

2014

ESSENTIAL GUIDE

CONTENT

MARKETING

- 3 companies using content marketing to fuel the customer lifecycle
- 4 ways marketers use content to increase brand awareness and sales
- 12 content marketing gaffes to avoid

A supplement to

DIRECT
MARKETING
NEWS


The Independent
Authority for Direct and
Digital Marketers

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ASK ME WHERE I
GET MY PROTEIN
ONE MORE TIME
AND YOU'LL
HAVE QUINOA
COMING OUT OF
YOUR EARS.*

* AMERICANS EAT
MORE THAN 1,000,000
ANIMALS...A DAY AN HOUR.



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They're rare, but I need to see
where we can improve.

MY BIGGEST
DESIGN INFLUENCES
ARE CONSUMERS. They
always will be because they're
the ones I'm trying to please
and how I judge my success.



DELTA

+DATAENTRY

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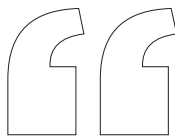
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Research Corp.



"Knowing your audience well enables the creation of compelling content."

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The Content Marketing Obsession

The age-old practice of content marketing, revitalized through digital, is more alluring than ever.



Ginger Conlon
Editor-in-Chief
Direct Marketing News

Vinyl records, remember them? The Duran Duran album *Rio* you had in 1982? Or David Bowie's *Scary Monsters (and Super Creeps)* from 1980? Then CDs came along and all but wiped vinyl out.

Well, not only are vinyl albums back, but they're also moving well beyond the niche they've been lingering in for the past 30 or so years. According to *Billboard*, in 2012 vinyl album sales were up 19% over 2011 and totaled 1.4% of U.S. album sales, compared to 0.4% in 2008.

That's content marketing.

Marketers have been quietly using content to attract and engage customers for decades—advertorials, branded products like cookbooks, seminars, white papers, and more. But now that digital media and distribution have made it easier than ever to create and share content with the right customers at the optimal time in their lifecycle, marketers have gotten their content marketing groove on in a big way.

Today many marketers are, dare I say it, obsessed with content marketing—but understandably so. There's a great deal to consider. What's the

right long-term strategy, and the ideal content and channel mix to support it? Who should create and distribute it? Which success metrics are best? How often should all of those elements change?

What's more, content marketing plays many roles in the overall marketing mix. In some cases content marketing is about moving customers through the purchase funnel or bolstering customer engagement and loyalty. In other cases it's about branding. Consider LCA Vision's view: "Someone

“Marketers have been quietly using content to attract and engage customers for decades...”

may not be in the market [for Lasik] right now, but as their eyesight starts to wear down, they'll start doing research,” Mark Stevens, director of digital marketing at LCA Vision, says in “Content Marketing Gets Creative” (page 6). “We want to be seen as the authority on Lasik.... We aren't seeing a lot of additional sales this year, but we expect to in the next year or two.”

Goal oriented

Additionally, the many roles content marketing plays vary depending on where customers are in their purchase cycle or lifecycle. Different content and channels work best at different stages in the prospect and customer lifecycle, and getting the right mix of both will help content marketing achieve maximal effectiveness. This requires a deep understanding of customers, and their needs and expectations; also essential is having a specific way to measure success. As Bob Egner, VP of product management at content management developer EPiServer, says in “Content Marketing Fuels the Customer Lifecycle” (page 10): “You have to know the journey [and] the objective your prospects and customers have in mind that they want to achieve. And you need to be able to measure how effective that content was at helping the visitor move through the journey.”

As opportunities for using content to attract, engage, educate, and convert customers continue to proliferate, content marketers must devise, deploy, and maintain a robust, multichannel content-management strategy. But only 44% of B2B marketers and 39% of B2C marketers have a documented strategy, according to Content Marketing Institute. As James Hill, chief strategy officer at custom media company McMurtry/TMG, points out in “Strategy First, Then Content” (page 14), “[A good strategy is] going to boil down to, what actions or thoughts are you trying to prompt with your customer?” Because, ultimately, content marketing that resonates enough to get customers to engage, purchase, or share is music to marketers' ears. ■



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CONTENT MARKETING GETS CREATIVE

4 ways marketers are using content to increase brand awareness and drive sales



By Phil Britt

Brand have used content marketing for years to attract, engage, educate, and convert customers. But the relatively simple content marketing efforts of the past (e.g. advertorials) are being replaced by more strategic campaigns and initiatives that leverage digital channels to drive engagement, referrals, and purchase. Businesses as disparate as the Four Seasons Hotel, audio manufacturer DTS, camera and video lens manufacturer Sigma Corp. of America, and LasikPlus corporate parent LCA Vision are using content marketing in creative ways that drive measurable results.

1. Social influence

Social media sites and online communities present compelling content marketing opportunities for companies that can effectively leverage them. One such company, Chicago's Four Seasons Hotel, worked with Freebie—a company whose app allows users to redeem products available to them based on their social influence rating—on a pilot program to use the influence of socially connected customers to drive more business to the hotel's Allium restaurant.

Allium offered a free lunch or dinner to patrons who, based on a Freebie algorithm measuring social influence, would be able to generate more than 50,000 social media impressions for the restaurant. About 130 partook in the lunch and about 50 in the dinner.

"A lot of [companies] say that they can help us with social media marketing, but they're not able to measure the results," says Jann Kaiser, the hotel's director of food and beverage. "The idea is similar to Groupon or daily deals. [Freebie] bring[s] us business."

However, unlike Groupon or similar campaigns offering deeply discounted or free (typically buy one, get one free) meals but no measurable return, according to Kaiser, the Freebie offer resulted in a measurable 30% increase in restaurant business directly tied to those patrons either returning for another meal or from a guest Freebie tracking showed they had influenced through social channels while having a dinner at Allium.

freebie SOCIAL INFLUENCE IS THE NEW CURRENCY

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Starting at 6:30 pm

Use Uber code **FreebieApp** for \$25 off your uberX ride to or from the event, compliments of Uber

RSVP TO RESERVE YOUR TABLE

Social influence was the "cost" of a meal at Allium.

