



Digital
Marketing
Institute

CONTENT MARKETING

Study Notes

Content Marketing

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LESSON 1: CONTENT MARKETING CONCEPTS AND STRATEGY

CONTENT MARKETING

What is it?

Content marketing is a powerful tool that allows you to bring your potential customers along the journey of what it is that you do and hopefully, convert them. We assign different content formats, types, and styles along every stage of the purchase consideration funnel to help you achieve the best return on investment for your content marketing efforts. We also need to look at the benefits of content marketing.

Benefits

We should assess the benefits of content marketing.

- **Grow:** You can grow your audience. Looking outwards to the general public, or, indeed, your specific target audience, and being able to grow a community around what it is that you're trying to sell.
- **Recruit:** You can recruit brand advocates. Content marketing can help you get a sense of influence or credibility about what it is that you're looking to do in the wider market and recruit people to believe in what you are trying to achieve.
- **Increase:** There is an opportunity with content marketing to increase what we call SEO, which is your search engine optimizing. This is essentially where you appear in the search results for Google or for Bing. Content marketing allows you to increase your position in search engines.
- **Generate:** This involves lead generation. So this is about assessing potential leads that you can convert into sales for your business and new clients that you may want to get on board.
- **Enhance:** This involves enhancing the understanding of your business, enhancing what your proposition is in the market, and enhancing your affinity with potential customers.

TYPES OF CONTENT

Effective content

When creating content for your content marketing efforts, it's important to remember that the aim of this content is to convince your audiences and convert them into customers.

Let's look at some qualities of highly effective content for your content marketing mix.

Relevant

In order to be truly effective, your content needs to be relevant. If you can't see why a customer would engage with this piece of content, or how it helps drive your business agenda, then it may not be worth creating it.

Personalized

It's important to create content that is personalized; content that speaks to your audience at that moment and time, that is relevant to their personal outlook on life, or addresses their pain points. Creating content that serves a personal purpose will have a huge impact on creating a bond and building trust with your intended customers.

Educational

The content needs to be educational. This may be for the wider mix of education around the vertical of the business in which you operate. It may also be education about your specific business at its core, in terms of the services that you offer, who your personnel are, what experiences you have with other previous clients or customers, and so on.

Addresses needs and interests

It's also important to create content that addresses the buyer's needs or interests. It should be relevant to the cultural context of your audiences, and you should be looking to see what problems your content can help solve for your particular audience.

Includes explicit CTAs

It's really important that effective quality content has a call to action. Your customers or your potential audiences need to know what you want them to do as a result of seeing your content. Giving people a clear call-to-action allows them to understand what it is that you're actually selling and brings them on a journey through the conversion funnel.

Demonstrates a solution

Finally, your content must demonstrate that your business is the solution, and that you have a USP.

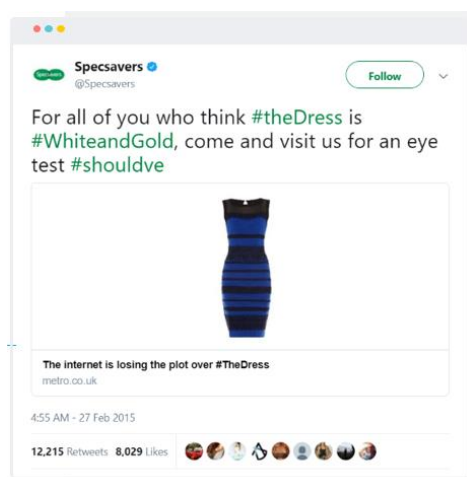
Content groups

Broadly speaking, we can group all content into either **topical** or **evergreen** content. Both types have benefits and limitations when it comes to creating content for your digital marketing efforts.

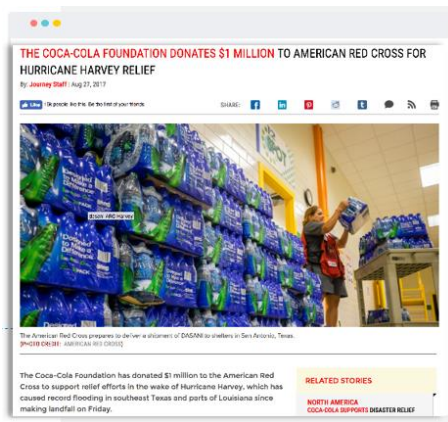
Topical content is newsworthy, time-sensitive content that is linked to a topic and is best suited to a particular moment in time. It can be effective in driving backlinks based on its relevance. It's important to note that as topical content is tied to a moment in time, it has a shorter lifespan of relevancy.

Topical content

Here are two examples of great topical content.



In the first example, Specsavers, an optician brand, created topical content around the time of 'The Dress'. The Dress, of course, was the social media phenomenon that sparked countless online debates – was the dress in the image blue and black, or white and gold? It was a nice way to interact with something that was topical, which earned the brand huge kudos.



On a more serious note, Coca-Cola created topical content around the time Hurricane Harvey hit, and talked about their corporate social responsibility strategy in donating \$1 million to the American Red Cross fund for hurricane relief.

Creating topical content

Let's take a look at the three steps to creating topical content.

1. The first step is to **choose general themes or events** that are relevant for your audience.
2. The second step is to **consider what you're trying to achieve** with your topical content, and then sketch backwards to see it fits within your theme.
3. The third step is to **make sure that you have adequate resources** that can be rolled into action when needed, for example, writers, designers, and approvals you need to put in place.

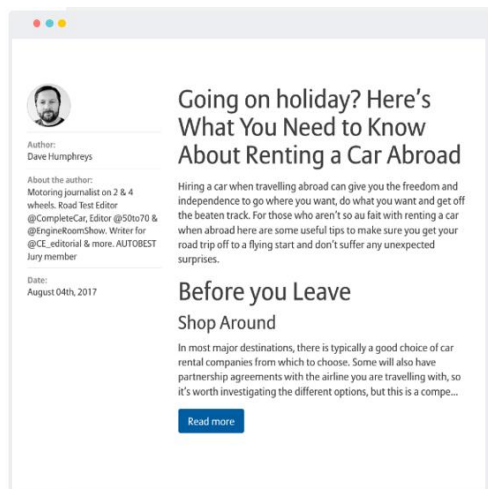
Evergreen content

Evergreen content is content that can be used at various stages of the buyer's journey. The main part of your content marketing mix should be evergreen content.

Evergreen content:

- Is relevant and valuable for a prolonged period of time
- Can drive more traffic and generate more leads over its lifespan
- Can be repurposed into different formats, maximizing creation time

By leveraging evergreen content, you can make your content creation process more efficient and yield a greater ROI.



The example shown here provides tips on renting a car when abroad. As you can imagine these tips are relevant no matter the time of year; these are general facts on what you need to know when renting a car abroad.

There are some other common evergreen content post types that work very well:

- How-to articles changing a spare tire if you're not a mechanic
- Tutorials on applying a certain make up
- A beginner's guide to filling out a self-assessed tax form
- FAQs based on information from your customer service channels
- Case studies, where you may have completed a great piece of work for a previous client or customer.

All in all, evergreen content can come in many forms and there's great utility in this content.

Creating evergreen content

How do you create evergreen content?

Step 1: Choose timeless topics

The first step is choosing timeless topics. Rather than focusing on a fleeting trend or something that's newsworthy today, you need to focus on your customer's needs. What are they searching for all the time? Look at your customer service emails or FAQs and create a guide or piece of content that helps serve those needs.

For example, if you operate a hotel chain in New York, consider creating a blog post about the top things to do while visiting New York. This constitutes a great piece of evergreen content that can be reused and be relevant for a wide customer demographic.

Step 2: Promote on social media

The second step is being able to share your evergreen content across a variety of social media platforms. It's important to note that regularly re-posting content on social media will extend its reach and help you acquire more followers.

Step 3: Repurpose at a later date

Finally, repurposing your content at a later date maximizes the value of your content creation efforts. In the example of the hotel chain, that piece of content about things to do in New York may be relevant around the booking phase, but also around the phase when customers actually come to the hotel.

CONTENT INTENT

Stages of the buyer's journey

Always make sure that your content has a clear intention. Consumers can easily spot a lack of intention, and when they do, they won't react to your content.

Let's look at the ways in which the intentions align with the traditional sales funnel.

Awareness

In terms of the upper end of the sales funnel, the first step in the funnel is awareness. This lets potential customers know what it is that your business is offering, what your USPs are versus your competitors, and what your general proposition is in the market.

Interest

The second step in the funnel is interest. This is where you capture the audience's attention by offering them something interesting to spark their interest; something that gets them excited about what it is that you do.

Consideration

The consideration phase is an opportunity for you to provide further information on your key proposition in the market and what your business does versus your competitors. You can also incentivize your customers to try your products or services, and give them a taste of what it is that you can offer in the business.

Conversion

Conversion is about fostering that warm and personalized experience between potential customers and your business to get them across the line and make them become customers. This includes lead nurturing, added value, return purchase incentivizing, requesting feedback, and community management.

Retention

The last aspect is retention. It's about encouraging repeat business by delivering on great customer service, so they become champions for your brand. Using digital formats and social marketing, you can keep customers within that loop and encourage repeat business from loyal customers.

Aligning content to the buying cycle

It's important to note that different content performs best when it is aligned to different stages of the buyer journey.

Awareness

With awareness, there's huge opportunity around exciting pieces of imagery, short-form video, social ads, and GIFs, advertorials, templates, and banner ads. In this phase, you don't want to take up too much of your potential customer's time. You want to excite them, you want to appear in their newsfeeds, and you want them a little bit thirsty to find out more about your business.

Interest

Then you move on to interest. This is where potential customers are doing a little bit more digging around about what you do, what your business proposition is, and what it is that you can offer. With this phase, you can stretch out the intent or the content attention span to slightly longer formed pieces of content. You can look at formats like blogs, long-form videos, white papers, podcasts, e-books, and even infographics.

Consideration

Moving into the consideration phase, you should look to engage with your customers in a proactive manner by being overtly helpful and using mechanics like community management and social engagement. You can look at formats like carousels, case studies, webinars, FAQs, testimonials, newsletters, Facebook Messenger, and social display advertising.

Conversion

Then, you move into conversion. This phase is a great opportunity to retarget the people who've been through the awareness phase and the interest phase. You don't want to harass them; rather, generate content that pops back up in their newsfeed to remind them of what your business proposition is. Placing your content in the right place at the right time, when they're looking to make that conversion leap, will be the perfect moment to remind them that you exist and turn them into customers. You might want to use formats like re-targeting, imagery, carousels, social display, canvas, and cards.

Retention

The retention phase is an opportunity to create content that reminds consumers of why they first engaged with you. Using retargeting methods to highlight user-generated content from previous customers is a great way to incentivize repeat purchases. You can also utilize Click to Buy formats and other exclusive offers for people who've previously bought. You might also want to use imagery, rewards, reviews, value additions, and discounts.

COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT

An important complement

Community management is often the stage that comes after the content has been published. But it's not to be overlooked in terms of its importance.

It can help you in a number of key ways.

- **Manage customer, product, or service issues:** The first is being able to manage customer, product, or service issues with your business, not letting any issues fester, swell out of

control, and being able to call any particular issues out before they become a much larger issue for your business, gaining valuable insights and feedback directly from your customers.

- **Gain valuable insight and feedback:** Social media and digital marketing and content marketing is one of those rare platforms that allows you direct access to a large database of your customers almost instantaneously. Glean this feedback. Reward them. Look for their insights and their input, because ultimately they're your customers. You can pivot not just your content marketing but your full business and service offering to be more inclusive of customer feedback by using your channels.
- **Turn customers into loyal fans:** You can also with community management, turn loyal fans into brand advocates, really energize them, being able to interact with them. Heroing their content and thanking them for getting in touch adds that lovely element of personality that brings your brand to life versus competitors.
- **Network with others:** There's huge opportunity to network with like-minded businesses, like-minded individuals and potential affiliates through using community management as well. Being able to link in and tagging affiliate businesses, which we're going to look at a little bit later in this presentation will help you network online through your content marketing efforts.
- **Drive repeat sales:** Community management allows you to have ongoing conversations with your social audiences and being able to build that credibility, that trust that the community wants to give you repeat business.

Example

So looking towards all of these key aspects of community management are a very important addition and supplementary to your content marketing efforts.



Here's a great example of some community management as handled by the fashion online retailer, ASOS. In this example, you can see that ASOS are interacting with somebody who has a missing parcel. They've answered their query in a really positive, upbeat and friendly manner that will ensure them repeat business.

CONTENT MARKETING STRATEGY

What is it?

A content marketing strategy is an ever-evolving plan that determines the types of content that you're pushing out, how they're aligned to your business goals, who the content is intended for, and what content formats you'll use.

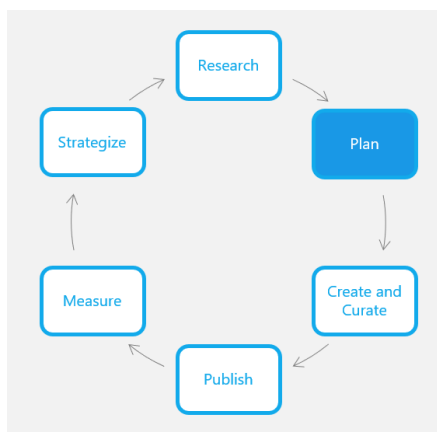
This is an ongoing process for content marketers. It's very important for content marketers not to work in a bubble, but to work with those around them to define what content is created, what purpose it's serving to the wider business goals, and how effective it is in helping achieve those.

