

Content Marketing

Transcript
Version 1.0

CONTENT MARKETING

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Lesson 1:

Purpose of Content Marketing

PURPOSE OF CONTENT MARKETING (VIDEO)

Hi I'm Will Francis and I've worked on content marketing for some of the world's most loved brands. In this course we'll cover everything you need to know about content marketing.

Content marketing is the creation and sharing of content in different formats such as videos, blogs and social media posts, to build interest in a product or service. It is becoming increasingly important for marketers to understand content marketing and to know how to use it effectively. The rise of ad blockers, algorithms, private social, and many other factors will increasingly limit our ability to reach consumers.

However, the inbound nature of content marketing cuts through these barriers. This is because it is centered around creating written and visual assets that have a genuine and intrinsic value to people. This requires a change of thinking for many marketers, because it doesn't feel like marketing. And this is precisely why it works.

The purpose of content marketing is to drive both inbound customer engagement and organic searches (using search engine optimization, or SEO) from a defined audience, which can then be nurtured to convert into valuable customers. Content is strategically created or curated, and distributed in key locations across the internet to attract customers to your website. But what exactly is inbound marketing? It is a strategy where brands use content marketing to attract customers. The key driver of inbound marketing is 'consumer intent' as potential customers actively seek out the brand's content. As a result, the consumers are more engaged and open to taking action than if the brand were to communicate with them when they are not actively interested.

Outbound marketing, on the other hand, is when the brand pushes its messages out to as many people as it can within a target audience. The brand believes that this audience is a good match for the product or service being advertised. Of course, the consumers might not be interested in the product at that particular time! So outbound advertising is generally less effective than inbound marketing at driving action.

IMPORTANCE OF A CONTENT MARKETING STRATEGY (VIDEO)

Content marketing drives valuable search traffic and social engagement. These in turn can increase the number of valuable actions taken by your audience.

To create a successful content marketing campaign, you first need a strategy! This sets out the objectives and scope of your project. It keeps everything on track while providing a roadmap outlining the different aspects of your campaign.

You can use the 'conversion funnel' as a guide when planning your content marketing strategy. This enables you to map your content to key decision points in the consumer journey and address their needs. The conversion funnel helps you understand the consumer journey by tracking the different steps a typical consumer would complete on the way to taking a valuable action such as a purchase, sign up, or contact request. Content marketers should use funnel insights and knowledge to drive more valuable customer engagement.

In order to apply funnel techniques to your content strategy:

- Begin with 'awareness' content for the top of the funnel to get the word out there.
- Create 'consideration' content for the middle parts of the funnel, when people are assessing options in the market.
- Produce high-impact 'conversion' content for the end of the funnel. This drives people to take action.
- Create 'retention' content for past purchasers to turn them into repeat purchasers, or even brand advocates.
- It might also be worth creating 're-engagement' content for people who've dropped out at different stages of the consumer journey to entice them back.

Where appropriate, marketers can use what's known as 'hero content' as part of the funnel. This is high-value content that aims to drive brand awareness. Although it is created less frequently, it can cause a brand's message to go viral!

Examples of hero content include research studies, high quality infographics, ebooks, and highly unique and desirable audio/video (AV) content such as exclusive videos or podcasts.

So why develop a content strategy? As we can see, there are a lot of moving parts in a content strategy. Clearly, it's a useful document to create to get buy-in and sign-off from stakeholders. It can also act as a roadmap for the project itself. And it can be referred to when queries arise and can be adapted to suit the changing needs of the campaign and audience, as required.

A content strategy ensures content is developed for purpose by:

- Defining your objectives, KPIs, budgets, and audience personas.
- Capturing your brand or campaign story.
- Detailing production pieces, such as formats and timings.
- Outlining distribution channels.

- Measuring the performance of your content in terms of business impact and KPIs.

Take into account these key considerations, dependencies and constraints when project managing a content strategy:

- **Scope of production:** Identify the type and quantity of assets and formats you plan to deliver.
- **Timeline for production:** When will you deliver each part of the strategy? Plan your timeline carefully and ensure you've allowed enough time for each stage of production.
- **Budget and production resources:** What is required in terms of money and people to deliver your content efficiently?
- **Upstream dependencies:** What has to happen for the strategy to progress? Try to identify any potential issues in advance and put a solution or alternative plan into place.
- **Downstream dependencies:** What must the strategy deliver for something else to progress?
- **Risks:** What could happen to derail the plan? Factor in some contingency time for unexpected delays or complications.

It takes time to plan and execute a content marketing strategy effectively! Because there are many moving parts, you'll need to be flexible and ensure your strategy is agile. Can it evolve in response to changing business objectives, KPIs, and performance? More than any other discipline, content and asset production takes time and money. So, in order for the strategy to succeed, you must understand the full requirements to deliver on your plan from the beginning.

A number of tools and tactics can help content marketers to develop a successful content strategy:

1. **Objectives:** SMART objective setting
2. **Research:** Persona development
3. **Planning:** Content or creative strategy and content schedules
4. **Production:** Creating and repurposing content and storytelling
5. **Distribution:** SEO, social, paid media, and scheduling
6. **Measurement and analytics:** Measuring campaign performance

Lesson 2: Buyer Personas

PURPOSE AND BENEFIT OF USING PERSONAS (VIDEO)

A buyer persona is a snapshot of your ideal customer. You need to know as much as you can about the behaviors and attitudes of your ideal customer in relation to the objectives you have set for your content strategy. This can then help you to focus on creating the most engaging content for your customer.