2. Creating a moving experience

YouTube is one of the most powerful video forces in the world, with more than one billion viewers each month, according to the company's blog. DTS, which makes high-quality, high-definition audio for the OEM market, is using a content marketing strategy developed by Ignited that features YouTube videos highlighting DTS's products. As an "ingredient" brand, DTS is seeking to position itself as a component consumers want, like the Intel Inside campaign. The videos are more effective than print for gaining an emotional response from consumers, according to Ignited CEO and Founder Eric Johnson. Sponsored videos featured on Internet entertainers Rhett & Link's channel on YouTube already have more than one million video views, twice the number the channel had promised.

"We're an ingredient brand," says Geir Skaaden, DTS senior VP of products and platforms. "All technology companies like us have a challenge. Consumers don't care about the technology, they care about the experience."

The experience DTS promotes through YouTube is the quality of its audio components. The idea is similar to the Intel Inside campaign that the computer chipmaker ran a few years ago. The DTS videos show people hearing something unexpected via DTS audio technology, which offers surround-sound type audio. For example, one spot features a consumer using a DTS headset, then flinching when hearing an apparent dog attack from behind. However, the video shows someone holding a docile cat behind the person with the headset. The reach of the videos DTS posts on YouTube is double what would be expected for the investment, says Skaaden, who adds that the videos do a better job of reaching its young target audience than does a typical television ad or homemade YouTube videos.

Broadcast and cable program impressions are gone once an ad has aired, Johnson says, but YouTube videos stay on the Internet indefinitely, so the one million impressions can do nothing but grow. The monthly visits to the company's Facebook page have doubled since the campaign began earlier

this year.

Subway takes a more brand-focused approach to video. The sandwich chain is using a miniseries, *4 to 9ers*, to raise brand awareness. Its videos, which originated on Hulu, feature the typical teenage Subway worker who works a 4-to-9 shift. The videos target teens, some of who work at Subway

themselves or have friends who do. More than 380,000 hours of the videos have been watched since the launch late this summer, according to Stuart McLean, CEO of Content & Co., which created the videos.

The videos also have a life outside of Hulu; viewers have shared them 25 million times on YouTube and via Facebook and Twitter.



Subway is using a video miniseries to raise brand awareness.



DTS videos show people hearing unexpected sounds.

3. Using action to drive reaction

Customers get 10% of their knowledge from reading and the other 90% from video and audio, according to research from the Visual Teaching Alliance.

With so many options available to its customers, Sigma Corp. of America decided to use video as a primary source of product information on its website. The videos, produced by video services provider Invodo, show potential consumers' different uses for its lenses. Doing so helps prospective customers determine which is best for their needs. The videos help customers assess lens performance in a way that photographs or product spec sheets simply can't, according to Jack Howard, new media specialist at Sigma Corp. of America.

In addition to using the videos as companion pieces to online product information, Sigma has repurposed them to run as fillers between streaming videos from conferences.



Sigma Corp. product experts share their advice via video.

"They provide us with another video asset," Howard says.

The videos also have led to an increase in online conversions. According to Sigma's metrics report, visitors who watch a product

video are 83% more likely to click the "find a dealer" button than a visitor who doesn't view a video. There are no figures available for the sales from those visits, but Howard believes the correlation is high.

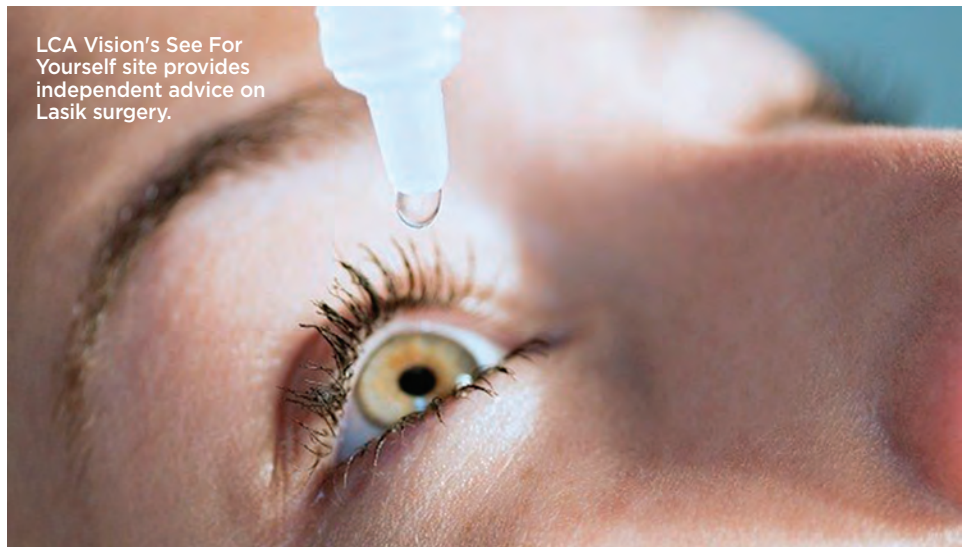
4. Sourcing expert information

When potential patients seek health-related advice on the Web, they want information from medical experts. Marketing medical or health-related products or services by just focusing on price or product features isn't enough for today's consumer, notes Mark Stevens, director of digital marketing at LCA Vision. "People today want somebody to inform them before they sell them," he says.

That's particularly true when it comes to procedures like Lasik surgery. "Someone may not be in the market right now, but as their eyesight starts to wear down, they'll start doing research," Stevens says. "We want to be seen as the authority on Lasik surgery."

LCA Vision teamed with Empower Media Marketing to develop See For Yourself, an independent editorial platform with physician-authored articles, testimonials, and other information regarding Lasik surgery.

The site launched late this past summer; while it's difficult to correlate sales directly



LCA Vision's See For Yourself site provides independent advice on Lasik surgery.

from the See For Yourself effort, Stevens says the company has seen an increase in online and phoned-in bookings, and increased patient time spent on the company's website.

Such a marketing effort isn't designed for

immediate purchases, but rather to position the company for when the prospect is ready to buy, Stevens says. "We aren't seeing a lot of additional sales this year, but we expect to in the next year or two." ■

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CONTENT MARKETING FUELS THE CUSTOMER LIFECYCLE

One blog post read infers infatuation. Two white paper downloads and you're going steady. Three mailing-list opens says it's serious....