Moving through a complete content strategy process will help you create meaningful content, seeded to the right audience, that is measured and optimized to inform future content campaigns. Each of the main steps includes a number of activities. These must be carried out sequentially to make logical sense and avoid investing time ahead of schedule in an area that is undermined by later learnings.

Developing a content marketing strategy is a cyclical process. Your learnings from the measurement phase should always be fed back into the research and planning phase of each campaign to help evolve your strategy.

Phases of a content marketing strategy

Looking at a typical content marketing cycle, you can see here that there are six phases.



Research

We start off with the research phase. With this, you'll be looking at your intended audience. You'll be finding out as much about them as possible, where they live and what content formats they react to. The activities involved are social listening, competitor audits, audience segmentation, and platform research.

Plan

You will then work to align your business objectives, wider business targets, and KPI setting with your content needs. This comes in to the planning phase, in which you are looking at individual content formats you need to resource for; the channels you need to be active on; and the pain points, information, and education you're going to supply to your intended audience.

Create and curate

We move then into the content creation and curation phase, which we're going to cover later in more detail.

Publish

Next, how is that content published into the content ecosystem? The activities involved here are: platform selection, content promotion, and content outreach.

Measure

Further, how do we measure that content? The activities involved here are: social listening, monthly content reports, and content audits.

Strategize

Finally, the measurement, insights, and analytics gleaned from the measurement phase are then implemented into the strategy for the next cycle phase.

As you can see, the entire process follows a cyclical fashion and essentially we're going to revisit this content strategy piece annually, potentially even two or three times a year.

NOTES

LESSON 2: USING CONTENT RESEARCH TO FIND OPPORTUNITIES

SOCIAL LISTENING

What is it?

Social listening is the method of tracking online conversation in relation to keywords, topics, or phrases to glean key insights from your target audience. In other words, this is the process of monitoring social platforms and digital channels to find out what people are talking about when it comes to your brand or your business proposition in the market. Valuable insights can be attained not just from looking at what people are saying about you, but what people are saying about the wider business in which you operate.

For example, if you're Coca-Cola, if you're conducting social listening, you may also be looking at what Pepsi are doing and what people are saying about Pepsi; or indeed, what people are saying about soft drinks as an entire category.

It isn't enough to have a snapshot in time. Listening tools may only give you hashtags and content insights from a short, recent period of time. If you want to get to know your audience and competitors, you will have to engage in active listening over a period of time.

It's important to note here that you shouldn't solely focus on what your audience is saying about your brand or even your competitors. You are looking for what matters to them in order to facilitate a more personalized engagement.

Benefits

The benefits of social listening include identification of opportunities, looking to spot potential risks or threats to your business or to your industry, and understanding what your brand and your business position on different platforms really is.

Identify opportunities

Social listening will help you identify any opportunities or platform usage that you can leverage for your brand. We mentioned Coca-Cola before. It may be the case that Coca-Cola aren't on a particular social media platform because they don't realize that there's a conversation going on there; they haven't been alerted to it through their organic listening. Social listening tools may show them where new conversations are happening, so that they can refocus their content marketing on these platforms. Being relevant to your audience and looking towards the channels that they're using is hugely important for success with content marketing.

Spot potential risks

Secondly, the focus is around spotting potential risks or threats. For example, you may discover that there is an ongoing conversation about an additive or ingredient in one of your products. Being able to utilize social listening to spot these conversations, and the correlation between them in different areas at a given time, can help identify a potential risk, product issue, or threat to your business.

Understand brand position

Finally, you can understand how brands and businesses fit into the ecosystem of each platform. For example, Facebook brand Pages work better to engage with consumers than Facebook personal

profiles. Therefore, you might want to keep that in mind while trying to build a community around your brand through Facebook.

Social listening tools

It's important to note that social listening has its limitations based on how open the social networks are with their access to social listening tools.

Some tools to use in your social listening efforts include:

- **Talkwalker:** This is a website that monitors Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram across 150 million websites, as well as being able to assess key brand mentions and phrases.
- **Social Mention:** This shows detail on strength, sentiment, passion, and reach; it also displays keywords, hashtags, and sites.
- **Hootsuite:** It offers a whole range of services, but in the social listening space, it's one of the best. You can track keywords, key phrases, influencer conversations, and ensure that any time your brand, competitor brands, or industry keywords are mentioned, you receive an alert.

COMPETITOR ANALYSIS

The value of competitor monitoring

Conducting competitor analysis is a hugely beneficial way for you to understand what audiences are interacting with when it comes to your competitors' content.

We're going to look at some benefits and values of doing this on a regular basis.

Spot content gaps

The first benefit is spotting content gaps that, potentially, your competitors aren't fulfilling. There could be a great opportunity for you to create content that fits this gap and serves that particular consumer need.

Identify innovations

Looking towards what your competitors are doing in terms of content formats may give you inspiration, but it'll also provide an opportunity for innovation in your own platform usage. Maybe they've identified that a conversation is happening on Twitter versus Instagram, and maybe they've moved their content efforts towards that platform as a result, because maybe they have a sponsorship of a live event.

Define content

Again, being able to determine the rationale and the reasoning behind where they move their content efforts towards will help add insight and inspiration for you. You can also measure the impact that their content is having. Being able to define the content that's working largely for that particular segment or that industry in terms of your competitors will help you understand and identify the content behaviors of your audience.

Avoid content clashes

And lastly, looking to see what kind of content that they're pushing out in terms of their creative style, the language they use, or potential influencers, ambassadors, or celebrities they're using, will help you avoid embarrassment by negating any clashes or any direct lift from what they might be doing from a content marketing perspective. That said, some brands thrive on trying to undercut their rivals.

Take Burger King and McDonald's. Burger King has been taking swipes at the McDonald's content marketing efforts for a long time. And actually, they see it as a challenge to try and be a little bit cheeky and a little bit contentious in that space. Determine what's right for your brand or your business by using content marketing and being able to assess through competitor audits whether this is right for you.

What do look for

So when compiling your competitor analysis, what are the key things that you should be looking for? Well, we've touched on content topics and language, but looking at what platforms they're using, what feedback they're getting from their customers on particular content formats, looking towards, "How are they using content in terms of their search engine ranking? Has it helped boost their

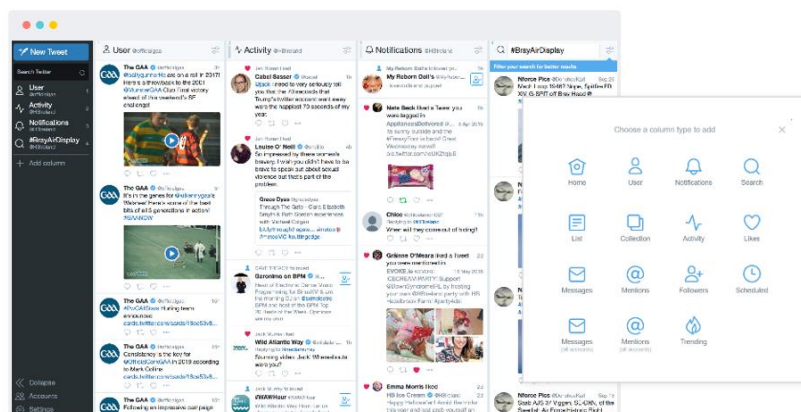
ranking over the course of the past six months to a year? Have they been conducting social follow campaigns in terms of their ad formats? Or have they been relying on organic content?"

Being able to assess their tone of voice and being able to give yourself a unique positioning so that you don't come across as a me-too and a bit of a copycat, but also looking towards what new formats they may be utilizing and what new channels they may be dipping their toe into, too.

Assessing your competitors' content will only seek to help improve your content marketing, but also give you a point of difference within the sphere.

TweetDeck

Here's a free tool for conducting great competitor analysis on the Twitter news feed. TweetDeck allows you to assess the content, the interactions, and the engagement with competitor streams at any one moment in time. There's a really handy feature where you can add columns that can assess keywords, account traffic, engagement, and also your own account channels as well.



This allows you in real-time to see the reaction of your audiences versus the reaction of the competitor audiences. You can also track competitor hashtags and the usage of these from an organic perspective as well.



- A. Search Query
- B. Reach
- C. Exposure
- D. Tweet Activity
- E. Tweet Types
- F. Top Contributors
- G. Top Tweets
- H. Contributors
- I. Tweets Timeline

This screenshot is from TweetReach. TweetReach is a tool that allows you to assess the impact and the reach of specific hashtags, again, from a competitor perspective, or from your own.

And indeed, the reach of individual accounts over a period of time. There is a free version which lets you track back over 72 hours, or indeed a paid version which can check data more historical. What this allows you to assess is the individual search query, looking at what the reach is. When we talk about reach, it's the individuals who have been reached by the piece of content. It allows you to assess the impressions.

When we talk about impressions, it's the amount of multiple times one individual may have been reached over the course of the campaign. So largely speaking, impressions will always be higher than your individual reach. Then, we look at the top contributors and the top tweets that have lent towards these particular stats in the report. TweetReach is a great tool for getting that snapshot from a moment in time and being able to assess competitor activity.

Buzzsumo

Another great tool for conducting competitor analysis is BuzzSumo. It allows you to compare your content to your competitors' across a wide-ranging span of social media platforms. It allows you to identify what the topics and the themes are for your audience at that moment in time that are really driving an interest at. And it allows you to discover catchy language and formats of headline that are really resonating with your audience at that moment in time.

Tracking really key topics, key news stories, being able to filter out what's relevant to your audience at that moment in time will give you great inspiration for content creation.

CONTENT AUDIT

Carrying out a content audit

Content marketers should conduct regular content audits, assessing the performance and spotting opportunities within your own content marketing efforts.

- **Review content performance:** This involves looking at the performance of your content over a specific time.
- **Set rolling objectives:** It also allows you to set rolling objectives that you may review in light of certain changes within your business, and also changes within your content strategy.
- **Implement key learnings:** It enables you to implement key learnings based on the content that has been most successful, and the content that has fallen short of the mark. Being able to assess the format, the tone, the style, and the content of the piece itself may give you great learnings in how to adapt and how to change for the following month.
- **Improve and optimize:** Improving and optimizing from the key learnings aspect will allow you to move forward with a much better content strategy for the following period. Be really honest in assessing what did and didn't work, and weed out instances where you're creating content formats or types that just aren't resonating with your audience.

Steps

How should you conduct a content audit?

1. **KPI and objectives review:** Auditing your content regularly will assess if your KPIs are being met and if you're reaching your business objectives. Make sure you measure specific moments in time for each audit and keep them consistent – for example, one per month, one per quarter.
2. **Benchmarks:** Then, refer back to your annual goals or objectives and assess progress towards these goals – adjust goals if needed. You need to look at establishing those benchmarks going forward, looking at what has been done in the past and how you can improve upon it.
3. **Current audience segments:** Review your audience segments.
4. **Content inventory, forms, and types:** Review content inventory, including the forms and types of content over the past period, and assess the successes or failures of these. Be sure to put narrative around your findings and don't just report stats.
5. **Website performance and UX:** Review your other digital platforms – for example, website and shopping cart – and assess the referrals from your content. Look towards your website analytics, particularly if you have an e-commerce business. Assess which styles and types of content are actually driving people back over to your website, and are actually leading to conversions and sales.
6. **Social platform review:** Look at the individual social platforms. How are they performing for you? Which ones are most alive? Which ones are most engaged? And which ones are driving more traffic back to your end goal, whether that be a business objective around awareness or getting emails or inbound phone calls to your business. Is there a referral system in place, where you can determine where that traffic has come from? Also, research the various social media platforms to identify any new innovation to leverage.
7. **Language or tone involvement:** It's also beneficial to consider the successes or failures of your tone with customers and determine if the language you're using with audiences is resonating.
8. **Social listening:** Finally, review your social listening to determine if there's anything new to be factored into your content.

Monthly content reports

It is recommended to conduct monthly content reports. These would be a much more abridged tracker for you to keep on top of what's happening in your content efforts month-on-month, and can allow for earlier detection of successes or failures within content. They are also handy for sharing with other stakeholders within a business.

Here are some examples of which details should be included in your monthly marketing report:

- **Key metrics:** Based on your objectives, these could be audience, reach, engagement, views, clicks, and conversions.
- **Most successful content:** Again, success here is determined by your objectives – for example, reach would be a good metric for brand awareness.
- **Least successful content:** Look at this as an opportunity to trim the fat and eliminate what's not working from your content plan – be as honest as possible with this.
- **Learnings:** How can next month's content be better? Are you noticing any month-on-month trends worth highlighting?
- **Aligning business activities:** What else is happening in your business, and how can content marketing further support overarching business goals? All businesses have rolling calendars and have things that crop up that are unexpected. How might you adapt to this and how might you create content that helps serve these needs?

NOTES

LESSON 3: DEVELOPING A CONTENT MARKETING PLAN

CONTENT GOALS

Content marketing goals

We're going to look at some content goals for your content marketing.

