SEO CONTENT

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LESSON 1:
SEO CONTENT MARKETING CONCEPTS
INTRODUCTION TO CONTENT MARKETING

Definition

Content marketing is using pieces of content to effectively market products and services online and through traditional outlets, such as publishing and advertisements.

How content marketing has changed

Content marketing has really changed over the years:

- **More data**: We have a lot of data about content and content marketing, which helps us craft better campaigns.
- **More formats**: We can produce content in many more formats, such as infographics, videos, podcasts, and more.
- **Incorporation of digital, audio, and video**: We can combine video, audio, and digital elements together, resulting in a great content marketing strategy.

Purpose of content marketing

The purpose of content marketing is to serve the user first, and to be interesting and useful to them:

- **User-first mentality**: Instead of thinking about what is most important to the company or the person creating the content, you instead should be focusing on what the user would want to read, consume, or buy. When it comes to content creation, we often have the ‘curse of knowledge’ that we need to actively work beyond.
- **Serves a purpose**: For every piece of content that is created, make sure it serves a purpose. Weave that purpose throughout your content. For instance, if the purpose of your new e-book is to explain how to complete an annual budget, weave examples and even exercises throughout the content to make it the best-available learning material on annual budgets.
- **Content not created for content’s sake**: Many experts have argued that we are living in a time of ‘peak content.’ This means that there is a tipping point between how much content we can publish and how much content audiences actually consume. Studies have shown that users on average can only tolerate between one and six new pieces of content from a brand per day. After that, the traffic is unaffected by publishing more content.
- **Allows growth in traffic and thought leadership**: Many people first start creating content because they want more traffic to their website. However, as time progresses, many publishers see the benefits in utilizing a strategy-first approach. Planning your content before creating it can lead to better engagement, social sharing, inbound links, and lead generation.

CONTENT TYPES

Various types of content can be used

Various types of content are available to us online. These include:

- **Infographics**: These are visual representations of data. They graphically show statistics, important points, or trends based on a specific topic. They are usually vertically long and are usually accompanied by a text introduction in a blog post.
**Blog posts:** These are pieces of written content that usually range from 250 to 3,500 words. They are published on company websites in their blog sections.

**Videos:** These are recorded visual pieces of content that usually range from seconds to 50-plus minutes in length. They can be standalone pieces or can be used to explain other forms of content, such as blogs or articles. You can also live stream video on platforms like Facebook or YouTube.

**Audio:** These recorded auditory pieces of content, such as podcasts, can either be the inspiration for other pieces of content, or can be read versions of written content.

**Transcription:** This is a transcribed version of a piece of audio or video content. Many marketers use transcription to create a written blog post out of a piece of audio or video content.

**Image:** These are visual representations of content. These could include visually stylized quotes from written content, or be standalone pieces of content, like a chart or data set.

**White papers:** These are long pieces of written content that usually offer in-depth instruction on a specific topic. They can include unique research or simply be an introductory look into a wider subject.

**Case studies:** These can be part of white papers or even blog posts, but are usually defined as an in-depth look into a specific customer or study, where the author is presenting exclusive information that can’t be found anywhere else. They can be used as a way to reinforce a company’s processes or prowess, or best practices in the industry.

**Webinars:** These are online presentations that can be attended virtually. The presenter can be on video, or the attendees may simply see presentation slides. Many webinars include a Q&A portion at the end, and attendees can ask questions at any time.

**Website content:** These are the other pages on websites, apart from blog posts. These are usually the basic pages of a website about its product, services, team, or history. They also include homepages of websites, as well as landing pages, which are one-page explainers of a specific offer or service that focuses on a call-to-action.

## Content Quality

### Why is content quality so important?

Content quality is important because there are thousands of new pieces of content being published every day, and you really want your content to stand out. Paying attention to quality is what is going to help you stand out. These areas are affected by content quality:

**Brand:** Content quality is a reflection of your company’s quality and trustworthiness. Poor quality can subconsciously equate to a poor-quality business in the mind of the reader or viewer.

**Online reach:** When you have high-quality content, you’re going above the bare minimum. High-quality content can help increase website traffic, outside websites linking to your website, and social media shares.

**SEO:** SEO is really important when it comes to content. Search engines are looking for high-quality content that is updated regularly, that doesn't have any broken links or errors, and that is actually answering user’s questions. So whenever you’re writing content, make sure that it’s answering a question or providing a service, because the algorithms search engines use are built around that.
SEO CONTENT

Definition

SEO content is content that has been optimized for search engines, with the focus on increasing indexability and visibility through organic search and social media.

SEO content includes a dedicated approach to keyword research and analyzing user traffic patterns to determine areas of interest that best serve the target audience.

Content that has been optimized for search engines can increase indexability and visibility through organic search and social media, because it focuses on optimizing content around specific keywords or topics that targeted users are interested in. It's important to analyze user traffic patterns to determine areas of interest that best serve the target audience.

How SEO content impacts traffic

SEO content can impact your traffic in different ways:

✚ Faster indexing: Google came out with a ranking factor called the ‘freshness factor’ in 2011 that showed its preference for new content in search engine results pages (SERPs). According to Moz, “Websites that add new pages at a higher rate may earn a higher freshness score than sites that add content less frequently.” In some cases, higher freshness results in faster visibility in SERPs.