By Jason Compton

Successful content marketing is not a deluge of videos, tweets, mailings, and more. Developing and sustaining a customer relationship means providing prospects and customers with content that resonates with customers' needs and preferences. Those expectations change as prospects become customers, and as customers move along the customer lifecycle. Yet, according to the Content Marketing Institute, barely four in 10 B2B marketers use lifecycle-sensitive content.

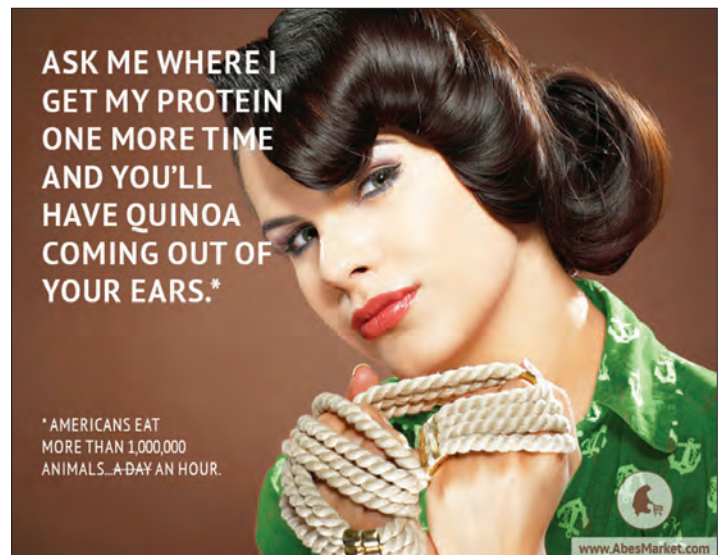
"We assume that if we just push people faster by inundating them with more content, they'll be convinced that they're brilliant if they buy from us," says Liz Miller, VP of operations and programs at CMO Council. "Customers aren't going along with that; in fact, they're rebelling, because so few companies are actually [articulating] challenges in the way customers think about them."

And since content marketing strategies need to be relevant to the customers they serve, there's no single, industry-agnostic recipe for identifying the perfect content for each stage of the customer lifecycle. "You have to know the journey [and] the objective your prospects and customers have in mind that they want to achieve," says Bob Egner, VP of product management at content management developer EPiServer. "And you need to be able to measure how effective that content was at helping the visitor move through the journey."

Abe's Market, Yoh Services, and Outside Lands are three businesses that have taken their own unique approach to successfully aligning content marketing with their customers' lifecycle, and moving those customers along the path of increased engagement.

Abe's Market: Content feeding commerce

Online natural products grocer Abe's Market is looking to secure lifetime customers who want a healthier lifestyle. Some of its customers have been organic diehards for decades, while others are just beginning



Abe's Market mixes facts and snark to capture customers' attention.

to explore the natural foods category. Kimberley Grayson, Abe's chief revenue officer, doesn't try to pigeonhole every visitor into a definable slot on a customer lifecycle chart. Instead, the grocer's strategy focuses on engaging and educating visitors on a continuous basis.

Yet every brand needs a hook to lure in new buyers, and Abe's best weapon for engaging prospects and customers in the early stages of the customer lifecycle is its Dishing Dirty campaign, which exemplifies Grayson's focus on "snackable content." Aimed at female customers with an appreciation for snark, the campaign operates on Tumblr and on the Abe's site, and blends tongue-in-cheek barbs with a pro-health

THE NUMBERS

43%

→ B2B marketers whose content is lifecycle-sensitive
Content Marketing Institute

3

→ Times longer Abe's Market visitors spend on the site when viewing Scoop online magazine
Abe's Market

15

→ Number of content views per year that qualifies a Yoh prospect as "high interest"
Yoh Services

82%

→ Marketers who increased content production in 2013
B2B Technology Marketing Community

57%

→ B2B marketers who cite "customer retention/loyalty" as a content marketing goal
Content Marketing Institute

and typically product-agnostic message. “Through humor, we’re able to get people to engage with highly sharable content and spread truths about some less-than-better products, and their alternatives,” she says. “Some like the humor-based approach, but we [also] provide deeper, authority-based article content.”

For established visitors and shoppers, Abe’s built Scoop, a daily resource combining recipes, articles, and expert advice under the umbrella of a monthly theme. Only some Scoop articles contain direct product links, but Abe’s has found consistent uplift regardless of the type of content touched by a potential shopper. Visitors who engage with Scoop convert twice as often and are 10% more likely to make a repeat purchase. Even more significantly, Scoop visitors who return for a second purchase have an average order size 50% higher than repeat buyers who don’t read the online magazine. “We’re pleased to say that content does drive commerce,” Grayson says.

