CONTENT OUTREACH

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LESSON 1:
CONTENT
SEEDING
CONTENT SEEDING

What is content seeding?

A good content seeding strategy has content creation at its heart. Content seeding is what you do with your content once you’ve created it. It can be spread around multiple online and digital platforms.

The benefits

What are the benefits of content seeding?

- Delivers you wider reach than more traditional forms of marketing
- Ensures you’re reaching the right audience with a highly relevant message, increasing your relevancy at that moment in time
- Increases traffic back to your channels and site, as well as awareness of your brand
- Increases your SEO ranking
- Generates sales leads and conversions

Ecosystem

When we look at the ecosystem in which content can be seeded, there are three main areas.

Owned

The first of these are your owned channels. These are channels which you have full, creative, and administrative control over. Indeed, these can feature your social media platforms for your business or brand, your company website, or any collateral that you use for marketing purposes that you have full control and autonomy over.

Earned/paid

Another area to consider are the earned and paid channels. These are essentially third-party channels that you don’t have full control over but can help influence, either through paying for placement of your business or product message, or using methods like PR to generate organic coverage for your brand or business.

Collaborative

The third area to consider is the collaborative space. These are channels where online communities come together to share and create content. Weaving your content in here can benefit from user-generated content (UGC) input, making users feel part of the creation process.

The mechanics

It’s important to understand the mechanics behind content seeding. Content seeding involves:

- **Posting.** This involves natively publishing something to your social media channels
- **Measurement.** This involves monitoring the sentiment, engagement, and initial impact a piece of content has with an audience
Boosting. If a piece of content has been published to a channel and it gets great pickup organically, consider putting some paid investment behind to get it out to a wider audience.

Amplifying. If a consumer or a third party has engaged with your brand or your business in a positive way, consider amplifying your content to its maximum potential by looping in wider audiences who may find it useful or interesting.

The challenges

The following are some of the challenges to consider when content seeding:

- **Reach.** Reach can be a challenge. Many social media platforms now leverage reach for paid promotion. Understand that social media is a ‘pay for play’ space.
- **Relevancy.** Making sure that your brand or business message is seen at the right space, at the right time, can be challenging. News agendas and topical moments shift, so trying to keep up-to-date with them isn’t easy.
- **Transparency.** To avoid misleading consumers, it’s important to ensure that all of your paid placements are clearly declared to be paid-for. They shouldn’t be disguised as organic content.
- **Content.** Ensure that you have adequate resources to create your content, whether that be video, graphic design, or indeed copywriting, and that you can fulfill the content needs of your intended audience.
- **Measurement.** Measurement can be a tricky area for a lot of businesses. Being able to determine the success or, indeed, the failures of a piece of content, and being able to learn from that and optimize going forward, can be a challenge, especially if you’re new to content seeding. Make sure you know what success looks like for your brand or business before you invest in the content creation aspect, and be sure to track and measure the benefits and the return on your investment.
- **Budget/Resources.** Appropriate allocation of budget and resources must match your objectives.
- **Tight collaboration.** Make sure that all of your marketing materials have a consistent narrative; for example, that your social media is telling the same story as your above-the-line TV ad.

Case study: Unilever, All Things Hair

A platform, All Things Hair, was set up by Unilever to help them market their haircare offering. This is a great example of content seeding that used owned, earned, and collaborative channels all together. The brands that look after haircare in Unilever, including Dove, TRESemmé, and Suave, all put together their resources to create a YouTube channel that created their own content but also employed the use of third-party content. They used beauty bloggers from across the U.K. and Ireland to help create content for that channel. Leveraging their own audience and their own influence, they were able to build a very cohesive campaign that reached over 64 million people globally. This was a masterclass in content seeding and it was a great success for the brand.

Case study: Honda, The Honda Stage

Honda decided one year to redirect their entire television advertising budget into creating a media platform around the brand. This included live gigs and product reviews, and some lifestyle pieces that weren’t very easily linked back to the brand. Ultimately, it was deemed a failure. The campaign and the product was rushed to market. Users were very confused by the consumer journey they
were supposed to carry out on the site. This is an example of good content that was seeded in the wrong way.

Per platform

A person might retweet something on Twitter, but decide they’re only going to comment on it on Facebook. Audiences interact in very different ways when they’re brought to different social media platforms. Key things to consider in this area are:

- No one size fits all. Different audiences for different businesses will interact in very different ways. It’s important for you to trial and trial again, and try to identify exactly how your audience interacts with certain elements of content on the individual channels.
- Formats. Have a look at what content formats are available on the different channels. Being familiar with the various formats for seeding your content will help you optimize your content correctly on the individual channels.
- Personas. Consider your personas. Different users, at different stages of the buyer’s journey, will want different types of content from you. Make sure that you’re creating content that is mapped out against an individual content persona and is based on real insights about your target audience.
- Trial and test. Sometimes, a piece of content will exceed expectations and really perform very well. Try to emulate this again and again, and learn from your mistakes. This will help you increase engagement on your social media content.

Avoid misleading audiences

It’s important not to mislead audiences when seeding your content. Consider the following:

- Hashtag declaration. If you’re seeding a piece of paid-for media through an influencer channel, or indeed through a third-party publisher, it is worth declaring on that piece of content that what you’re seeding is, in fact, a paid-for advertisement. Individual business verticals, such as pharmaceuticals and banking, all have their own sets of rules for declaring content that is paid for. Make sure that you’re familiar with these, if you operate in a regulated industry.
- Truthful messaging. Make sure that you’re not misleading customers by effectively telling them lies through your content. Always be truthful in the content that you – or anybody who’s employed on your behalf – put out.
- Clarity on involvement. Make sure that you declare exactly what your relationship is with any influencer or with any third-party channel you use, and that they declare it too. This might be as simple as saying, “A fee was paid to me for X”, or indeed “I was supplied with free products for this review”.
- Bio declaration. Have a clearly defined bio on your platform, to let people know what content you’ll be seeding and what they can expect by engaging with your brand or business.