- **Awareness:** Awareness is visibility of your brand in the wider content ecosystem. Looking at how much of your target audience is seeing your message at a particular moment in time, and how frequent they're seeing that message, is hugely important to assess.
- **Engagement:** This engagement can be grouped into positive engagement and negative engagement. Essentially, these are the comments, the shares, and the likes that are given to your content through the content channels, but also the clicks in which you're driving people towards your individual website, or if you have a conversion portal.
- **Affinity:** Affinity can allow you to determine whether an engagement that's been given on your content has been largely grouped as positive or negative. Facebook, Twitter and Instagram provide you with a great portal that allows you to see when a consumer has hidden a piece of content because it is not relevant to them, it is offensive, or they are seeing it too many times in their newsfeed.
- **Conversion:** This means having an end point where you can actually track a sale using customized links or UTM Tracking Modules. This is where you add a snippet of simple code to the end of a URL to track the performance of campaigns and content.
- **Advocacy:** Based on user-generated content, reviews, ratings, and recommendations, you can assess, within your audience, key individuals who may be really amplifying your cause. Having those loyal brand champions to give word-of-mouth referrals to your audience is incredibly important.

Aligning goals

It's really important to make sure that your content marketing goals are aligned to your overall business goals, and are really focused in on all of the individual business touch points that your consumer may have at a particular moment in time. This will ultimately drive your commercial messages, and avoid any confusion regarding your proposition within the market.

Consistency

Consistency can be across your brand assets, brand guidelines, your look and feel, your language, and how you're interacting and talking with your potential audience, at any moment in time. Make sure you have that consistency across the board so a consumer knows they're dealing with the same business.

Timing

Consider how content marketing helps support other campaigns the business is running. Make sure that you're not going out with a different message in your content marketing; or that other aspects of your business are going out with a completely different proposition to market.

Input

Consider the wider business input. Make life easy for yourself. Speak to the other members of your business and see how they may contribute ideas, inspiration, or what they've got going on from a

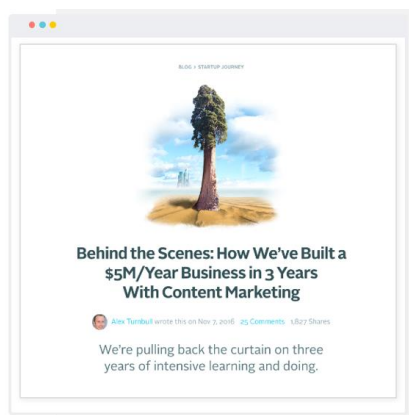
business agenda perspective. Add these elements to the content marketing mix. You'd be surprised how often businesses still operate in complete silos. You may have some great activity happening within the HR team that doesn't translate into social content or content marketing because the teams just don't speak to each other. Make sure that you have that integrated approach with your wider business.

Website

A really simple one, and one you would think shouldn't need mentioning, but make sure that your social streams and your social handles are all integrated with your website function, whether it be through a plugin or a simple link. In addition, align your SEO goals to your overall business goals to not only increase the consumer experience, but also your SEO rankings, in terms of a search engine optimization.

Groove HQ

Groove HQ is a real inspiration, in terms of the power of content marketing. They are often cited as a great example of a business that aligned its content goals with its business goals. They ran an entire content marketing campaign with absolutely no advertising spend whatsoever.



They built their entire content marketing proposition around the story of their business. They got people invested in the credibility of what they do, around their passion, and around their service offering to their customers, so the people actually really believed in what it was that they were trying to do. They managed to raise up to \$5 million a year in business. They reached out to like-minded influencers and affiliate businesses to help them amplify their story and their proposition within the market.

GrooveHQ is a simple help desk tool for growing small businesses that helps them manage and deliver personal online customer support. They built their platform with a minimal feature set that anyone can use, and left out everything else.

GrooveHQ share three key behind-the-scenes wins that helped them to grow their blog:

- **They 'plagiarized' their content topics:** They asked their audience a simple question over email: 'What are you struggling with most in your business right now?' They quickly identified recurring themes and then used these responses as the basis for their next blog posts.
- **They went straight to the gatekeepers:** After identifying key influencers, they focused on building relationships with those individuals by taking a different, more personal approach

that revolved around asking these influencers for feedback on new posts before they went live.

- **They innovate:** Lastly, they strongly advocate that you continually explore new ideas and approaches in the way that new content is written and presented – don't be afraid of experimentation or making mistakes.

BUYER PERSONAS

What are they?

Customer personas help you understand your customers and your prospective customers better. This makes it easier for you to tailor your content, messaging, and tone – as well as product development and services – to the specific needs, behaviors, and concerns of different groups.

A buyer persona for content marketing acts as a sounding board to assess what they think, how they feel, and their behaviors, so you can align your content to resonate best with them.

Purpose

Buyer personas have three main purposes.

Targeting

The purpose of buyer personas in content marketing is to help you adjust your targeting and make sure that your writing is focused; that you're relevant in terms of the topics that you're creating content around. It also helps provide valuable insight into conveying your message to the right audience at the right time. This will help you avoid waste for your content marketing efforts, and will help keep you focused on your content marketing efforts.

Format

Looking at the individual formats that your target audience consumes most informs how they are consuming content. Being able to provide the types of content that they're more likely to actually interact with will again help you avoid waste. It will give you the information and perspective you need to make objective decisions about how to craft your brand messages through the most consumed and widely accepted formats and platforms.

Discovery

Finally, discover the channels your audiences are inhabiting. Personas allow you to get a grasp of your audience's channel behavior. Where are they having conversations? There's no point in creating content within a vacuum. It's as simple as that. Create content where your audience is already active, and leverage their online behaviors to the maximum effect for your business and your content marketing.




Developing buyer personas

What do you need to consider when developing buyer personas?

- **Objectives:** It is important to consider your users' objectives when developing your consumer personas. What are they actually setting out to achieve? What is their need? Why would they consider your business at that moment and time?
- **Location:** Where are they based? What language do they speak? What time zone are they in? What cultural significance does their location have in terms of their buying behaviors? Being conscious about the cultural context of what it is that you're advertising – and avoiding waste by complying with the cultural context at a user's particular location – is very important.
- **Job details:** What are their job details? What earning power do they have? Do they have the authority to action a purchase with your business, or are they somebody in a very junior level who'll flag the opportunity to their boss? What kind of a person are you targeting with your content? Make sure that you're reaching the right person and that you're not reaching somebody who's completely irrelevant.
- **Platforms:** As we've touched on previously, what platforms are they inhabiting? Where is the conversation happening with your target audience? Make sure that you're going where they are.
- **Devices:** What devices are they using? What kind of connection do they have? Are they still operating on a 3G network? Or are they using 4G or LTE? This will influence the type of content you're creating. Make sure you're creating content that's relevant for your audiences' device, not just from a size perspective, but also from a data perspective as well.
- **Purchase behaviors:** What is their path to purchase? How elongated is their decision around actually purchasing from you? Do they research? Do they speak to their friends? Identifying what their entire purchase behavior is will help you adjust your content marketing to that particular persona at that moment in time.
- **Interests:** From a personal context, how can you access them through sport, or music, or TV, or film? What issues are they trying to solve? Being able to embed your brand within other cultural contexts will allow you social permission to access them on a personal interest level. That will make you seem credible and make you more accessible, but only if your content is relevant.

Examples

You can see here three sample personas that may be involved in any content marketing plan. You can see Jane has a particular background that's very different from Brad's, and Tom's background is very different from Jane's.

 <p>Jane</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single • Works hard and parties harder • Likes to treat herself • Sporty • Lives in the city • Instagrammer 	 <p>Brad</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living with partner • Career driven • Ambitious • Likes fine foods • Tweets a lot • City liver • Tablet user 	 <p>Tom</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single • Just graduated • Seeking first job • Keen to travel • Music lover • Lives rural • PC user • Uses forums
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Understanding your personas allows you to get a more complete knowledge of not only their job title but their background. Their needs and their interest sets offer up important information on how to access them emotionally, but also illustrate what motivates and frustrates them. This can help you paint a picture of your ideal customer. It's vital to flesh out these personas based on their content and information needs to position your brand or business as the solution to their requirements.

The hardest working customer personas are developed with field research, focus group research, surveys, and interviews with your target audience.

CONTENT TOPICS

Using research

So, before you set out to create your content topics, it's important to conduct research to make sure that the content that you're creating is right for your audience. We're going to look at three key areas of research that you should conduct before creating your content topics.

Keyword establishment

The first of which is keyword establishment. Looking to see how users are currently finding your website, looking to see what language that you're currently using on your website for consistency, and also trying to identify maybe what audiences are searching for when they're looking for your competitors.

Tools like Google Analytics and Ad Words Planner will help benefit you in this area of research.

Search trends

The second piece is looking around search trends. Again, we turn to reliable Google. Search trends is a great tool that allows you to identify the peaks and the troughs over the course of the year aligned to certain phrases or certain keywords, where you can determine the appetite or the interest set, month by month, even day by day.

This is a great tool to assess what kinds of content you should be creating at what moment in time.

Audience insights

And lastly, don't discount your own audience. Reach out to your audience, survey them, and find out what information you can glean from them directly. Previously, we touched on inbound customer service channels.

Generate content topics

Again, look towards these recurring themes and where you may be able to pull out FAQs for the creation of content and the assistance in your content topic creation. There's a wide variety of methods that you can use in terms of inspiring your content topics.

- **Activities:** These include brainstorming, again looking at social listening, and the community engagement piece about reaching out to your own audiences and finding out what content they actually would like from you.
- **Tools:** We're going to take a look at the likes of Pinterest and StumbleUpon, in addition to RSS feeds, a little bit later in this presentation, to show you topics and ways in which you might curate content.

Case study: Bodyform

Take a look at this great case study from female health brand Bodyform.

Video can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bpy75q2DDow>

Bodyform used a combination of social listening and community management to identify a great opportunity to create some fantastic content.

They created a tongue-in-cheek style video that you've just watched that allow them to convey their USP around their brand personality.

CONTENT CALENDARS

What are they?

Content calendars are an essential tool for all content marketers. Generally speaking, content calendars are a centralized document that allow you to map out your social media content for a period of time in the coming weeks or months. These allow you to determine the copy, the creative, the platform, the targeting, and the times and dates in which content is seeded.

Some businesses suffer from spreading themselves too thin, opening social media accounts on every platform, and using them in a completely ad-hoc way. This attitude to social media will invariably not return any meaningful results.

Benefits

There are many benefits of using a content calendar.

- It helps you **plan your content** efficiently and keeps the team focused and organized.
- It **allows enough time** to have a plan in place that identifies the audience and the topic in advance and prevents you having writer's block.
- It **allows key dates** for functional messaging and topical content.
- It **keeps social content on track** across multiple platforms.
- It **helps all content marketers stay on track** with exactly what they're trying to push out from a content marketing perspective.

Element

All good content calendars will include five key elements covering the who, what, where, when, and how of your content.

- **Copy:** Copy is the text that would accompany a post, an image, or a video that is being populated. Some platforms have a very tight character limit, so you need to be more succinct.
- **Creative:** Creative is the image, the video, the GIF, or a poll or a card format that accompanies your copy.
- **Theme:** The theme ties back to one of your content topics. Who is this content for? What purpose, pain point, or audience interest is this content serving? This reminds you to stay on track and be relevant.
- **Date and time:** Regarding the date and time the content is being seeded, always be mindful of international time zones, bank holidays, and whether there is daylight savings in the area you are targeting. Taking all of these factor into account will help ensure your content is relevant and doesn't become dated.

- **Platform:** What platform is the content going to be seeded on? Whether it's Facebook, Instagram, or Snapchat, having a clear determination of where this content is going to be seeded would give clarity on the content marketing mix.

Creating a content calendar

It's really simple to create your own content calendar for your brand or business. We're going to look at four quick steps on how this can be achieved.

Plan

The first one is to make sure that you're planning for a specific moment in time. It's important not to plan too far in advance. Some brands may decide they want to plan by month, by week, or by day, especially if they have a very busy day or a launch for a particular brand or product.

Create

Secondly, you will be creating a simple spreadsheet. This spreadsheet will have columns and headings and will assign a topic, title, content type, overview of the blog post, relevant keyword, target persona, offer, and call-to-action.

Populate

Next, populate your content calendar with as much detail as possible. If you get into a habit of being considered and intentional about the content you're going to create, it will help you to always look for the link between your content and the needs and interests of your customers.

Edit

Finally, make sure to edit and amend as required. Content calendars are very rarely fixed documents. They evolve. They have input from multiple parties. People may add in comments, or may add in questions about the motives behind certain pieces of content, or their own ideas. Make sure your content calendar is a flexible document that has multiple inputs and can evolve and grow as you adapt and as you optimize.

Aligning your content calendar with business activities is key. Consistency and alignment across your social channels with any consumer-facing messaging will add continuity. It also provides a brand narrative for users that is easy to follow, regardless of the touchpoint at which they come into contact with you.

Considerations

You need to consider a number of issues when assembling your content calendar:

- **Business priorities:** Be aware of your business priorities, timelines, and product launches.
- **Marketing activities:** Look towards other marketing activities that may be going on. Make sure to speak to the other individuals within your business to get that full, well-rounded aspect of your content calendar. It's really important to have the full input of your entire team.
- **Sponsorship activities:** Look towards any sponsorship activities that you may have running at that particular time, and how you may support it from a content perspective.

- **In-store promotions:** If you're selling in shops, look towards sales and in-store promotions and consider how you might link in potential outlets and retail partners.
- **Time of year:** Make sure that your content is aligned with the current search trends and is relevant for that particular time. For example, at Christmas, topics like gifting ideas and festive recipes are popular with B2C audiences online.

