The essential guide

Digital B2B Content Marketing

Sell your product or service superiority | Support your sales force | Provide regular inbound leads

Case in point: Small IT hardware provider

A rugged wireless solutions provider wanted to increase brand awareness, raise public profile and position company executives as subject matter experts (SMEs) in its key vertical markets.
Problems:

- Executives tied up in other roles or tasks
- Previous blogs infrequent and not driving inbound traffic
- Small company so only had a small budget

Solution: Implemented blogging & social program on a very low budget

IBA put in place a highly effective, low-cost blogging program comprised of the following services:

- Blog creation for the company 'Resources' webpage: Thought-leadership content that mixes together industry hot topics with company expertise and messaging to position the company as industry leaders and its executives as SMEs
- Pitch&Place service: Repurposing blog content and placing it in influential industry publications read by target audience of key prospects and decision-makers
- iBAengage social media support: Amplifying earned media coverage, company blogs and select third-party industry stories through regular social media content creation and management

Result: The first company blog hosted on website received significant traffic and Pitch&Place version received interest from 20+ industry journalists—placed in five influential publications within two months with link-backs to boost lead generation.

Case in point: Mid-sized business software provider

A digital transformation technology provider required a dedicated PR campaign to achieve industry exposure, earned media placements and influencer growth across three target vertical markets. **Problems:**

- Marketing strategy heavily reliant on paid media and sponsorships
- Content produced in-house struggling to earn enough leads
- Social media strategy not sufficiently supporting company activities

Solution: Implemented a full-service PR ecosystem for much less than its paid media costs

IBA became the 'extended marketing & editorial department' for the client, providing a full PR service to meet specific needs such as:

- Drafting and distributing a regular stream of press releases: Announcing new solutions, technology partnerships and industry recognitions to target media using the IBA journalist database
- Turning paid media content into earned media coverage: Repurposing existing content for thought-leadership articles to be placed in key industry publications—without paying a penny
- Journalist outreach program to secure media interest for events, SME interviews and support local press activity
- Extensive social media support: Mix of earned, owned and third-party content, promoting webinars, company assets and events

Result: In a single year, IBA secured over 120 clippings in target media outlets—predominantly thought-leadership articles. IBA generated over 200 organic leads from authoritative website referrals using link-backs in earned media placements.

What content marketing can do for you – and why it isn't yet

The right approach to digital content marketing and PR combines the best of inbound and outbound practices to produce a balanced—and proven—lead generation strategy.

The first thing to stress is that B2B content marketing is fundamentally different from B2C.

- The prospect profiles are different
- Buyer motivations are different
- The sales funnel is longer and more complex

Too often we see organizations get this wrong and try to implement tactics and strategy that, while completely legitimate for B2C, never translate into B2B success.

If you're not seeing the success your product or solution deserves, maybe it's time to examine how your pattern of activities fit together and to identify which of the problems you can easily put right.

In this paper we identify the four most common pain points for B2B marketeers and set out four easy techniques that can remove the pain and transform your content marketing results.

Common pain points for B2B digital marketeers

1. *"We're not driving enough traffic... or generating inbound leads"*
2. *"Our blogs haven't taken off"*
3. *"We have good ideas, but we don't always have the time"*
4. *"Our competitors are hogging the media"*

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Problem 1: “We’re not driving enough traffic or generating inbound leads”

This is one of the top demands we hear from marketing managers who are looking to drive ROI in their marketing efforts. Search engines—just like your prospects—love fresh, relevant content. A proactive stream of high-quality content that is optimized for search and addresses the real needs of your target audience will result in greater online visibility. This is a sure-fire way to elevate brand awareness in your key markets.

“B2B buyers read an average of 10 pieces of content before making a purchasing decision”

Problem 2: "Our blogs haven't taken off"

A common problem. Sometimes the solution is quite obvious, businesses just aren’t doing enough blogs, or if they are, they aren’t doing enough with them. But why should you bother in the first place?

“Small businesses that blog can get up to 126% more lead growth”

Well it’s simple, a well-run blogging program delivers leads. But the key ingredient here is quality. Yes, blogs are a medium to talk about your business, but they absolutely must provide value to the reader and put your offerings in context.

Problem 3: “We’ve got ideas, but don’t have the time—or the budget”

Maybe your marketing team are tied up with events or customer days or you don’t have the budget to fuel a full content-driven campaign. It’s time to think again.