CONTENT SEEDING CYCLE

An ongoing cycle

Content seeding is an ongoing cycle. As you plan, create and seed, measure, and adapt, it should influence your next revolution or your next phase of content seeding. As such, no two revolutions of the content seeding cycle should ever really be the same as you grow, adapt, and learn.
Step 1: Plan

Start by mapping your objectives. What is it that you hope to achieve with your content seeding? Then look towards your target audience. What kind of content are they actually consuming? Where are they consuming it? And what channels are they using? Lastly, it’s worth considering what resources you have at your disposal. This might be from a budgetary perspective or indeed from a headcount perspective. For example, you might need a graphic designer for a certain project and you might need to hire an agency for another project.

Step 2: Create and seed

This is the copywriting, the designing, the editing of video content: the creation of your content. When it’s created, you then focus your efforts on getting that content out to your intended audience: the seeding of your content. This may involve your owned, earned, or collaborative platforms.

Step 3: Measure

Measuring things like engagement, sentiment, and reach will help you determine whether your content has been a success or a failure. Being able to track the real impact of your content seeding will help you learn.

Step 4: Adapt

Put logic behind the results of your measurements. Devise recommendations for ongoing content seeding. Optimize your current content seeding plan and introduce new efficiencies into your content seeding capabilities. Add any learnings to the planning stage for your next content seeding cycle.

Measurement and management of content

Implementing a content seeding plan will help you effectively manage your content by channel and measure success effectively in the following ways:

- **Track social engagement/sentiment.** Using a consistent content seeding plan allows you to track social engagement and sentiment. It is worth doing from a budgetary perspective, as well as from a measurement perspective.
- **Measure formats.** Consider measuring the individual formats that you have at your disposal. Being able to identify the success of particular formats on different channels will help you optimize and use best-case scenarios going forward.
- **Analyze channel success.** Analyze how the individual channels perform. It may be the case that using one or two channels very well is far better for your business than being on every single channel.
- **Limit conflicting/cluttered messaging.** Limit or remove any instances of cluttering or conflicting content. This can be a challenge, certainly in larger businesses, where there are numerous stakeholders. Strive for one consistent brand or business voice, campaign objective, and creative style.
SOCIAL MEDIA FORMATS

Benefits of both seeding forms

When seeding content, be aware of the benefits associated with paid social versus organic social.

Organic

Organic social will help you test content. If you’re unsure of your content strategy, or whether your content will resonate with your audience, seeding something out organically is a great measure.

Organic is also a great way to build relationships. Ongoing engagement with a consumer via a Q&A or consumer query doesn’t require great advertising spend. It will help to engender good will and nurture positive relationships with your target audience.

If your message isn’t necessarily one that you want to trumpet from the rooftops, say, for example, a negative story that you’re obliged to respond to, you won’t want to put paid social behind it. Sometimes there are messages from a brand or a business that are intended to have low reach.

Organic messages tend to have a slightly higher engagement rate. Because the content has a lower pool of viewers, the potential engagement becomes more important.

Paid

With paid social, you can achieve great reach - far beyond what is normally experienced with organic posts. This will help you get into the newsfeeds of your intended audience. However, make sure that your targeting is absolutely right. Sloppy targeting can lead to content wastage and to content being seen by an irrelevant audience.

We tend to see higher conversion rates with paid social formats. This is a great benefit for you in terms of actually driving your business agenda.

Paid social also offers a more diverse set of formats. Platforms like Instagram allow access to formats that aren’t available through organic social. This is great for innovating your content seeding strategy.

Complementary formats

Organic and paid social media formats work hand-in-hand. You can see in the example on the left-hand side (see slide ‘Organic and paid social media’) that there was a 25% higher conversion rate for paid social formats than organic social formats. However, it is worth considering the individual format by channel.

On the right, you can see that Facebook and Twitter both led to higher conversion rates for the marketer on the paid side rather than the non-paid. However, Pinterest didn’t quite deliver.

It’s very important to be aware of the audience’s perception of ad formats per channel: whether the ad format has become stale or whether it isn’t relevant to that particular audience. Platform penetration by your target audience should be seriously considered before you make any investment in paid social. And always make sure that the paid social format is a fit for your creative style. For
example, a three-minute video that is promoting your brand or business won’t work on Instagram, where only 60-seconds of paid promotional advertising is available.

Blogs

On owned channels, consider these key rules when content seeding on your blog:

- **Links.** Earn links and back links to your website to drive conversions through clever cross-functional blog posts or by featuring guest slots.
- **SEO.** Identify and consistently use keywords for each blog to drive search rankings.
- **Insider.** Consider your blog as an opportunity to give audiences an inside view of exactly what your business does. This will help to engender a human connection between your business and your target consumer.
- **Guest slots.** Guest slots can be quite effective in earning back links, and also in leveraging an influencer or a potential celebrity to get access to their communities and audiences.
- **Outreach.** If there’s a blog post that you feel might be relevant to a certain journalist or a certain influencer, why not reach out to them? Ask them for a comment or indeed maybe ask them for their opinion on the individual piece that you’ve written. This can be an effective way of gaining additional reach for your individual blog post.
LESSON 2: CONTENT PROMOTION AND OPTIMIZATION
Defining content promotion

Content promotion is the process of gaining additional exposure for the content that you have created through a combination of organic and paid social media formats. This can also include public relations and link networking.