✚ More frequent crawling: As with the freshness factor, when search engines are continuously seeing new pages or changes to existing content on a website (which is reflected in the website’s sitemap), the more likely they will be to crawl the website to look for content to index and display in SERPs for user queries.

✚ Sets your website up for long-term success: This usually happens through others linking to and reading your content, as well as setting up thought leadership for your company. A robust website with regular new and optimized content will be held in higher esteem than one that is never updated or hard to read. Adding new, high-quality content will also be a great way to compete against others in your industry.

✚ Increased SERP positioning and traffic: Website content that is optimized and is adding new pages on a regular basis is more likely to lead to higher SERP positioning, as well as more traffic. However, adding too many new pages can overwhelm readers, so it’s important to test for your own website and industry.

SEO CONTENT PERSONAS

Developing personas

Audience personas are ‘ideal customers’ that you create as examples of the target audiences that you want to target for different types of content on your site. Some websites will only have one persona because they’re going after one specific target market, such as VPs of marketing. But a lot of sites, like e-commerce sites or publishers, will have a couple personas, usually two or three. It depends on what your goals are and who you want to target.

There are four key areas when it comes to developing personas that you need to think about:
**Interests:** This encapsulates both personal and professional interests, because they tend to overlap. Ask yourself, what is your persona interested in, both professionally and personally? This could include hobbies (fitness, travel), business habits (an interest in productivity tools), or topics they are interested in (sports, news, healthy living).

**Demographics:** This includes facts about the persona that are relevant to your product or services, such as age, gender, relationship status, family setup. Be careful to only add demographics that directly correlate to your product or service. For instance, for a sock company, ethnicity doesn’t matter, but for a line of hair products for African-American hair, ethnicity does matter.

**Thoughts:** What are your persona’s opinions, values, and lifestyle or business goals? As with demographics, be sure to stick to only thoughts that are applicable to your brand. For instance, it makes sense for a Christian gift store to target Christians, but not so much for a pizza store.

**Needs:** What are your personas looking for? How can your company meet their needs, and how does it stand apart from what competitors are doing? Outlining this information can help you understand a persona’s thought process and combat any objections to product or service offerings.

**Example personas: sock website**

Let’s look at a few example personas for an imaginary sock website:

**Danielle**

Danielle is 28 years old. She’s a new mother, and she is looking specifically for gifts and for her family.

Danielle is likely searching not only for herself, but for her family and her baby. Therefore, it’s important to craft content around not only her interests, but her family’s (which is an extension of what she is interested in). It’s important to think about why people are searching and who they are searching for, instead of just the person alone.

**Derek**

Derek is 35. He is budget-conscious, so he cares a lot about price, but he also cares about quality and fashion.

Derek is likely only searching for himself. He cares about his appearance. This means that your company’s socks are an extension of what he will look like to others, so your content needs to reflect that reality. You need to create content that appeals to his needs (in this case, looking sharp without breaking the bank).

**Clare**

Clare is 44. She’s a practical searcher, so maybe she just searches for ‘women’s socks’, instead of ‘high-quality affordable socks’, like Derek might. She also is a frequent traveler and speaker, so likely isn’t at home a lot.

Clare would want an easy-to-understand shopping process that has fast shipping, so her order gets delivered before her next trip.
How personas impact SEO content

There are several different ways that personas impact SEO content:

- **Appeal**: By getting a glimpse into who to write content for, you can ensure your content appeals to the right audience.
- **Correct voice**: Personas help you use the correct voice when creating content.
- **Keeps the audience in mind**: Personas help ensure you’re creating content for the users, not for yourself.
LESSON 2: RESEARCHING SEO CONTENT
KEYWORD RESEARCH

Conducting keyword research

Keyword research helps you identify what your target audience is looking for. Conducting keyword research for content planning involves:

- **Looking at competitors’ sites** to identify key terms to create content on
- **Analyzing what keywords your website is already ranking for** to look for areas of improvement (for example, you rank number 5 for a keyword but want to rank number 1)
- **Building long-tail keywords** to better optimize for longer phrases, which can increase the frequency with which your site is shown on SERPs

Searchmetrics

Searchmetrics is a good tool to use for keyword research. If you enter the keyword ‘women’s socks’ in this tool, Searchmetrics shows you the searched term first, then offers other related terms that you could consider creating content around, such as ‘best women’s socks’, ‘cute women’s socks’, and ‘warm women’s socks’. Many branded terms are also included, but as a whole, unless you’re doing a piece of content strictly about brand comparisons, you should avoid targeting competitor branded terms. Even if your website is listed for a brand competitor search, the content will likely have a high exit and bounce rate, since the customer is specifically looking for ‘brand X socks.’ This means, unless you have an article showing how your product is superior to brand X, then the user likely isn’t going to be interested.

Over-optimization of keywords

Over-optimization is **overusing keywords or phrases you want to rank for**.

Over-optimization can cause your site not to be shown in SERPs because the search engines may think that you are trying to manipulate their crawlers to get better SERP rankings.

Example

For an example of over-optimized text, see slide ‘Over-optimization of keywords’.

The e-commerce clothing site in this example wants to optimize for ‘vintage clothing’ and keyword variations containing the terms ‘retro’ and ‘fashion’. However, these words are mentioned too many times in the text to sound natural.

(If you are unsure whether or not something is over-optimized, simply look at it, and read it out loud to yourself or to someone else. That way, you’ll find out how easy it is to read.)