The benefits of using buyer personas to inform your content creation include:

- **Improved targeting:** Personas help you to adjust and focus your content so that it is strategically positioned to target consumers who are likely to be interested in it. Personas provide valuable insights that you can use to convey your message to the right audience at the right time. They also enable you to perform market research, targeted advertising, usability testing, and keyword research more efficiently.
- **Format:** Personas give you the information and perspective you need in order to make objective decisions about how to craft your brand messages through the most consumed and widely accepted formats like videos, social media posts, and articles. This allows you to create compelling content that meets the needs of each persona.
- **Discovery:** Personas help you discover insights into your audience's channel behavior. Where are they having conversations? What topics are they interested in? If you distribute tailored content to where your audience is already active, you can then leverage their online behaviors to the maximum effect for your business and your content marketing.

STRATEGIES FOR CREATING PERSONAS (INTERACTIVE)

Bear in mind the following when creating personas:

1. **Objectives:** What are your ideal customers looking to achieve by interacting with your business? How many competitors will they consider? What information is pertinent to their decision?
2. **Location:** Where are your personas from? Where are they based? This will include cultural considerations.
3. **Demographic:** What age group are they in? What is their marital status?
4. **Job details:** What's their economic position or job role?

5. **Platforms:** Which online platforms do they use? Where is the conversation happening with your target audience?
6. **Devices:** What devices do your personas primarily use to access the internet? What kind of connection do they have? For example, is it high-speed broadband?
7. **Purchase behaviors:** What steps do they take when considering a purchase?
8. **Interests:** What topics are they interested in? What issues are they trying to solve? How do these issues impact on their lives? How can your brand help? And how will solving these issues benefit them and your brand?

It's vital to develop your personas based on your audience's content and information needs. You can then position your brand or business as the solution to their requirements.

You can gather a lot of information from social media, and search and website analytics, but some of the more specific questions may require you to conduct some primary research like interviews, focus groups, or surveys.

Best practices for using buyer personas in your content strategy

1. **Prioritize:** You can prioritize your persona in terms of how easy it is to reach them. Or you may consider their value to your business. You could use a reach/value matrix to help visualize this.
2. **Budgets and Resources:** Use your prioritization to help set budgets for production and allocate resources.
3. **Creative Messaging:** Develop creative messaging and assets that align to their needs, solve their problems and showcase your business in a useful, authentic way.
4. **Content Distribution:** Distribute your content to the channels and devices they use, and align your content production outputs to the requirements of these channels.
5. **Purchase Journey:** Create the types of content they need at key stages of their purchase journey.
6. **Internal Expectations and KPIs:** Manage internal expectations and set KPIs for conversion outcomes by understanding the typical conversion journey as detailed in your persona research.

Lesson 3:

Developing a Brief

DEVELOPING A BRIEF (VIDEO)

So you've established your content marketing objectives, and you've gathered your audience data and persona insights. What's next? Now, it's time to develop your creative and media briefs!

A brief helps you to identify the most important insights that will inform your creative outputs. It forms the basis of your creative strategy and helps ensure that your strategy is aligned to your campaign objectives. These insights can be derived from audience, competitor, industry, and other research used in your strategy. Writing a brief challenges you to convert your insights into a usable action plan for your creative and media teams. You can then fully evaluate the scope of your campaign.

The two main briefs are the creative brief and the media brief. The creative brief is a document that includes product, audience, and competitor insights. Its aim is to inspire campaign ideas to deliver on your objectives. The outputs of the brief should be defined clearly. The outputs include copy and messaging, creative formats, banners, social posts, videos, and so on.

Following on from the creative brief, the media brief is a document that uses audience data, budget, timings, content formats, and creative formats to help you decide which promotional channels and media should be used to distribute the content to your audience. The output of the media brief should be a channel plan which details all channels (paid and free), as well as 'go-live' and run rates for each of the channels.

Another output from the media brief is the media plan. This plan details all of the paid media channels, including cost line items and delivery metrics, such as impressions and clicks for each paid channel. This is important for budgeting and distributing your content on paid media channels.

CONTENT SCHEDULE (INTERACTIVE)

Your content schedule is a comprehensive list of all the formats used in your content strategy and the timings for delivery. Along with your creative brief, your

content schedule will help you to ensure that your creative assets are developed on time and to the required specifications. A content schedule gives you a better understanding of the number of different formats and assets you will require.

What are the steps for creating a content schedule?

1. Lay out all content in a given time period.
2. List all relevant channels.
3. List all copy.
4. List format details.
5. Outline specific sizes, dimensions, and other requirements.

Once your creative brief, content schedule, and media choices have been agreed, you can then move to executing parts of your content strategy.

Lesson 4:

Keyword Research

TYPES OF KEYWORDS (VIDEO)

Keyword research is the process of discovering the keywords used by potential customers to find your products. You can then pick the most relevant keywords within your reach that have a good search volume.

Keyword research helps to inform your content development. You can use the findings from your keyword research to decide on themes for your content. If you base your content on high ranking keywords, it is more likely to appear in search results. Keyword research allows you to:

- Get the right kind of visitors to your site.
- Identify keywords with high search volume to use as a guide to content topics.
- Identify content gaps on your website by comparing new keyword topics to your existing content topics.
- Provide unbiased statistical rationale for pursuing content themes.
- Identify new opportunities with emerging themes and trends based on what people are searching for.
- Use SEO difficulty metrics to identify quick wins and high impact opportunities.

Let's look at the two main types of keywords - long-tail keywords and short-tail keywords.

What are long-tail keywords? Long-tail keywords are specific keyword terms containing many words. They are easier to rank and convert, but harder to research. They have lower individual keyword search volume, but higher collective keyword search volume. They require more in-depth content, and a greater amount of it, because there are so many brands competing for these searches. So, in order to be noticed and ranked by Google, you'll need to produce a lot of in-depth content.

What are short-tail keywords? Short-tail keywords are broad keywords with just a few words in the keyword. They are harder to rank and convert, but easier to research. They have a higher individual keyword search volume, but lower collective keyword search volume.

It's worth noting that approximately 70% of all search traffic (2021) comes collectively from long-tail keywords. Searchers tend to be more detailed with their searches because they are looking for *specific* results in as little time as possible.