Yoh: Content for hire

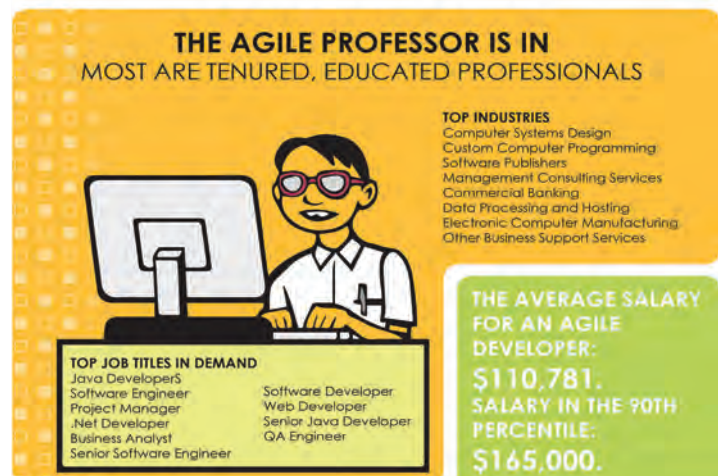
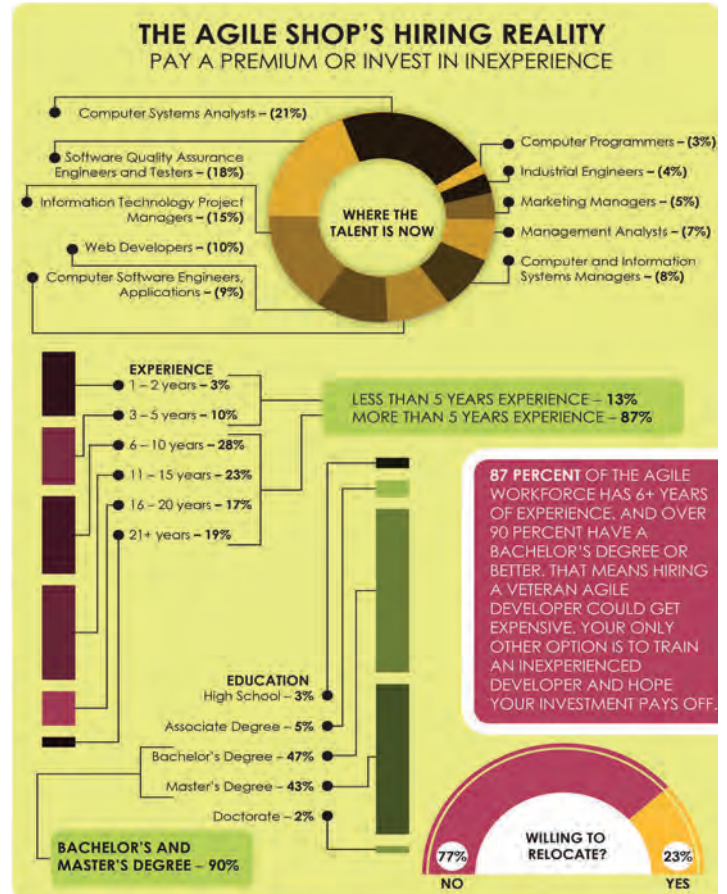
Staffing firm Yoh Services LLC pairs midsize and large enterprises with the technical resources they need to complete projects, staff programs, and manage personnel. Joel Capperella, Yoh’s VP of marketing, says that the significant time investment required for a content marketing strategy pays off in the form of a higher profile and a more trusted voice throughout the customer lifecycle. “We changed from the mind-set of the early 2000s, from just getting the number of leads up to lining up our buyers well in advance of their demand,” he says. “It’s our job to understand the talent market, so that when demand comes up [we’re] ready, and that’s why our outreach typically begins six months ahead of that demand.”

Clean, eye-catching, and carefully researched infographics play an important role in establishing Yoh’s voice of authority. For example, an infographic on agile development, a hot trend in technical project work, gives clients a clear understanding of the tough competition for qualified candidates in the biggest tech markets, while demonstrating Yoh’s mastery in the space. “It’s one of our best-performing assets, because it positions us both for candidates and for clients,” Capperella says.

Yoh does much of its prospecting through search engine optimization on industry-specific terms, but relies on content marketing to move potential clients through the marketing funnel. Using HubSpot’s inbound marketing platform, Yoh shares vendor-neutral tips on employee engagement, social media, and training. Yoh’s content also provides deeper insight on such topics as how customers can enhance their recruiting infrastructure and evaluate their hiring cost models. As prospects and customers engage with more content, they’re sent links to blog posts on related topics and invited to Web events, both private and third party.

Inbound content is also a part of Yoh’s lifecycle marketing to attract candidates—the company works with Vine Consulting to attract new talent candidates, including soliciting portfolios from video game developers in the form of a six-second video. The effort drew in hundreds of new candidates and established another reliable social media presence: LinkedIn, which remains the company’s chief outlet for content marketing promotion. “You have to encourage employees to fill their social media feeds by sharing your content,” Capperella says.

AGILE DEVELOPMENT



Infographics are a key part of Yoh Services’ content mix.

Yoh's services run the gamut from one-time project work to long-term hiring and personnel management, so there's a great deal of room to grow relationships to multiple divisions inside a single client company. Consequently, the company closely monitors not only how many units of content are being viewed by a single company, but also how many different people appear to be reading them. One major client demonstrated that it was primed for expanding the relationship when Yoh noticed that a half-dozen people were hitting content. "When we notice those levels of activity," Capperella says, "it helps us qualify and get a salesperson engaged."

Outside Lands: Rocking fan-generated content

Even organizations with a unique or limited customer lifecycle can benefit from content marketing. The promotion for San Francisco music festival Outside Lands starts weeks in advance, when dozens of bands are announced and buzz begins to build. But this year, for the sixth-annual event, promoter Another Planet Entertainment (APE) decided to use fan-generated content to fuel the frenzy during the three days of music and fun. "We want to engage both concert-goers who were there, and those who weren't but wish they were," says Jill DiBartolomeo, marketing manager for APE.

APE worked with social media curator Content (Ctrl) to enhance its Morning Dew daily newsletter, sent to the Outside Lands mailing list, with fan-generated photos from the previous day's social streams. Each edition of the newsletter included the most popular images with the official #outsidelands hashtag. The fan content was a big hit, with some images achieving more than 250,000 impressions, keeping Outside Lands in the social conversation among fans and prospective concert-goers for days, rather than hours. "Typically the 'likespan' of an item runs hot in a feed and can be hidden in minutes," DiBartolomeo says. "These curated images stayed hot for another 24 hours."

Outside Lands was already a sellout event before the introduction of social content, but the promoters are looking to raise its profile and build deeper ties with fans. The payoff won't be clear until next year's event, but DiBartolomeo says that the strong uptake of the social content has already proven its worth. "We'll do it every year," she says. "It was a great way for us to engage our festival-goers, increase exposure of the festival, and build our brand."

Maximizing content at every stage

Keeping customers engaged—and making the most of the investment in content development—requires a commitment to carrying on a conversation, rather



Outside Lands uses fans' social content to fuel its newsletter.

“The core challenge is to deliver value before expecting something in return.”

Dan Siroker,
Optimizely

than relying on big-bang email blasts and individual posts to magically drive results. One way to do so is by repurposing content, which gives it life beyond the initial release. For instance, the work Yoh puts into preparing a webinar is later translated into as many as five blog posts, sustaining a deep discussion of a particular topic. "You want to nurture and develop a relationship with the prospect over time, and you want that relationship to be helpful and not promotional," says Dan Siroker, CEO of content optimization firm Optimizely. "You don't just throw everybody into an inside sales phone bank."