Additionally, such content isn’t helpful to the user. It offers no real value or substance. Search engines are getting better daily at determining whether or not content was created to be useful for the user or just to appease search engines.

Translating keywords into topics for SEO content

Once we have a list of keywords that we want to create content around, we can translate those into topics for our SEO content. To do this:
First, select a few keywords as the first batch to focus on, based on target audience interests and team expertise. The number of keywords you focus on at a time depends on how much content you’re producing.

Next, brainstorm or use topic-generator tools to come up with a cloud-based list of topics. Cloud-based means it’s a centrally located document or file that everyone who’s involved in creating your content can refer to.

Finally, you want to cross-reference your topic list with searches to determine competition and angle.

Example

When translating keywords to topics, ask yourself: ‘What would people searching for this term be most interested in?’ Then create content that ties in with the keyword.

The keyphrase ‘Paisley Men’s Socks’, translates to the topics ‘The History of Paisley in Men’s Fashion’ and ‘Who Invented Paisley?’

Both topics contain some of the keyphrase, but don’t match it exactly to avoid over-optimization. Search engines are smart enough now to know that this content is related to the keyword.

**RESEARCH TOOLS**

**Benefits of using research tools for content development**

Using research tools for content development offers many benefits:

- **Helps you look at your own data:** You will be unable to tell how people are consuming your content unless you have data tracking how they are navigating your content. You can also use cloud data (crowdsources data) from studies and trend websites such as Google Trends with your own data to see how yours compares.
- **Provides reports to track goals:** Regularly tracking your goals and progress can determine whether or not your efforts are working.
- **Offers ideation and topic suggestions:** Tools are great because they can give you insights and ideas you might not have thought of otherwise. By using crowdsourced data (as well as your own data), you can see what your target audience is interested in and searching for.

**Free tools**

A number of free tools are available:

- **Google Analytics:** Helps you track and interpret your website goals and data
- **Moz Open Site Explorer:** Helps you compare your website’s link portfolio – that is, how many links it has coming to its content pages compared to your competitors
- **Answer The Public:** This pulls Google Autocomplete data to show what real users are actually asking, based on a basic keyword phrase you enter
- **Keyword Tool:** Similar to UberSuggest, this pulls up related keywords. You can see results and search by search engine and different languages and country versions.
Paid tools

Paid tools like SimilarWeb, SEMRush, and Searchmetrics all work in basically the same way – they offer data and reports on your website and competitors. This varies by tool, but usually includes:

- Links
- Mentions
- Errors
- Competitor comparison
- Keyword suggestions, and more

Paid tools often provide more data – for example, you might get more searches or more data results – and more options, like white labeling your reports or being able to save them as PDFs. They also offer more extensive tracking.

Paid accounts usually offer you the option to add team members to work collaboratively and access the same features of the paid tools.

Topic and title idea tools

These free tools can help you generate and store ideas for future pieces of content, as well as track team feedback:

- **RYP Marketing, Portent idea generator, HubSpot title generator**: These help you come up with topic-title ideas based on keywords.
- **UberSuggest**: This suggests related keywords based on a basic keyword phrase you enter. This is based on Google Keyword Planner data.
- **Google Drive, Dropbox, Evernote**: These are used for storing brainstorm title ideas to share with the team, and to collaboratively add comments.

**LOCAL VS GLOBAL**

**Writing content for different countries and cities**

When it comes to writing content for a global audience, pay attention to the following:

- **HREFLANG tags**: Global content that is meant to reach different countries or languages requires HREFLANG tags. This involves building out separate language versions of websites and properly telling the search engines which versions go with which language and country, so they know what to index and display in each version of Google.
- **Slang**: Global content may need different vernacular or terms that have a wider global understanding. Let’s say you are doing a webinar and you include a lot of slang terms that are widely known in the U.S. If your main audience is in England, they might not know what certain slang terms mean. So pay attention to turns of phrase, and make sure that anyone who watches or reads your content knows what you’re talking about.
- **Specific areas**: Conversely, local content may be more highly focused on a specific area, such as a city, which means the content will likely have more mentions of local locations and landmarks that are familiar to the target audience.
EDITORIAL CALENDAR BUILDING

Editorial strategy

The basics of an editorial strategy include:

- Creating an editorial calendar to ensure even coverage of all your target topics, so they all get coverage and there’s enough variety to hold users’ interest.
- Using analytics to determine the highest traffic times and publishing content during those windows.
- Educating copyeditors on SEO best practices, as well as common grammar edits, which makes content easier to read and more intuitive for users and search engines. Encourage them to use tools like Grammarly and Hemingway to help scan for errors.

Using an editorial calendar

Build columns for each type of content for each day/week using an editorial calendar that plans out your content each month, based on your data, goals, and regular meetings. (For an example of an editorial calendar, see slide ‘Using an editorial calendar’.)

Ensure your content calendar is accessible to everyone working on the content.

Assessing how your topic needs have shifted

As you work through your editorial calendar, it’s important to stay on schedule and to ensure everyone on the team knows what they are responsible for.

To assess if your needs have shifted:

- Use the notes from your regular meetings to check whether you accomplished everything that was supposed to be accomplished.
- Review your social media data. Check on the social media shares of your content to see how titles and topics have been performing. Take action by coming up with more topics surrounding highly shared content.
- Assign new content topics and types to team members.