HOW TO CONDUCT KEYWORD RESEARCH (INTERACTIVE)

Here are the key steps involved in keyword research:

1. Pick a topic to research.
2. Brainstorm keywords around that topic.
3. Use keyword research tools.
4. Review keyword value and difficulty.
5. Prioritize keywords.
6. Use priority keywords to guide content development.

Step 1: Pick a topic to research

The topic could be for a product or service where the searcher is likely to take action following the search. These searches are known as transactional keyword searches. For example, 'buy Chanel perfume'. It could also be a topic that acts as a source of information for searchers who are researching and discovering through informational keywords. These are known as informational keyword searches. For example, 'best types of perfume'. Finally, it could be related to a brand or person which directs people to take the next step. These are known as navigational keyword searches. For example, 'Chanel perfume reviews'

When picking a topic to research:

- Focus on one topic at a time.
- Think of topics that are closely aligned to your objectives.
- Have a web page in mind.
- Think of your customers' needs.

Don't:

- Use terms that are too generic.
- Research the whole website at one time.

Step 2: Brainstorm keywords around that topic

When brainstorming keywords around the topic:

- Think of closely related keywords.
- Think of synonyms.
- Include plural and singular keywords.
- Aim for quantity, rather than quality (with at least ten keywords per topic where possible).

Don't:

- Stray off topic.
- Try to find only exact match keywords.
- Stop at two or three keywords.

Step 3: Use keyword research tools

There are some useful keyword research tools available to help you find search volumes and difficulty scores for your geographical region.

- Use search engine suggestions and related searches to gain insight into terms consumers search for that are related to your topic. Just start typing something into the Google search bar and take note of the suggested searches as ideas for topics.
- Tools like SEMrush or SpyFu can be used to conduct competitor keyword analysis.
- Compile a list of keywords that closely relate to your topic and include the search volume after each.
- Use specialized keyword research tools like SEO Monitor, MOZ, Ahrefs, and Google Keyword Planner. They will give you keyword suggestions related to your topic.
- Use the Keywords Everywhere tool to get search volumes if you don't have a Google Ads account.

Step 4: Review keyword value and difficulty

There are five steps to reviewing organic keyword value and difficulty.

1. Get the keyword search volumes.
2. Get the organic keyword difficulty scores.
3. Get the organic rankings for the keywords.
4. Review the keywords.
5. Assign a relevancy score based on how closely they align to your initial search ideas and your own business objectives.

Step 5: Prioritize keywords

Prioritize your keywords based on search volumes, relevance, and difficulty metrics. There is scope here to be subjective about which keywords you select as priority in terms of business goals and persona research.

When prioritizing keywords:

- Rate all of the keywords on your list in terms of priority from 1 to 10.
- Group your keywords into lists based on similar themes and topics.
- Look at the organic clickthrough rate, or CTR. This shows how often people click the organic result for a keyword.
- Prioritize your high-impact topics based on the priority keywords in a topic list.
- Use your priority topic list to guide your SEO content plan.

Step 6: Use priority keywords to guide content development

When creating content for a topic, look at the keywords in your topic group or keyword list and try to use:

- One primary (P1) keyword
- Two secondary (P2) keywords
- Three to six tertiary (P3) keywords

Using prioritized keywords will improve SEO for your content and attract interested consumers to your website.

CONTENT CONSIDERATIONS FOR SEO AND VOICE SEARCH (INTERACTIVE)

Based on your priority topics, you can create pillar pages for your site. These are specific pages of content focusing on one overall theme and linking to other closely related content formats on your site. Pillar pages are like hubs or directories for content themes. When developed effectively, they are highly visible to search engines and improve inbound content performance via SEO.

Creating pillar pages is an important part of your content strategy because they can drive inbound traffic to your website. You can develop the content for your pillar pages based on keyword research, audience research, and business objectives. Content on pillar pages can use various formats. Don't limit it to text alone!

Pillar pages can drive quality inbound discovery traffic from searchers, so it's important to consider how to move searchers to the next stage. In other words, you want to turn the discovery traffic into conversions. You can do this by including specific content types that are aligned to the consumer journey at key points on the page, to help drive sales or action. Remember to align your content placement to the conversion funnel.

As voice search grows in popularity, what else do you need to consider when conducting keyword research? First of all, content marketers need to make their content visible to and readable by voice assistants such as Google Home, Siri, and Alexa (Amazon Echo).

The types of keywords most suited to voice searches are questions. Therefore, content creators should create text-based content pieces that can be read easily by the voice assistant and that succinctly answer the searchers' questions.

It is best practice to name your content piece after the search query you are trying to rank for. For example, you might call your piece 'When was Nikola Tesla born?' if this is the voice search query you are trying to rank for. Doing this makes it easier for the search engine to find the result, and for the personal voice assistant to match it to your query.

How do voice assistants know which results to choose?

At present, voice assistants use *organic rankings* to find results. Generally, they read the first results for a particular topic on the search engine results page (or SERP). These are typically the rich snippet results, which are the lists and expandable sections on the Google SERP. Searchers can see the answers to their questions directly on Google without visiting the source website.

What are some best practices for creating content for voice search?

1. Think of your content as an answer to a question or series of questions. In other words, it is a response a question.
2. Use text-based content that can be read.
3. Target local language.
4. Use the query as the title of your piece of content, or use headers (H2, H3, and so on) that reflect the questions that users might ask their voice assistant.

5. Where possible use rich snippets (pieces of SEO code in your written article) to highlight parts of the piece for the search engine to get a deeper understanding of all elements in your content.
6. Consider using lists where you can - these tend to be the types of content that feature in SERP rich snippets. For example, 'What are the top 10 habits of a successful content marketer?' or 'What are the top laptops available to buy today?'
7. If in-store visits are your objective, be aware that mobile voice searches may have a location query involved - for example, 'Where is the nearest jewelry store to me?'