Another straightforward rule everyone can follow is to earn prospect and customers' attention before asking for a lengthy time commitment. For instance, because webinars and video directly demonstrate how a product or service enhances a prospect's life or solves a business problem, they're best used deeper in the funnel. In fact, they're usually ideal for a call-to-action that asks for a commitment to a demo or trial. "Webinars are less effective for pulling in potential buyers at the top of the funnel, but they're great at moving leads to qualified status when [the webcasts] educate," says Kipp Bodnar, director of marketing at inbound marketing content platform HubSpot.

One place brands often go wrong is by creating too much friction in the initial contact, such as firewalling appealing content behind a registration form, which savvy customers fear will immediately lead to a sales call. "The core challenge is to deliver value before expecting something in return," Optimizely's Siroker says. "Businesses make the mistake of requiring contact information before delivering value, but if you keep too much behind a sign-up page, people will just bounce, and you've turned a potentially interested client into a detractor who isn't going to visit again."

When marketers are unsure what type of content or channel of communication would be most effective at moving a customer to a deeper relationship, odds are that they simply aren't doing enough to look past their own four walls. "Anyone thinking in terms of generating leads and using content to move those leads down a funnel may not be thinking from the customer's perspective," EPIserver's Egner says. "Ask what [customers] want to achieve, and create...content that takes them to the next step." ■

Strategy First, Then Content

Creating marketing content without a plan will waste time, resources, and effort.

By Martha Spizziri

Most companies that create marketing content don't have a strategy. In fact, only 44% of B2B marketers and 39% of B2C marketers have a documented content marketing strategy, according to Content Marketing Institute's (CMI) "B2B Content Marketing" study. The research also found that fewer than half of the marketers surveyed thought their organization was effective at content marketing.

A content marketing program must answer three questions to be effective, says CMI founder Joe Pulizzi: Is it driving revenue? Is it saving money? Is it creating happier customers? Instead, the approach marketers often take is to try to find content to fill each channel, Pulizzi says. "I call it filling buckets. Fill in the Facebook bucket, fill in the blog bucket. But there's no thoughtful plan behind why [they're] doing [it] in the first place and what the outcome should be."

As content marketing continues to grow in importance due to customers' changing purchase and engagement habits, so, too, does the need for marketers to craft a thoughtful, comprehensive approach to it. This includes such elements as strategy, content type, and distribution frequency.

Why content?

Before arbitrarily posting a tweet or blog or distributing white papers, marketers need to set their overall content marketing strategy. "Without a clear set of business goals, you're not going to have good content-strategy goals," says James Hill, chief strategy officer at custom media company McMurphy/TMG. "[A good strategy is] going to boil down to, what actions or thoughts

are you trying to prompt with your customer?" For instance, if the objective is to acquire email addresses, the first step might be to bring people to your website. So, the strategy's goals might be to get into



THE NUMBERS

93%

→ B2B marketers who use content marketing

90%

→ B2C marketers who use content marketing

44%

→ B2B marketers who have a documented content strategy

39%

→ B2C marketers who have a documented content strategy

42%

→ B2C marketers who say their organizations are effective at content marketing

34%

→ B2C marketers who say their organizations are effective at content marketing

Source: Content Marketing Institute

the top five search results for specific keywords, boost site traffic, and get conversions.

Once they've clarified the business goals, Hill says, marketers must do research to answer some basic questions: Who are our customers? What are their aspirations? What types of media do they engage with? Where, when, on what type of device, and for how long? Marketers can obtain some of that information through Web and mobile analytics, social media monitoring, and the like. But it's also imperative to talk to customers, CMI's Pulizzi notes. This may be through such avenues as surveys, online communities, and focus groups. This combined insight will help to inform the overall strategy, as well as specific elements within it like targeting.

Content gains power when it's tailored to different audience segments. "Within healthcare, we might be writing for millennials versus baby boomers versus retirees," Hill says. This tailoring may also help to determine channels. Younger customers might prefer to watch videos on their smartphones, for instance.

Learn to be choosy

With goals set and customer segments and preferences analyzed, marketers then need to determine what type of content to create, and how often they should share it. "It's generally a bad idea to cast a wide net of bland, repurposed content," Hill says. "That's just interruptive and clutter.... Go with [short], superbly crafted, incredibly engaging content first. Then build on that."

Similarly, marketers should be discerning about which social channels to use for distributing their content. "People think, 'Oh we just finished this huge research project or white paper, and we're going to slam all the channels with that message at the same time.'"

That doesn't work," Pulizzi says.

LinkedIn is a primary channel for many B2B companies, including Kelly Services. Kelley Services' sales force was already using the platform to connect with prospects, which was important because having employees share content is a significant part of its content strategy. Employee sharing can easily double or triple the amount of traffic to a piece of content, notes Todd Wheatland, VP of marketing and head of thought leadership at the staffing agency.

The company also uses LinkedIn groups to share content. Group owners can send a LinkedIn-branded email once a week. "The click-through rate on those emails is extraordinarily higher than you would ever get from [a non-LinkedIn] email campaign to a similar group," Wheatland says.

Kelly typically releases two major pieces of new content a month through LinkedIn. The agency also posts on Facebook and its own company channels (a website and blog) a minimum of once a day each, and on Twitter a minimum of five times a day.

Similarly, Delta Faucet Company extensively uses Facebook, Pinterest, Twitter, and Instagram to support its Inspired Living content marketing initiative, which targets consumers who are refurbishing their kitchens and bathrooms, and centers on a comprehensive microsite that includes everything from kitchen and bath design ideas to recipes and water-related trivia. "Pinterest tends to be a channel that's used for inspiration to redesign a room. We have a ton of great photo assets. [It's] a place to really showcase a lot of [it]," says Dave Morse, digital marketing strategist at Delta.