Team collaboration and cross training

There are four main departments in most companies that are important for SEO writers and content creators to work with. When these departments all work together, it can help to fuel really great content:

- Sales: Sales can give topic ideas for SEO content based on customer feedback, and the content team can educate sales on products and services using existing content.
- Customer service: Customer service can give topic ideas for SEO content based on questions and comments they receive from customers.
- Product development: This department identifies new products and services that need to have content written about them, which will shape what content is going to be written over the next week, month, or quarter.
- Advertising: A paid search can tell the content team which keywords are getting the most clicks on ads, which can offer ideas for more content. Other traditional ad types, such as
radio commercials, will need input from the content team to have consistent branding and messaging across content and advertising.

**EVALUATING TOPICS**

**An audience-first mindset**

It's important to adopt an audience-first mindset when evaluating your topics. This can lead to:

- **More clicks**: If your content properly targets your personas'/target audience’s interests, you will get more reads and traffic on your content.
- **More time spent on site**: Good content leads to more time spent on site, as users want to stick around to read more content from your website.
- **More conversions**: The better the content is tailored to your target audience, the easier it will be for them to convert.
- **Proper voice and language making content more digestible**: Ensure that you are writing to the appropriate reading level of your target audience (which, interestingly enough, is actually 5th grade as an average across industries).
- **Audience feeling you are addressing their needs or concerns by using the vernacular**: Avoid using slang terms in your content which may not make sense to the audience.

**Language example**

Here is an example of a good and a bad way to use language to draw in your target audience.

The **bad example** is: “How to properly launder socks so they aren't misplaced”.

The words “misplaced” and “launder” are too long. Of course, everybody knows what they mean. But if you were searching, would you really use “misplaced” or “launder” in a search? No, you’d be a bit more casual.

The **good example** is: “How to wash socks so they don’t get lost”.

“Get lost” is a more common and more natural way of saying “misplaced”.

**Data evaluation example**

Imagine you have two topics to evaluate:

- How to find lost socks
- Best ways to iron socks

You can use **data** to determine which topic to cover first.

In this example, ‘How to find lost socks’ has 500 monthly searches on Google, based on data from an SEO tool such as Searchmetrics. It could also link to your sock website’s related piece of content on how to make your own sock laundry bag. This piece of content is the website’s 10th most popular blog post of all time.

‘Best ways to iron socks’ only has 20 monthly searches on Google, using the same metrics. Ironing socks is a practice that dropped off a few decades ago.
So ‘How to Find Lost Socks’ would be the priority topic - both because of its higher search volume, and because you can relate it to another piece of content that you have.

**CONTENT VARIETY**

**Mixing up your content calendar**

Make sure that you’re mixing up your content calendar. You can schedule different types of content for variety by:

- Examining what types of content are the most shared and read, and adding more of that type of content
- Experimenting with converting content into different types – for example, turning a long blog post into an infographic – and seeing what gets the most traffic and shares

Scheduling tools like **Edit Flow, CoSchedule, Buffer, Hootsuite, and Google Analytics** can help you determine when your website and social traffic is online – so you can schedule posts around that time – as well as what type of content is getting the most clicks around that time.

**Appealing to different learning types**

Make sure your editorial calendar appeals to **different learning styles** (visual, auditory, tactile/kinesthetic, and reading/writing) and to **different mediums** (YouTube, blog, iTunes and so on) in order to reach the greatest number of people.

For example, a person might hate watching videos, but enjoy podcasts. Having an audio podcast version of a video (if it translates clearly enough to make sense without visuals) would be a good way to reach this person who otherwise may not consume your content.

Types of learning include:

- **Visual**: Anything the eye is consuming that is graphic or visually appealing, such as infographics, social media images, or featured images
- **Auditory**: Anything that is audio only, such as podcasts or audio versions of a written blog post
- **Tactile/kinesthetic**: Anything that the audience can interact with – this usually means something physical, but in the digital sense it could be a game, app, or interactive infographic or website that needs more audience participation
- **Reading and writing**: This deals with the written word, so blog posts, white papers, and so on would appeal most to this type of learner

Great pieces of content can ideally utilize multiple types of these learning formats. For instance, a blog post could include a ‘key takeaways’ summary image, an audio version of the blog post, and maybe an interactive quiz. However, it’s not required to always use all the learning styles. Just keep them in mind and utilize each as needed.
LESSON 3: CREATING SEO CONTENT
TACKLING WRITER’S BLOCK

Tips to combat writer’s block

It’s difficult to consistently create great content and never have any stumbles. It’s important to remember that if you get stuck, you can get over it. For example, you could simply move on to another piece of content or stop and brainstorm ideas for a few minutes. Here are some other techniques you can use to beat writer’s block and stay on schedule:

➤ **Change content type for your assigned topic idea**: If you are supposed to write a blog post and feel like you can’t write an 800-word piece of content, ask yourself if you can do something else instead. Maybe you could do a video presentation. Maybe you could do a live stream, where you answer users’ questions on Facebook. Maybe you could have a designer work with you on creating an infographic. So if you feel like you just can’t get past a particular type of content, switch it up.

➤ **Free write for 10 to 15 minutes**: Just start writing – often, the hardest part of a writing project is getting started. This approach gets you up and running, and gives you the momentum to keep going.

➤ **Use the Pomodoro method**: With this method, you time yourself to get something done before taking a break. So, for example, you could concentrate on a writing task for 50 minutes to an hour, and then take a 10-minute break. Studies have found that most people can completely focus and dial into something for an hour, give or take, before they need a break.