Voice search is growing in popularity so it is an important consideration for all content creators now and into the future!

Lesson 5:

Content Creation and Repurposing

CONTENT CREATION (VIDEO)

So, what is content creation? It is the process of creating different creative assets and formats that serve the needs of your content strategy objectives. It engages your campaign personas in such a way to help build authority, credibility, and utility between your target audience and your brand. By creating content that interests your audience and helps them solve a need, you are building your brand in terms of trust, relevance, and credibility.

How important is creativity in your content development? Content development should, of course, be guided by audience, competitor, and keyword research. However, it's important to remember that creativity is also required to add a splash of color to those research findings and bring your content to life.

The creative process involves these steps:

1. Researching and consuming information about the brand and product to get ideas
2. Brainstorming ideas and identifying themes
3. Taking a break to leave the ideas alone for a period
4. Returning to your ideas to critique or validate them in terms of your objectives, audience, and strategy
5. Creating prototypes or content samples (where possible) to explore and test your content in its simplest form before investing further
6. Creating your content

When validating or critiquing your content, it is helpful to have a checklist that addresses your main goals and objectives for the content created. Verify that you have accomplished what you initially set out to achieve by asking questions such as:

- Is this content useful for my audience?
- Is it fit for the platform I'm publishing on?
- Can I accurately measure the impact of this content on my campaign?
- Is this content consistent in appearance and style with my brand?
- Is this content aligned with my business goals?

It's also valuable to understand what motivates users to share your content. You can then take these motivations into consideration when creating content, and make it more shareable:

1. **Incentives:** Offer your audience incentives such as competitions they can enter to win a prize, or a loyalty scheme they can join.
2. **Fame:** Give your audience sharing options so they can show their friends and connections on social media that they have donated to a charity, or won an award, for example.
3. **Utility:** Provide your audience with content that will be useful to them or help them in some way. For example, tutorials, toolkits, or templates.
4. **Topicality and trends:** Create content that is topical and based on trending themes that people are likely to want to discuss or find out about.

CONTENT FORMATS (INTERACTIVE)

Marketers can use many content types and formats in their content marketing strategy. When creating content, consider these questions:

- How and why might your audience engage with these formats?
- How does this help you achieve your objectives?
- What channels are used for distribution?
- What specific issues do you need to be aware of with specific formats?

Using a variety of content formats as part of your content strategy can help you to increase awareness of your brand and reach a wider audience as it allows you to publish content through a range of distribution channels.

Some commonly used content formats include:

- White papers
- Ebooks
- Infographics
- Blogs
- Interactive content
- Videos
- Articles
- Templates and checklists
- Webinars
- Podcasts
- Apps and games

Keep the following best practices in mind when creating content:

1. Begin with your audience in mind.
2. Align your message with your strategy objectives.
3. Keep it simple and clear.
4. Ensure the format used is appropriate.

5. Consider your budget, audience, brand personality, objective, and channel for distribution.
6. Make it easy to share, by including an embed code or social share buttons.
7. Use prototyping and A/B testing.
8. Optimize for SEO.

Here are some best practices to follow when creating image content:

- Use simple, clear images – don't clutter them with multiple subjects.
- Use dominant colors – one or two in general.
- Add copy beside or directly into the image to develop and give context to the story or help drive action towards your goal.
- Frame and crop your image correctly. Try not to cut off parts of the subject (unless intentional).
- Use the rule of thirds as a means of composing your image. Divide your image into a grid of nine squares, and aim to have the most important element of the image in the center of the grid.
- Consider the golden ratio. The size relationship of a smaller segment to a larger segment should be the same as the size relationship between the larger segment and the sum of the smaller and larger segments.
- Take time to get your calls to action, or CTAs, right and don't be afraid to A/B test or experiment.

And here are some best practices for infographics:

- Consider the flow of information and make sure it is presented in a natural and logical manner.
- Understand that statistics and copy can be presented visually.
- Consider font sizes, styles, and readability.
- Take the viewer on a journey towards a final piece of information.
- Pepper the journey with mini 'pay offs', such as interesting statistics, stories, facts, and animations.

There are two different types of video production formats available to content producers.

1. High quality video production

This is suitable for corporate videos, TV, and online commercials. High quality video production requires expensive cameras, lighting, sound, and post production equipment.

2. Low budget video production

This works well for native social and live formats. Low budget video can be produced with smartphones, webcams, and lower cost production and post production equipment.

Here are some best practices for creating video content:

- Tell viewers what is the video is about within first 3 to 5 seconds. Use an impactful establishing shot, or title.
- Understand the importance of location and setting.
- Consider the tone and accent of the voiceover used, and make sure it fits well with the theme of your video.
- Consider the shape of your video: portrait, landscape, or square video (depending on distribution channel).
- Use closed captions for 'sound-off' video views.
- Consider high-impact special shots using drones, mounted cameras, or GoPros, if appropriate.
- Understand the value of 'watch next' video content to keep users engaged.

Headline writing is a creative process. Here are some best practices for writing interesting content titles and headlines:

- Focus on the needs of the reader. For example, show how you will solve a problem.
- Be specific. Include numbers or percentages where appropriate
- Put your most important words near the start of the title or headline.
- Drive urgency! Hint towards why the content is so interesting.
- Use the CoSchedule Headline Analyzer tool to analyze your headlines. It gives your headline a quality score and rates its ability to result in shares, increased traffic, and SEO value.
- SEO: Consider the five 'W's (Who? What? When? Where? Why?) from the consumer's point of view.

There are some important points and best practices to consider when writing copy.

- Never use a commonly used metaphor, simile, or other figure of speech (clichés).
- Never use a long word where a short one will do.
- If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out.

- Never use the passive where you can use the active.
- Never use a jargon word if you can think of an everyday equivalent.