Landscape

There are three ecosystems in which content promotion exists:

- **Paid.** Paid media includes traditional ads and media outlet placements.
- **Owned.** These are your corporate channels where you have full creative control.
- **Earned.** This is where your content has been shared by like-minded individuals who see value and merit in the content that you’re creating. This is a great space for public relations to play a role.

It’s important to see how these individual areas and content ecosystems interact and overlap with each other.

The methods

Here are some very practical methods by which you can promote your content:

- **Social media.** Through owned channels with organic and promoted content, you can get your message out to your intended audience. Largely, these are channels that you can control yourself, but you can also leverage the social media of other affiliates and influencers.
- **Public relations.** Researching and building relationships with the media and other influencer or publisher channels is key to getting your message out through their channels and leveraging their audiences.
- **Link networking.** This is essentially a way to build relationships with other online platforms to earn links back to your individual social platform or website. Tactics around link networking can include featuring guest bloggers on your website, or putting your own column on somebody else’s website or blog.
- **Influencers.** This involves utilizing an influencer’s own channel to get your brand or business message out. However, any paid placements must be declared as advertising.

Social media

Let’s look at how content can be promoted by the various social media platforms.

- **Facebook.** Facebook offers a number of paid formats. These include boosting posts to increase engagement and fan recruitment ads. They also include click to website formats and video view formats. Facebook has a wide variety of self-service advertising options, which allow you to set your ad based on whatever your objective is. So make sure to match your ad format with the ad objective in the ad service self-service platform.
- **Twitter.** Twitter also offers a wide range of advertising formats. Again, these can be mapped to your objectives. Great formats here include fan recruitment, promoted trends, video view through the video card, and lead generation and website click formats.
**Instagram.** Instagram has started to incorporate more and more paid formats. These include advertising-based formats like click to website, video views, and its very innovative Carousel ads, where users can show up to three or four images in one single ad as a scroll-through.

**Tumblr.** Tumblr includes sponsored posts and sponsored videos in its advertising formats.

**Snapchat.** Any advertising bookings placed with Snapchat have to be placed directly, as there’s no self-service platform available to consumers or brand marketers. Advertising formats here can be expensive – from $35,000 up to, reportedly, $750,000 – which can be a real challenge for a lot of small businesses. Formats here are quite inventive, and include sponsored stories and custom brand filters.

**Reddit.** Social bookmarking sites like Reddit rely on user-submitted content to generate news. There are adverts available here by way of paid social bookmarks. This essentially means that your posts will be pinned to the top of a thread.

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**Owned versus earned**

Talking big picture, let’s look at the best ways in which you can optimize your owned and earned content channels.

**Owned**

Using your social media platforms from an owned perspective will help you drive your brand visibility and awareness. Your company website should do the same; it can benefit SEO and help you get buy-in from potential customers as to what drives your business. Consider producing an E-Zine or using a mailing list to update potential customers on all the activities that are happening within your business. A company blog is a great way of earning additional SEO, and also showcases the benefits of working with your business. Finally, incorporating an RSS Feed, or a really simple syndication feed, will allow users to get an alert every time there’s a new blog post on your site. This adds value and visibility to your brand.

**Earned**

In the earned space, you need to be able to interact with the consumers’ owned social media platforms to get kudos from them in terms of positive reactions, retweets, or shares on your content. Consumer blogs and reviews are useful – if you’re getting positive sentiment out of a blog or review, it is an earning channel for you. Getting your message on media publisher channels in an organic sense is of great benefit, because you’re accessing their audiences, who are very invested in their media brand. Check-ins, whether it’s on Facebook or Foursquare, will garner further reach and engagement with your brand or business. And finally, being able to show that your brand is getting great endorsements from key influencers in a particular area will help build visibility, credibility, and also desirability for your business.

**Challenges and solutions**

With your content promotion, there are challenges to be aware of:

**Budget.** Make sure that your content is matched correctly to a persona to avoid any budget wastage. Also, make sure that you have adequate budget to support your KPIs and objectives.

**Personnel.** Limited personnel can also be a challenge. Try to introduce efficiencies through content automation, whether that’s scheduling content far in advance or being able to
identify opportunities in which you can leverage or reuse user generated content. This will help you achieve the best use of the personnel that you have at your disposal.

➡ **Choosing the right content.** If a piece of content doesn't perform well on social media, there's no point putting additional advertising spend behind it, to try and garner some sort of success from it. If it doesn't work, learn from the mistake and optimize going forward.

➡ **Choosing the right platform.** Be sure that your content format and style are adequately matched to the platform that you choose to seed on before investing in any content promotion. Also ensure that your audiences are using that platform.

## PAID PROMOTION

### Defining paid promotion

Paid promotion of content involves paying for any media space or placement. Usually ads or advertorial, they're targeted toward your individual audience segmentation. Paid promotion is a great opportunity to assess whether your content is working and whether your marketing message resonates with your audience. It also allows for great scale and reach for your marketing campaigns.

### Benefits

> **Right audience.** Paid promotion ensures your content reaches the right audience at the right time by essentially making it visible in their newsfeeds.

> **Maximizes reach.** Paid promotion maximizes your reach and gets your content seen by enough people to make it worthwhile investing in and creating in the first place.

> **Brand visibility.** Paid promotion increases your brand awareness. It makes sure that people who may never have heard of your brand or business offering before are made aware of it by seeing your content boosted into their newsfeeds.

### Creation versus paid support

A common mistake by content marketers is investing heavily in content creation, but not necessarily putting a decent paid budget behind it. So you can have a situation where you've created a big budget piece of content, but the value of your return is quite low. Generally, if it's worth putting the investment and time into creating a piece of content, it's worth promoting. So have an adequate spend support for all of your content.

