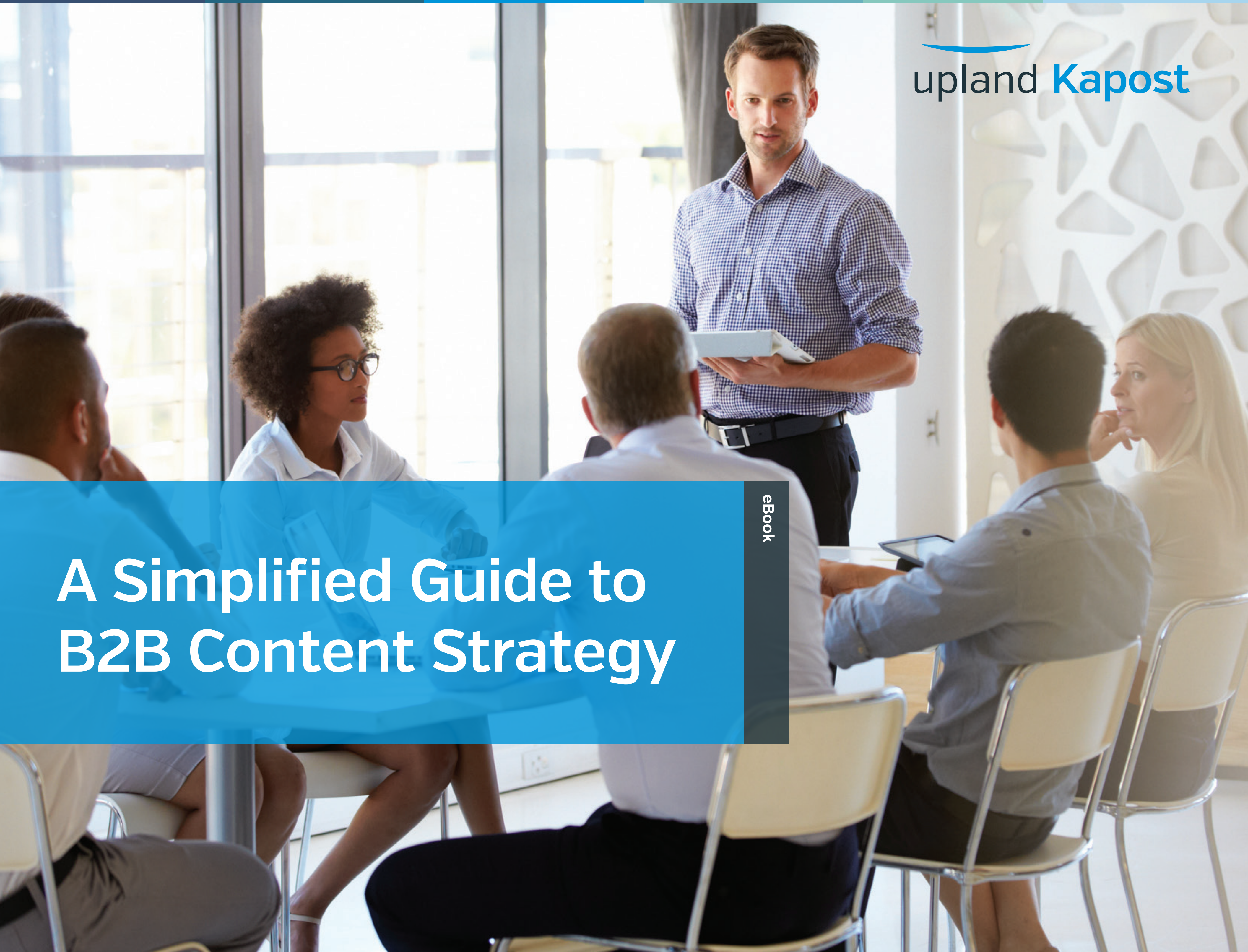

upland Kapost

eBook

A Simplified Guide to B2B Content Strategy

Introduction

When it comes to B2B marketing, organizations that are able to address the complex process and outcomes of the customer journey will both win and retain customers.

Content is at the heart of this customer journey, addressing the needs of multiple stakeholders, each needing specific information and proof of value depending on their goals and responsibilities.