There are many useful resources available for writing copy, it's always worth referring to George Orwell's *Politics and the English Language* which is a good start.

Here are some best practices to consider when developing a blog:

1. Write and publish on your blog regularly and consistently.
2. Create longer-form evergreen content. This is content that isn't time dependent and won't date quickly. For example, a long blog post on the history of social media.
3. Write short-form pieces about current trends and topics. For example, a short article about the recent trends in social media.
4. Choose themes that are relevant and meaningful for people, so that you become an authority and resource.
5. Use SEO keyword research as a guide to identifying popular search topics to write about.
6. Use long-tail keywords as content themes to base your blog posts on.
7. Optimize your titles, header tags, and body content for SEO.
8. Look at your existing content's performance to gauge what your audience responds to.
9. Comment and engage with other people's blogs to generate awareness of your blog. This also builds goodwill with other bloggers and their community who may then check out your blog or share your social posts.

What are some considerations when choosing tools for content creation?

- **Functionality:** Is the tool designed to create the content formats you need?
- **Ease of use:** Some content creation tools are very intuitive while others require specialized upskilling.
- **Cost:** Should you use free tools or paid tools? Are there budget constraints?
- **Frequency of use:** Is there a case for repeat use of the tools?
- **Platform or device:** For example, mobile workflows can be improved with mobile production tools.

There are a wide variety of tools available for creating different content formats:

Images

Many image creation tools are available, including iPhoto, Gimp, Canva, Pic Monkey, Pixlr, and Adobe Photoshop.

Infographics

For infographic creation, tools such as Piktochart, Infogr.am, Adobe Illustrator, and Visual.ly are all excellent resources.

Video

Video-creation tools include: Lumen5, Biteable, GoPro Quik, iMovie, Boomerang, Adobe Premiere Pro, After Effects, and Final Cut Pro. Don't forget most mobile devices have great native camera features. These can be great when you're recording a short-form video that doesn't require very high-quality footage. Many social media platforms also have built-in video editing features that you can use.

Ebooks and white papers

For creating ebooks and white papers, tools such as Microsoft Word, HubSpot, InDesign, and Pressbooks are ideal.

Text

Once you've created your content, make sure you check for grammar errors or typos. It's important to re-read your content a few times and have someone else check it for you, if possible. Using programs such as Microsoft Word, Adobe Acrobat, Grammarly, or Hemingway Editor can be helpful to ensure that your content is of a high standard and free from spelling errors.

CURATION, PERSONALIZATION, AND REPURPOSING (VIDEO)

It's not always feasible or possible to *create* the content you need, so content curation is another option. This involves using or sharing third-party or other people's content in a fair and selective way. It's a quick, easy, low-cost, and high-impact content marketing method, when done correctly.

It is 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.

So first, you need to identify the best sources from which to curate content. Then you can begin to think about the types of content your target audience engages with most. You can do this by experimenting with the content formats and topics you curate. Make sure to include full credit for the original creator and adhere to any specific copyright guidelines associated with the content you curate.

It's good practice to provide your own commentary on any content you curate. For example, you can give 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 and an expert commentator. You can also seek community input by asking your audience for their opinions, thoughts, and insights to help curate your content.

The main benefits of using curated content are:

- It can make your brand appear less promotional and show that you care about the wider industry in which you operate.
- It can make your brand seem more relatable and accessible to your audience.
- It can generate overall goodwill because it shows that you, as a business, care about what is happening in the wider industry from a content perspective, and what your consumers are engaging with, and interested in.
- It can position you as an industry leader, giving you a voice in the space so that you can add credible opinion or discussion around trending industry topics.

The five main types of curated content are aggregation, distillation, elevation, mashups and chronology.

- **Aggregation:** This consists of curating the most relevant content about a topic into one single location. This is the most common form of curation and the basis of most content curations services available for use or purchase.
- **Distillation:** This removes some of the 'noise' from a topic and reduces it to its core concept. It looks to simplify a topic by covering the key points that the audience needs to know at this stage of the consumer journey.
- **Elevation:** This happens when curators draft more general insights or trends from a large amount of content. They look to form a hypothesis, an idea, or a theory based on multiple content threads that are all similar in their view.
- **Mashups:** These merge different content types to create a new original point of view. For example, you might find pieces of relevant content in the same industry that nobody has yet joined the dots between, to show a new perspective.
- **Chronology:** This is historiographical content curation. You map a series of content pieces along a storyline or a timeline. This shows the evolution of a concept or theory through content or a full story. It also shows how individual pieces of content have contributed towards the end point.

What is content personalization? Content personalization is the powerful process of using different content at different stages of the consumer journey. The different pieces of content are highly relevant to the users' need state at that particular time. Because personalized content is targeted and more relevant to your audience, this strategy can lead to an increase in conversion rates, higher brand affinity, and increased campaign efficiency.

The main strategies for content personalization include:

- **Leveraging customer data:** Apply your research findings around customer interests and behaviors to the content you create.
- **Targeting your messaging:** Tailor your messaging specifically to the audience who will receive it. Timing is important here! What stage of the consumer journey are they at? What actions have they taken already? What actions do they still have to take? Also consider what time of day or day of the week the user will consume the content. Remember that consumers are more receptive during certain hours, and on different days.
- **Measuring and analyzing:** As you create personalized content, pay attention to the performance of the content. Then adjust and optimize your content strategy accordingly.

What are the benefits of repurposing the content you create? Repurposing content means adapting it or breaking it up to use for other purposes. For example, you might take an infographic and turn it into a number of individual images.

There are many benefits to repurposing:

- **It saves time:** It's quicker than creating content from scratch.
- **It's low cost:** It's more cost-effective than purchasing or creating new content.
- **It reinforces your message:** If content appears in more than one place, it can reinforce the message you're trying to convey.

By using good evergreen content that doesn't date quickly, you can always look for opportunities to maximize, reuse, and save yourself time by repurposing it.