Elements

You can see here a sample content calendar.

Week #1	Date	01/11/2018	02/11/2018	03/11/2018	04/11/2018	05/11/2018	06/11/2018	07/11/2018
	Day	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
Social Posts	Social Channels (check all that apply)	<input type="checkbox"/> Facebook <input type="checkbox"/> LinkedIn <input type="checkbox"/> Twitter <input type="checkbox"/> Instagram <input type="checkbox"/> Pinterest <input type="checkbox"/> Snapchat	<input type="checkbox"/> Facebook <input type="checkbox"/> LinkedIn <input type="checkbox"/> Twitter <input type="checkbox"/> Instagram <input type="checkbox"/> Pinterest <input type="checkbox"/> Snapchat	<input type="checkbox"/> Facebook <input type="checkbox"/> LinkedIn <input type="checkbox"/> Twitter <input type="checkbox"/> Instagram <input type="checkbox"/> Pinterest <input type="checkbox"/> Snapchat	<input type="checkbox"/> Facebook <input type="checkbox"/> LinkedIn <input type="checkbox"/> Twitter <input type="checkbox"/> Instagram <input type="checkbox"/> Pinterest <input type="checkbox"/> Snapchat	<input type="checkbox"/> Facebook <input type="checkbox"/> LinkedIn <input type="checkbox"/> Twitter <input type="checkbox"/> Instagram <input type="checkbox"/> Pinterest <input type="checkbox"/> Snapchat	<input type="checkbox"/> Facebook <input type="checkbox"/> LinkedIn <input type="checkbox"/> Twitter <input type="checkbox"/> Instagram <input type="checkbox"/> Pinterest <input type="checkbox"/> Snapchat	<input type="checkbox"/> Facebook <input type="checkbox"/> LinkedIn <input type="checkbox"/> Twitter <input type="checkbox"/> Instagram <input type="checkbox"/> Pinterest <input type="checkbox"/> Snapchat
	Post Type							
	Format							
	Text/Copy							
	Link URL							
	Characters in Post	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Image Preview (optional)							
Week #2	Date	08/11/2018	09/11/2018	10/11/2018	11/11/2018	12/11/2018	13/11/2018	14/11/2018
	Day	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
Social Posts	Social Channels (check all that apply)	<input type="checkbox"/> Facebook <input type="checkbox"/> LinkedIn <input type="checkbox"/> Twitter <input type="checkbox"/> Instagram <input type="checkbox"/> Pinterest <input type="checkbox"/> Snapchat	<input type="checkbox"/> Facebook <input type="checkbox"/> LinkedIn <input type="checkbox"/> Twitter <input type="checkbox"/> Instagram <input type="checkbox"/> Pinterest <input type="checkbox"/> Snapchat	<input type="checkbox"/> Facebook <input type="checkbox"/> LinkedIn <input type="checkbox"/> Twitter <input type="checkbox"/> Instagram <input type="checkbox"/> Pinterest <input type="checkbox"/> Snapchat	<input type="checkbox"/> Facebook <input type="checkbox"/> LinkedIn <input type="checkbox"/> Twitter <input type="checkbox"/> Instagram <input type="checkbox"/> Pinterest <input type="checkbox"/> Snapchat	<input type="checkbox"/> Facebook <input type="checkbox"/> LinkedIn <input type="checkbox"/> Twitter <input type="checkbox"/> Instagram <input type="checkbox"/> Pinterest <input type="checkbox"/> Snapchat	<input type="checkbox"/> Facebook <input type="checkbox"/> LinkedIn <input type="checkbox"/> Twitter <input type="checkbox"/> Instagram <input type="checkbox"/> Pinterest <input type="checkbox"/> Snapchat	<input type="checkbox"/> Facebook <input type="checkbox"/> LinkedIn <input type="checkbox"/> Twitter <input type="checkbox"/> Instagram <input type="checkbox"/> Pinterest <input type="checkbox"/> Snapchat
	Post Type							
	Format							
	Text/Copy							
	Link URL							
	Characters in Post	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

We've talked about whether these could be daily, weekly, or monthly. Best practice is to embed any creative – for example, images or stills from videos – into the spreadsheet. Timing, paid support, target audience, and target channel are all worth including.

Designing a content calendar template will allow you to plot your content themes across the month and, again, make sure to seek input from all areas of your business.

Stakeholders

Before creating your content calendar, it's important to identify stakeholders for input of ideas, thoughts, and recommendations on content. This will lead to a more rounded calendar and prevent potential future issues.

Key considerations around stakeholders would be in-house teams across marketing, PR, sales, compliance and legal, especially for validating any claims or any insurance or financial aspects of whatever it is that you're putting out.

Look towards any particular spokespeople or communications professionals within your organization.

Also, it's important to loop in your creative teams. If you have in-house designers, videographers, or copywriters, ensure that they have an element of input into the content calendar.

And finally, it's very important to consider the management of the business and make sure that they have input; as well as clients or investors (if applicable).

CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

What are they?

We're now going to look at content management systems (CMSs).

They are often web-based applications that allow users who may not be too technical-minded to create, edit, and manage content through social media platforms and through blogs. Essentially, a content management system allows you to potentially cut down on the resource you need to cross-publish across multiple platforms, but it also has great interaction and engagement with the likes of Click to Tweet buttons, Facebook Like buttons, and being able to essentially socialize content that may live from a web presence, and being able to publish that across the social web indeed.

Benefits

The benefits of using a content management system include **automation**. As we talked about, content can be pushed out simultaneously across multiple platforms by using one of these CMS solutions.

In addition to this, content can be **enhanced**, allowing for that **cross-publishing** piece, but also the aspect of social interaction with more static, like web content. This Click to Tweet or, indeed, Facebook Like or Share via Twitter enables users to get more involved in the content from a social perspective, rather than just reading it flat.

Some of the more advanced content management systems allow you to **create content** within the web-based application. A great example of that would be Percolate, which allows you to create content within the CMS itself, which is quite nice.

And lastly, one of the benefits of a great CMS system is that you can **assign tasks** to people within your business who are also working on that same piece of content. You can hashtag users who also are signed in via the same CMS, highlight tasks for them to complete, or issues for them to manage. This allows you to manage an online team who may not necessarily be in the same location together.

A CMS really brings all of that content piece together that mitigates working in silos where somebody may be on a disconnected machine, and being able to move your team online to one initial, and one ongoing target-driven based content marketing system.

Here's some examples of some content management systems, which range across both the social web and, indeed, blogs or website management themselves. As mentioned previously, there's no one size fits all. Try out different content management systems for you to see what works best for your business.



Considerations

What should you consider when choosing a content management system?

- **Dynamism:** How easy is it to edit the content? How much access are you being given to edit key aspects of your website or, indeed, your social content? And how integrated is it across the digital and social web?
- **Intuition:** How intuitive is the CMS to use? Is it easy to use, or is it quite complex and technical? A good CMS should be what we call WYSIWYG, what you see is what you get, and essentially allow you to edit in real time, and be really simple to use, and shouldn't require too much technical know-how.
- **Cost:** A lot of CMS platforms have a rolling, recurring monthly cost. Factor this into your resource planning, and determine whether this provides good value for your business, or, indeed, if it's just an additional expense that you don't need.

As mentioned, try out as many as possible. A lot of CMS platforms come with free trials that allow you to assess whether the platform is right for your business or not before you make the initial investment decision.

NOTES

LESSON 4: CREATING AND CURATING CONTENT

CONTENT CREATION

What is it?

Content creation is the process of creating varying formats that help interest your audience, help get them excited, and help solve a potential content need for them to help build you up in terms of trust, relevance, and credibility in the space. When creating content, there's a number of key stakeholders you have to have in mind.

Key stakeholders

You need to know your key stakeholders.

Online community

Your online community comes first. Looking towards what your online community is already currently creating, or what we call user-generated content, so you can assess the types of content that they feel most comfortable with, and indeed, what resonates with them best. Examples include product reviews, customer testimonials, and indeed, what they're sharing on social media to determine what really floats their boat in terms of great content.

Industry influencers

Secondly would be industry influencers. What are influencers in your particular industry or your business space saying about businesses like yours and your competitors, and how you might leverage them by working with influencers to help amplify your content? We have information on influencer marketing coming a little bit later.

Third-party sources

So what content is being created outside of your own content marketing efforts but are still relevant to your business or your industry? This content can be used in what we call content curation to effectively drive your credibility and your thought leadership, once there is context, insight, and opinion added to it from your perspective.

Online community

We touched on your own online community and your own fans and followers are an invaluable content inspiration source. Look to see how they create content about your brand or your business, how you may amplify this, and how you may actually potentially engage with user-generated content to hear of their content creations and create a platform that really shows true value to your audience.

Collaborating with your audience will only serve to increase the resonance of your content with a wider audience segment. We also touched on influencers. Every industry on the planet has influential figures. These figures potentially could have networks that you could leverage to get your brand or business message out. Associating your business or your brand with these high-ranking influencers within a particular industry will only serve to add credibility and thought leadership to your service or your product offering.

Industry influencers

You can identify these influencers by using social listening, looking at the likes of tweet reach, which we discussed earlier on, and also BuzzSumo to see who the key contributors are for particular topics. You can work with them in an earned way by negotiating content deals or indeed through a paid way once there is disclosure and transparency about the partnership if money changes hands.

But ultimately, influencer marketing has become a really exciting and really prominent aspect of the content marketing mix for a lot of brands and businesses.

Third parties

In terms of third parties, don't discount searching keywords or hashtags to see what other content is being created by people in a similar space to you. There may be a great opportunity to engage with them around potential link-up, whether it'd be through guest blogging or a content curation exchange. This particular example here from SEMrush shows an ongoing conversation that the brand has online through Twitter conversations. They unify the conversation from their audience responses around one particular hashtag that owns a brand where they ask people for their honest input and their honest answers.

Being able to utilize third-party inputs and insights from the conversation that they generate allows them to create even more content with learnings and adaptations of what they get back from their audience influence. So, do not discount the ability to reach out to the likes of third parties like SEMrush, to be able to learn from them but also work with them as a third-party contributor towards your content marketing mix.

CONTENT TYPES

Formats

There are many content types and formats that content marketers can use in their content marketing mix. These can be grouped into format by Visual, Text, Audio, and Review.

The web is a visual medium, and as such most content formats are visually driven. The most innovation in content comes in the visual format space. Designing visual content to be responsive to computer, tablet, and mobile screens has become an important consideration for all content creators, as the user experience in relation to content is an important decider in retaining audiences.

Whitepapers

The first content format we're going to look at is whitepapers. They're persuasive and authoritative in their approach. They're a great knowledge sharing resource that can help you build thought leadership and credibility in your industry. They're a strong lead generation tool and can be a great awareness tool, too. Make sure to educate readers by focusing on an industry topic that is relevant. Provide solutions based on research, insights, and facts – a badly researched and flawed white paper could do damage.

Always include a logical link back to your business or website. For example, if you were a law firm, you wouldn't do whitepaper research on sugar consumption solely from a health perspective. You might, however, do a whitepaper on the legal requirements for a business around calorie

declarations on menus. Whitepapers can be text heavy, so ease the reader's job with interesting and high-quality visuals to break up any potential monotony in reading.

Leveraging user data – like email addresses for mailing lists, or a social media endorsement to gain access to your whitepaper – could be a consideration. Ultimately this could achieve a lower reach for your content, but there is better pay off for your dissemination of content. There are arguments both for and against. A potential avenue could be sharing part of a whitepaper to bait audiences, and then introducing a gate for the full report.

Typically, whitepapers will:

- Focus on customers' pain points
- Demonstrate solutions
- Keep to consistent company branding
- Include links to your website
- Include strong CTAs
- Use clear, crisp visuals
- Publish in PDF format
- Consider gating content

Infographics

The next content format we're going to look at is infographics. They allow you to take really big sets of data and turn it into an interesting visual story. It's a really creative way to take boring information and make it exciting for any brand or business. Look towards user research, customer data, or anything that you have from a historical context in terms of the impact your business has had to create really great and interesting infographics. Use as many graphical elements as possible, rather than text, numbers, and stats. The recommendation would be between eight and 12 datasets at an absolute most. Make sure that you reference any statistics in a footnote to back up your research.

Ebooks

Ebooks are often shorter and a lot more interactive than whitepapers. They generally focus on multimedia content and 'how-to' guides, rather than thought leadership pieces. They're generally easier to distribute than whitepapers. You can add a Creative Commons license for your ebook to allow for sharing by third parties, and make sure to amplify through your social channels. ebook formats are more likely to be read as they contain functional benefits that businesses can implement immediately; whitepapers are a little more cerebral and require more dissection to process.

Ebooks typically:

- Focus on customers' pain points
- Demonstrate solutions
- Make use of engaging multimedia and graphics
- Include links to your website
- Contain strong CTAs
- Experiment with formats
- Don't gate content to help message travel

Blogs

Blogging is a really effective tool that allows businesses to journal their activity through the forms of text and imagery. This largely sits on a company website and allows you to create a great structure that drives search engine ranking. Being able to assess the keywords that you want to rank for through organic search will allow you to craft your responses and your individual content pieces from a blog perspective. Make sure to regularly update your blog, though.