WRITING TOOLS

Tools for content writing

Here are some recommended writing tools to help you create content:

➤ **Hemingway** (free and paid versions): This reviews all your content and checks for grammar, readability, spelling, and reading level. It gives you feedback on your content.

➤ **Grammarly**: This is a downloadable program (paid) and free Chrome extension that checks your grammar and spelling.

➤ **TitleCase**: If your headers and post titles use title case, use this tool to automatically convert your pasted-in titles and headers into title case.

➤ **Basic writing programs** of your choice: These help you compose your content directly in a word processor before pasting it into your web content editor; for example, Microsoft Word. Some writing programs like OmmWriter help to minimize distractions.

➤ **Voice and search in Google Docs**: Google Docs allows you to not only search the internet within Google Docs, so you don’t have to leave the word processor you’re typing in, but you can also use its speech-to-text feature to transcribe your content for you.

OUTSOURCING CONTENT

Pros and cons

When it comes to SEO content, it’s really common to outsource that content – maybe to a freelancer, or a part-timer, or even an agency. Outsourcing basically means that someone who is not a full-time
or salaried, regular employee with your business is going to be the one creating your content. There are pros and cons to outsourcing your content and bringing on freelancers:

**Pros**

- **Fewer employee costs to produce content:** You don’t have to pay for insurance, taxes, benefits, office space, internet, and other costs.
- **More flexibility:** In case demand or needs change, you can decrease your work for writers to free up budget. The same goes for needing more work – you can easily give existing freelancers more work or bring on more freelancers.
- **More variety in content:** Since it’s coming from a larger pool of writers with different voices, backgrounds, and talents, you can get a wider spectrum of content.

**Cons**

- **More management and oversight needed:** Usually, you will need a project manager or someone in charge of the project to make sure that best practices are being followed.
- **Difficult to enforce hard deadlines:** If someone is not in the office and is working remotely or even in another country, it may be hard to get hold of them if they miss a deadline. Time differences can have an impact as well. Again, you will likely need a team member who is in charge of project-managing the freelancers to make sure that they are staying on task, that they know what’s expected of them, and that milestones and deadlines are being met.

**Where to find freelancers**

If you are going to outsource your content, you can look for freelancers in a variety of places:

- **Job boards:** Popular job boards include FlexJobs, FreelanceGigs.com, and ProBlogger. These offer the most exposure. Some are paid, some are free for companies. Always use reputable job boards that have a good reputation to ensure your job is shown to the right people.
- **Referrals:** Referrals are by far the best way to find someone. Ask your colleagues, ask your co-workers, put it out on social media that you’re looking for recommendations for someone to write your content. Be specific about what you’re looking for, what they’re experience needs to be, and hopefully you will get a trusted referral from someone in your network whose opinion you trust.
- **Website and social media:** Post a job description on your website, and share it on social media and on your company profiles. Say, “We’re hiring an SEO content freelancer” or whatever, provide a brief overview of the role, and a link to the job description on your website. Be sure to check freelancers’ existing online presence on social media.

**Crafting job descriptions**

When crafting job descriptions, keep the following in mind:

- **Ask applicants to use a specific subject line:** When people are sending you their résumés, ask them to use a specific subject line with their applications. This shows whether or not they are paying attention to detail. This can also demonstrate whether they are reading the entire job description, and know what is expected of them.
- **Ask for topic ideas for your website, blog, or YouTube channel:** This can help you find out the depth of applicants’ industry knowledge. This can also show how well they think on their
own. Independence and proactivity are really important when it comes to being a good freelancer. You will want people who can react in a timely manner to trending topics or crises.

**Be as specific as possible and be upfront about expectations:** Being specific and upfront just means being clear and honest, so you are all on the same page. Outline expectations in project management software or in emails, and give extensive feedback upfront to ensure that freelancers know your expectations and what you are looking for. Over time, it gets easier. Consider saying, “People who succeed in this position do X, Y, Z”. Be upfront about payment schedules and rates, so people know before they even apply what’s going to be expected of them; and they know what they need to have in terms of experience and skill sets to succeed with your company.

**The hiring process**

When it comes to hiring, you should follow this process:

**Hire for culture fit:** Hire for culture fit, even if the applicant doesn’t have all the experience you were looking for. If you know that they fit personality-wise with the rest of your team, then you can probably train them to do a lot of the things that you’re already doing, especially when it comes to content. So if the person is a pretty good writer and they get along really well with everyone, you could probably take a chance on that person.

**Interview over video chat or in person:** If you can’t meet in person, arrange to have a video interview with the applicant. You could use Skype, or Google Hangouts, or Zoom - whatever tool you usually use. Video gives a better overall view of the person and their personality.

**Have a trial period:** Do a one-month or one-assignment trial first, to make sure the person is a good fit. Usually, after a month, you’ll be able to tell whether you want to continue working with them or not.

**CONTENT REPURPOSING**

**What is content repurposing?**

Content repurposing means turning your content into different formats for different audiences. This is good for SEO because it allows you to increase your visibility on different websites, which can give you more placement in search results. It also gives you the chance to reach more people with your content, which can lead to more website traffic and more return visits.