There are some great tools and templates available for repurposing content:

- Visual editors like Pixlr and Canva have libraries with extensive templates and examples for producing social media images and blog graphics.
- Lumen5 allows you to convert articles and blogs into videos.
- Full Twitter threads can be shared to blogs.
- Anchor allows you convert your blog to audio – 'listen to this article'.

Repurposing allows you to get creative in thinking about the way that you create content and how you can possibly reuse it in different formats or on different platforms, or even by making small tweaks to your original piece. When done cleverly, repurposing saves time and reinforces your brand message and personality.

Keep the following guidelines in mind when repurposing content:

1. Ensure that the quality is high and free from any copyright.
2. Ensure you remove any placeholder content.
3. Be inspired by these sources, but don't just copy them directly.
4. Be careful of the contrast and fonts of some of the templates.

Lesson 6:

Your Brand Story

PURPOSE OF BRAND STORYTELLING (VIDEO)

Let's start off by looking at brand – what does brand mean?

Brand is:

- Your actions
- The stories your communities create around your mission
- Your extraordinary customer service
- Experiences every single person has with your company
- The image and style associated with your company
- How you relate to your customers

Having a strong brand purpose means you'll stand out in the market with unique, recognizable content. And you'll connect with your audience in a meaningful way.

Brand storytelling is a way of connecting with communities that share your values and your beliefs. It helps to drive emotional engagement. It invites others into your community and embraces them in an authentic way. Don't be afraid to tell a story about your brand. Use your brand story as a key part of your content marketing strategy to increase credibility and demonstrate authenticity to your audience. By communicating engaging narratives to your target audience, you can improve business performance. Brand storytelling can also serve as a valuable tool for crisis management should you ever need to defend your brand.

Did you know that brand stories are up to twenty-two times more memorable than facts and figures? Activity in the human brain increases up to five times higher when listening to a story. When you consider these facts, it's clear that storytelling is a very powerful skill to have to create meaningful, emotional engagement with your audience.

TELLING YOUR BRAND STORY (VIDEO)

So, what are the steps to creating your brand story?

1. **Know who you are:** Define your brand personality and stay true to your brand.
2. **Understand your goals:** Be clear on *why* your brand does what it does and the purpose of your goals.

3. **Find your story:** Use your brand personality and goals to inform your brand story.
4. **Identify your audience's knowledge level:** Make sure you've identified your audience adequately and understand what they will respond to emotionally.
5. **Map story elements to personas:** Always map your story back to your customer personas to make sure that it resonates with your target audience.
6. **Craft your story:** Use the information you have gathered to write your brand story.
7. **Share your story:** Share your story with your target audience and the wider industry.
8. **Engage with your communities:** Engage with your audience and invite input from them.

It can sometimes be difficult to know where to begin to identify your brand story. Here are some tips to help you:

1. Focus on your audience and their needs.
2. Stick to a single message in the narrative.
3. Use facts appropriately. Be clear and try not to leave room for confusion.
4. Create characters in your story who reflect your audience.
5. Develop dramatic tension in your plot where possible.
6. Structure your story for easier comprehension:
 - Introduce the problem.
 - Show how your characters deal with the problem.
 - Showcase the resolution.

Lesson 7:

Content Scheduling and Promotion

CONTENT SCHEDULING (VIDEO)

Content scheduling involves uploading content to be published in the future. Methods for content scheduling include native scheduling and using third-party applications.

- Native scheduling is scheduling content using a social platform's own upload function. Examples of native scheduling include Twitter Studio and Facebook Publishing Tools.
- Third-party content scheduling apps such as Buffer, Hootsuite, and Sprout Social can be used to publish content across multiple platforms through a single hub which has already validated your logins for the platforms you wish to use.

There are both benefits and limitations of content scheduling.

First, the benefits. Content scheduling is time-efficient. It enables you to schedule a large amount of content at the same time, freeing up your time for other activities. And using third-party content scheduling apps makes your content approach more integrated.

However, there are some drawbacks. Content scheduling means you are slower to react to unexpected real-time events. For example, in the case of a natural disaster or tragic event, automating content may mean you forget to disable content which may later be deemed inappropriate or insensitive in the context of a recent event. For example, advertising holiday deals for an area that has just been struck by a natural disaster. An automated content scheduler does not have the intelligence to remove this content so it's important to be aware of this possibility.

API updates can often affect third-party applications. An API update is when changes are made to the features or data of a service or application (for example, Facebook or Instagram). When social networks change their security features, this may prevent content being published. You need to monitor this and have a QA process in place to check that content has been published as and when expected.

Scheduled content can make reporting in Google Analytics less comprehensive as URLs are sometimes stripped out, making it difficult to see the exact sources of traffic.

There are three main content distribution channels: owned, earned or collaborative, and paid.

1. **Owned channels** are the channels that you have complete control over. These channels offer the best opportunity to shape your message, creative, and content. The challenges with owned channels include reaching your intended audience and the danger of being too product-focused. Examples of owned channels include your own website or blog, social media pages, and your email broadcasts.
2. **Earned or collaborative channels** are channels where online communities come together to share and create content together. User-generated content (UGC) can greatly benefit your content offering as well as making users feel that they are part of the creative process. Examples of these channels include forums and social media comment sections.
3. **Paid channels** are channels that you pay for. They allow you to leverage already engaged audiences or networks and place your product into the existing conversation. Examples of paid channels include social advertising campaigns.

CONTENT PROMOTION AND INFLUENCER MARKETING (INTERACTIVE)

Content seeding is the strategic approach to publishing content in a particular location on the internet so that it is seen by an audience who will positively engage with it.

This can be achieved by publishing your content on key platforms where it will be picked up and distributed by social influencers, content producers, or publications.