### Social algorithms

The social platforms are moving to introduce algorithm-based newsfeeds. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, the platforms state that it will improve social-media users’ experience on the platform by prioritizing the content that is relevant to them, has been peer-reviewed, and is popular within their own social circles. Secondly, the social platforms themselves can generate revenue by charging brands to get their messages seen.

The three things to be very conscious of here are:

➡ **Visibility.** Visibility is lower than ever for businesses within the social newsfeed. Media networks and media publishers get higher visibility.
Bugets. Budgets need to be geared toward social investment in the same way that many businesses carve out a TV-advertising or print-advertising budget for the year.

Adapting. Make sure that you adapt your social-media advertising plan on an ongoing basis. Use formats that work for you, invest in trialing new innovations, and always make sure that you’re learning from your experiences.

Auction versus fixed

There are two formats in which you can place social-media advertising. One of these formats is auction-based, the other is fixed-based. Let’s look at each format under a number of different headings.

Social. In a social space, auction-based advertisements can be charged based on your cost per like, your cost per engagement, your cost per fan acquisition, or your cost per conversion. Fixed social-media advertising placements are generally around cost per impression. These are where you’re charged a fixed price and you’re not competing with other brands. Essentially, a fixed piece of inventory might be a banner or a home-page takeover, whereas an auction-based piece of advertising might appear in a newsfeed, but is also competing with three or four pieces of content that are all looking for that same target audience. You will achieve greater reach and better consistency for your auction-based advertising if you have direct-content copy, if you make sure that your relevancy is absolutely high-end, and that your content is perfectly produced.

Search. Search advertising is largely based on an auction system. Determining the correct keywords, ensuring that your content isn’t misleading for your audiences, and that any imagery you use is well produced and looks great, will help you achieve a higher relevancy ranking with the individual search platform that you place your advertising on. Fixed formats are a little less frequent here.

Display. With display advertising, fixed items might include homepage takeovers, skyscraper ad units, banners or mid-page units. Generally, these are negotiated at a fixed rate with the media owners themselves. So, for example, if you wanted to run a home-page takeover on perezhilton.com, you might brand either side with your individual brand and you’ll be set a fixed charge for that. Whereas, if you were running a Google Display campaign, it would be based on an auction basis across a wide variety of Google-affiliate websites. So being aware of the two individual types of format buying will help you adjust your message accordingly.

Media outlets. Some individual media outlets charge in auction-based format, depending on how many sites are part of that media conglomerate. In the fixed space, native advertising is becoming increasingly popular. This is advertising which is, essentially, a digital version of the old-school advertorial-based content which sits within the newsfeed of regular content on the media site.

Bloggers and influencers. There’s not really an auction-based system here; this is very much a rate card of fixed prices. Some bloggers charge maybe $200 or $300 for a tweet or an Instagram post that endorses your product. Be aware of declaration, if pursuing this particular method of paid promotion.

Facebook formats

Facebook advertising appears in three spaces:

Social newsfeed. Within the social newsfeeds of consumers who are browsing their friends’ and family’s posts, Facebook offers an opportunity for brands to insert their messages amongst that newsfeed content.
Facebook Display. Facebook display advertising largely appears on the right-hand side of Facebook.

Facebook Network. Facebook has access to a network of affiliate brands, media publishers, and mobile apps. Ads that appear here are essentially outside of Facebook, but are displayed through Facebook's ad-buying process.

With Facebook advertising formats, it's very important that you're mapping each of your ad placements to an ad objective. This will help you achieve the best reach, relevancy, and engagement for your piece of content. Follow the guidelines specific to each ad format to ensure successful placement of your Facebook or indeed Instagram ad through the Facebook platform.

Twitter formats

Twitter has also started to prioritize content serving based on audience insights. Sponsored content will push content ahead of this algorithm. Just like Facebook, the formats are designed to align to a business objective. Formats include:

Promoted 280 characters. These are purely text-based. Where possible, include links, @ mentions of other users, and hashtags for your campaign.

Summary cards. Summary cards preview website content with a short description and an image. They also utilize a call-to-action button.

Image cards. Image cards allow for a single image or for an image gallery, depending on what your content objective is.

Player cards. Player cards allow for audio, video, and live-streaming content formats.

Product cards. Product cards showcase a product and key details, with a shortened link to convert your audience in a more effective way.

Lead-generation cards. Lead-generation cards are great tools for capturing user details directly within a tweet.

Mobile-app cards. Mobile-app cards show an app summary and a download call-to-action button. These can be tailored for iOS or Android phones.

Instagram formats

The Facebook-owned platform Instagram has introduced great advertising formats to help content reach more fans.

Always make sure to connect your Facebook and Instagram accounts before activating any Instagram advertising.

Some formal objectives for Instagram advertising include app download, video views, or click to website.

Instagram also benefits from really powerful targeting tools worked into Facebook's ad manager, to make sure you're targeting effectively.

Google and YouTube

Google-owned YouTube has a number of advertising formats available to social media marketers. These will help your video content achieve more views. Some of these formats include:

Google Ads for video. These enable pre-roll content and video on-demand.

Multiple auction formats. These allow your video content to essentially compete with other people's video content throughout the Google Display Network.
Fixed formats. These include banner ads and mid-page units.

Targeting. Great targeting is conducted through the Google Ads panel.

YouTube formats

Some YouTube formats available to content marketers include:

- **In-Search.** In-search highlights your video in the YouTube search terms. This makes your video stand out ahead of all your competitors.
- **In-Display.** In-display shows your video as a sponsored item in the Suggested Videos panel on the right-hand side.
- **In-Stream.** In-stream ads, also known as pre-rolls, play as a trailer before another video. These can also be incorporated to include a call-to-action overlay footer, which shows during video playback.
- **In-Slate.** In-slate video ads show your video as a suggestion at the end of a video play.