Essentially, you need to create between eight and 10 pieces of blog content per month to make sure that people are kept up to date with what you're doing. Make sure your blog has a unified topic or theme so you don't go rambling off. And make sure that the content is relevant to your audience and what you're actually driving them towards in terms of a call-to-action. To do this, make sure that each blog post has a very clear, specific action that you'd like your audience to take upon reading it. Case studies are often featured as a topic within blog posts. These are evergreen pieces of content but they also develop thought leadership and credibility with your potential customers.

Interactive content

The next content format we're going to look at is interactive content. There are some really great interactive formats which can be utilized for your content marketing. They allow users to dictate their own journey within a social space, and essentially, deliver over 500% more engagement than static posts in the newsfeed. One particular example is Facebook Canvas. Facebook Canvas allows a full screen takeover of imagery, video, click-through, polls, and multiple options. Try out this format and see if can be creative with it.

Video

Video content is the number one form of consumed content on the web. There are multiple expressions of video content, though. And 87% of content marketers are using video in their content marketing. It's important to remember that over 50% of video is viewed on mobile. It's important to note that creating really high-resolution video content may be hampering for some users who are experiencing less than optimal data streams.

Audience retention rates for video content continues to decrease based purely on the sheer volume of video content that is in our newsfeeds every single day. What may have been 30 to 45 seconds, and even up to a minute, in terms of the optimum video length, has now been reduced to 20 to 30 seconds. Audience attention rates are depleting year on year, so make sure that you're creating short, snackable, bite-sized content from a video perspective, especially for your awareness section.

Other considerations around video content will be the likes of disappearing, or what is called ephemeral pieces of video content. Snapchat Stories, Instagram Stories, these content formats range between 10 and 15 seconds, they exist for 24 hours, and they can be looped and sequentially turned into a narrative or a full story. But the important thing to remember here is that they actually disappear after 24 hours. They are a prime example of the topical content or reactive moments we spoke about earlier. There is limited reporting available on those formats. But what we've definitely seen is that Instagram Stories take a lot of the functionality from a Snapchat audience perspective; for example, features like lenses, where you may add on a CGI element to a human face or a graphical overlay.

Brand filters are also a feature of both platforms, and being able to utilize these from an organic perspective is great for a brand. But they can be very expensive from a paid perspective. Longer form video content still serves a purpose for the likes of YouTube, where audiences have a much longer attention span and are generally there in the region of three to five minutes.

Looking towards optimizing your video content per platform is really important, in addition to imagery. We've also seen new formats being implemented by the likes of Facebook around 360 Video, a great engaging format that allows consumers to have control of the viewing direction. On a normal computer, the mouse is used to move the view. When watched on mobile devices, a user can move the device around to alter the perspective. This particular example here is around the launch of the Star Wars film, where they showed a whole alien planet in a 360 Video format. This 360 Video feature is also available via YouTube.

And the last point to consider regarding video content is live video. We've seen a real explosion in live video formats. Through the likes of Facebook Live, YouTube Live Streaming, and Periscope, which is owned by Twitter, people are leveraging live video for broadcast across multiple metrics. Examples of this include media publishers who are putting whole TV shows online via Facebook Live; or behind the scenes, if you're using a brand ambassador to launch a product, you may be showing the behind the scenes aspects of that particular product launch.

Articles

Articles are another content format. These are long-form social posts that really work effectively to build thought leadership and credibility or expertise in a particular area. LinkedIn and Facebook currently offer the facility to create long-form articles, which can include text, imagery, and video. Ultimately, you need to make sure your content is focused on a particular topic or theme, and that you're driving discourse or engagement around that particular theme by adding your thoughts, your opinions, or your learnings and insights. It's important to have a snappy and succinct title. Articles load pretty quickly as the content is mostly plain text, so be sure to grab your audience's attention in the first paragraph. Engage with comments on articles to continue to amplify your credibility and expertise in the subject area.

Articles are very effective in driving conversation, and gaining additional perspectives and insight from peers within the same vertical. You can take advantage of this and think about the senior members of your business, your CEO, your managing director. Could they benefit and could they be used as influencers for your organization by creating this type of article content?

Templates and checklist

The next content format is templates and checklists. They can be handy content formats to seed to your potential customers. These allow you to build credibility, help solve a pain point, and add real true effort to help your audience.

HubSpot created a quick cheat sheet on how to create smart social content for any channel. They're trying to utilize this content template to empower potential customers. If you're an in-house team, this kind of information is invaluable. You could potentially save this down, print it out, share it around the office, and it would actually contain the branding of the individual business who actually supplied it to you.

Research what your audience's pain points are to ensure what you're creating for them actually provides assistance, and shows true effort on your part to understand the challenges they face.

Webinars

Webinars, or web-based seminars, allow you an opportunity to connect to your audience in a human way by putting a face or voice to your offering. The feeling of dedicated care that an individual can get from a webinar helps build a relationship with your potential customer.

Theme your webinars on a specific area of your expertise, and use visual aids, such as videos, animations, or PowerPoints over screenshare, to talk the audience through solving their business need or educate them in a specialized area.

Allow time for Q&A and discussion on their experiences. Be warned: if you aren't sure of the area you're giving a webinar on, a Q&A could be tricky, so be prepared in advance.

Lastly, always provide a takeaway – for example, a follow-up email with the presentation you delivered, or an invitation to ask more questions. Webinar audiences are investing their time in listening to your expert insight, so maximize this opportunity as much as possible.

For example, like Percolate did here, you can put together a webinar around questions that your individual audience members are asking all the time. You might want to bring it back to that piece around research and the pain points of your audiences, and helping handhold them through a particular topic that they may find challenging. This will allow you to build on your credibility and your expertise.

Podcasts

And the last content type that we're going to have a look at here is podcasts. With the rise in online audio streaming from platforms like Spotify and SoundCloud, podcasts have become more and more popular. Globally, listenership has risen to 24% of online users, with an affluent and educated audience aged 18-54.

Big international publications like the New York Times are creating podcasts around content that lives on their website, but they're using it as a platform for discourse and for conversation. Podcasts are the perfect format if you're really looking to build credibility and engagement around thought leadership.

When you're creating a podcast, make sure that you have a single theme that you're focused on, that you have multiple voices contributing towards the conversation and the discourse, and that you have high-quality audio. There's nothing worse than a bad quality podcast, and it really drives down user engagement with the content. You can also use platforms like SoundCloud to host your podcast afterwards. Podcasts offer a great opportunity to repurpose content that may exist elsewhere.

You may be able to take a blog post and turn it into a podcast topic in which you debate the pros and cons of the original blog post topic. There's great opportunity for this content to go live, whether it be through a direct stream, via a SoundCloud plugin on Facebook, or on Twitter.

In general, there's a great opportunity in being able to condense your various content forms into a podcast and triggering further debate and discussion.

Advantages

With great content comes great responsibility, and knowing the limits of content will help you plan appropriately and not over-promise and under-deliver.

In terms of the advantages, using the various formats that we've spoken about can bring several benefits:

- It can help you drive your brand awareness.
- It can also help you become a thought leader and build your credibility and expertise in your field.
- It may help excite and drive advocacy around your consumers and your potential customers.
- It can help you get your message out to a much wider audience.

Limitations

What about the limitations?

Silent Auto-Play

In terms of the limitations, an important consideration for video content would be Silent Auto-Play. Presently, 85% of Facebook video is watched without sound. If you have any form of spoken word or verbal cues in your video content, it's crucial that you include subtitles, or even a sign that tells people to turn the sound on.

Accessibility

Accessibility is an important factor. Does your audience require ALT tags? ALT tags are small descriptors that provide the visually impaired with an audio description of both images and videos. Making sure that your content is more visually pivoted is crucial.

Vertical compliance

In terms of vertical compliance, we're talking about video content which is shot in a portrait style as opposed to shot in a landscape style. Platforms like Instagram Stories and Snapchat Stories need vertical content to be fully optimized.

Excessive data usage

Remember, you need to avoid inflicting high data charges on your consumers. Making content available to an audience only using Wi-Fi would help them mitigate a really high roaming bill or a data charge if you're creating very long, high-resolution content for them to download in a streaming context.

Crisis situations

And lastly, plan for crisis situations. If your brand is experiencing an unexpected crisis around a product recall or a brand-damaging piece of activity, not all content is going to be able to fulfil the engagement needed to manage a crisis situation. Always review to make sure your content is not going to exacerbate a particular crisis issue.

Segmentation

Thanks to a content segmentation method called 'dark posting', you can now determine what audiences see certain content at a certain time. This feature is currently available via Facebook and

Instagram. It's a hugely powerful tool in avoiding wastage and delivering the right content to the right person at the right time.



For example, a shoe store may have a 50% sale off of their regular summer shoes. But they may use a different creative for targeting a female audience versus a creative that targets a male audience. What they are able to do here is make the content that is seen by the right audience hyper-relevant and make the content that that's not intended for them dark, so they actually can't see the content.

Benefits of segmentation

Essentially, targeting content to your intended audience will help you avoid irrelevant messaging and increase your return on investment.

- **Avoids wastage:** It avoids wastage by making sure the content is 100% relevant to the audience who sees your content.
- **Avoids irrelevant messaging:** It avoids irrelevant messaging reaching the wrong audience.
- **Allows tweaks:** It allows for tweaks in language, copy, and imagery without interfering with your master brand.

CONTENT CREATION TOOLS

Tools for ebooks and whitepapers

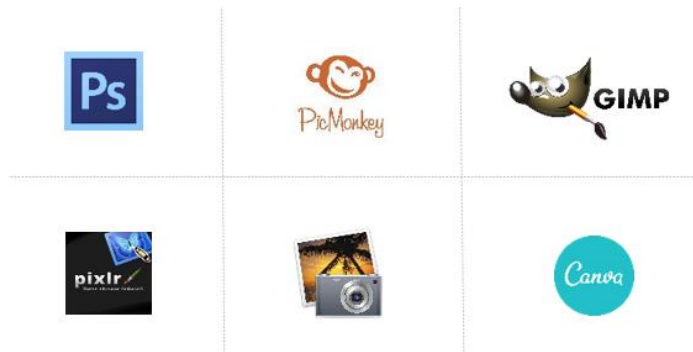
In terms of tools that can help you create ebooks and white papers, here's a brief overview of some tools that you can utilize.



My personal favorite is **Adobe InDesign**. The program lets you integrate text, images, and rich content formats that creates really exciting and interesting ebooks. When it comes to content creation tools for images, one of my favorites is **Canva**. Canva is a brilliant content creation piece for beautiful presentations and images that is so simple to use and it makes it look as though you're a pro designer.

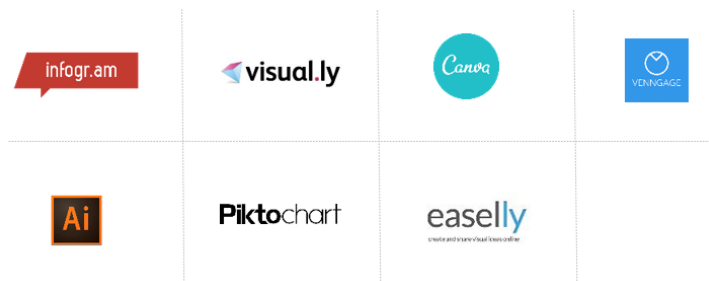
Tools for images

Here's some other examples worth checking out for image creation.



Tools for infographics

When it comes to infographic creation, **Canva** is another great one to have a look at, but personally my favorite is **Piktochart**, another great free online tool that you can utilize to create great content.



Piktochart allows that WYSIWYG, as we mentioned before, that what you see is what you get, non-technical designer to create some really fun, interesting, and quirky infographic content for your content marketing mix. We've included some other examples that are worth checking out too.

Tools for long form video

Tools for creating a long form video include Adobe Premiere Pro and After Effects.



Adobe After Effects is very much in the motion graphics and animation style whereas Adobe Premiere and Final Cut Pro are two great tools in terms of being able to utilize, edit, and amend live video content formats.

Tools for short form video

For short form video, the mobile app, Viva Video, allows for some really great content creation around mobile, on the go video sheets. It's quite agile and easy to use.



In addition, Photoshop also has an animations feature that allows you to create short looping forms of video content for getting your message across very quick and effectively. In addition to a lot of these external tools, a lot of the social media platforms themselves have built in editors.

Tools for native video editing

Instagram, for example, has great features built into their mobile video app. They include the likes of slow motion, time lapse, and a great feature called Boomerang where content is played forward and then backwards again.



Have a look at what individual content creation of tools are available via the native social media platforms themselves. Another great example of these native tools includes the YouTube Video Editor.

YouTube video editor

The YouTube Video Editor allows users to add captions, add scenes, change transitions, and also add music and sound effect to your video creation. YouTube also offer a gallery of free production music that you can utilize in all of your brand videos if you find the right fit, of course.

Tools to proof content

Once you've created your content, it's really important to check for grammar errors or typos.



Utilizing much-used programs like Microsoft Word or Adobe Acrobat can help you do this. Another great service is Grammarly. Grammarly is an online web tool that allows you to sense check your

content via a browser extension that can automate and read the content, flagging real time errors and typos for you to amend.

Considerations

While we've discussed a number of content creation tools available for you to use, it is important to assess which tools are right for your intent and right for your business. You can do this in four key ways.

Functionality

Having a look at the functionality, does this tool suit the content that you're looking to create? Will it fulfil the need that you have in your organization for creating a content format that is a part of your content marketing mix?