The benefits of content seeding include:

- **Reach:** It helps your content to reach a much wider audience.
- **Relevance:** By leveraging third parties, you can ensure your content is seen by the right audiences.
- **Credibility:** Influencer distribution of your content increases and validates the credibility of your brand.

While content seeding is an effective content marketing strategy, it's also important to understand its challenges:

- **Production:** It can be a challenge to regularly create high-quality content that merits seeding and investing in paid social formats, while also maintaining a consistent brand message.
- **Measurement:** This can be a challenging area, because businesses often have many forms of marketing taking place at once. Make sure to set up appropriate protocols for measuring a direct return on investment, or ROI, in advance of campaigns going live. For example, you could organize focus groups before and after the campaign has taken place, to ascertain brand recall and awareness.

How can content seeding be used to encourage influencer marketing? To promote influencer marketing through content seeding, you need to research the influencers who already have an impact on your target audience. Use social listening tools to engage with your audience and become familiar with the content and influencers that resonate with them most. Identify influencers to target based on their following and expertise. Software such as Klear, BuzzSumo, Followerwonk, or Brandwatch can help you to do this.

You can also connect and network with influencers directly using:

- Hashtags
- Introductions through shared connections or colleagues
- Email – contact their agent or direct message them on social media

There are many ways to promote your content. Content promotion is defined as the strategic approach to getting your content seen by a wider audience than your immediate owned channels in both the earned and paid space.

Paid content promotion methods include:

1. **Influencer marketing:** Pay influencers to distribute or endorse your content to their audience, or co-create content with influencers. Some challenges include effectively measuring influencer marketing, guideline compliance, and influencer contract considerations.
2. **Affiliate marketing:** Pay third-party blogs or publications who produce content that drives engagement with your brand and traffic to your website. The aim is to convert this traffic into leads or sales for a fee, usually paid as a commission per lead or a percentage of the sale value.
3. **Media promotion:** Link with a media channel to activate paid content promotion campaigns. Examples include LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and so on.

Unpaid methods include:

1. **Owned media channels:** These include websites, blogs, emails, social company pages, and so on. Unpaid (organic) reach is limited on social channels, but a well-visited blog on your website and substantial email list are effective ways to promote your content.
2. **Hashtags and tagging:** These allow you to join conversations or categorize your content relevant to your audience and theme.
3. **Guest blogging or takeovers:** With these, you can extend the reach of your content by creating a piece for another publication, company, or influencer.
4. **Interviews or Q&A:** Interviews conducted on the basis of outreach or a press release can promote your content to a wider audience
5. **Backlinks:** You can extend the reach of your content by having it shared on a reputable site.

Influencer marketing is one of the most popular methods of content promotion. It can be used in three main ways:

1. **Media channel:** where the influencer is essentially used as a paid-for media channel to speak about your product or business
2. **Content co-creation:** where you work with an influencer to craft content for your audience and theirs, adding value and taking into account the content behaviors of the influencer's own audience
3. **Content amplification:** where an influencer shares your content through their channels via retweets, shares, or regrams

The challenge is to go beyond using influencer marketing as a media channel and into more collaborative territory. Then influencers are truly *engaged* with the campaign. Simply paying them often doesn't stack up commercially.

OPTIONS FOR PAID SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS (INTERACTIVE)

When choosing which paid social channels to use, content marketers need to consider the following:

Audience: Different channels will have different audiences. For example, the demographic of a Facebook audience may be very different to Snapchat.

Content type: Different content types may be best suited to different channels. For example, LinkedIn is suitable for professional slide sharing, white papers, and ebooks. Snapchat, on the other hand, is better for sharing ephemeral video and photos.

Budget: Channels have varying costs to reach their audience. It's important to maximize your reach to the desired audience with your available budget. Do your research and choose an option you can comfortably afford.

What are the steps for setting up a paid social media campaign to promote your content once you have decided on which channels to use?

1. Go to the ads manager of your preferred channel:
 - Facebook: business.facebook.com
 - Instagram: business.instagram.com
 - LinkedIn: linkedin.com/ads
 - Twitter: ads.twitter.com
 - Snapchat: forbusiness.snapchat.com
2. Choose to create an ad, and name your campaign.
3. Set the objective for the campaign from the list in the platform. It's usually awareness, consideration, or conversion objectives.
4. Choose your audience targeting criteria – for example, interests, age, gender, location, and so on.
5. Choose the content you want to promote.
6. Enter your budget details. For example, how much do you want to spend over the lifetime of the campaign?
7. Push the campaign live.

What are the steps for optimizing your paid social content campaign?

Results for digital campaigns appear relatively quickly. Although they are not exactly in real time, you will see metrics from thirty minutes to two to three hours.

The key to understanding the performance of your campaigns is to look at the following:

1. How are the different target audiences engaging with your content?
Use metrics such as:
 - Total click numbers
 - Clickthrough rate - that is, the percentage of people who saw your content and then clicked on the content to find out more
 - Total number of content downloads
 - Cost per download
 - Percentage download rate – that is, the percentage of people who click your promoted content ad and then go on to download your content. For example, ebook downloads, white papers, and so on

- Video plays – the number of plays your promoted video content receives
 - Percentage play video through - how many people played to 25 percent - 50 percent - 75 percent - 100 percent of your video
1. Test adapting parts of your content to speak more effectively to your most engaged audiences based on these metrics.
 2. Increase budget allocation for the most engaged audiences.
 3. Reduce budget allocation or pause budget for audiences that are performing poorly.

Lesson 8:

Measuring Content Performance

CONTENT MARKETING KPI MEASUREMENT (VIDEO)

When you measure the success of your content marketing efforts, you can see the value of your work in terms of how it achieved the key performance indicators, or KPIs, you set for the activity.

Measuring the performance of your content is an essential part of content marketing. It can help you to:

- Justify spend and resource allocation.
- Provide learnings for future campaigns.
- Unearth unexpected insights.
- Create a valuable roadmap on how to produce a content strategy.
- Clarify topics and themes that resonate with an audience.