**Benefits of content repurposing**

Repurposing means turning your content into different formats for different audiences. It allows you to:

- **Reach more people:** People like to absorb content in different formats.
- **Get more content:** Repurposing a piece of content into another format extends the life of that content.
- **Grow your visibility:** You are more visible, because you are pushing out content in different ways and on different platforms.
- **Cater to different learning styles:** Having content in different formats increases your ability to cater to different learning styles.
Ways to repurpose content

Here are some ways that you can repurpose content:

- **Audio**: Turn written content into an audio version that users can listen to instead of read.
- **Podcast**: This is an audio file that could be uploaded into iTunes as a podcast. You could also take a long piece of content and develop a discussion for a podcast covering the topic. Conversely, you can take a podcast and transcribe it into a blog post.
- **Video**: Just like podcasts, videos work both ways – they can either be transcribed or can be used to further describe a piece of written content. They can also be turned into audio-only versions that people can listen to on the go.
- **Webinar**: Webinars can be turned into blog posts, podcasts, and infographics. These pieces of content can also inspire a webinar, if there are a lot of questions or you want community participation.
- **Presentation**: Turn infographics or the main points of blog posts, podcasts, and webinars into a slide presentation you can upload onto SlideShare. This shows users a summary of your points and then you can link to the longer content that’s hosted on your website.
- **Social media**: Like the presentation method, take the main points of your content and turn it into visual images that quickly show a takeaway from your content that you can share on social media. Link to the full content to get more interest and drive traffic.
- **Infographic**: This allows you to summarize your content in a visual format that can also be used in a blog post or on social media (Pinterest and SlideShare are best for infographic formats). You can also take the data shown in infographics and elaborate on it in a blog post, white paper, or case study.

**Example: Marketing Nerds**

Repurposing means turning your content into different formats for different audiences. For example, Search Engine Journal’s Marketing Nerds podcast episodes are transcribed into written text, which is then edited to make a 700 to 2,000-plus word blog post. The questions asked in the podcast are used as headers in the post.

**Methods**

There are a number of methods you can use to repurpose your content:

- Combine multiple types of content into one blog post in order to appeal to all types of learners and allow people to consume the information in the way they like best. This lets them learn from your content easily, and will help hold their interest and keep them coming back for more content from you. Examples are video explainers or presentations embedded into a written blog post.
- Include an infographic and a shareable image that shows key takeaways from a related written blog post or video. These help explain the main points and give readers a ‘bird’s eye view’ of what to take away from the content.

You might figure out different formats that work best together. So keep experimenting! Experimenting is always a good thing when it comes to repurposing. And because you’ve created the original content already, it takes less manpower and fewer resources to repurpose it than to create something new from scratch.
Example: video embedded into a blog post

A video interview was filmed at a conference for Search Engine Journal. Once the video was edited and uploaded, a blog post was created that explained the key takeaways from the video, as well as where to learn more about the topic and where to reach the interviewee.

Recommended tools

Here are some tools that can be used for repurposing content:

- **Canva**: This helps you create images easily with text, frames, and other graphics.
- **Pablo by Buffer**: This makes it easy to overlay quotes or phrases on photos and then share on Buffer or other social networks.
- **Quotes Cover**: An alternative to Pablo by Buffer.
- **Photoshop**: A more advanced graphic creator that lets you edit image properties, such as color or red-eye, and also allows you to combine images, overlay tints, and more.
- **PicMonkey**: An alternative to Canva.
- **Gif Creator**: This makes it easy to create gifs from a series of images or videos. You can cut a video down into a repeating gif.
- **Boomerang**: This app shoots a few seconds of video that then loops (replays) over and over once the user hits play on Instagram.

Example: visual repurposing

Here is an example of visual repurposing (see slide ‘Visual repurposing example’).

In this case, it’s an example of a company sharing takeaways from a blog post in an Instagram post. The blog post (on the left) was condensed into an Instagram-sized image that had three key takeaways from the post.

**LEGAL GUIDELINES**

**FTC Guidelines**

The **FTC** is the Federal Trade Commission in the United States. Its legal guidelines may impact on your SEO content activities.

**Requires disclosure**

The FTC requires disclosure of paid or sponsored content in the top of all content, as well as use of hashtags for Twitter. Not doing so means possible fines from the FTC. This doesn't harm SEO, but may get you in trouble regulation-wise.

**Source attribution**

Any content taken from other sources must be used with permission and properly credited. Copying someone else’s content could show malicious intent to search engines, causing them to not index or show your content.

One thing a lot of people overlook is source attribution of images. So whenever you are searching for an image to accompany a blog post, you shouldn’t just go to Google Images, search for a keyword,
save an image from the results, and put it on your site. A lot of times, that’s not going to be in line with copyright law and you could get fined up to thousands of dollars for not sourcing images correctly. You should either buy images from a stock photo website like Shutterstock or Getty Images, or use images that are creative commons licensed and are properly attributed according to the creative commons guidelines.