Ease of use

How easy is the tool to use? Does it require specialist training, continues professional development or upscaling, or is it quite intuitive and easy to use?

Resource

Do you need to dedicate an entire team member to using this tool effectively to create content for your content marketing efforts? It may be the case that you do not have resource to dedicate to this particular content creation tool, and maybe you need to assess other avenues of content creation.

Frequency of use

How much use will you actually get out of using this tool, especially if the tool is a paid resource? Like for example, an Adobe Creative Cloud. Adobe is a great tool and is the absolute industry pinnacle however, it is a considerable resource for any business or brand to be investing in. There is no one size fits all and it's important to assess the tools under these headings to assess what is right for you, your business, and your content marketing needs.

Best practices

Best practice across your content creation should follow these considerations regardless of the platform.

Utility

Is it actually providing something useful for your audience? Is it addressing a concern? Is it educational? Or is it providing information or relief for them that actually position your brand as the key to solving their issues?

Fit for platform

Is it fit for the platform? Does it make sense to be using this content format on this particular platform or does it size correctly? Is it relevant in terms of the context of the language that's used? And will your audience receive this content well and do they engage with this content on this type of platform in an ongoing basis?

A general example of this would be a financial report probably wouldn't find its home most comfortably in a B to C audience on Facebook.

Measurable

Is the content measurable? Some content may not be entirely measurable and you may be doing it for the pure brand awareness perspective or an early adopter desire. Just be conscious that all content marketing really should be measurable that you can track back to its successes or its failures, and learn and implement changes.

Consistent

Is the content consistent with what you have happening across your other touch points from a brand guidelines perspective, a tone of voice, and also what's happening in your why your business calendar? Making sure that you have that consistency across the board is key to driving the relevancy and also measuring conversion of your target audience.

Aligned with goals

Is the content aligned with your wider business goals? Is it clear what you're asking consumers to do? And is it clear what you're hoping to achieve with this piece of content?

CONTENT CURATION

What is it?

Content curation is the utilizing of third-party content, relevant to your business and your industry, that helps you grow thought leadership and credibility in the field.

Once you have identified the best publications from which to curate content, you can begin to learn more about your target audience and the kind of content they most engage with. Do this by experimenting with the different content formats and topics you curate; this is also a great way to ascertain where you should focus your efforts when creating content.

Make sure to provide your own take on any content you curate by adding some additional insight, an opinion, or some context. In this way, even though you may not have created the content yourself, you're still establishing yourself as a source of knowledge.

It's important to be selective about what you curate. You're trying to showcase your thought leadership, so pick high-quality content that reflects well on your personal brand and adds genuine value to your target audience.

Curation versus creation

Content curation and creation have various benefits and limitations. A good content strategy should have a mix of both types of content.

Curation

Curation is the use of third-party created content with added insight to further your positioning.

As we've mentioned, curation involves utilizing third party content. As a rule of thumb, you should always add your own commentary onto that content to give it further context for your audience. In addition, it is a more efficient way of producing content because you're leveraging content that somebody else has gone to the effort of creating in the first instance. And lastly, you can seek community input by asking them for their opinions, thoughts, and insights to help curate your content.

Curation:

- Utilizes third-party content
- Addition of commentary
- Lower resource investment
- Limited ownership
- Community input

Creation

Creation is the generation of unique, owned content. It is content that's being created from scratch. It has a higher resource investment as you need to do the research, the content creation, and you have to actually put the content out. One of the benefits of content creation is that you have 100% ownership of that content. Should somebody else decide to curate it themselves, you have the initial thought leadership piece. And lastly, content creation, by its very virtue, drives more credibility for your brand than it does for a third party brand.

Creation:

- Original content
- Higher resource investment
- 100% ownership
- Credibility

Benefits of curated content

What are the benefits of using curated content?

- It can make you appear **less promotional** and show that you care about the wider industry in which you operate.
- It makes your audience **like you more**, because they can actually see your train of thought, they can see your insights, and they can see why you provide a USP versus your competitors.
- It also **generates overall goodwill** because it shows that you, as a business, care about what is happening in the wider ecosystem from a content perspective, but also from what your consumers are engaging with, and what they're interested in.
- It positions you as an **industry leader**, being able to add credible third party thought, opinion, or discussion around trending industry topics. It shows that you have intelligence and a voice in this space.

Types of curated content

Here are five different types of content curation.

- **Aggregation:** This consists of bringing together multiple relevant content pieces into one centralized location. For example, a newsletter that might go out on a Friday afternoon that talks about the top five biggest stories in horticulture that week.
- **Distillation:** This takes the overall 'noise' that is happening around a particular concept or theme. It looks to simplify it by calling out the commonalities and creating a piece of content which covers the key points that you need to know about a recurring topic or theme in the industry.
- **Elevation:** This happens when content curators look to form a hypothesis, or an idea, or a theory based on multiple content threads that are all similar in their take.
- **Mashups:** This is when authors merge completely different points of view into something that's brand new. They may, for example, be finding pieces of relevant content in the same industry that nobody has yet joined the dots between, to create an original point of view.
- **Chronology:** This is where a series of pieces of curated content are mapped out along a storyline or a timeline. It shows the evolution of a concept or theory through content or a full story, but maps it back to individual pieces of content that have contributed towards the end point.

CONTENT CURATION TOOLS

RSS feeds

Additional content curation tools, specifically around RSS feeds, include **Feedly**, **Feedspot**, and **Bloglovin'**.

My preference is definitely for Feedly. It's a great news aggregator app that is available for both iOS and Android for free and allows content marketers to assemble all of the content that is relevant and interesting for them in one place at one moment in time. We've touched on email alert tools previously. And I would have to say, Google Alerts, for me, is definitely the one that I would recommend.

Email alert tools

Being able to track against keywords, phrases, and publications, having email alerts delivered at a frequency that suits you, and being able to switch on and off this service very easily is a great addition to any content marketer's curation efforts. We've touched on social listening tools. But certainly, from a content curation perspective, **Talkwalker** would be a fantastic tool to utilize in your content curation efforts.

Social listening tools

Talkwalker looks at over 187 different languages. So regardless of how people are speaking about you or where people are speaking about potential curation content, you'll be able to find it through Talkwalker.

Considerations

So best practice in your content curation.

Trusted

Make sure that the content is verifiably true, that the publisher is of a good standing and has thought leadership within the industry.

Make sure to add your own insight, thoughts, and opinions. Avoid duplicating content just for the sake of it. And also, make sure that you include a variety of sources and that you're not just curating from the same platform repeatedly. Make sure to include proper attribution and a link, and credit where it's due. So important content curation considerations for curating content would be largely around the validity and the veracity of this content.

And when we talk about validity and veracity, really you need to be making sure that the content is absolutely trustworthy. You need to make sure that when you are curating content, that you've read it, that you can stand over the facts, and that it's completely factually correct and accurate before you curate it. Another consideration is around how customizable that content is. Do you have permission to use that content in a curated capacity, or is it only for editorial use, which would limit your usage of it if you were only a journalist or a publisher? So again, make sure that you're being compliant with the usage of that content.

Cost

And lastly, cost. Is there a fee for curating somebody else's content? Do they need payment up front before you're able to engage their content? It may be proprietary and as such, you need to be aware of what the limitations are before you engage in active content curation.

DEFINING YOUR PERSONALITY

Brand personality

We're going to have a look at the importance of brand personality through your content marketing.

How you speak to customers

Are you friendly? Are you approachable? Are you warm? Or are you more formal and a little bit cold? This will be determined by your brand objectives and by the type of business that you are.

What's appropriate for your individual industry?

Tone of voice

Are you upbeat? Are you endlessly optimistic? Or are you a little bit more real and hard-hitting? Consider what your business proposition is and what your consumers are going to respond and resonate with. And lastly, what style do you come across in?

Imagery and style

In terms of your imagery and your video style, are you slick and are you dark? Are you too cool? Or are you very fun and upbeat and bright and colorful? Think about the brands Coca-Cola versus Mercedes-Benz. Two very different brands in terms of their look, their feel, their tone of voice, and their style.

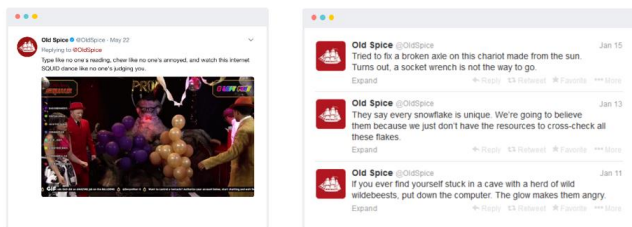
Importance of brand personality

Why is it important for you to have personality in your brand?

- **Point of difference:** It adds a point of difference versus your competitors. It enables you to be able to vocalize what your business proposition is, and allows for a resonance with your target audience that is right for you that doesn't have duplication with a competitor set.
- **Unique vantage point:** It allows you with a unique vantage point, where your customers can see the unique proposition that you offer within the market that differentiates you from your competitors.
- **Resonance:** It offers that resonance with the end consumer. People don't like thinking of brands as cold, hard businesses. They like thinking of brands as people with a story to tell. And certainly having the why behind what you're selling, and being able to act with conviction and a personality, will help it resonating with a consumer.

Example: Old Spice

Here's an example of great brand personality that's been focused through content marketing.



Old Spice, the men's deodorant and aftershave brand have a really unique tone of voice. They have a Twitter following of over 215,000 Twitter followers, making them one of the most followed personal care brands on the planet. Their personality centers around three key pillars. One is humor. They don't take themselves too seriously. They use a really quirky style in terms of their content, they speak their minds, and they're very honest about their approach.

As you can see from this, they don't feel the need to conform with their competitors' view on elite performance or male masculinity. They're here to have a bit of fun. And lastly, they're quite provocative. A lot of personal care brands try to paint the picture of increasing attraction or desire with use. With their particular execution, they use the Old Spice guy, who's a bit quirky, a bit funny, and elicits the emotional response of laughter and humor.

What story do you want to tell?

Again, they're shattering the norms and they're not conforming to what the industry expects them to do. And they have a very unique personality that offers them a USP within the market. Roughly, elements of your personality can be themed into three overall categories.

Functional

There's the functional. This is the less emotive side of your brand, very much around the educational story of the why you're selling.

It also talks about what your service offering is and potentially your products.

Emotional

Then we get into the emotional side. This is the part that really resonates with people. It's the humor, the passion points, the interest sets. What makes you exciting? What makes you relevant? What makes you funny?

And what makes you ultimately relatable?

Essential

This is the call-to-action piece that we talked about previously. Where you're located, what your price points are, your availability, and your distribution, and how consumers can actually engage with you thereafter. Your personality is defined by how hard or how soft you go in these particular areas, how forceful you are with your messaging, and also, what element plays the biggest role.

For some brands like Dove, for example, emotion is everything. However, if you were working in a small solicitor, functionality and essential information may be more important to you than the emotive aspect of what you're actually marketing.

BRAND STORYTELLING

Value of brand storytelling

Brands storytelling is a way to use your content to tell the narrative of the business, and drive a really compelling story to convince and convert your audience.

We're going to have a look at a great piece of content now, from the master of the why behind selling, Mr. Simon Sinek. And a "TED Talk" that he gave in relation to driving brands storytelling home for consumers.

Video available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qp0HIF3SfI4>

So as you can see from Simon's examples in his presentation, customers rarely care about the what you sell, or the how you sell, they're more interested in the narrative and the story behind why you sell. This is why it's so important through your content marketing to take customers on that journey with you, to bring them through right through to conversion.

Case study: Kenco

Kenco imports a huge amount of coffee from Honduras, but the country is actually ravaged by gang violence. They wanted to create a campaign and a program that gave back to the nationals of Honduras. They worked with the Telegraph to create a series of digital content formats that show the stories of Kenco versus gangs, where they invested locally in training programs getting gang members back to work, and making them productive members of society again.

Over 5.5 million people engaged with this content because it showed the why of why Kenco cared. People really didn't see the aspect of the showy promotional sales driver, and actually the emotive element of the content really resonated well with them.

Case study: DKNY

Another great example is this example from DKNY, who showed how a potential crisis situation was turned on its head and was solved using their brand story. They inadvertently and mistakenly, used a photograph from a Humans of New York photographer, the photographer got online and really gave them a hard time. He wasn't very happy about them using the content without him being paid.

So what DKNY did was explain their brand story. That back in 1989, they've always been inspired by incorporating authentic New York imagery into their content formats, and ultimately they were really saddened to hear that this had happened accidentally.

They also agreed to donate a large sum to the YMCA, which the Humans of New York photographer was aligned to, and ultimately help change the narrative and the agenda around negative potential crisis issue by illustrating really great brand storytelling to drive their position, and their credibility on the subject.

Steps to creating a brand story

What are the steps to creating your own brand business story?

- Make sure that you define your personality and that you're true to your brand.
- Make sure you've identified your audience adequately and what they will respond to emotionally.
- Always map your story back to your customer personas to make sure that it resonates adequately with your target audience.
- Don't forget those business objectives. While you may be focusing on emotive content or you may be getting back to the root of the why of you're selling, you still have a job to do with all content marketing. So make sure it is delivering on those wider business objectives.

CONTENT PERSONALIZATION

What is it?