Adding to the complexity is the ever-changing number of teams, tools, and channels that need to touch each of these stakeholders–which means different teams are facilitating different stages of the journey. In order to move prospects through each stage of a longer sales cycle, B2B marketers need to use the right content at the right time. A B2B content journey might look like this:

	Awareness	Investigation	Comparison	Consideration	Purchase	Ownership
Content Goals	Thought Leadership Engagement	Lead Acquisition Lead Qualification	Lead Qualification Lead Flow	Equip Sales Team Build Consensus	Confirm Value Define Next Steps	Onboard Ensure Success
Content Type	Blog Posts Infographics	White Papers eBooks	Emails Case Studies	Fact Sheets Demo Videos	Presentations Emails	Videos Press Releases
Metrics	Referral Traffic Social Shares	Registrations Downloads	Opens Click-Throughs	Content Usage Downloads	Content Usage Downloads	Content Usage Opens

A clearly mapped journey that extends across all functions within marketing is rare. It's common for each function to work with little insight into the planning, production, and measurement of the content served, resulting in content chaos.

Content Chaos

Without a strategy in place for coordinating teams, tools, and channels, seeing the big picture of your marketing impact is almost impossible. Not to mention, ad hoc content creation across departments leads to duplicate, off-brand, or unnecessary content.

The reality is that marketing content needs to be managed as a part of an integrated marketing strategy that addresses the needs of each decision maker at every stage of the process. Doing this effectively requires a shift in how you organize your marketing initiatives, and content is at the center of that effort.

Escaping the Chaos

B2B organizations must create aligned processes around organization-wide goals. They have to understand content needs, how to efficiently meet them, and how to measure the results. Effectively meeting content needs–and delivering effective marketing–requires strategic alignment and involvement across all departments.

A closed-loop strategy creates impactful, usable content that supports all of your channels and internal teams, delivers valuable and necessary information for prospects, and increases deal velocity.

This process comes down to four key capabilities: alignment, collaboration, accessibility and insight.

In this guide, these four capabilities are outlined and simplified to help build a B2B marketing strategy that unifies your organization around shared objectives, delivers relevant and valuable content for every team and stage in the customer journey, and helps you meet your goals. It's the beginning–the foundation–for a strong, efficient, and winning B2B marketing strategy.

Key Capabilities

- Alignment
- Collaboration
- Accessibility
- Insights

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Alignment

Alignment is the first, and perhaps most foundational, capability for building a successful B2B content operation—and thus, marketing strategy.

Without alignment, your team is stuck in silos, creating content that is at best misaligned, and at worst, duplicative and ineffective.

But alignment is more than just knowing what a different team is working on. True functional alignment defines tools, teams, and technology in a categorical and structured way, creating consistency and unity across an organization. Here's how to build alignment in your organization for a clear and consistent content experience, from content creators to internal consumers to your prospects and customers.

Budget

To get the dollar signs aligned for a killer marketing content strategy, first assess your goals and objectives. Then, evaluate the people, tools, and channels you need to meet these goals. This includes resources to collaborate internally, execute efficiently, deliver content strategically, and measure the revenue impact of your initiatives.

TECHNOLOGY

Here are the must-haves for your B2B marketing technology stack, and the foundation for creating content that is valuable, trackable, and persona-based:

+ CMS (WordPress, Drupal, Kentico, Sitecore, Squarespace)
+ Marketing automation (Marketo, Eloqua, Pardot, Hubspot)
+ CRM (Salesforce, Microsoft Dynamics)
+ Content management platform (Kapost)
+ Social media platform (Hootsuite, Sprout Social, Oktopost)

Once these core platforms are in place, identify the gaps that prevent you from planning, executing, and measuring success efficiently.

CHANNELS

You also need to invest in the appropriate channels for delivering content. Some of the most important channels for B2B marketers to consider investing in are:

+ SEM/Retargeting
+ Content recommendation platforms
+ Email advertising
+ Social media advertising
+ Content syndication

Even though certain strategies are consistent across organizations, your company's products and target audience are unique. Make sure you test and constantly evaluate the effectiveness of these channels, so your marketing spend is adding value.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

To make content ideas a reality, it's important to budget resources for freelancers or contractors who specialize in various stages of content execution, and use them to remove bottlenecks and fill important content gaps.

Here are some contracted resources to consider factoring into your marketing budget:

+ Writers and copy editors
+ Graphic designers
+ Digital/interactive designers
+ Videographers
+ SEO specialists
+ Data and analysis specialists

These types of contractors can help accelerate your marketing functions.

Cross-Functional Involvement

The best B2B marketing strategies are built upon cross-functional, collaborative efforts across marketing teams and departments. Here are the major stakeholders that should weigh in on your strategy:

+ Product marketing
+ Field marketing
+ Marketing and sales operations
+ Demand generation
+ Digital and SEO
+ Social/PR

Define the Customer Journey

If you're not producing relevant, persona-based content that captivates potential buyers at every stage of the journey, you're wasting your time.

