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THE 6 STEPS TO BUILDING AN EFFECTIVE B2B CONTENT MARKETING STRATEGY

by Brian Regan
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Noted digital media strategist [Jay Acunzo](#) defines B2B content marketing as “solving the same customer problems as your product but through media you create and distribute.” Seth Godin offers a simpler definition: “the only marketing that’s left.”

The demand for quality content – content that connects with decision-makers – continues to grow. Good content generates strong organic search traffic and cements a foundation for your brand as a thought leader in your industry.



Content moves your prospects through the buyer’s journey, reinforcing relationships at every stage of the sales funnel. But absent an effective content marketing strategy, it is almost impossible to hit your mark.

According to recent Content Marketing Institute

data, 92% of marketers said their organization sees content as a critical business asset. Yet among B2B companies, Less than one-third of reported they believe their content was effective. The reason behind this is simple: only about 46% of marketers have a documented strategy.

The prevailing myth of B2B Content Marketing

Let's start with the myth of B2B content marketing

The prevailing myth in B2B content marketing says this: keep on blogging and sooner or later you will open up a torrent of leads: they will flow in all day, and you'll rank, convert and create demand. Just keep blogging!

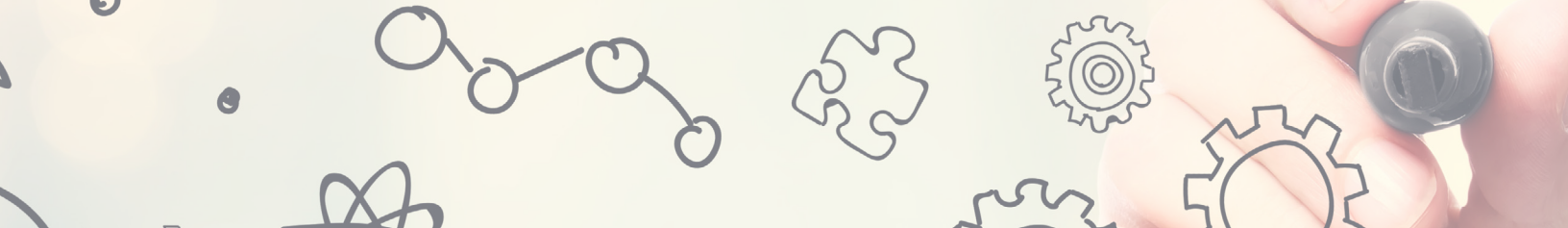
But the reality is actually much different: some content strategies achieve results within a reasonable timeframe, while others just never get there.

Why is that? Because in the latter case, the key connection between content and traffic is missing. And therein lies the nugget of the myth:

Visitors click from blog posts to service pages and then become leads.

This is actually very rare for B2B companies.





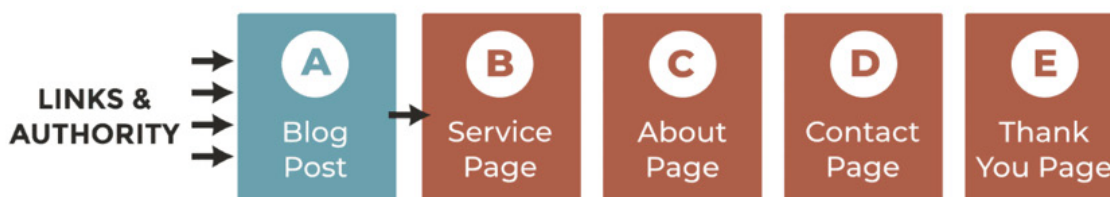
If you've ever studied the lead generation conversion rates for visitors who start on a blog post, you know that it's anemic -- usually just a fraction of one percent. Why so low? Because these visitors have *information-intent*, not *commercial-intent* -- they're looking to read what you posted, not find out if what you do fills a need they have.