Content personalization is a really powerful tool that allows you to differentiate your content at different stages of the purchase funnel to help it be hyper-relevant to the right user at the right time.

Benefits

There are a number of benefits to content personalization.

- **Targeted and relevant:** You can make your message more targeted and relevant to your specific audience at a moment in time.
- **Higher conversion rate:** A lot of studies have shown a higher conversion rate. We're seeing 42% higher conversion rates by using personalized content at the various stages of the conversion funnel.
- **Increased brand affinity:** Ultimately, it will result in increased brand affinity as that audience believes the content is fit for them at that moment in time.
- **Drives efficiency:** For you, as a brand marketer, it drives efficiency to segment your content intelligently like this.

How can you give your content that personal touch?

Being able to do your research around your audience segments and understand their consumer journey is hugely beneficial.

- **Leverage customer data:** Make sure that you're leveraging as much consumer data as possible. Are they on your website? Have they looked at a newsletter that you've sent them? Are they on a mailing list or have they had a direct mail in their inbox? Looking to see how they've interacted with you in the past will inform how you can interact with them in the future.
- **Target your messaging:** Look towards your targeting on your message. Are they the right audience that you need to be hitting? Is this the moment in time when they're making a purchase decision? Look towards demographics or consumer personas that we've mapped out previously, and make sure that you're hitting the right creative and the right copy to the right people.
- **Measure and analyze:** As you create and personalize content, you will glean great learnings and understandings by which content worked effectively. As they're guided through the purchase funnel, you'll be able to assess which content most effectively brought people onto that next phase. If you're selling and linking people to an e-commerce platform, you might be able to see which content formats across your content personalization chain actually help drive the most amount of sales or client acquisitions for you.

Case study: Vidyard

Here's a great example of content personalization and one of my favorites from a brand called Vidyard.

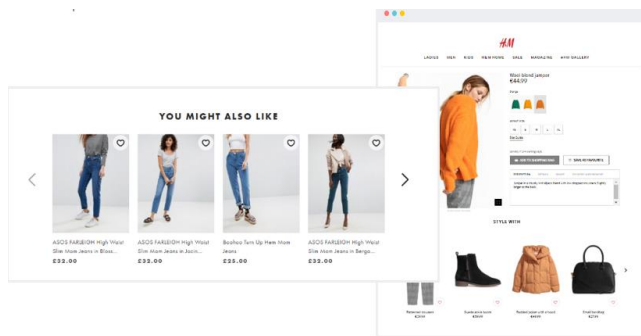
They created a simple, super personalized video campaign of bespoke video assets. They targeted individuals from a high-value potential for their business that they actually seeded out to drive the commitment to their potential clients.

The man in the video addresses each of the people individually, and he has a message for them that, relevant to their own audiences, mentions co-workers in their office or previous conversations that he's had. It's a really good example, if not possibly one that's not the most time efficient. It was a great piece of content that helped Vidyard hit their sales target.



Case study: H&M

Another great example of content personalization is from fashion retailer H&M.



As you can see, users who have purchased on the website are also treated to other content from, "You might also like this outfit." It's able to look at the individual items that you have been searching and recommend complementary items of clothing that would fit with your basket contents.

It's a really clever way for them to upsell their accessory suggestions, and also auto-generate list space off of the user's input with the website. These lists demonstrate the brand's interest in their customers or appearing interest as the case may be, and, again, result in their overall business objectives.

NOTES

LESSON 5: PUBLISHING AND DISTRIBUTING CONTENT

CONTENT PLATFORMS

Matching your platform to your audience

Before publishing content, it's important to assess your content platforms. Tailoring your content and platform to your audience will make sure that you prevent wastage and make for a more efficient content strategy.

What are the key considerations?

- **Content need:** Will your content add value or solve a problem for your audience at that particular moment in time?
- **Audience ecosystem:** Is your content right for that particular platform, and are your audience using that platform at that moment in time? Make sure to go where your audience is as opposed to trying to forge a path ahead and go where your audience isn't.
- **Proposition and format:** Is the content that you're proposing right for the platform format? When we talk about this, again, we made the analogy earlier on around a financial report for a large pharma company may not be best seated out on a B to C platform like Facebook.

Make sure that both work together

Be conscious of the platform and the usage of the platform from the mass public or from the target that you're targeting and how they use it on a day-to-day basis, the types of content they interact with, and what's right for the tone of the platform.

	White Paper	eBook	Infographic/ Images	Blog	Interactive Content	Video	360 Video	Live Video	Articles	Templates	Webinar	Podcast
facebook	x	x	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓
Twitter	x	x	✓	x	x	✓	x	✓	x	✓	x	✓
Instagram	x	x	✓	x	x	✓	x	✓	x	x	x	x
LinkedIn	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	x	x	✓	✓	x	x
YouTube	x	x	x	x	x	✓	✓	✓	x	x	✓	✓
Snapchat	x	x	✓	x	x	✓	x	✓	x	x	x	x
Website	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓

This table shows the different forms of content and what works best on each individual channel. As you can see, Facebook and Twitter support a wide range of content types.

Just make sure that you're using the right content in the right channels at the right time to maximize the platform to its best usage. It's also really important to note that other platforms, like LinkedIn and Snapchat, do have their own benefits and have more niche audiences. It's not a case of looking at the largest amount of content formats per audience, but more what the platforms are that your audience is using.

CONTENT SEEDING

What is it?

A good content strategy will involve content creation at its heart. What you do with that content, and getting it to your intended audience, is what we'll look at in content seeding.

Content seeding is a strategic approach to mapping out your content across the entire web. Content can be split across online platforms, your website, and your social media channels. Optimizing your content per platform is a key consideration so that you avoid overlap as much as possible.

More often than not we'll look at how content is placed on these places with a link back to the original content source. There is some overlap here with content promotion; however, seeding is the approach for the initial publishing, with promotion coming in afterwards.

Benefits

What are the benefits of content seeding?

- **Reach:** This allows your content to reach a wider audience more than a static platform like your website.
- **Relevancy:** It's not just about reaching a mass population, but making sure that that mass population is aligned to your customer personas and is more likely to engage with your content. By leveraging third parties, you can ensure your content is seen by the right audiences, and get your message to the right targets.
- **Increase:** The next aspect in terms of a benefit is being able to increase not only your web traffic but your search engine ranking by using content seeding as well.
- **Build:** It also builds your credibility as a brand and thought leadership within your industry.
- **Generate:** It generates leads and conversions
- **Improve:** It improves your online brand mentions and SEO.

Distribution channels

In terms of the content ecosystem, there are largely three individual areas that you can use to seed your content.

There are your owned channels:

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram
- YouTube
- Snapchat
- Pinterest
- Blog
- Website

These are the channels that you have 100% autonomous control over. These channels offer the best opportunity to shape your message, creative, and content. Challenges with owned spaces include reaching your intended audience and the danger of being too product focused.

There are then the collaborative platforms:

- Reddit
- Pinterest
- StumbleUpon
- Mix
- Digg
- Forums
- Tagging
- Linking

These are channels where online communities come together to share and create content. Weaving your content in here can benefit from user generated content input, making users feel a part of the creation process. You may even do some audience testing of content in these collaborative channels to get real-time feedback.

And lastly, in the earned and paid space, there are the following:

- Third-party social channels
- Online news sites
- Influencer channels
- Blogs
- Vlogs
- Journalists

Earned and paid channels for your message represent a great opportunity for content marketers by leveraging already engaged audiences or networks and placing your product into the existing conversation. Great conversion can be achieved by correctly identifying perfect fits for these third-party channels. We will cover this further when we get to content promotion.

Challenges

Let's take a look at some of the challenges to consider when content seeding.

- **Reach:** Reach is a really attractive metric to chase after. However, when you are chasing after reach, it's not necessary that all of this reach can be entirely cost-effective or relevant. Being able to build a campaign platform that reaches your audience and reaches the most amount of your audience in the most cost-efficient way is really important.
- **Relevancy:** We talk about relevancy here as well, and as we've mentioned, great reach can also mean great wastage. Being very specific about your consumer personas, and who you want to reach, and reaching the greatest amount of them with your content marketing is key.
- **Transparency:** Transparency is really important when it comes to the paid seeding perspective. Make sure that anything that you are publishing that has paid promotion behind it is clearly labelled as such.
- **Content:** In terms of content, it's always a challenge to create high-quality content. Ensuring you resource adequately is obviously a content creation and curation consideration as well as a content seeding consideration.
- **Measurement:** Make sure you set up appropriate protocols for measuring a direct return on investment in advance of campaigns going live. For example, engage with focus groups before and after the campaign to ascertain brand recall and awareness.

- **Budget and resource:** Make sure that you have effectively planned to get your content seeded and promoted wide enough to succeed in your business metrics. Allow for personnel allocation and social media advertising budgets to extend for this as well.
- **Tight collaboration:** We talked about working well with the other members of your team in terms of being able to have content input. For the content seeding process, make sure that your content seeding efforts are helping all areas of your business, and that you're mitigating any aspect of conflicting messages or confusion for consumers.

Seeding curated content

There are a number of ways in which you can seed your content.

Summary blog posts

We have looked at some of the content formats previously, but these may take the guise of a summary blog post. These blog posts can discuss content seen in other places, top tips lists, and observations comparing and contrasting multiple similar items in your industry – all of which add your thought leadership perspective.

Email newsletters and notifications

Email newsletters and notifications and being able to share your weekly or monthly updates, again, adds that nice element to being able to seed content out to a specific audience who may have subscribed to an email news alert from your business.

Social posts

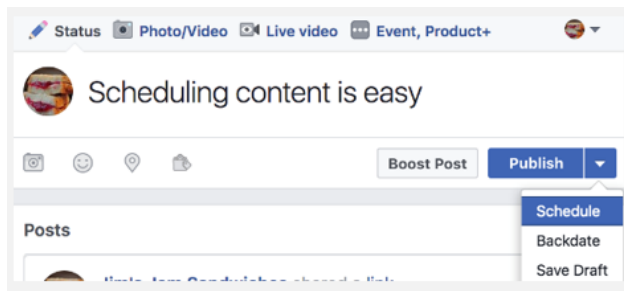
Retweeting or sharing stories with additional narrative, or thought on articles or content pieces, is hugely important.

CONTENT SCHEDULING

Content can be scheduled natively to the platform itself, or through a third-party application that you grant access to your platforms.

- **Native scheduling:** When we talk about the methods, native content scheduling is the method by which content is uploaded for future publishing. Native content scheduling includes the likes of the Facebook Scheduling tool, Twitter's Media Studio, and WordPress's Post scheduling.
- **Third-party applications:** Third-party applications such as Hootsuite, Buffer, Sprout Social, Percolate, and Falcon Social all allow you to validate existing permissions with your social media platforms to allow them to cross-publish and to publish on your behalf. This allows you to upload content in bulk and allows for you to free up your time to get involved in other content creation activities.

Here's a quick overview of the Facebook Scheduling tool.



As you can see here, it allows you to schedule images, text, and videos. You can also backdate content, which is really helpful, especially if you're looking at a retrospective in terms of your brand and business's history.

Twitter scheduling allows for scheduling of images and text only, but doesn't allow for backdating of content.

Content scheduling tools

Here are a couple of free and paid content scheduling tools that you can try out, to see if they fit with your business needs.

- **Hootsuite** is a great tool for starters, combining content scheduling and social listening.
- **Sprout Social** is a management tool that lets multiple users schedule, publish, and analyze social media posts across several platforms.
- **Buffer** allows you to add articles, photos, and video, and Buffer will automatically post them to your social media accounts throughout the day.
- **Percolate** allows for task delegation and content creation, in addition to scheduling. With some time investment, this tool allows for a really dynamic outcome.

Benefits and limitations

Let's take a look at the benefits and limitations of content scheduling.

Benefits

Content scheduling is time-efficient. It frees you up to focus on other work. It also allows cross-posting. When you're posting a piece of content to your WordPress account, you may be able to cross-post that to your Facebook account and your Twitter account at the same time.

Limitations

In terms of limitations, there is an inability to react. As the content is not being published immediately and has no human oversight, the scheduling tool does not have the intelligence to disable inappropriate content in cases of a natural disaster, a tragic event, or if there's an issue as a result of publishing content. In addition to this, API updates can be limiting from certain social media platforms. For example, if you're using a third-party application like Buffer or Sprout Social, their permissions sometimes change and get revoked. As a result, content may not end up being published.

CONTENT PROMOTION

What is it?

Content promotion is the strategic method by which you get your content out to a much wider audience, other than your owned immediate channels.

Content promotion methods

We'll have a brief look at some of these earned and paid-for methods.

Methods of content promotion include:

- **Influencer marketing:** This involves using influencers to co-create and amplify your content. Here, a beauty blogger has co-created a post with a beauty brand. Notice the #ad within the post.
- **Guest blogging:** This involves extending the reach of your blogs by using influencers who may exchange blog posts with you. Here is an example of guest blogging where the Digital Marketing Institute teamed up with Dr Dave Chaffey to write a blog on Digital Skills. This piece of content can be shared on both blogs and can be linked to by both platforms, which will spread the reach and amplify the content beyond owned channels.
- **Tagging:** Tagging particular audiences and channels that may find your content interesting or useful: this is an example in which an industry influencer has chosen to tag Salesforce and Google in a LinkedIn post to amplify the content and extend its reach.
- **Affiliate marketing:** This involves teaming up with a like-minded business to create content together. This is an example of affiliate marketing, where a vitamin drink company and a company that makes protein bars teamed up because they have a similar target persona and customer segment.
- **Media partnerships:** This is where you may involve a third-party media outlet to seed your content through. Here is a great example of a media partnership between Red Bull and Go Pro. They have created a fantastic content series that combines the energy and the adrenalin of sports from a Red Bull perspective, and the amazing abilities of Go Pro cameras to capture them.