To have a truly closed-loop marketing approach, marketing, sales, and support teams all need to have a stake in the revenue goals of your company. Therefore, each of these departments and the teams within them must be aligned across the customer journey, equipped with relevant and valuable content at each stage, and have a stake in your company's revenue goals.

CATEGORIZATION MATTERS

The first step toward tackling this challenge is to get agreement across the company about the definition of each stage in the customer journey. Below is an example of the customer journey. Use this as your template, and incorporate your own sales stages and goals into your strategy. Take note that the definitions you agree upon should be used across the entire organization.

Buyer Stage	Buyer Activity	Potential Sales Stage Definition	Teams Responsible
Awareness	First interaction with the brand	Marketing qualified leads	Demand gen, field mktg business development, digital mktg
Investigation/Research	Filled out gated form, contact form or requested to speak with sales	Sales qualified leads	Content mktg, demand gen, field mktg, digital mktg, product mktg
Assess/Comparison	Initial assessment with sales rep to determine if lead is an opp with budget	Opportunity	Business/sales development reps, product mktg
Consideration	Lead has been transitioned to a sales/ account rep	Opportunity	Sales reps, sales engineer, account exec, product mktg, content mktg, product management
Purchase	Lead has decided to purchase	Closed deal	Sales rep, account manager
Implement	End users are identified, onboarding begins	Onboarding	Customer success manager, customer success mktg
Support	Customer receives satisfactory support as needs arise, positive ROI use case with product	Satisfaction	Customer support, customer success manager, customer success mktg, account reps
Renewal / Repeat Customer	Customer success/account manager upselling, new product	Renewal or upsell	Customer success mktg, customer success manager, account reps, product mktg

With the customer journey, sales stages, and team/department goals defined, identify the content that supports each stage of the journey to move leads from one stage to the next.

	Awareness	Consideration	Vendor	Purchase	Upsell	Post-Sale
Team	Marcomm, digital, social	Demand gen, marketing ops, sales	Product marketing, sales consulting, sales	Sales, product marketing, product mgmt, consulting	Sales, customer support, consulting	Customer support, customer marketing
Content Types	Blog posts, videos, infographics, social	eBooks, landing pages, emails, events, webinars	Fact sheets, case studies, videos, testimonials	FAQ sheets, brochures, tech guides	Onboarding docs, help articles, preentations	Product collateral, events, webinars
Content Goals	Thought leadership, engagement	Lead acquisition, lead qualification	Lead qualification, lead flow	Equip sales team,	Confirm value, define next steps	Onboard, ensure success
Key Metrics	Referral Traffic, social shares, downloads	Registration, downloads, new leads, lead attribution	Opens, clickthroughs, downloads, conversion attribution	Content usage, downloads, opens, conversion attribution	Content usage, downloads, revenue attribution	Downloads, opens, content usage, online engagement

Persona Development

B2B marketers have to address several personas within a single sale. Each persona has unique information needs, goals, and concerns related to the purchase, and often join the decision-making process at different stages.

BUILDING PERSONAS

Whether you're trying to understand what your product has to offer a specific user, how your target audience consumes information, or what customer success stories you need to tell, strategic interviews are key to developing valuable, persona-based content.

Here are some key interviews to consider scheduling as you develop personas:

+ Your sales representatives
+ Your customer service representatives
+ Your account managers
+ Your customers

Crowdsource Ideas

Only 50% of marketers believe they have enough content ideas to fuel their content operations. Marketing should not be the only team carrying the ideation responsibilities for your company. Your internal subject-matter experts, sales reps, and customer service teams are brimming with buyer-centric ideas; they just need to be mined appropriately.

Getting your team involved and excited about content promotes collaboration, which spotlights what content your company needs to create in order to close deals and keep customers happy. Here are three ways to start regularly crowdsourcing ideas:

1. Find an executive sponsor

Find someone who can relay content ideas up the ladder to an executive, while also establishing credibility and authority to the tactical executors. Perhaps this is your CMO or another executive that reports to the CEO. The goal is to get buy-in at the top, so it doesn't feel like an uphill battle every time you try to gather the troops for ideation.