Morse uses an editorial calendar to plan Delta's content distribution, and creates a schedule for social posts, too. Delta Faucet is selective about what content it posts to which channel, but Morse notes

12 Things to Ask a Contractor Before Saying "You're Hired!"

It was love at first faucet. You were so taken by the job your neighbor's contractor did, turning her 1980s-era kitchen into a 21st century showplace, that you're ready to book him, like, yesterday. Stop! Before hiring the only contractor you know (or hire to renovate your kitchen or bathroom, get referrals for other pros, obtain estimates and ask a lot of questions. We can help you with that last one.

- 1 How long have you been in business?**
Look for a pro with at least three to five years' experience, a good reputation and lots of satisfied customers.
- 2 Do you have a license—and I don't mean driver's?**
Most states don't require general contractors to have a license. But if a potential candidate has one, verify that the license is current with the local or state government agency that issued it. Like most and most Hollywood romances, licenses have an expiration date.
- 3 Who pays the medical bills if a worker trips over a hammer?**
If the contractor has taken out workers' compensation insurance, the stricken employee will most likely be covered again, check that the policy is current. If there's no insurance, you may have to cough up the cash.
- 4 What happens if you break my antique ornate sculpture?**
General liability insurance means that if something on your property gets broken or damaged during the renovation, you'll likely get reimbursed without it. All you may get is a sincere apology.
- 5 You've done this before, right?**
A successful contractor should be able to show you examples of projects similar in scope and budget to your own. Only consider companies that are proficient in remodeling the room you need done.
- 6 What time will your crew start working? I like to sleep in.**
The hammering and drilling often begin early in the a.m. and may continue until early evening. Since most contractors only work Monday through Friday, plan on giving your beauty rest on the weekends.
- 7 Are you going to apply for a permit?**
Building codes vary from town to town, but you generally need one whenever structural work is involved. Most contractors will take care of the application process.
- 8 On TV, putting in a new kitchen takes about three commercial breaks. What's your timeline from demo to completion?**
In the real world, a renovation can take anywhere from a few weeks to a few months, depending on the scope of the work being done. If your contractor has other jobs going on at the same time, it may take even longer.
- 9 Can you stick to my budget? I mean, really?**
If your wish list and budget are rooted in reality, an experienced contractor should be able to give you much of what you want. Still, you'll probably need to prioritize which items mean the most to you.
- 10 My sister's contractor gave her a warranty—will you?**
Just as you wouldn't buy a car or a refrigerator without a warranty, don't "buy" a renovation unless it comes with one. Reputable contractors stand by their work, and that means giving you a written warranty.
- 11 What do you mean you don't take credit cards?**
Smaller companies may only accept checks or cash. Be prepared to make a partial payment upfront, another payment mid-job and the balance on completion.
- 12 How about some references?**
Smart contractors welcome the chance for satisfied customers to take up their work. Call at least three recent references and ask about work habits and the job outcome. And always ask: Would you hire this person again?

DELTA
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For additional remodeling tips and tricks that will save you hassle and heartache, visit: deltafaucet.com/inspiredliving

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Delta Faucet's Inspired Living content informs and entertains.

that if “we have an infographic and we feel like it’s supercool, we’ll publish to Twitter and Facebook.” Infographics and other visual content are the most likely to be shared.

Mixing it up

Like Morse, Beth Cossette uses an editorial calendar, but stresses that it has to leave room for trending topics. Cossette, marketing manager, campaigns and social media solutions group at CenturyLink Business, notes that the telecommunications company engages its business customers and prospects with content postings via its blog, LinkedIn, Twitter, and SlideShare. But unlike the many marketers focused primarily on digital content distribution, CenturyLink Business sometimes weaves direct mail into the mix.

The company recently learned from a brand-tracking study and a monitoring program it conducted with tech-marketing Mazon Zimblar that CenturyLink Business’s customers wanted to know where technology was heading. So it hired industry experts to write an eBook called *Business Technology 2020* and created a campaign to distribute it that married direct mail and social media.

Initially, the company created a post for its ThinkGIG blog that summarized and linked to the eBook. The post was pushed out on the various social platforms and shared by the sales force. The strategy was a big win for sales, because it showed that CenturyLink could help customers prepare for the future.

Complementing the social distribution was a direct mail piece that included a Magic 8 Ball fortune-telling toy with CenturyLink branding inside and out. “We changed some of the answers that show up,” Cossette says. “One [was] ‘CenturyLink knows.’” The packaging featured the eBook branding and recommended questions to ask the Magic 8 Ball, such as, “Will we still be talking about cloud computing in 2020?”

The mailing was especially effective. “We’ve had a number of reps say, ‘We’ve been trying to call this customer for months. Finally,



CenturyLink customized Magic 8 Balls to point customers to its content.

when he got the 8 Ball, he took my call,” Cossette says.

Between the mail and digital campaigns, the eBook has received more than 2.4 million impressions. “We have some big competitors with really sharp brand awareness,” Cossette says. “Just getting those 2.4 million impressions, that’s the tangible result for us.”

And, in fact, forecasting results at the outset is essential to creating a content marketing strategy. Doing so is the only way to determine success. “If you’re a new brand simply trying to get recognized in the marketplace, you can easily say there’s value to having 100,000 people come to [your] website every month,” says McMurtry/TMG’s Hill. Kevin Kerner, managing director at Mason Zimblar, advises measuring a program’s value in two ways: By analyzing on a regular basis how consumers are interacting with content and by linking through to conversion when possible. “The latter is tricky,” he says, “but it can be done.” ■

How to Snag the Top Content Job



Joe Pulizzi, founder, Content Marketing Institute

have to understand that this is marketing,” says Content Marketing Institute Founder Joe Pulizzi. “There are lots of people that

What does it take to land a job as a chief content officer (CCO) or head of content marketing? First, a content chief needs some of the skills of an editor; for example, understanding how to build an audience, tell a story, and manage editorial workflow. “But they also

understand good storytelling and how it moves people.”

Another essential area of expertise is technology: analytics, marketing automation systems, even HTML. “Become a technology junkie. If you’re a data person, you have a big leg up,” Pulizzi says. “Technology and content go hand-in-hand these days.”

A CCO needs effective people skills, too. “Content is the most political thing in an organization. Every division within an organization feels [it’s] responsible for content,” Pulizzi notes. “These are people that can help you market.”