CONTENT MAINTENANCE

Reviewing your content

It’s important to maintain your content and make sure it’s following SEO best practices to ensure that you can avoid any penalties. Because SEO is an ever-evolving field, there are some things that may have worked in the past that need to be updated years or months down the road. Regularly review your past and new content for:

- **Internal linking**: These are links within your content to other pages on your site. These could be links to other pieces of related content, or product and service pages where users can get more information about how your company can help them with the problem they are experiencing.
- **Call-to-actions**: These usually occur at the end of a page, but not always. A call-to-action includes an enticing phrase that leads the user to commit a conversion, such as signing up for an email newsletter or buying a product.
- **Image additions and monitoring**: Make sure images are attributed correctly (especially if you are using creative commons) and are still working. Broken images not only result in a poor user experience, but they also are shown to search engines when they crawl your site, which can lead to errors and less exposure in image searches.
- **Broken link monitoring**: Broken links make it harder not only for search engines to crawl your website, but users as well. Use SEO tools to scan for broken links. Make sure these are repaired or changed to a working link as soon as possible. In addition, if a piece of content is removed from your site, make sure that content's URL is redirected to a new page that is closest to the original piece of content using a 301 redirect.

Internal linking

**Helps search engines crawl your site**

Links make it easier for search engines (and users) to find and crawl your content. Think of links like a spider web or a roadmap that is telling the search engines where to go.

Using proper keyword anchor text ‘hints’ to search engines what the link should be shown for in search results (SERPs).

**Helps get links to new pages from established ones**

Use site search and search your topics and keywords in content to find additional pieces of content on your site to link to. If you have ‘cornerstone content’ – a major piece of content, for example, an e-book – have the smaller pieces of content, like social media images or blog posts, link to the big pieces.

**Allows users to find more information**
Internal linking is good for user experience because it allows users to find and discover not only more of your content in general, but to find more information on topics they are interested in. Be sure to only link to pages the user will actually find useful (always adopt a user-first mindset).

So when it is applicable, link to your service or product pages or other pieces of content, like blog posts. Search your website for related content and link to them. However, don’t link just to fit links in. This won’t necessarily harm you SEO-wise (unless you go completely overboard, and put five or more links in a single paragraph consistently), but it’s bad for user experience.

Call-to-actions

You can make any call-to-actions you include SEO-sound by including proper anchor text and ensuring the link isn’t broken.

- **Make sure CTAs reflect current offer**: Do you change promotions or have a new piece of content to promote? Go through some of your most popular pieces of content and make sure the CTAs are all correct. As an alternative, you could also use a plugin that automatically updates your CTAs across all posts, but that content in the CTA may not be indexed by Google (depending on the plugin and your website).

- **Verify contact information is correct**: If you change your business name, phone number, or other identifying information, make sure it is changed in all the content. Use an SEO tool to search for that phrase on your website to make sure it is correct across all content pages.

- **Tweak according to data**: Are you seeing that pages that have service pages within the text convert better than a CTA? Consider testing more in-post linking to see if that drives more conversions. You can view conversion data in Google Analytics (or whatever your analytics dashboard is).

Image monitoring

Make sure that your images aren’t broken and that they accurately represent your content. Here are some other considerations:

- **Alt text can help a website’s images get indexed in the image search results.**

- **Highly shareable images are more likely to be shared in social media, which leads to more links pointing to your website.**

- **Images break up the content, making it easier to read. This can lead to a higher time on site, more social media shares (because people like sharing images on social media), and can also help comprehension if they include key points, quotes, or takeaways.**

Broken link monitoring

When it comes to broken link monitoring, you should be monitoring weekly - and if not weekly, at least monthly - because you need to make sure that any broken links are **fixed as soon as possible**.

If a search engine is crawling your site and they find a broken link, that’s like a stop sign to them. They might exit your page, they **might not index that page**, and that can affect what pages on your site are indexed and shown in search results.
This is also frustrating for the user and leads to a **bad user experience**, as they click on a link expecting to be taken to a different page, and it doesn’t work. Nothing is worse than wanting to learn more about a company’s services, but then finding you’re unable to look at the company’s service page because the link is broken.

**How to fix broken links**

Follow these steps to fix and moderate broken links:

- Run a link report using a link checker tool like Majestic
- Export to Excel
- Go through report data in Excel and figure out which links to fix
- Either manually fix links or do 301 redirects for bad links that were moved or where there’s replacement content
- Schedule regular intervals to repeat the process – for example, monthly or quarterly

As a rule of thumb, you should:

- Run link checker tools at least monthly to identify broken links
- Export report and assign task to employee to fix links

Broken link checker tools you can use include:

- LinkPatrol for WordPress
- Screaming Frog
- Majestic
- Google Webmaster Tools

**CONTENT CHECK LIST**

**SEO best practices**

You can review your new content as it is being created or edited. You should also regularly review any old content that is still popular, to make sure it still adheres to SEO best practices. Here are the main things you should always check in new content and in old popular content:

- Headers
- Meta titles and descriptions
- Content titles
- Image alt tags
- Internal links – whether or not you are linking to relevant service or product or content pages on your own website
- Duplicate content – to ensure that your team and contributors aren’t copying someone else’s content

**Content to regularly review**

You should regularly review:

- **All new content:** Make sure the content has SEO best practices from the get-go. Ensure all of these are set up properly ahead of time.
Your 10 to 25 most popular pieces of content: Review these monthly or quarterly. Look at your analytics to determine this list, and make sure all SEO best practices are being followed and that there are no broken images or links. Also, check to see if there are any new pieces of content these popular pieces can link to.

URLs that flag for duplicate content: Use the available tools to ensure that no one is duplicating your content (or no one on your team is duplicating your own content). If you find someone that is duplicating your content, ask them to remove it. If they won’t, there are several potential actions you can take, including disavowing to Google or having a lawyer handle it and file a copyright request.