2. Establish a content committee

Identify key stakeholders and subject-matter experts across your company and establish an official “content committee.” Consider pulling in representatives from the following teams to gain additional insight into themes that will resonate with prospects and customers:

+ Sales/business development
+ Customer support
+ Customer success
+ Product marketing
+ Field marketing
+ Demand generation
+ Marcomm/PR
+ Social and community

3. Brainstorm, then cluster ideas into themes

Marketing must always be nimble, and one-off content assets just add to the pile of unused content when they aren’t aligned with the strategic goals of your organization. Accordingly, the content committee should have representation from buyer-facing teams, such as sales, support, and services. They will be able to source ideas for content from customer feedback or insights. But don’t try to tackle these requests one by one and fall into the trap of “random acts of content.” Instead, group ideas into themes that can be approached strategically and are aligned with larger business goals.

Build Timelines

Launching new messaging or products into the world isn't an ad hoc, siloed act. A seamless, successful marketing campaign is the end result of department-wide visibility into timelines and responsibilities, in addition to streamlined workflows. Here's a step-by-step timeline:

Step 1: Set your major asset deadline

Start with the go-live or launch date of the major asset from which your other assets will be built. Kapost's content strategy uses the pillar model, where you create and build your campaigns around one major asset, such as an eBook, and build supporting assets from the pillar. You'll work backward to fill in the supporting content deadlines relevant to your pillar launch date.

Step 2: Set deadlines for supporting assets

Next, think through each supporting asset of your pillar launch and assign a deadline for each. Here is an easy template for assigning deadlines for assets supporting your pillar campaign:

+ Funnel-Driver: Top-of-funnel, high engaging asset such as an infographics, videos, or blog posts.
+ Gated Asset: The conversion piece, behind a landing page, that brings new leads into the database for your team to determine whether or not they are sales qualified.

  If this is the first asset that the new lead has interacted with, your team should follow up with drip emails to nurture them with additional relevant content. This builds trust and offers more opportunities for interaction.
+ Product Piece: Solution-based pieces such as short demo videos or case studies to drive leads to engage with sales.

Step 3: Assign content tasks and workflows

Assign a deadline and owner to every task to ensure that internal stakeholders know their responsibilities. Identify each task that needs to happen–and who is responsible for completing it–before and after the date of your pillar launch.

Step 4: Schedule collaborative meetings in advance

Pre-production

+ Content brainstorm
+ Meet with PR and social teams
+ Plan SEO strategy for launch
+ Meet with design team to determine visual direction
+ Determine digital strategy with marketing ops (e.g., landing pages, automated email campaigns, etc.)

Post-production

+ Update sales and customer support with relevant assets and email templates
+ Formal review of campaign metrics post-launch

Collaboration

Collaboration is the second core capability for a successful content operation because it's the foundation for successful execution.

The content creation stage is often where marketing teams find themselves overstretched, drowning in content chaos. This happens when the right processes aren't in place to sync teams and automate efforts.

Marketers who are effective at producing high-quality content have efficient workflows and structure operations that streamline the collaboration across teams, tools, and channels. They set smart deadlines and give their internal teams visibility into the production cycle, for effective collaboration across the organization.

Here's how to build a culture of successful collaboration on your marketing team:

Map the Process

Without the right processes in place to fuel content creation, assets are constantly stalled in the production phase. And process has a real impact on performance. While only 45% of average performing companies use workflows to streamline the production of similar content assets, 80% of market top performers implement these steps into their content processes, creating a solid foundation for meeting and exceeding their revenue goals.

Having a documented content production process in place streamlines workflows and unites efforts across campaigns, asset types, and even internal teams, allowing marketers to focus on creating high-quality targeted content.

Establishing a Team Structure

To map people to workflow process, determine consistent responsibilities across content types. Assigning core responsibilities (i.e., writing landing page copy or building emails in marketing automation software) to specific people organizes high-level workflows.

Chaos ensues when there are too many variables and not enough clarity around how something needs to be completed. When roles and responsibilities are transparent and assignments are consistent, workflows are streamlined and time spent managing production is reduced.

Building Workflows

Each content type has its own nuances to consider and steps to follow. To cover all the bases, list out every type of asset your organization creates. Some examples include:

+ eBook
+ White paper
+ Webinar
+ Blog post
+ Infographic
+ Landing page
+ Email

Next, list out every task to be completed for each asset before it can go into completion status.

+ Identify SEO keywords
+ Assign asset to author
+ Submit copy
+ Add image
+ Complete SEO
+ Edit/review
+ Final approval
+ Publish
+ Schedule social
+ Evaluate metrics

Revisit your established workflows annually and take a magnifying glass to the process. Workflows do not necessarily have to be set in stone–don't be afraid to make changes.