With the auction format, you are competing for ad space with other advertisers, so make sure to set a maximum cost per view or a cost per impression. Try to outbid other advertisers for your content to be seen ahead of theirs. But make sure you keep an eye on your content-marketing budget, so these costs don’t spiral out of control.

YouTube fixed-inventory formats

Digital-ad formats are generally booked as display inventory directly with a YouTube sales representative. It’s important to note that these fixed-inventory formats can be localized to your country, so you can change the language based on your location. It also means that YouTube can resell this format in a number of different regions.

Google formats

Other auction formats include marketing within the search feed. With Google’s search marketing, search advertising appears in search results by bidding on keywords and audiences. These search terms have essentially been paid for in terms of placement. They’re targeted by demographic, keyword, and also by auction bid. Targeting and optimizing are important to make sure that you’re obtaining the most from your budgets.

Google also offers a dynamic network of partner sites on which display advertising can be placed. Essentially, these are moving images with a call-to-action banner that get you to click through to an intended destination. Google display advertising appears by both contextual and specific placements on the Google Display Network. So you can have your ad display automatically or manually choose the sites it will be displayed on. These ads are placed through the Google Ads manager. Targeting and optimizing here are important to help you keep track of your budgets and make sure that they’re effectively spent.

LinkedIn formats

LinkedIn primarily offers two advertising formats for content marketing. These are text ads and sponsored updates. Both are available through the LinkedIn self-service advertising platform. LinkedIn also operates an algorithmic newsfeed similar to Facebook, which means publishers really need to leverage their updates with sponsored payment to achieve greater reach and engagement with their audiences.
Text ads. These are display ads which run alongside profile pages. These can incorporate an image and a line of text. Generally, they should always include a call to action.

Sponsored updates. Sponsored updates are pieces of content like articles or posts from an individual or a business, which can be sponsored and pushed into more users' newsfeeds. These are very similar to Facebook promoted posts. The newsfeed that LinkedIn uses is called Pulse.

Snapchat formats

Snapchat's advertising formats are a little more difficult to activate. Finding information about this can be challenging, as there's no self-service option available for brands at the moment. Prices are based on fixed-price models and ads have to be placed directly with a Snapchat sales representative. Prices ranging from £35,000 up to $750,000 for 24-hour advertising placements have already been reported in the media.

Some of these formats include:

- Discover interstitials. Interstitials for brands placed through the platform's news or Discover section are treated similarly to mobile interstitial formats.
- Sponsored filters. Sponsored filters are an engagement-oriented and very innovative format for users. Essentially, a sponsored filter is a custom design, often a combination of graphics and video, which users can then engage with to create their own versions of images and videos. These offer a really fun and novel way to engage; however, can be a very expensive proposition.
- Sponsored stories. Sponsored stories will add a brand stream of content into the organic newsfeed of users. This negates the need for anybody to be following you, and pushes your content straight into their newsfeed.

Pinterest formats

Currently, there's only one form of paid promotion format on Pinterest. This is sponsored pins, which is a great format for driving traffic from an e-commerce perspective, as there is a Buy button included with this format.

Reddit formats

Reddit offers promoted posts and a sponsored link to a thread on the platform. This can be placed either on the Reddit home page or within a dedicated subreddit. Your budget and impressions/frequency limits will determine how often your sponsored thread is viewed. It's very important to note that, while this is a paid placement and the nature of Reddit is upvotes and downvotes, your paid placement will remain at the top of the intended page, regardless of how many downvotes it gets. This is great for increasing visibility of your brand message on one of the Reddit subreddits or on the main page.

Tumblr formats

Tumblr's sponsored posts allow publishers to reach an intended audience through a self-service platform. This is activated on the newsfeed of your intended audience. Essentially, content can be text-, image-, or GIF-based, with GIFs being incredibly popular on the Tumblr platform. Targeting can be placed using hashtags on the platform.
**Paid formats**

There are various mechanisms by which social content can be promoted:

**Paid social advertising.** This involves getting your content or message into the social newsfeeds of your intended audiences. Paid social advertising is generally activated through self-service platforms.

**Paid search/display.** These are ad formats which generally appear in the search newsfeed of an individual website or in digital ad format inventory, for example, MPU, skyscraper, or banner format. Search advertising generally appears in the search terms as a highlighted search result pushed up to the very top of the results.

**Paid syndication.** This is where editorial content is used in an advertorial way. It helps get your brand or business objective out to a wider reach and a dedicated media-publisher audience.

**Paid bloggers/influencers.** This is where you place your brand message or business objective through the platforms or channels of a key influencer or blogger. In this space, you need to consider how much you need to declare to comply with your local Advertising Standards Authority. Anything that has been paid for needs to be declared.

**Ad blockers**

When considering these ad formats, it's important to note the increased use of ad blockers. An ad blocker is a piece of software that blocks search and display advertising from appearing on the web pages of a user’s phone or desktop computer.

A lot of media owners and media publishers rely heavily on the revenue generated by display advertisements, and the use of ad blockers prevents revenue being generated on these sites. This has led to the rise of native advertising, which can't be detected or blocked by an ad blocker.

**Example: BuzzFeed**

The media publisher, BuzzFeed, is the leading online publisher of native content formats. It has actually moved its entire business model to depend solely on native advertising. You can see, within the newsfeed (see slide ‘Native content – combating ad blockers’), the native ads have been clearly declared as native advertising, but the quality of the content that lies within them is so high that they still receive great click-through engagement and reach with the intended consumer audience. This is a great example of how to overcome an issue such as ad blocking within your content-promotion strategy.