Checking for duplicate content

You can check for duplicate content using:

- **Tools**: Copyscape, Siteliner, Yoast WordPress plugin (most of these are paid or have paid versions)
- **Reminders**: To regularly scan your site for duplicate content, both internally and on other sites (Copyscape allows you to scan entire domains for duplicate content on the web)

You can use a spreadsheet to track the review process.

When quoting another piece of content, make sure it is properly cited in your text. Aim for less than 5% duplication on most pieces of content.

If another site has been duplicating your content, contact their web development team (if possible) to request them to take it down. If they refuse, be sure to disavow their domain to Google. This tells Google that any links or content on that website is not related to your website, so your website shouldn’t be held responsible for their actions. In a nutshell, it is telling Google you aren’t affiliated with that website. This avoids content penalties.
LESSON 4: EVALUATING THE PERFORMANCE OF SEO CONTENT
MEASURING YOUR GOALS

Tracking progress

Measuring your goals is really important because it ties in with tracking progress, based on your content creation and campaigns.

The benefits of measuring goals by tracking your progress are that it:

- **Identifies areas of success and improvement going forward.** If you can see where you’re failing, you can see where to improve. If you can also see where you are having success, you’ll be able to determine what is working and what to focus more on.
- **Helps you understand how your target audience interacts with your content.** Figure out what content the users are reading the most, what pages they are converting on, and what pages they are bouncing out of to help you figure out your strategy for upcoming months and quarters.
- **Determines future opportunities for more content.** Data such as internal search terms, new keywords your content is ranking for, and an increase or decrease in your goal metrics can help you understand new opportunities for more content.

Metrics to measure the success of your SEO content

You can use the following metrics to measure the performance of your SEO content:

- **Conversion rate:** An increase in conversion rate shows better-optimized content that is converting customers.
- **Time on site:** This shows how engaging your content is and if it holds the audience’s interest.
- **Inlinks (incoming links):** Are other websites linking to your content?
- **Audience demographics:** Have your target audience demographics increased? For instance, if US traffic increases after adding more content on a specific topic that you previously identified your US audience is interested in, then you know your goal has been met.

Content-tracking tools

You can use various tools to determine the success or failure of your SEO content initiatives:

- **MuckRack** shows you which influencers and journalists are sharing your content on social media.
- **BuzzSumo** helps you track social shares of your own content, as well as competitors’ content (by searching domain). It also shows you what content is popular on social media when searching by keyword.
- **Google Analytics** gives you data about what is going on with your site – time on site, bounce rate, website traffic, and so on. It also shows you referral sources of people who found your content from other websites.
- **Tag Manager** helps you tag URLs to identify where they came from. For instance, you can share a URL on Twitter with a tag that shows it was shared on Twitter. When someone clicks on that link in Twitter, it will show in Google Analytics that that is where they came from. This
is great for tagging specific campaigns or promotions, so you know what platform is driving traffic to your site.

**SEO Tools** give you more data and insight into what people are searching for on your site, as well as on your competitors’ sites. They include Searchmetrics, SEMRush, and Raven.

**Example: BuzzSumo**

This is an example of tracking social media shares of content (see slide ‘BuzzSumo’). By looking to see which of your content is being shared most on social media, you can see what content from your website is most popular. Additionally, by looking at most-shared competitor content, as well as what content is being shared most for a specific keyword, you can gain insight into what your target audience is most interested in, as well as what is being shared most on social media.

For instance, if the topic ‘history of paisley’ is really popular, you can use BuzzSumo to determine what type of content does best, and prioritize that first. It could allow you to see that infographics about paisley get more social shares than blog posts, so you can create an infographic first.

**Example: Google Analytics**

This screenshot shows an example of an audience demographic segment (see slide ‘Google Analytics’). Because for this site, US-based traffic is the priority, we can track growth using this view in Google Analytics. In this example, we see that our US-based site traffic makes up about 33% of the website’s overall traffic. If our goal was to increase this by 5% in quarter one, we can use analytics to track our progress.

**REPORTING DEADLINES**

**Importance of being strict with deadlines**

When it comes to building an SEO content strategy, everyone is usually very excited about creating the content, but they often aren’t strict when it comes to reporting and making sure that goals are being met. It’s important to be strict with deadlines because:

- **Accountability means more steady content output.** Scheduling tasks and following up by analyzing whether or not you’ve met goals is the only way to ensure that steady progress is continuing. It can be easy to be stagnant or do the same thing over and over if deadlines and goals aren’t enforced.
- **Deadlines create results** that translate into real growth of sales, newsletter signups, or other conversions.
- **Transparent deadlines across teams ensures everyone is on the same page.** This can help create clear communication and ensure that everyone knows what their individual responsibilities are.

**GOAL EVALUATION**

**Choosing the best goals**

Choosing the best goals leads to the most improvement.

Ask yourself the following questions, to evaluate your goals:
Do you need to change your goals? Are your goals actually showing real growth? Or are they not showing the whole picture of what you’re doing?

Example: You have just launched an international product, but one of your goals is tracking US-based conversions. In this instance, you’d need to build a separate goal and report for your new international product.

Are your goals properly showcasing your efforts? If not, you may need to add more metrics or goals to track.

For instance, if your goals all deal with product sales, but mailing list signups aren’t being tracked as a conversion (and email is a main revenue driver), your content efforts that drive email signups (which do actually lead to more sales) aren’t being properly attributed to the content.