Set Smart Timelines

Deadlines are one of the best indicators of efficiency, helping marketers stay on track, measure progress, and identify bottlenecks. However, deadlines are not arbitrary dates set to motivate us. Smart deadlines take into consideration the average production time per content type–preferably with some wiggle room. They provide a framework for accountability and align with broader organizational goals.

IDENTIFY THE AVERAGE PRODUCTION PROCESS FOR A CONTENT TYPE

Understanding how long it takes to produce a single type of content is the first step in setting smart deadlines. It gives marketers clarity on how long it should take to complete all the required steps, setting realistic expectations.

When considering how long it takes to complete each asset type, use content workflows to frame your planning. Each step in the workflow should be consistent in the amount of time it takes to complete.

ESTABLISH ACCOUNTABILITY

Typically, there are many stakeholders responsible for different tasks in the workflow. When you assign a deadline to individual tasks, it keeps all stakeholders accountable for their piece. This also eliminates the need for excessive email correspondence.

By communicating deadlines from start to finish before beginning a project, your team starts off with clear expectations and eliminates surprises.

ALIGN CAMPAIGNS TO BUSINESS OBJECTIVES

When setting deadlines for major content initiatives, consider other major deadlines within the organization (for example, product releases, major trade shows). By leveraging broader company initiatives to build your deadline framework, you establish a clear measurable purpose and create a richer experience for your audience all around.

When marketing aligns its goals with broader organizational objectives, content becomes mission critical—rather than ad hoc and reactive.

The result? Your content consumers are delivered a consistent and complete brand narrative.

Utilizing an Editorial Calendar

Not having a broader view of all deadlines across a project, from start to finish and across every stakeholder, keeps a content strategy from being successful—and puts it at risk of failure.

Using a centralized editorial calendar provides visibility into the content production process, enabling teams to collaborate easier and aligning goals across teams.

Working Cross-Functionally

At the heart of collaboration is learning to work cross-functionally. Creating content is a concerted effort that transcends a single team. The best marketers rely on the expertise of their internal teams to garner relevant information, gain access to key customers, ideate, and, often, get final approval. As a marketer, you need to leverage internal teams to build an authentic, credible voice for the brand. Successful content creation depends on gathering all of that knowledge from internal contributors without letting it get lost in the shuffle.

Which leaves us with a question: how do you really manage content across teams?

MASTERING INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

First and foremost, identify how and where you're communicating with all your teams. Establish a singular location where content will live throughout its entire production cycle, and give all stakeholders access to it.

INTEGRATE TECHNOLOGIES

When assessing your marketing technology needs, be sure that you can integrate as many of your tools as possible. This is particularly important among your marketing automation software and CRM platform, as the flow among stages can be more smooth, trackable, and measurable. It's a win for both sales and marketing.

Ensure Content Governance

Having a unique voice is important, but if it doesn't align with the voice of the overall brand, there's a problem. Audiences trust sources that are accurate and consistent. If your content doesn't reflect a singular tone and message across the buying experience, from first touch to onboarding, you risk hurting the trustworthiness and credibility of your brand. Here are the steps you need to take to ensure a consistent customer experience:

BUILD A STYLE GUIDE

Develop both an editorial and visual style guide that you can share with content creators, outlining your company's tagline and mission, preferred word list, description of company tone/voice, etc. It can be as simple or complex as needed based on the level of individuality your company wants, but a strong alignment with a universal style guide (AP, Chicago Manual) can help you avoid inconsistencies.

RELY ON YOUR METADATA

Taxonomy, categorization, whatever you want to call it, is at the heart of content collaboration and execution. Take the established definitions outlined for your customer journey, content themes, personas, etc., and mark each piece of content accordingly. This allows every member of your organization to search for and find the content they need.

Additionaly, team members can jump into a piece of content and quickly understand its high-level categorization, so they can get to work without needing clarification of the details.

PUT SEO INTO YOUR PROCESS

Optimizing content for organic search is critical to success, relating not only to findability but also for governance of voice. Streamline your process by incorporating SEO directly into the content product workflow.

Accessibility

Alignment and collaboration are key to creating great content.

However, all the streamlined planning and execution in the world doesn't matter if your buyer never reads it. Accessibility is key to delivering the right content to the right person at the right time.

By amplifying content through your sales, customer support, influencers, partners, and digital channels, you gain an unbeatable advantage over your competition. The following section highlights the major channels to consider in your distribution plan to achieve maximum accessibility.