“Content marketing generates almost three times as many leads as traditional marketing—and costs 62% less”

You need to make the most of your content. IBA are masters at squeezing every mile out of a single piece of content and leveraging it across multiple platforms. It’s all about optimizing your content and its delivery.

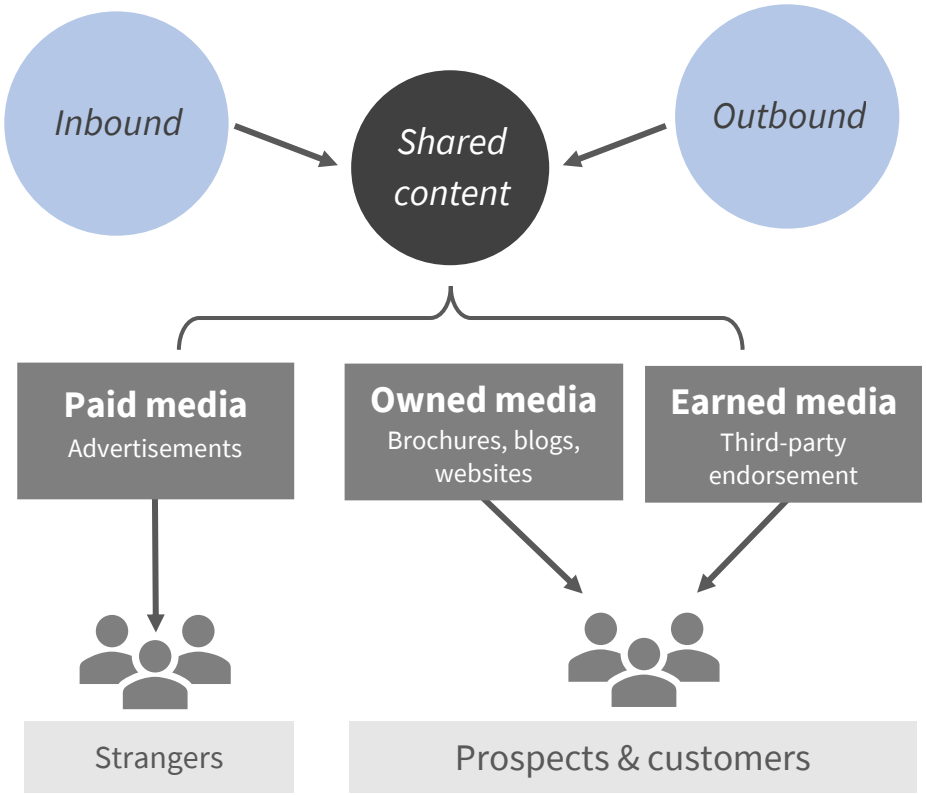
Problem 4: “We’re struggling to make headway within the media—but our competitors aren’t!”

Relax, it’s not that they are cooler than you or have a better product. They might be just be blowing the marketing budget on paid-for placements!

“80% of decision makers prefer to get company information from articles versus adverts”

You don’t need deep pockets to make it in the media. You just need to take the right approach and put in place the best practices that help you first become part of the industry conversation—and then lead it.

Develop a content strategy that brings together inbound and outbound marketing



The four easy steps to remove the pain and transform your content marketing results

Step One

Establish messaging across inbound & outbound marketing

B2B buyers consume, on average, ten pieces of content before making a purchasing decision, so producing one case study or a couple of blogs and calling it a day isn't going to help drive prospects into and down the sales funnel.

Are you looking to increase brand awareness, establish market leadership, cement industry trust? Undoubtedly, you want to drive increased traffic to your website to impact sales. Defining your priorities will dictate your content marketing strategy.

Your content can provide a powerful mix to support both your inbound and outbound marketing.

Step One – assemble your forces

Do a content audit – existing copy may just need a face lift

Don't create content for content's sake—strictly define your audience so you create content that directly addresses your target prospects.

Most businesses have more content than they think, it just takes a little vision and creative know-how to dust off old copy, re-purpose it and turn it around for a quick win.

Rules for re-purposing – understand prospect pain points and industry hot topics

So, you know what your content needs to do. Now make sure all your deliverables actually deliver your core messaging—and to your target audience. This means you need to know the job titles of your target persona.

Social listening and influencer tracking must play a part

Don't run the risk of creating 'thin' and off-topic content that appeals to no one, or writing hot topic copy your target audience isn't interested in.