Wouldn't it be amazing if a blog reader had an "a-ha!" moment while reading and decided they needed your services? It rarely happens, because that's not why they're on your site.

But -- blog content serves another, critical purpose: blog content is important because of its indirect benefits. Blogs help the service pages rank by being link-worthy. Here's the connection:

- No content? No one will link to you.
- No links? You'll have low Domain Authority.
- Low Domain Authority? The service pages will never rank for those competitive commercial-intent phrases.

When a blog post attracts a link, it makes every page on the site more authoritative, more likely to rank. That's how links and authority work.



The primary goal of the B2B content strategy is this: get the service pages to rank for commercial-intent phrases. The *money* phrases.

If you're a B2B content strategist, you know there are two kinds of visitors: those who just want information and those who actually may need your

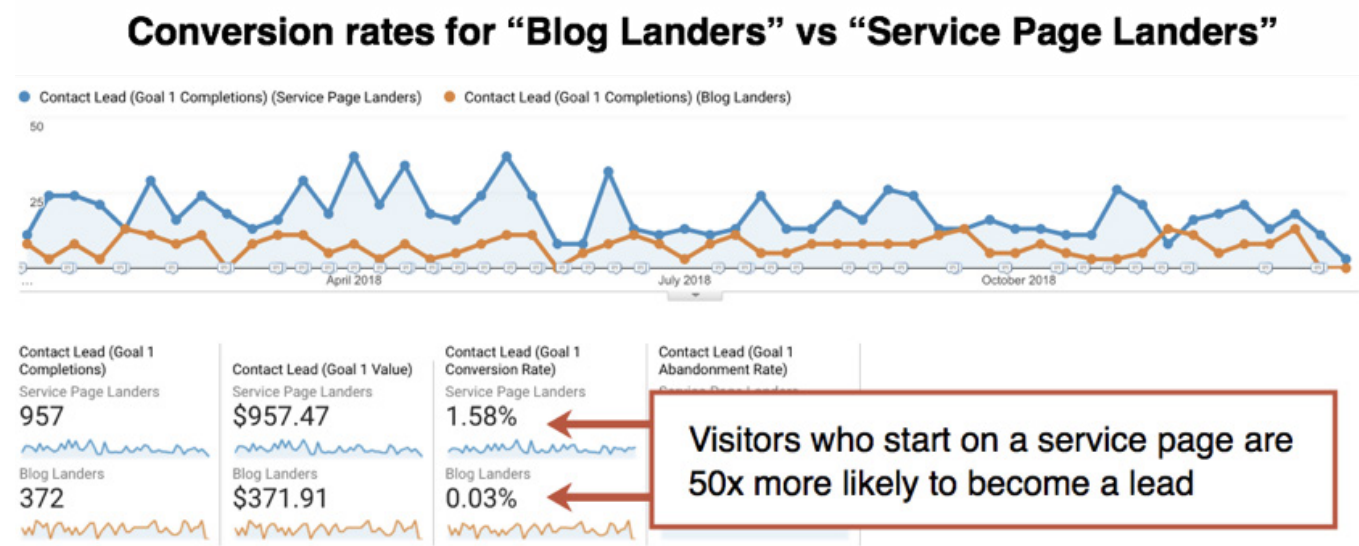


services. And the latter – the commercial intent visitors – are far more likely to convert into leads: they’re pre-qualified.