Internal Distribution

It's easy to think only of your digital channels like your website and social media. But don't forget about internal, human channels. These channels are key to B2B content operations. Internal channels include:

Business Development and Sales
By getting the right content into the hands of your sales and business development teams at the right time, you ensure your team's value and ROI to your company as you support sales. It's a win-win.

Customer Success
A good customer success team knows your customers' pain points and upsell opportunities more than anyone else in the company. Leverage this internal channel with plenty of content around best-practice use and other supporting assets.

Field Marketing
Field marketing fosters key relationships with customers and prospects on the local and regional levels, driving strategies to close new business and support retention of target accounts. This channel relies on a knowledge of messaging, whether through training videos or SlideShares, so they can communicate on-brand messaging with customers.

BUILD A CENTRAL CONTENT REPOSITORY

You know that equipping your internal channels with quality content will result in big returns for your marketing strategy. But even though you're pumping out endless streams of content for these channels, chances are internal teams still aren't using that content appropriately.

Basically, if your content lives in a nebulous file, other teams don't even know it exists, let alone where to find it or how to use it effectively.

Consider reorganizing your content into a central repository. Remember that successful content becomes "ART":

+ Accessible
+ Relevant
+ Trackable

Trade Traditional PR for Influencer Marketing

PR for modern marketers is all about engaging influencers in your space. Start by researching what media outlets, analysts, and influencers are covering your industry already.

Once you've identified key contacts, reach out to them directly and introduce yourself as an expert on an industry-related topic, and offer to help them with any stories they're working on. For media outlets, make sure you're not giving them a hard pitch quite yet. You need to establish yourself as an expert and a value-add for other related articles first. For influencers, invite them to guest post to your company's blog, or request their permission to quote them from a book they've authored. The key is to form a trusted relationship.

Once a solid relationship is built, you can reach out to them with requests and story ideas that would interest their particular outlet and audience.

LEVERAGE CHANNEL PARTNERS

Strong channel partnerships guarantee a more robust reach for your content. By maximizing your partner relationships, you:

1. Gain access to large, new networks that will distribute your content and increase your brand awareness
2. Gain a partnership that resells your product in the marketplace via their existing channels and networks, maximizing your reach and increasing your revenue opportunities

Distributing the Right Content through the Right Channels

You've got marketing automation, CRM, CMS, and social media channels. How do you get them to play nice with each other to create a winning strategy that moves a lead seamlessly and intuitively through your sales pipeline?

Let’s start by breaking down the major digital channels you’ll likely use to distribute your B2B content, and what to coordinate for a truly integrated B2B content operation.

EMAIL

There are so many tools for email out there, how does one even choose? The key here is integration. Integrate your email campaigns with your chosen marketing automation tool, CRM, and content marketing platform. By aligning email campaigns with the right technology, you can get more accurate insight into which emails work or fall flat among the different segments of your database.

Likewise, make sure your automation system integrates with your CRM platform. Otherwise, you risk your contacts getting lost and disorganized as they transition from one system into another, costing your team valuable data about a lead’s activity, and ultimately, the revenue-based impact your content has on closed deals.

Finally, keep both segmentation and A/B testing in mind when considering tactics to optimize and elevate email distribution strategy.

BLOG

For many B2B companies, the corporate blog is one of the most successful top-of-funnel channels. It inspires anonymous users to become known leads and eventual customers.

Be sure each blog post ends with a clear call to action that drives leads to either:

+ Subscribe to the blog
+ Download gated content via a landing page

Also, make sure your blog is synced with your automation system so it can track which calls to action are the most successful among your subscribers.

PAID ADS

Make sure that whoever manages your paid and SEM advertising is plugged into your campaign launches. Paid ads can attract new leads in ways your organic leads won’t. Ensure that your messaging is aligned so you’re attracting the right leads.

Strategize for Social

Social media is a key top-of-funnel channel. However, it often gets a bad rap for not driving people deeper into the funnel. But a sound social strategy that's aligned with your overall marketing goals can be a killer revenue generator for your company. Here are some key things to consider when building out your strategy.

INTEGRATE SOCIAL WITH MARKETING STRATEGY

If you're creating excellent content, you already have a strong foundation for social. Here are a few ways to incorporate social seamlessly into your overall marketing content strategy:

+ Break down larger content assets into sharable, bite-sized pieces
+ Focus on building a conversation from your content-sharing activity
+ Ensure that share buttons are easily accessible to every piece of content

IDENTIFY RELEVANT SOCIAL CHANNELS

You need to choose the channels that resonate most deeply with your target buyers.