Create an asset library

An asset library is more than just a repository for your content—it's a living hub of material that can use, re-use and re-purpose to help you project company positioning, which will influence key audiences.

By keeping content close to hand, you gain the agility to quickly produce or re-purpose targeted material for any communication platform and support specific sales opportunities at short notice.

Flip the horizontal to vertical

Whether your product or service is designed specifically for a vertical niche or is an application that can be delivered to multiple markets, the trick is to turn one-to-many marketing messages into one-to-one messages and directly address the verticals you intend to pursue.

One of IBA's most successful services, Pitch&Place has been designed as a low-cost way to take existing material and make it prospect-ready

- Takes new or existing copy
- Re-purposes as blogs, opinion pieces, thought-leadership articles
- Places content in different media outlets across target markets and geographies
- Uses the power of LinkedIn and Twitter to drive brand messaging

“A consistent message is a powerful message”

“The same message from more than one source is more readily believed”

Step Two

Develop a content pipeline for your inbound and outbound marketing

The content cascade

A lot of B2B marketeers produce a single piece of content, which is used once and then shelved. A single asset such as a white paper or case study can, and should, be repurposed to serve multiple audiences, quickly and efficiently. Write once, re-purpose many times. It’s an IBA mantra, it’s also the best way to get the most value— and the most mileage—out of your content creation efforts.

Identify the primary assets and then break down the content to see how else it can be used. This enables you to adapt your core messaging across different formats while ensuring content remains 'on message'. The same message from more than one source is more readily believed—this is a powerful communications tool.

Step Two – content cascade

Not all content has the same objective, not all prospects are at the same stage of the buyer journey—it can't always be the hard sell!

Here are some formats and how they work:

Blogs	Attract and engage website visitors at the early stages of the buyer journey— help them learn more about their business problem and the potential solutions.
Press releases & thought leadership	Maintain momentum, establish trust through third-party endorsement and your position as a serious player.
E-Books & white papers	Explore business challenges in more detail. Get these assets behind a gated landing page to capture your visitors' details.
Customer case studies	Turn customers into evangelists and success into a demonstration of your product or service.

Get your owned media noticed – be discovered

What you must do is make the most of this content and critically, make it searchable. Incorporate the fundamentals of SEO when creating your owned content so prospects can easily find it via search engines.

One of the most common 'SEO crimes' we see is marketing execs and managers pumping their content full of all the keywords they can. While this content might make you searchable, they tend to have poor readability and these pages will have a high bounce rate and low conversion rate.

Give your blog wings

Use your company blogging program as a foundation for industry thought-leadership and third-party endorsement.

- Repurpose, pitch & place to target media – 1:3 ratio, deliverable:placement
- For more effect, combine with company announcements to demonstrate growth and success
- Use Twitter to promote and amplify owned and earned media
- Use LinkedIn threads to demonstrate industry thought leadership

Draft a stream of blogs that combine media hot topics with key company messaging, host them on your website, place them in the media

Step Two – share on social

"75% of B2B organizations use Twitter, compared to just 65% of B2C organizations"

"43% of B2B marketers have sourced a customer from LinkedIn"

Show and grow your success – social media is a must!

It's not just about #FOMO, it's a sales tool—75% of B2B buyers use social media to support their purchase decision.

For B2B organizations it's all about finding and cultivating those all-important leads. Choosing the right social media platform to deliver this message is the right place to start.

It's better to have a strong presence on a few social platforms that are proven lead generators than to have a weak presence on a lot that aren't—43% of B2B marketers have sourced a customer from LinkedIn, so this is often a good place to start.

Getting the right balance of content on social is important. A simplified way to remember this is the 80:20 rule. If you are sharing 10 social posts a week, eight of them should be informative third-party content to help align your brand with hot topics and key influencers. For the other two, feel free to shout about your brand!

Remember, not all platforms are the same, and aligning what you say to where you say it will be the difference between success and failure.

"Companies that excel at lead nurturing generate 50% more sales ready leads at a 33% lower cost"

Step Three

Win third-party endorsement from journalists and bloggers

So you've got your content, but getting coverage in tier one publications is a slightly different beast to creating direct-to-audience marketing material. But done successfully, it secures that third-party endorsement and establishes the trust essential to B2B sales and marketing.

First point is that the 'pay and spray' approach of distributing news via a wire service just gets you machine pickups, not third-party endorsement from quality and authoritative media. So, what can you do to establish your brand as the go-to thought leader and help you own the space in your chosen markets?