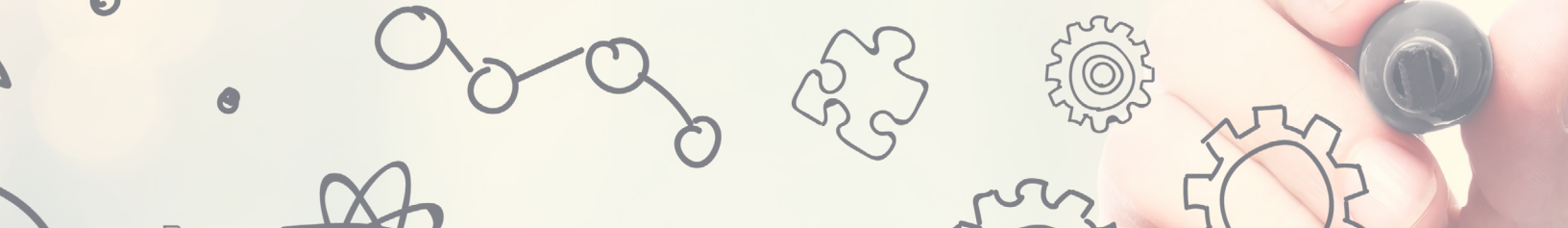


But Service pages are definitely not link-worthy. Think about it this way: If someone is looking for public relations services, do you think they’re lingering on an agency’s Services page? Ever link to someone’s service page? I didn’t think so. And the corollary to this is as follows: a website without a blog is an online brochure – and one with very low domain authority and rankings.

With a few quick segments in Google Analytics, you can see the conversion rates for the two types of visitors for a website – and it’s very illuminating: It’s the visitors who land on our service pages that drive demand. We won’t



Source: Orbit Media



be successful until we get qualified visitors to those pages. And to get those pages to rank, we need links and to get links, we need a strategy.

The 6 Key Components of a Successful B2B Content Strategy

SEO pioneer and expert Barry Feldman likes to say, “Your website is the mousetrap. Your content is the cheese.” The first and most important step in a successful content strategy is to build the best possible mousetrap (our search -> conversion optimized sales pages) before you start creating cheese (blog content).

1. Build the Core

We begin with the centerpiece of all digital marketing: the search=optimized, conversion-optimized sales page. You build the page to attract and convert qualified visitors: the people who need our help and our services. It’s optimized in two ways:

Optimized to rank (SEO)

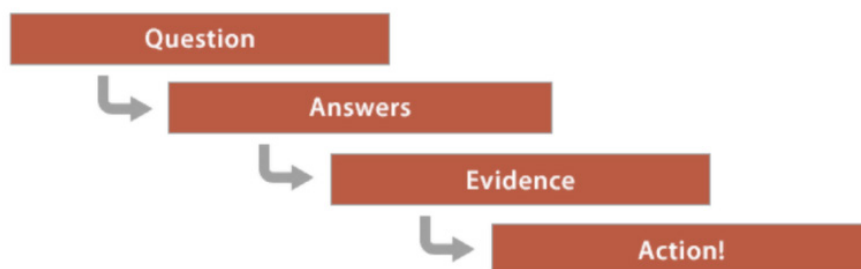
It targets a commercial-intent keyphrase for which it has a realistic chance of eventually ranking, based on the Domain Authority of our site. It indicates relevance for that phrase using all the usual SEO best practices.

Optimized to convert (CRO)

It answers all of the visitors most likely questions. It supports those answers with evidence. It includes calls to action and leverages human psychology wherever possible, using the usual conversion optimization best practices.

And please note that conversion optimization has a particular framework: answer your visitors’ top questions, address their main objections, support our

messages with evidence and ensure you include simple and specific calls to action.