With that in mind, consider the following channels for your B2B content:

+ LinkedIn
+ Twitter
+ SlideShare
+ Facebook
+ Pinterest
+ Instagram

Maximize Your Website for Inbound

Think of your website as the mechanism for converting anonymous visitors to qualified leads and eventually paying customers. Your website, accordingly, shouldn't be a static entity; it has to be interactive, delighting those who visit with high-quality content that drives the right people further into the sales funnel.

Here are some key aspects of your website to consider focusing on:

MAKE LANDING PAGES OPTIMIZED, PRIMARY DESTINATIONS

When you gate your valuable content, such as white papers or eBooks, you draw in anonymous visitors to engage with your content in a more valuable way—one that merits a different lead score than simply reading a blog or liking a tweet.

Things to consider when building an optimizing landing pages:

+ Ensure your message is clear and value-focused
+ A/B test formatting, headlines, buttons, form fields, etc.
+ Be honest and avoid click-baiting

MAKE CALLS TO ACTION CLEAR AND COMPELLING

Make sure your messaging is compelling and speaks directly to persona pain points. It has to pique enough interest to merit the visitor giving you his or her contact information. In other words, the offer has to promise a value exchange.

MAKE CONTENT DYNAMIC AND PERSONA-DRIVEN

You want your website to immediately speak to the persona you're targeting. If you're like many other B2B companies, you're targeting multiple personas within a single organization. Focus your messaging on your website to speak to all of them using dynamic content.

With dynamic content, digital marketers can optimize a website to serve up specific messaging based on previous user engagement or known demographic information, such as industry and title. This creates a tailored user experience on your website, delivering only the content that's relevant to a visitor, engaging the buyer more effectively, as they immediately understand the value as it relates to them. With this strategy, marketers can further impact the buyer's journey in a positive way and contribute to a shorter sales cycle.

MAKE SEO A PRIORITY

Nothing could be more depressing to a marketer's ears than a beautiful, content-rich (and expensive) website that never gets any traffic attention.

SEO should be a high priority for every website. Research and identify target keywords early in the development of your website, rather than having to go back and rework your messaging to fit keywords. Work with your web and digital experts to get SEO nailed down from day one.

Insight

Content must be tied to results, namely revenue, to show real value.

Optimizing content for ROI means digging deeper than top-of-funnel metrics to measure how content influences a prospect's decision to buy.

Otherwise, you're left creating reactive content or, worse, flying totally blind, basing budgets and strategies on anecdotal evidence, ad hoc research, and internal assumptions.

To measure content's full impact across the customer journey, marketers need to track and measure the pillars of B2B content metrics according to their goals and objectives.

Measuring Results

Without insight into performance at every stage of the purchase process, marketers can't prove that their strategic content initiatives contribute to revenue.

To measure the full impact of content driving the right engagement, converting buyers at every stage of the funnel, and supporting internal teams to close new business more quickly, B2B marketers have to track performance at every stage of the content and buyer lifecycle.

INTERNAL REACH

Content plays a critical role in moving buyers toward a closed deal and increasing customer retention; it should be tracked, reported on, and measured against in context of these goals.

Think of every division of your organization as a distribution channel. Internal teams are using content to communicate through one-on-one channels such as email, offering content to meet the specific needs of individuals based on their role, sales stage, product use case, and interests.

By tracking the way internal teams consume and distribute content, assets can be optimized for better targeting and results.

To measure internal content use, content needs to be stored in a single, accessible content repository where internal teams can discover and distribute it. Content should be tagged to specific objectives, such as campaign, sales stage, persona, and asset type, so internal stakeholders can quickly, and easily, find the relevant content they need.

But to gauge if your product, field, or digital marketing content serves the needs of your internal teams, you need to benchmark and track the following:

+ How much of the content is used by internal teams?
+ Are teams using content to drive engagement?
+ What kind of buyer engagement is being facilitated as a result of internal content shares?

INTERNAL CONSUMPTION

+ # Month-over-month internal views of assets
+ # Month-over-month internal downloads of assets

INTERNAL SHARES

+ # Month-over-month internal shares of assets via email or social

REFERRALS EARNED

+ # Month-over-month referral traffic from internal shares

EXTERNAL REACH

Insights that delve into the how, when, and where of content engagement give marketers a full picture of how content performs at different stages and through different channels.