Additionally, chief content marketers need to have a personal social-media pres-

ence. Marketers who don’t use social media won’t have a sufficient understanding of how consumers get, consume, and share information.

Marketers looking to get a top content job should do three things, Pulizzi asserts. First, have a blog and update it regularly. The blog must position the writer as an expert on a specific topic related to his business or personal life. Second, publish a print book. “Today it’s easy, because anybody can [self-]publish a book and it doesn’t cost an arm and a leg to do it,” Pulizzi notes. Third, take public speaking engagements.

“If you do these three things...you will never be out of a job, ever,” Pulizzi says.

12 CONTENT MARKETING GAFFES TO AVOID

AS THE POPULARITY OF USING CONTENT MARKETING INCREASES EXPONENTIALLY, SO TOO DOES THE POTENTIAL FOR MISSTEPS.

By Ginger Conlon

Content marketing may well be a recently coined term for an age-old practice, but that doesn't mean marketers have it easy. With the continuous proliferation of communications channels and media—and ever-increasing customer interest in content for information, education, and entertainment—marketers instead are challenged to present relevant content through the most appropriate channels at the optimal time to the right customers. It's a challenge that presents plenty of opportunity—for errors.

So we asked a dozen content marketing experts the following: What's one all-too-common bad practice in content marketing, and what should marketers do instead? Here, their responses.



ALEX KRAWITZ | VP, Content Development, Firstborn

One bad practice in content marketing is when brands embark on a content campaign without first creating a content strategy and a road map for it. Content can be an effective means of achieving marketing objectives, but some fundamental questions should be answered first, the most important being, "Why content?" Also, how is content going to be a workhorse for the brand? What does success—and failure—look like? What should customers walk away with? The answers to these questions form the foundation of a sound strategy. With proper planning, content can work hard for your brand.

TIM RIESTERER | Chief Strategy and Marketing Officer, Corporate Visions

Ask marketers if they think they've effectively prepared their content marketing messages and you'll likely hear a resounding, "Yes." But the sad truth is that too many marketers make one critical mistake: Their content focuses on themselves, what their company does, and what their product features are, rather than on building messages that live in their prospect's story.

The fact is, people innately want to hear about themselves, which means that unless you as a marketer are able to provide your prospects with materials that address their company, their challenges, or their potential gains, chances are your message will be ineffective and, therefore, lost.





LIZ MILLER | VP of Operations and Programs, CMO Council

One disturbing practice is the “Field of Dreams” approach to content development: Build it and they will come. A white paper could be great, but if it isn’t relevant, timely, and trusted it’s just collection of words. Marketers need to track how the ROI of their content actually aligns with and impacts the customers’ journey. Does it help customers make a shift from their status quo? Does it help clarify their decision-making process? Does it help confirm that customers made the right choice? Far too many times we see a content glut that impacts one part of the experience funnel and forsakes the other stages of the journey. Unless you understand the customers’ journey, how can you understand what content helps them along that path? It’s a bit like building a field without understanding baseball—it can be done, but not done well.



ERIC MARCY | Vice President of Demand Generation and Marketing Operations, SAVO

One of the most common bad practices in content marketing is failing to deliver context-based resources. Blindly pushing content to prospects and customers without knowing what they need, whom they’ve spoken to, and what messages are resonating is like sending spam. Marketers need to realize that if they provide content that isn’t based on the specific needs of their prospects and customers, they will not only fail to add value to their marketing and sales conversations, but they also will lose deals. Whether it’s qualifying a lead or closing a deal, marketers must deliver the right content when and where it will be most relevant, or else they’re only undermining all the hard work they put into creating the content to begin with. To ensure that the messages and timing are right, marketers should track each interaction their brand has with prospects and customers, and use an automated system to make this information readily available to their sales and marketing teams.



JAMES O'BRIEN | President, Aarra

It’s an extremely bad practice when brands use content marketing as a sales pitch. Content marketing shouldn’t be about touting your product or service; if it is, you’ll turn off your customers. It’s really that simple. Instead, offer up content that your customers actually need that’s either entertaining or insightful. The content should emphasize quality over quantity. Say you sell a line of high-end car wash products. Create a series of videos that will show your customers how to properly wash, wax, and maintain their cars. Share with your customers some of the secrets that the pros use. Auto products company Ammo is a great example: Owner Larry Kosilla has created several videos that educate viewers on topics like cleaning car glass, installing window tints, and engine detailing. The expertise demonstrated in the videos instills a sense of trust in customers that Kosilla’s products really are superior, making customers more likely to purchase.

FRANS VAN HULLE | CEO, ReviMedia

There's an ongoing debate about what's more important in content marketing: quality or quantity. If you don't publish content often enough, you may not attract as many visitors as you would hope. One bad practice is publishing content that doesn't help you convert visitors into leads or followers. The secret is to strike a balance between quantity and quality, rather than choosing one over the other. A good way to engage your audience and gain leads is to publish content that is relevant and informative to your audience on a regular basis.

**MITCH KANNER** | CEO, 2 Degrees Ventures

Brands often overlook the possibility of enlisting long-form creative partners for their content marketing endeavors. Agency creative has unique skill sets that allow it to speak to consumers about something and, ideally, change behavior. Hollywood knows how to speak to a large audience with narratives that create or sustain pop culture. If the two marry then the best of both worlds are present to



create content with brand context. So, if marketers want to create a story that has the power to penetrate pop culture—one that makes people want to share it and socialize it—they should collaborate with the creative community in Hollywood, where they'll find content creators and storytellers expert in pop culture.

KEVIN KERNER | Managing Editor, Mason Zimble US

We're all content consumers—out there searching for content that meets our needs at any given moment in time. Thus, as content consumers ourselves, we know the difference between good and bad content. What's the secret? I believe there are two primary ingredients: relevance and creativity. Sure, we're all looking for content that meets a unique need, but perhaps just as important is that no one's looking to be bored. Many marketers try to be relevant—and maybe they succeed—but they fail in delivering content with both style and substance. We marketers need to deliver relevant information in creative ways that capture attention and interest. How? By being creative with content ideas. Experiment with formats, themes, and creative images that take a relevant story and make it interesting. Try reimagining content in different ways. It's better for your customers and, frankly, a lot more fun.