Your learnings from the measurement phase of your current campaigns should always be fed back into the research and planning phase of future campaigns to help drive and inform strategy decisions.

If you have stated your objectives and KPIs in your strategy document, you can refer to this document when measuring your campaign success to determine how well you are achieving what you set out to achieve.

If there are areas that are overperforming or underperforming, you can investigate why this is happening by referring to the appropriate documents from your strategy. For example, what personas are most engaged? What channels are driving most action? What formats from your content schedule are particularly effective?

Using the written record from your plan to identify success while 'in-campaign' – in other words, when the campaign is live – allows you to quickly adapt your plan to the reality of the campaign performance.

CAMPAIGN METRICS (VIDEO)

The two most important metrics associated with measuring content marketing campaigns are engagement metrics and conversion metrics.

Engagement metrics for a successful content marketing campaign include:

- Higher average time on site
- Reduced bounce rates
- Increase in the number of returning visitors

- More pages viewed per session
- Deeper scroll depth
- Growth in discovery through organic search or social visitors
- Increased number of people searching for your brand
- Higher channel engagement metrics (For example, social shares, email opens, brand mentions, and links to your content, which is good for long-term SEO.)

Conversion metrics for a successful content marketing campaign include:

- Higher number of goals achieved
- Higher conversion rate
- Shorter path to purchase
- Reduced cost per sale or lead

Make sure you choose the right set of metrics to measure your campaign based on its objective. If the objective was awareness, for example, using conversion metrics to evaluate success can misrepresent the value of the campaign activity. The objective should be stated in the content strategy document and agreed with all stakeholders before launch. Remember, it is important to manage the expectations for a campaign and to use the correct metrics to show how the activity impacted on the agreed objective.

A challenge can arise when there are different expectations. For example, the agreed objective might be to drive awareness, but the expectation from stakeholders might be that the campaign will drive direct conversions or sales. Then stakeholders may ask for direct conversion metrics, instead of the awareness metrics, for the campaign. To avoid such cases, explicitly outline the metrics for success in the strategy document before sign-off. And only report on conversion metrics as a secondary effect of the content campaign.

Likewise, in the case of a conversion objective, it might not be possible to report on increased awareness activity following a campaign. Either way, the principle is the same - always ensure you are using the right metrics to report on your campaign in relation to the agreed objective.

ANALYZING CONTENT PERFORMANCE (INTERACTIVE)

What metrics should you look at when reporting on your content activity?

When reporting on your content activity:

1. **Begin with your objective:** - Was it awareness or conversion? Choose the appropriate metric set to report on your campaign.
2. **Look for changes in these metrics:** Check the metrics before the campaign started, during the campaign itself, and after the campaign has concluded. See if there are changes (positive or negative) in relation to these metrics

What are the steps to deriving insights from your content activity?

1. Choose the metrics you want to measure. For example, is it conversion or awareness?
2. Group the metrics for your themes and formats together in a table. (You could use a tool such as Microsoft Excel. Put your themes and formats in the left-hand columns of the table and your metrics in the right-hand columns.)
3. Identify if there was a particular theme or format that performed above or below the campaign average for those metrics.
4. When you have identified the best performing themes and formats, dig deeper to see what the best performing channels for distribution were. This will help with channel optimization in future campaigns.
5. Look into your data to see if any content elements such as images or headlines were particularly effective. This can help with identifying ways to reproduce compelling headlines or images going forward.
6. Note the best performing times and days. This can help with future content scheduling.

How can you determine ROI from your content marketing efforts? When you have looked at the metrics related to your objective, it's important to understand the cost of producing these metrics. Simply put, divide your most important metric improvements by the cost of the campaign.

You can take the following steps to determine the ROI and other valuable return on spend metrics for your campaign:

1. Look at the weeks prior to your campaign. Set these as benchmark metrics.
2. Subtract these benchmark metrics from your campaign metrics to see the actual increase. For example, how many new visitors did you have compared to your benchmark? How many workable leads were generated? Was there an increase in revenue?

3. Divide campaign spend by the increased metrics. This will give you metrics such as cost per new engagement, cost per new conversion, and cost per increased brand search.
4. You can create your own metrics to show the value of your activity simply by seeing what changed, noting the change, and then dividing the spend by the increased metrics. The spend might be, for example, cost per comment, cost per share, or cost per new follower.
5. When creating metrics for non-analysts and non-technical stakeholders, use simple language. For example, say 'increase in people looking for our brand on Google' rather than 'higher brand searches'. Or say 'cost per new visitor to the website' rather than 'cost per incremental user'.

What should a content marketing report look like? Your content marketing report should include:

- All content that was produced, and the cost and campaign metrics associated with each
- Overall performance in relation to campaign KPI or objective
- Metrics for aspects of the campaign that worked well (For example, headlines, channels, content schedule, and so on)
- Aspects of the campaign that were less effective
- A summary of the insights that you have derived from the data
- Your recommendations for the next campaign based on this data

What are the steps to reporting on the success of your paid social content campaigns? It is also useful to measure how your paid social content performed and to draw insights from content types and audience engagement as well as budget investment. Paid social reporting is similar to reporting on your overall campaign but it is helpful to gather more detailed paid social metrics such as:

1. The percentage of your KPIs that you achieved (For example, ebook downloads were 115 percent of target but toolkit downloads were 75 percent of target)
2. Best and worst performing content types
3. Top performing social platforms
4. Most engaged audiences in terms of interests, locations, and genders
5. Best performing device types – for example, mobile, desktop, or tablet
6. Best performing call to action (CTA) – for example, 'Download now' or 'Learn more'
7. Cost per engagement, cost per download, cost per new follower, and so on

Use the insights and learnings from your report to create more effective paid social campaigns in the future by focusing your resources on the successful aspects of your campaign based on your learnings.

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