These insights explain where our target audience goes to find relevant content, and how they react to it depending on who they are and where they are in the buying process.

CROSS-CHANNEL REACH

+ # Engagements per month by type of engagement (i.e. views, downloads, opens, etc.)
+ Traffic by channel category (i.e. direct, paid, organic, etc.)
+ Referral percentage by channel source

ENGAGEMENT BY CATEGORY

+ # Engagements by content type (i.e. blog post, pideo, email, etc.)
+ # Engagements by buyer persona
+ # Engagements by sales stages

TOP ENGAGED ASSETS

+ 10 most engaged assets per quarter
+ 10 most shared assets per quarter

CONVERSIONS AND IMPACT ON REVENUE

Tying content to revenue is one of the greatest challenges modern marketers face. Content conversion metrics provide invaluable insights into marketing content effectiveness, pulling results at various stages of the buyer's journey and identifying opportunities to optimize for greater results.

But how do you do it?

Including content conversions in your dashboard yields the best insights into how well your content is ultimately performing. Attaching numeric value to content assets not only makes it easier to compare the performance of specific assets at various stages of the funnel; it also gives you concrete evidence that shows how your content is working.

Turn to data in your marketing automation and CRM to gather your data. A business intelligence tool, like Domo or Looker, can be an invaluable piece of software for making sense of a mass of data.

IMPROVING PRODUCTION PROCESS

Inefficiencies in the content production process cost businesses money–and it's often the most ignored area in content measurement. Marketers need to know how long it takes to get that product to market, find and eliminate bottlenecks in the process, and identify content coverage gaps. It starts with these four areas of measurement.

Average Production Time
In order to gauge process efficiencies from ideation to distribution, start by benchmarking the amount of time it takes to create content in days, per asset.

Once a benchmark has been established, use these benchmarks to identify workflow bottlenecks and clear away inefficiencies in the process.

Average On-time Delivery Rate
While pushed deadlines have almost become a given, without metrics to measure what content is being delivered late, and which step in the workflow is delaying the process, marketers have no way of addressing the issue.

To quantify the late-content problem, marketers need to capture how often deadlines are missed, by asset type and contributor.

Bottlenecks and Challenges in Workflows
Marketers need to pinpoint which tasks slow down production. To measure this, compare the average time it takes to complete a specific task in a workflow against how often that task is completed late. Armed with this data, marketers can tackle bottlenecks, many of which are easy to fix but typically hidden.

Content Coverage Gaps
In B2B marketing, mapping content to specific buyer personas or stages in the sales cycle are the only ways to consistently develop targeted, relevant, and timely content. By aligning content to the customer journey (as well as other key objectives, like regions, business units, verticals, etc.), marketers can locate gaps in coverage and address them strategically.

Average On-Time Delivery Rate

+ Amount of content delivered late/past deadline
+ Reported per asset type

Bottlenecks/Challenges in Workflow

Average # of days to complete workflow task

Mesaured by days and percentage of time delivered late

Reported per asset

Content Coverage Map

+ # of assets in production by persona and sales stage

Average Production Time

+ Average # of days to produce content
+ Reported per asset type

Create a Content Metrics Dashboard

Understanding how your content is performing across its entire lifecycle not only tells you where your high performers are; it also lets you know how you're reaching your goals. To do this, set up a content measurement dashboard.

A content measurement dashboard should include the metrics examined above, mainly:

+ The health of the content production cycle
+ Internal and external content engagement
+ Conversions and content score

With a consistent dashboard that tracks performance month over month, quarter over quarter, and year over year, B2B marketers can take important steps toward benchmarking success and sharing quantifiable results with the broader marketing organization and team.

Closing the Loop between Metrics and Strategy

The final step is to take your findings and results and incorporate them back into your planning stages for content creation. This is the key to optimization. By measuring the right metrics, you'll be able to make more strategic decisions across the content lifecycle.

Optimization should always feed back into your overarching go-to-market strategy–and with the data to back up your decisions, you'll be able to execute even more quickly, with the support you need from across the organization.

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About Upland Software.

Upland Software (Nasdaq: UPLD) is a leader in cloud-based enterprise work management software. Upland provides seven enterprise cloud solution suites that enable more than one million users at over 9,000 accounts to win and engage customers, automate business operations, manage projects and IT costs, and share knowledge throughout the enterprise. All of Upland's solutions are backed by a 100% customer success commitment and the UplandOne platform, which puts customers at the center of everything we do. To learn more, visit uplandsoftware.com.

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