**Native content**

Media owners are driving the adoption and collaboration process behind native content and finding room at the table for everyone, including creative agencies. They believe the best way to operate is to have everybody input into the creative process.

Take, for example, brand marketers. They have similar interests and marketing objectives to the media publishers. Being able to incorporate both viewpoints, along with an element of creativity from any agency that’s involved, makes everything work much better and delivers a more integrated product, as well as higher results.
**OWNED PROMOTION**

**Defining owned promotion**

Owned promotion is when the marketing channels of a particular brand or business are owned completely. Taking stock of all of your owned channels and making sure they’re consistent will help you deliver the best return on investment for your content promotion.

**Types**

From an owned perspective, types of owned promotion digital channels include:

- **Corporate websites.** These can be public or internal-facing websites that allow you to share information effectively and be consistent in your communications.
- **Social media channels.** From your top company executives, who are sharing company-related news on their LinkedIn personal profiles, to the Facebook and Twitter accounts of your corporate brand, make sure that everyone is delivering on the same business objective.
- **Blogs.** On your blog, you generate your own news items. So when you have some industry-related insights, learnings, or research that you’d like to share, profiling it on your blog will help drive awareness, credibility, and thought leadership for your brand or business. Be sure to do this with a consistent tone of voice.
- **Email signatures.** Make sure that you link back to your company website and corporate social media platforms through your email signature. Driving potential customers and clients back to your digital channels will help ‘close the loop’ for you and encourages consistent engagement with your brand or business.

**Maximizing methods**

Let’s look at some ways in which you can maximize your own promotional channels:

- **RSS feeds.** RSS feeds (Really Simple Syndication feeds) help update your users by sending an email to their inboxes as soon as you update your blog or website.
- **Social media optimizing.** Include social share buttons on your website, or indeed, on your blog post. This encourages people to engage with you on a social basis after they have visited your website.
- **Evergreen content.** Evergreen content is content that is timeless or that will work for you at any time of the year. For example, an article on a topic like “The Top Five Ways In Which You Can Create Great Visuals” is likely to hold true for a long time. Being able to create evergreen content will help increase your utility to your consumers.
- **Subscription services.** A monthly newsletter or an e-zine can help encourage visits back to your site after somebody has interacted with you. Consider these as a form of ongoing marketing, where you are building up your thought leadership, but also as a means of updating your prospective clients or customers on what’s happening inside your business.
EARNED PROMOTION

Defining owned promotion

Earned promotion is content marketing via channels that don't necessarily belong to your brand or business, but are owned by third parties. Marketing through these channels allows you to access alternative audiences that may not be aware of, or engage with your business, on a day-to-day basis.

Types

Here are some examples of channels where earned promotion can exist:

- **Online news sites.** This involves selling in stories or content that you've produced for your brand to appropriate online news sites, to generate awareness and exposure.

- **Blogger/influencer outreach.** This involves sharing your content with a blogger or influencer who is interested in exactly the same things that your piece of content addresses. For example, if you create and share content on "New Ways To Cook Potatoes" with a food blogger, that blogger might find your content quite interesting and share it with their friends. By doing this, you can leverage additional reach and scale for your content.

- **User-generated social media.** This involves leveraging content that users have produced that is positive towards your business. This can be anything from graphics to photos, or indeed, social media check-ins or reviews with your brand or business. Sharing this positivity will help benefit your brand or business.

- **Affiliate partnerships.** In the digital social space, a lot of brands are active in the same arena that you are in. As long as they’re not direct competitors and don’t have any ulterior motives, you can team up with them to access their audiences and let them access yours. For example, a children’s toy company might decide to team up with a local zoo. In this partnership, the company gives away tickets to the zoo and the zoo gives away toys. It’s mutually beneficial, as both have the same intended target audience, and they can access each other’s social media platforms.

- **Word-of-mouth marketing (WOMM).** This is where a stunt or activity has generated such consumer interest that, in the real world, people have taken photographs, written posts, and posted them to their social media platforms. You can then leverage this for further amplification of your individual stunt, to maximize your opportunity. Keep your eyes open for unplanned word-of-mouth marketing opportunities also.

Advantages and limitations

While earned promotion is a fantastic asset to your content marketing plan, it’s important to identify the advantages and limitations of this type of marketing.

Advantages

Advantages include:

- **Reduced wastage.** With earned promotion, you’re leveraging an audience that has bought in to your particular brand communications or message. This audience is hyper-relevant, so there is less wastage when it comes to target audiences.

- **Authenticity.** Being able to leverage earned content or earned promotion helps you resonate nicely with audiences, as they regard it as more authentic.
Peer recommendation. A peer-to-peer recommendation is a lot stronger than a direct ad. Earned content is positioned as a peer recommendation.

Limitations

Limitations to earned content promotion include:

- **Less control.** It’s very hard to control the message of an earned placement, because you don’t have a huge amount of say over it. You must be prepared for promotion that is not 100% on brand.
- **Responsibility.** With earned content, the brand or business owner is seen as responsible for the content, even though they don’t have full control over it. It may require delicate relationship-building and negotiation to get the content edited or changed, if necessary.
- **Credibility.** Ultimately, the credibility of your business could be called into question if your earned promotion channels are questionable. If you’re targeting individual platforms or influencers to earn coverage or promotion, make sure you want your brand or business to be associated with them.

Maximizing earned content

Maximizing earned content is a little trickier, as there is less control. But there are some rules that will help:

- **Relevant titles/target channels.** Make sure your target publications, influencers, and so on are relevant to your audience and don’t just have high reach.
- **Visually appealing assets.** Make sure that the earned platforms have visually appealing assets that are easy to access, whether they be video or well-produced graphics.
- **Easy-to-read layouts.** Make sure that your content is easy to read, and isn’t confusing or convoluted. This will make it more shareable.
- **Shareable content.** Make sure that your content is sharable in the first place. Asking yourself the question, “Would I share it?” and being able to answer, “Yes,” will help you determine whether your content is worthy of earned promotion from an individual or media platform.