CRAIG FITZGERALD | Editorial Director, IMN

One content marketing practice that needs reform is proper budget and resource allocation to execute effective content marketing programs. While content marketing is a priority for marketers, the marketing budget allocated to it doesn't necessarily reflect its importance. According to the results of IMN's content marketing survey conducted this past summer, content marketing was a medium or high priority for 90% of respondents, but for nearly half of respondents (46%) it represented less than 10% of the marketing budget.

As more budget is allocated for content marketing programs, marketers will have adequate resources in place to develop content that they'll be proud of (only 27% of respondents stated that their content establishes their firm as a thought leader), put channel-specific strategies in place, and use basic program tools, such as editorial calendars, to guide content topics and creation responsibilities.

**GEORGE WEBSTER | Director of Content Strategy, Critical Mass**

Think of content marketing as providing the most relevant content to the most relevant persona at the most relevant time to generate a lead or drive a sale. An all-too-common bad practice, certainly within large corporations, is that this fairly simple proposition can get lost. The good news is it's relatively easy to fix. Marketers just need to put someone *with real authority* in charge of content planning and mapping end-to-end throughout a campaign.

Content marketers' number one priority should be to map content to the needs and objectives of buyer personas. This would ensure, for example, that existing content is identified and used to maximum effect. It also ensures content gaps are identified early in the content creation discussion. This allows marketers to then draft a content strategy around all the great content they never knew they had, in addition to all the new content they'll be creating.

CHRIS MARENTIS | CEO and Founder, Surefire Social

Today's digital marketing world is now awash with content, so marketers need to focus on the quality of the content that is produced versus the quantity. Publishing an overabundance of poor content rather

**MATT CREAMER | Executive Editor, kbs+ Content Labs**

A common misperception—and a bad practice—is thinking of content marketing as purely an earned-media activity that doesn't need support with a paid-media budget. It's a result of too many folks refusing to let go of the old paid-earned-owned media slide in their preso decks, which, elegant as it was, doesn't accurately reflect a world where lines between PR, advertising, media, and content are increasingly blurred.

There's no doubt that any content program worth the name needs to have legs on the social Web or be a trigger for PR. But you can't expect your audience or the news media to do all the work for you. The truth is that even the most compelling, relevant content will benefit from living in paid channels. So, it's a smart idea to reserve some budget that will give your content a paid push.



than less frequent but more valuable information is a bad practice. This can make the difference between real engagement and negative consequences for SEO. Additionally, while promotions should be a part of your overall marketing mix, content shouldn't be promotional. Create educational or informative content that relates to your product, local community, or favorite social causes to show your business's personality. Prospects are more likely to comment on, share, and like interesting and relevant posts, which ultimately increases your social signals for SEO and overall online visibility for your business. ■

Ignite Your Content Marketing

5 tips for harnessing internal expertise to create compelling content.

When it comes to content marketing, marketers' most common concern is: How do we do it? They've recognized that content marketing is a smart strategy. The catch is that they're now vexed in the execution phase by the how-to's of sourcing content creation.

The mechanics of the content marketing process are fairly easy to grasp, but the creative challenges of content marketing, including what to write about and what to say, frequently stump marketers. Fortunately, the solution rests within the organization itself, in the form of its own expertise—accessing it is the key to creating great content. Setting the organization's hidden content sources free will help jump-start your content marketing strategy.

Following are five tactics for working around the blind spots that keep valuable content trapped within the organization:

1 Have a goal: Your objective always guides the content creation process. Part of the challenge of getting a content marketing strategy started is the apparent vastness of the mission. *Produce compelling content* is a daunting demand for a novice content marketer. So, start with a more manageable objective, such as *grow our perception as an industry thought leader* or *generate leads*. With a thought leadership objective, you'll probably use ungated content that showcases your expertise and how it can help the customer. With a lead-generation objective, your content is probably gated and designed to capture a lead with an offer. Either way your content message is usually not sales oriented. Rarely will you pitch products or services in your content—save this for your ads. Instead, be helpful by sharing your expertise with customers. Have a clear content objective so you can orient your creation process around it.

2 Understand your audience: Knowing your audience well enables the creation of compelling content. It's a mistake to start churning out content without first studying the audiences for which it's intended. What are their priorities and concerns? Where do they prefer to get information? The enemy of



great content marketing is assuming that you know your target audience extremely well. Validate your assumptions about the audience for your content before you start producing it. Additionally, build in regular synchronization with the audience for your content.

3 Use a prompt: You can get great “starter” content by going to the people in the organization who deal with your target audience—most often the sales or customer service teams. Get their response to this question: What are the top three (or five, or 10) issues that you consistently hear from customers or prospects? It's important to identify the business problems customers are seeking expertise to help them address. Whatever ends up on this list is usually a great starter for content. Every item on this list becomes a core piece of content. Expand each one into a blog post, and then promote it through your social media channels. Host a webinar, make a video, or deliver your expertise in response to these issues through the channels the audience prefers.

4 Keep your ears open: You'll hear some great content ideas in the daily course of interacting with customers. Condition yourself to capture those ideas. For instance, I presented at a conference at which an attendee approached me to chat afterward. He shared that his CEO was on vacation, and that, consequently, the attendee was getting a great

deal of work done. I asked him why and he replied that it's because the CEO was a micro-manager. The discussion inspired a blog post and two webinars for me, and the responses to all of them indicated that many marketers encounter the same problem. These types of content-rich, casual interactions occur regularly. Every time you have one, simply ask yourself how the exchange might be of value to other members of your target audience.

5 Remember shorter is better: Many content marketers misjudge the amount of content they need to provide customers in a given forum. When it comes to ideal content length, shorter is almost always better. The Gettysburg Address is 272 words long; so be Lincoln-esque and prepare just a few appropriate remarks. Blog posts between 400 and 600 words are ideal. Try to keep videos under 90 seconds. If you have more to communicate than you can fit into these boundaries, break the content into two or more parts. You'll end up with more consumable, shareable content as a result. ■



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