Influencer marketing

Influencer marketing can be defined as the leverage of an influencer to help get wider content reach for your brand proposition or message. We can attribute the rise in influencer marketing to audience fatigue with traditional advertising; a distrust in brands and businesses; and the rise in ad blocking by consumers. In short, brands and businesses are turning to individuals to get their messages out to their target audiences.

There are three ways in which you can use influencer marketing.

- **Media channel:** The first is as a media channel, where an influencer is essentially acting in place of a media channel for you to buy content through. This is where you give them a brief, and they deliver certain pieces of content that fit in with your brief.
- **Co-creation:** This is where you work with your influencer on a level playing field, to co-create content that is a fit for their audience, but still delivers on a business message for your brand.
- **Content amplification:** This is where you essentially pay an influencer to help amplify the content that you're creating through your own brand channels.

Why users share content

A key consideration for all influencer marketing is the clear declaration that influencer marketing is a paid-for advertisement. There are regulations in a number of countries that now make it illegal to mislead people, making it essential that all content used through influencer channels is declared as advertising.

There are three main reasons that we see consumers share content.

- **Incentives:** A lot of users are following the tactics that brands are implementing around being able to share content for the chance to enter a draw or enter a competition. These metrics can be quite hollow for brands, and don't reflect true reflection on engagement.
- **Fame:** Fame is another consideration. People often share content for the 'I saw it first' kudos. This is more commonly known as social currency. Leverage this in the best way possible to give your audience advocates and your brand heroes access to content first.
- **Utility:** A lot of consumers share content to be helpful to other people. As knowledge is the original sign of power and wealth, it continues to determine online influencers. It might be that there is a storm coming this weekend, and there's five top tips for keeping your house safe. Again, these kinds of ideas are shared quite far and wide with social audiences to provide utility to the wider online community.

CONTENT REPURPOSING

What is it?

Content repurposing is the method of reusing content in various different formats that make it still fit for purpose but don't tire out the audience by repeating the same thing. The benefits of this include being efficient in resource, helping drive consistency of a general theme or message, extending the lifespan of the content, looking to reach new audiences with different content formats across different channels, and helping to drive your SEO.

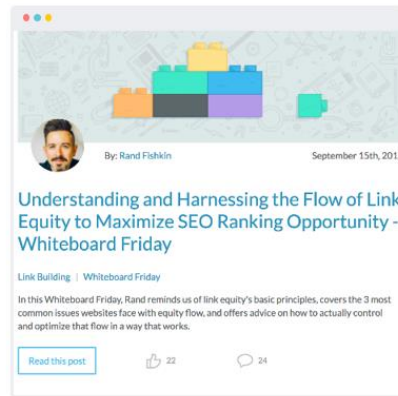
Repurposing methods

How could you repurpose a blog post?

- It could easily be repurposed as an **infographic**, calling out the key data and stats and tying them visually.
- These may be then translated into a **motion infographic** where we actually make the stats come to life using simple animations.
- We may take the topics and themes discussed in the blog post and have a **podcast** and a discussion about it.
- And then similarly there may be some further research that can help develop this blog into a **whitepaper** that drives thought leadership and credibility in the space.

Example: Moz Whiteboard Fridays

Here's one of my favorite content repurposing examples, the Moz Whiteboard Fridays.



These are pretty famous in the content marketing space. Every Friday, the team at Moz create a really cool giant whiteboard video showing digital marketing tips.

These tricks are drawn out by Ron Fishkin, generally, who then translates them into a lovely blog post thereafter. This offers additional context with video transcriptions. So what we see is a three-pronged approach to the same topic, the same piece of content, but repurposed in completely different ways that offer additional SEO benefit for the brand and help drive that thought leadership, credibility, and expertise in the area.

NOTES

LESSON 6: METRICS AND CONTENT MARKETING PERFORMANCE

CONTENT MARKETING ROI

Value of content marketing

The value of content marketing measurement can be largely three-fold.

- **Brand awareness:** This is the more potential customers that know about your business and your proposition within the market.
- **Brand conviction:** This is the credibility and authority that you have as a business, or in certain brand topics and industry themes.
- **Conversions and advocacy:** This is, essentially, the content that you can use to drive sales and also repeat business.

Calculating ROI

There are three main components to calculating this return in investment (ROI) from your content marketing.

Content

The first component is looking at your initial investment in the content. This is not just from a financial or a monetary perspective, but investment in terms of time. How long has it taken you to create content for your content marketing mix? If the content is ultimately been unsuccessful, it's not just a case of the monetary input, but also the resource from a manpower and also from a time perspective that you've actually entered into creating that content.

Performance

Then there's the performance of that content.

Looking around the engagement, the metrics, and essentially, how your audience has reacted to that content and determining whether it's worth the initial investment. Can you track back the performance of this content to result in any sales or new clients, or indeed, any new leads?

Long tail benefits

The immediate impact of your content may not be fully realized in the short-term, and there may be longer-term benefits to your content.

So, making sure that you're taking into account 6-month to 12-month impacts from an SEO perspective, or indeed, lead generation that needs to turn into lead nurturing before a close in terms of a sale or a new customer, and making sure that you're taking these considerations into full context. On your content marketing, it is important to consider the cost implications of your content creation.

Cost implications

So, have you invested in content creation and the ownership of that from a hundred percent perspective? Or did you have to license imagery or music? Or do you need to credit individuals along your content creation process? How much internal availability is there in terms of resource or skills for the creation of that content?

And what did you need to invest in in order to make sure that was deliverable for the business? Did you need to hire external support like an agency or a design consultancy to help you get content across the line? Also consider any additional external videographers, designers, or cooperatives that you've had to involve in the content creation process. And lastly, is your content compliant with regulatory bodies?

Is there a financial implication to making sure that your content is compliant? Industries like pharmaceuticals and alcohol have regulatory boards, and sometimes need to fund this. This needs to be part of your content marketing ROI considerations as well.

Accessing content utility

We're going to look at three metrics around assessing the content utility when looking at your content marketing return of investment.

- **Downloads and saves:** How many customers found the content that you provided so useful, they decided to save it to their device?
- **Customer feedback:** How much customer feedback have you generated along the way? Have you been able to take any comments from a positive or a negative perspective and enacted business change as a result of being able to access them through their pieces of content?
- **Plays, clicks, and views:** How many views or plays on pieces of video content? Get a true view of what the video plays look like, though, because some of the platforms, like Facebook, register three seconds as a video view. YouTube look at 30 seconds as a video view. So make sure your video view metrics parlay across the board and are relevant to each other, rather than what the insights, the platforms are delivering on the face surface.

Accessing content performance

Do the digging and deep dive into the statistics.

- **Content recall:** You should be able to get a helicopter view of your content performance by assessing content recall. So how quickly linked is your brand to the content that you've pushed at previously, and how aligned is it with the style of your brand?
- **Clicks to point of sale:** How much traffic have you driven towards the endpoint where a consumer actually converts? And how has it resulted in business effect, or in terms of your bottom line?
- **Overlaying commercial results with your recent content activities:** Looking over the peaks in the chart in your business, and looking towards busy times when you're activating large pieces of content, and seeing if there is a correlation or a link between business results and your content marketing efforts.

CONTENT MARKETING GOALS

Aligning content metrics to business goals

It's really important to make sure that you're still aligning your content metrics to your wider business goals. We're going to look at some of these metrics and what stages of the funnel they should actually assign themselves to.

Awareness

In the awareness phase, some of the most important metrics are the reach, how many people you've reached with your content piece. The impressions is how many times you've reached them. And then looking at the frequency, which gives you the average overall times by which you're reaching your audience to saturation point.

A great piece of research was done by Mindshare in the UK that showed optimum frequency in terms of reaching consumers to shift. The dial on audience perception was between four and eight times. So that meant to really shift the dial in terms of being able to generate sales or change a consumer view on a brand or product, you needed to hit an individual four times the same piece of content. So optimize your content in the awareness phase definitely your own frequency. Tools like Facebook's frequency and reach purchasing option allow you to do this and to set the frequency metric that you want to deliver on based off your business objective.

Consideration

The next phase around consideration, the most important metrics to measure are clicks, engagements, and sentiment. In this phase, you're trying to nurture the lead down the consumer sales funnel. So in this phase, it's very much dedicated to nurturing ongoing conversation, providing that engagement back and forth with your potential customer, and adding any value that you can along their purchase decision.

Sales

Moving into sales, you need to be looking more around the results to do with clicks to basket, abandoned baskets and conversion. So which content is actually driving people towards the checkout and pressing click on the buy button.

Loyalty

And lastly, when it comes to brand loyalty, we need to be looking at audiences who are driving repeat purchase, any brand advocates, and also around our community growth. How can we instill more positive reviews and positive sentiment for our audience to help them stay loyal to the brand and ultimately repeat purchase from us?

KEY METRICS AND TOOLS

Key metrics to consider

Here are four key metrics that you should be measuring as a good content marketer.

Reach

The first is reach. When it comes to reach, we're going to be looking at the total number of people who've seen your content. Impressions is a sub-metric within reach that dictates how many times an individual has seen a piece of content. Reach can be gained by using the native platforms' tools within the social platform. These statistics are readily available on all of the social media platforms.

Engagement

Engagement is a little bit more complex because it needs to be given the context of sentiment. Engagement metrics vary by platform. Facebook has a very advanced engagement mechanic where

users can dictate their engagement based on six different emojis that rate their reactions from positive to really sad. Instagram has a comment and heart feature. In addition to this, Twitter has retweet, heart, and comment features. And this is all in addition to Facebook's like, comment, and share. LinkedIn has a like and a comment section. All in all, you're not going to get consistent measurements across the board. Giving context and giving additional information per platform is hugely important. Social engagements can lead to exponential reach, showing content to friends of friends, which can be very beneficial in terms of amplifying your content.

Sentiment

Sentiment is hugely important in terms of tracking how your content is performing with your audience. It provides content to the engagement metrics that we've discussed previously. And it allows you to assess how your current audience is reacting to your content, and whether you need to optimize your content to change. Tracking sentiment can allow you to identify issues that could potentially become a brand crisis. A great example of this would be a company going through the turmoil of laying off employees. They may experience huge amounts of engagement on social media, but that engagement is quite negative, and based on the employees who are losing their jobs. Don't be fooled by engagement stripped from sentiment. Sentiment adds that context and is hugely important.

Clicks and conversions

Measuring clicks on your content will allow you to assess the success of your content in driving traffic to your website. These clicks can then be captured and retargeted across the digital landscape, particularly if you have an ecommerce site.

UTM tracking codes (Urchin Tracking Modules) allow you to use custom tracking codes within your content so you can correctly attribute each click to each piece of content. Setting these up is easy, and using a free tool like Google's Link Builder will allow you to designate different URLs for specific campaigns and platforms.

Tracking click attribution from content type, platform, and theme will allow you to optimize towards the most successful form of content going forward.

Linking the tracking of clicks with your Site Analytics – and overlaying data like bounce analysis, when people click on one page and leave – will allow you to determine if the right people are visiting your site, or if changes need to be made to your targeting.

Tracking clicks right through to basket completion on ecommerce sites will allow you to identify the best content for driving sales, and enable you to work out a true ROI on your content marketing efforts based on the value of a completed sale.

Adding these information points to your user experience planning, and also towards your content marketing efforts, will help optimize the process for future endeavors.

Reviewing your metrics

Review your content aligned to these metrics and determine whether changes are needed, going forward.

➤ **Reach:** Is your content reaching the right audience? Is it reaching enough of them?

- **Engagement:** Is your content really engaging with the audience that you're seeding it to?
- **Sentiment:** Is the sentiment of the audience currently positive or negative? Do changes need to be made in terms of what you're actually pushing out there? Or does your audience simply not care?
- **Retention:** Has your content improved the attention span of your audience, or has it not?
- **Conversions:** Which links within your content are driving the most clicks to your website?

Optimize and learn from these content key metrics, and drive towards what's delivering the best return on investment for you and your content marketing efforts.

Measurement tools

In relation to measurement tools, all native platforms provide some information if you take the time to dig and to learn how each of the native reporting tools work.

In addition to this, tools like Sprout Social, Buffer, Google Analytics, and TweetReach will help you consolidate those reports. However, some of these tools may not provide the same insight and in-depth analysis that the native platforms offer in the first instance.

- **Native Reporting:** Familiarize yourself with the insights panels of Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and LinkedIn to get the raw data from each platform as a starting point for any measurement.
- **Sprout Social:** A third-party tool can offer insightful reporting, and also package up data in easy-to-present or easy-to-digest formats that are handy for external reporting.
- **Buffer:** Content scheduled through Buffer will allow for further in-depth insights regarding the performance of your content, and allow you to track this against competitor content.
- **Google Analytics:** Using Google Link Builder and Google Analytics hand in hand will allow you to track attribution right back to the content format and measure a true ROI on your content marketing.
- **TweetReach:** TweetReach will allow you to track the reach, impact, and impressions of your Twitter content.

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