AUDIENCE PROFILING AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Consumer motivations

Consumer motivations around consuming content can be broken into three categories:

- **Education.** Learning how to do something new or finding out about a topic of interest; for example, how to mend a broken dishwasher or how to throw the perfect party.
- **Information.** Finding practical information, such as prices, opening times, or the location of a retailer.
- **Entertainment.** Using content for enjoyment and/or distraction. From the creator’s point of view, this can involve tugging on the heartstrings with a very emotional piece of content; or exciting, delighting, and surprising somebody using hilarious content.
Characteristics to consider

When developing your consumer personas, it's important to do a bit of psychographic profiling to help you categorize your consumer audience in terms of needs and motivations. Some characteristics to consider include:

- **Background.** Look at the audience's background and ascertain as much information about them as possible.
- **Job details.** Determine your audience’s job details, their spending patterns, and whether they are full-time employees, students, or job hunters.
- **Main sources of info.** Look at where your audience gets their main sources of information. This can include anything that influences their buying behavior. So, do certain individuals use TripAdvisor to check out reviews before they book into a hotel? Or maybe they look at Amazon product reviews before purchasing your brand or your service?
- **Goals.** Consider what your audience’s end goals are. Then leverage your product or business as helping to deliver on those end goals. This will help consumers believe in what you have to offer, and likely increase your conversion rate.
- **Key purchase actions.** Have a look at your audience’s key purchase actions. Are they window shoppers? Do they make considered purchases? Is this a lifetime investment or are they going to buy with you a number of times?
- **Challenges and pain points.** Have a look at your audience's challenges and pain points. How can you insert your brand or business offering into their day-to-day challenges? If you can help people solve their issues and achieve an easier life, you will make your brand or business irresistible to them.
- **Objectives.** Map out your audience's objectives. Make sure their objectives match up with what you have to offer. Tailor your message, and offer services that the audience hasn't thought about before.

Understanding behaviors, needs, and preferences

Consumer personas will help you understand your audience’s behaviors, needs, and preferences. As you can see from this slide (see slide ‘Understanding their behaviors, needs and preferences’), you have can have a number of very different target users. It’s difficult to create content for every different type of user. So it’s important to prioritize the user profile that offers the highest value, and create content largely directed towards that consumer.

When establishing consumer personas, some key items to consider include:

- **Geography.** Where are they based? What language do they speak? What time zone are they in?
- **Platform.** Which platforms are they using? How often are they using them?
- **Demographic.** Look at their age, their life stage, their gender, their sexual orientation, and their relationship status. This information will help you determine what platforms, what channels, and what content will reach them best.
- **Device.** This is a particularly important when it comes to serving app install content, or speaking about Mac/PC developments. For example, if you’re running an iOS app campaign and you’re serving that ad to android users, you’re creating wastage, because the app is not going to be downloaded on that device. Be clever and figure out what device your audience is using most.
Browser speed. Consider if your audience has the connectivity to stream high-definition video content or if they need low-resolution graphics, based on their location and the services that they have access to.

Content methodology

There are tactics you can use to help you define your audience and their motives when engaging with your content. This will help you tailor your message appropriately to the right audience at the right time, and also help your audience identify what it is that they’re looking for. These tactics can help increase your conversions by up to 20%.

Keywords. Establish a ‘keyword universe’ of commonly used search terms that consumers are using to find your brand or business. This will help you identify exactly what kind of content and language you should be using when advertising or promoting your content on the web. Will users be happy that with what they find when they land on your site? Make sure that your content and business offering are aligned with your keywords, to avoid misleading consumers.

Personalization. Personalized content can be very powerful. It is highly relevant and adapts to the changing needs and interests of your buyers. Personalization is a very effective tool, in terms of getting additional conversions and hitting the right users at the right time.

Search trends. Use a search trend tool such as Google Trends to establish the key habits of your audience. This will allow you to compare the search volume for certain keywords; track behaviors and propensity to search specific terms at a particular time of day or day of the week; and analyze search trends seasonally. For example, you might notice on Google Trends that crosswords or Sudoku puzzles are particular highly searched around the lunchtime period. You could leverage that information if you were, say, a tea or coffee brand. Knowing that people may drink tea or coffee during their lunch break and are also searching for puzzles to occupy them while doing so, could be a really nice way of making your content highly relevant.

Case study: Amazon

Amazon has mastered the art of e-commerce and personalization. You can see here (see slide ‘Case study: Amazon’), Amazon uses a consumer’s previous interactions with the brand to create personalized recommendations under lists such as ‘More Items To Consider’, ‘Frequently Bought Together’, and ‘Customers Who Bought This Item Also Bought’. These lists not only demonstrate the brand’s interest in the consumer, they are also a very shrewd way of driving more sales.

CONTENT OPTIMIZATION

The rise of multiple screens

With the rise in smartphone penetration, we’ve seen a trend termed ‘multi-screening’ emerge. This is essentially where consumers are watching TV at the same time as consuming content through their mobile phone. This presents an opportunity to ensure the content you’re seeding out through social media platforms is timely and relevant to what consumers are watching on TV.

Example: Just Eat

This slide (see slide ‘The rise of multiple screens’) is a great example of Just Eat, the mobile takeaway delivery service app, seeding content around the popular Netflix show, House of Cards. They timed
their content to be seeded at the same time that the show was being watched, making their content highly relevant in the second-screening space.