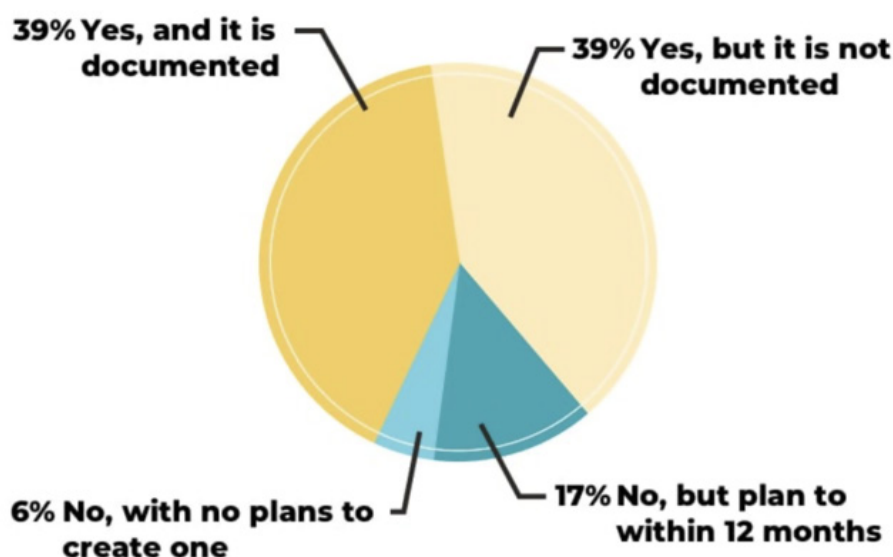


2. Define The Mission

Next, we need to make sure we lay the foundation of our content marketing: the content mission statement. It outlines three critical elements:

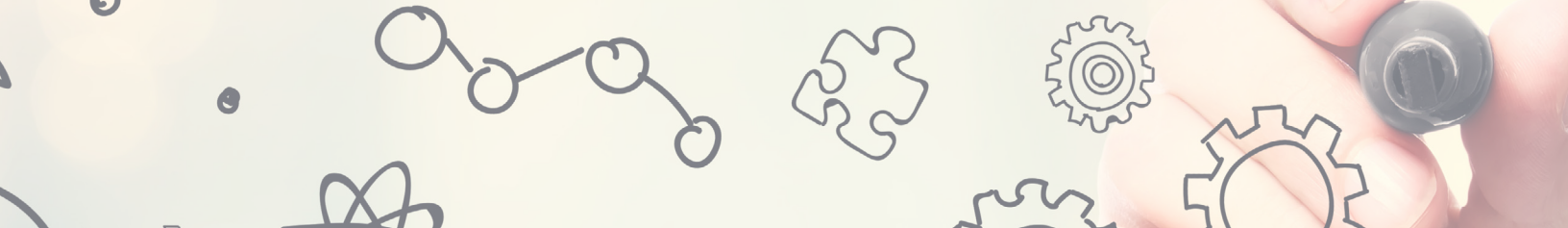
- **Audience:** Who is the target we need to reach
- **Topics:** The content most relevant to who we are trying to reach
- **Benefits:** Why that content is relevant to the target audience

This is an obvious step...right? Actually, it is frequently overlooked.



Source: Orbit Media

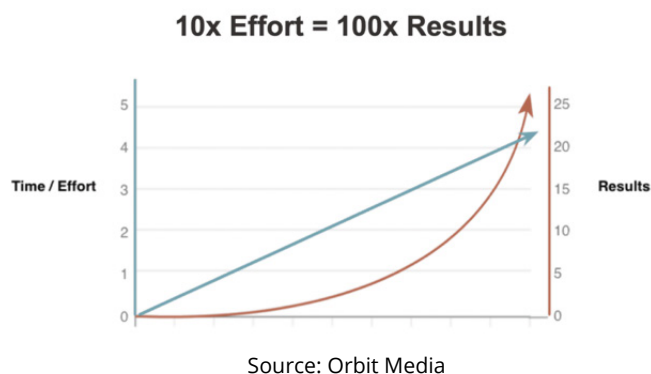
According to the 2019 B2B Content Marketing Survey, only 39% of B2B content programs have a documented content strategy. Those that do are twice as likely to report success in their content marketing.



3. Publish Research

Next up? something simple: beat every content program in our industry by being more relevant, useful and original. I know – that doesn't sound simple, but here is how you separate and differentiate yourself: conduct and publish original research.

Original research is a powerful component: it makes your website the primary source of new data. It's the most link-worthy content you could possibly create, so it's a critical foundational element to our content strategy.