With 96% of B2B buyers wanting content with more input from industry thought leaders, it's an unmissable opportunity. Content that already exists as a company blog or case study is great foundation for securing third-party coverage. By taking that content and re-purposing it into a media friendly format, you're already half way there.

1. Establish target media—target the right media, in the right geographies and reach the right audience
2. Select the right content—journalists don't want a product shill, they want content that provides value to their audience
3. Dedicate outreach to start building relationships and position your brand with the journalists—again, this is not a product pitch, it's a positioning exercise
4. Regular activity is fundamental. There is little value in being a one hit wonder—establishing a business in the mind of the media

IBA is the only PR consultancy that maintains its own relational database of over 180,000 publications worldwide and a global database of journalist contacts coded by geography and interest

Step Four

Measure, access, improve

Your content marketing doesn't simply end when a strategy has been agreed and a piece of copy has been drafted, pitched, placed and shared on social.

Building up an overall picture of performance starts by looking at all results with a critical eye. Use Google Analytics to get website insights, media monitoring tools to see coverage you've earned and built-in social media activity reports to gauge what kind of content works best to grab the attention of your audience. What are the numbers telling you?

Is your blogging program effective?

Putting out the right top-line messaging should get you the page views, but if visitors are not staying on your site and converting, maybe your content is not focused enough on their pain points.

Are you seeing spikes in visitor traffic and then nothing? Perhaps you're not consistent enough with your content—the objective here should be steady growth of targeted visitors.

The real time nature of social media means you can learn a lot about what works and what doesn't in a short amount of time.

How is your social media performing?

Is it driving traffic to your website, is it engaging with the right audience—or is it being ignored? Don't be afraid to take a step back and move in a new direction. Keep working at it until you find a voice that resonates. Once you do, focus your efforts to maximize that messaging.

The 80:20 rule to assess mindshare in the media

Here at IBA we like to see 80% of coverage in tier one outlets—publications which directly target your market audience. Most companies are pushed to get 20%. We also like to see at least 25% of this tier one coverage as thought-leadership which positions your company on the hot topics and key industry themes.

If you're not making headway with your media push, chances are you need to revaluate the content you are offering.

Not getting coverage in your target media? Have you fallen into the trap of putting product before insight?

Here to help you map out your strategy & get the results

There are quite a lot of moving parts when setting up an effective content marketing campaign. If this all seems too much to handle internally and you need to talk it through with a content marketing specialist, IBA International is here to help.

With over 50 years of content creation behind us, we have packaged that successful experience into a simple, low-cost service that produces brilliant results for leading technology clients throughout Europe, the Asia-Pac and the U.S.

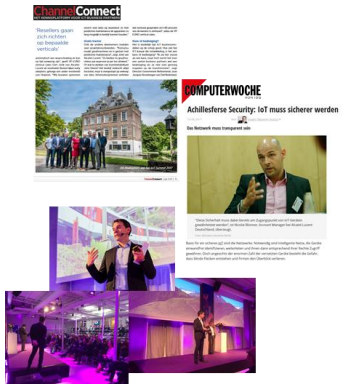
When our global A&D client needed to break into two vertical markets, we launched a campaign securing 369 clippings, with an advertising equivalency of £1 million.

For an Enterprise IT client, IBA secured the equivalent of €2 million of advertising in one year, achieving 688 earned media clippings.

IBA positioned a US FinTech client in four vertical markets, securing 211 clippings worth over $300,000 of advertising for a fraction of the price.

Building brands builds business

It produces business!



LinkedIn for lead gen – no cold-calling

- Client published LinkedIn thread in defence industry group
- Led to a multi-million pound deal worth half their yearly target—no cold-calling required!

Steal the theme – major IoT project

- Gotthard Base Tunnel project didn't just end in plenty of coverage
- The company was invited to multiple events across Europe to present, attended by top firms such as Microsoft, Fujitsu and Vodafone

Multimedia content – no production cost

- Content outreach around client implementing Wi-Fi in the NY subway ended in a feature on top technology video podcast
- The website receives over 1.3 million unique visitors per month

Vertical coverage – vertical sale

- Executive interview ran online and in digital issue of key vertical market publication—viewed by over 70,000
- Interview led to a prospect calling the company which was later turned into a sale

If you'd like to talk about your content marketing plans, please feel free to get in touch!

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