4. Write for current prospects

Your best source of content is your client's own audience: when you talk to prospects and customers, you learn their pain points, issues and worries. You find out what questions they have. It's the job of your content to answer their questions.

Two great things happen when you write content that answers the questions your client's prospects are asking:

- Your clients can send the article to companies that are currently in their pipeline, keeping those conversations going
- Your clients' sales and marketing teams are unified in their messaging, and they can send the link to future prospects who have that same question.

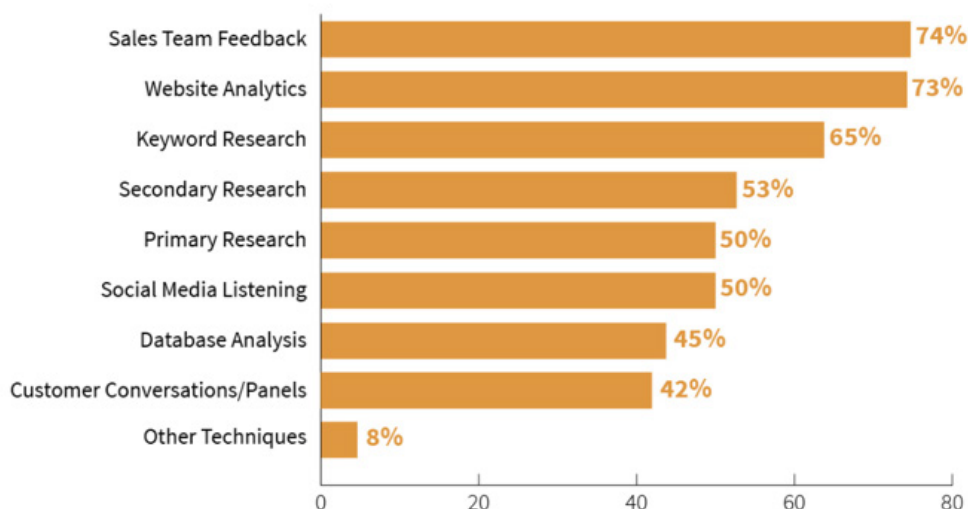
Two points here:

The best content marketers work closely with sales and marketing teams. It's

usually hard to be in meetings when you're on the agency side developing content, but push to be on sales calls and listen for questions and answers, or to engage with the sales team – this will significantly .

Relatively few B2B content marketers research their audience by talking to their customers. According to the latest Content Marketing Institute research, only 42% say they have conversations with customers as part of their audience research.

Techniques B2B Marketers Use to Research Their Target Audience for Content Marketing (All Respondents)



Base: B2B content marketers whose organizations research target audiences. Aided list; multiple responses permitted.
2019 B2B Content Marketing Benchmarks, North America: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs

Source: Content Marketing Institute

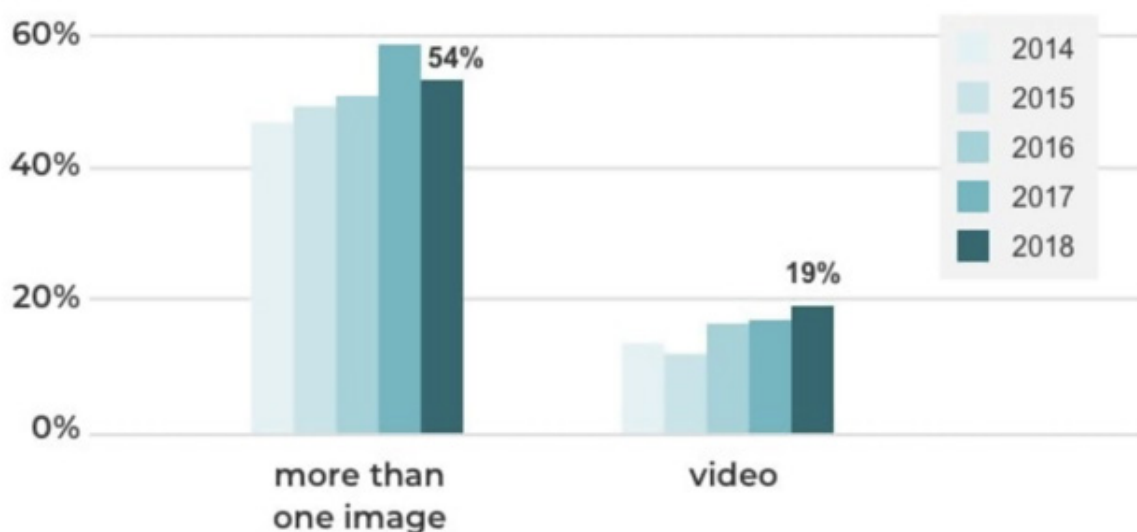
5. Use visuals

The foundation of every successful content strategy is great text – well-written articles. That said, every successful content strategy also uses visual formats regularly (images and video).

I'm sure you've noticed that the most engaging blog posts now include

multiple images. In fact, nearly 20% of the top B2B blogs regularly creates video (source).

And metrics clearly show: B2B decision-makers are engaging more with visual content: We need to create more visual versions of our most important content.



Source: Orbit Media

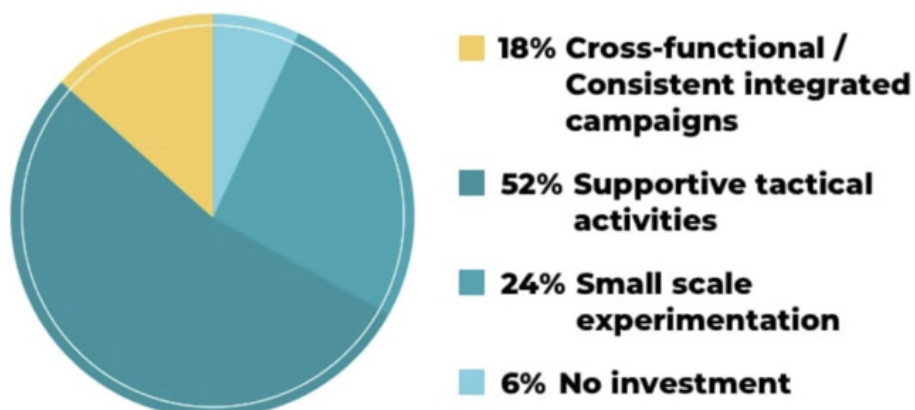
6. Collaborate with influencers

Collaborating with influencers has multiple benefits for your content strategy – it accelerates the network effect, it lends greatness by association, and everything is better with friends. Here are five quick benefits to collaborating with influencers:

- Enhances the quality of your content (assuming they're experts)
- Drives increased traffic from social media (assuming they share)
- Adds credibility (assuming they are reputable and support your message)
- It's good for your personal network (assuming you keep in touch)
- It's more fun! (assuming you like people.)

But...

Only 18% of B2B brands have ongoing influencer marketing campaigns



Source: Orbit Media

And please note: this does not have to be expensive or time-consuming. In fact, “organic influencer marketing” (which is really just collaborative content marketing) is free and can save you time.

More brands are investing in the tools

and resources necessary to better position their value proposition online. More brands are accelerating their progress in understanding how to create an environment that draws visitors in and then engages them – whether they have commercial intent or information intent – and effectively moves them from the top of the funnel down..

We hope this look at B2B Content Marketing gives you inspiration to re-examine how you approach your content marketing strategy. We’d love to connect with you if you’re eager to learn more.

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About the Author:

Brian has been in PR since buffing his (questionable) high school credentials for higher ed consideration. That early success sparked a communications career spanning entertainment, consumer, and technology — always with a singular focus on getting the story right.



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