Essentially, it’s about adapting your message to a moment in time, without infringing on any intellectual property rights; ensuring that your narrative is consistent with your brand; and that you’re using mobile formats effectively. Twitter has some great ad formats that can be used to tie in directly to television conversation moments.

**Optimizing checklist**

Generally speaking, before content is promoted, it should always undergo an optimizing checklist:

- Be aware of audience consumption by device. Developing a mobile-first strategy will allow for scaling up to tablet or desktop; it’s very hard to do the reverse.
- Think of your keywords and make sure that they feature in, or are related to, the content which you’re seeding.
- Make sure that videos and images aren’t cropped or cut-off in newsfeeds.
- Use content optimizing tools like Yoast to introduce efficiencies with blog content.

Good content optimization will result in:

- Improved and prolonged search engine rankings
- Increased impressions/click-through rates
- Lower cost per click/cost per acquisition
- Increased volume of downloads
- More leads, inquiries, and conversions

Optimizing your content, based on the interests of your audience and on their consumption behaviors and platform usage, will help your brand to be seen in the right light at the right time.

**The methods**

Some methods of content optimization include:

- **Images.** These should always be responsive for mobile, and should be resized for non-cropped preview in the newsfeeds of the individual social platforms. Always include alt tags for screen readers.
- **Targeted keywords.** These should always appear in the titles of blogs and web pages, and within opening paragraphs.
- **Video.** Video content should always be native or embedded. Subtitles should be included. Assume that silent auto-play is being used by your audience, which means that the content is being watched with the sound turned off.
- **Social share.** Web pages should always include social share buttons, to further stimulate sharing of your content on the web.

**Platform-specific considerations**

In terms of platform-specific optimization, there are some key elements to consider:

- **Copy length.** Copy length is a very important consideration on Twitter. With a limit of 280 characters available on the platform, it’s important to make sure that your message is
concise and to the point. While copy length restrictions don’t really come into play on other platforms, such as Facebook, it’s always worth ensuring your copy is clear and succinct.

Native video/images. Native video and images perform much better on the individual platforms themselves rather than when shared as third-party platform links. What this means is posting a piece of native video to Facebook or using Twitter’s video card will achieve much better reach and success – and, ultimately, engagement – with social audiences than cross-posting a YouTube link onto Facebook or, similarly, a Facebook link onto Twitter. So always make sure that you’re utilizing the native features on the individual platforms.

Hashtags. Use hashtags where available. By using these on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, users can click through to discover more content that’s been generated around your campaign or content topic.

Audience targeting. Use audience targeting – Facebook allows this for all posts, whether they’re paid or organic. This will help make sure that your message is being delivered to a highly relevant audience. Unfortunately, content targeting doesn’t exist for organic placements on other social media platforms, such as Instagram and Twitter. However, paid formats can help you achieve this.

Dark social ‘promoted only’. Dark social is essentially where highly targeted content is visible only to an intended target audience through a paid promotion. Always be aware that dark social may be being used by your competitors, but you may not be able see it. This is a great way to avoid wastage of your social paid promotion budgets.

Optimizing for search

In terms of optimizing for search, there are a number of key activities to carry out:

Targeted keywords. You should select one keyword for an individual blog post and pepper it throughout that piece of content, to a frequency of about 2.5%. Be careful of keyword stuffing.

Unique content. Make sure that your content isn’t essentially pushing the same keywords consistently.

Page titles. Page titles should always conclude your keyword. Make sure that your page titles make sense and can be read in whatever your local language is, to improve SEO.

Descriptions. Page descriptions should always contain the keyword. These include image descriptions and the snippets that preview a page.

Embedded videos. Include the keyword with embedded videos.

Alt tags. Image descriptions should all contain the keyword within the alt tags.

Real-time contextualizing. Keep your blog up-to-date and well-stocked with relevant content.

Offline integration

There is great value in offline integration. Making sure that your digital and non-digital teams are well integrated helps ensure a consistent brand narrative, and also increases relevancy and reach with your target audience.

To make sure your activities are fully integrated:

Website. Your website should be included in all marketing materials, such as business cards, leaflets, hand bills, and posters.

Linked social platforms. Your website should include links to all of your social platforms. Make sure that you’re joining the dots between all of them.
Social handles/hashtag. Consider your individual social handles. These should appear on all marketing materials where appropriate to the campaign activity. Again, you’re driving people from one format into another format by cleverly integrating all of your platforms.

Multi-screening. Consumers are now watching TV, while consuming social content using a tablet or smartphone as their second screen. Use clever targeting with digital integration to disrupt this conversation or close the loop back to online.

ATL/BTL collateral. Try to include a digital element in advertising formats that are in a non-digital space. Consider adding collateral: this could be anything from in-store labeling to in-store stickers, if you operate a retail business. Ensure your brand messaging is consistent across all activities.

INFLUENCER MARKETING

Defining influencer marketing

Influencer marketing is the exercise of profiling and marketing towards specific individuals, rather than large, volume-based demographics. Why do we engage in this? Well, for the first time in history, individual influencers are starting to gain more reach and more engagement on media platforms than some of the most trusted brands and businesses in the world.

For example, a popular blogger in the UK called Zoella has 10.2 million YouTube subscribers, while the BBC has only 3.06 million YouTube subscribers. So on the individual platform, this blogger has a lot more reach than a long-established broadcaster of high quality TV content.

Considerations

When engaging in influencer marketing, consider the following:

Reach and relevancy. When using influencers, make sure that you are not overly concerned with their reach. What you really want is their relevancy. Reach is great but, ultimately, if a very low percentage of that reach is relevant to you, then it doesn’t really warrant incorporating that influencer into your marketing strategy. So, balance your relevancy and reach objectives.

Peer recommendations. Peer recommendations are fantastic, but ultimately you need to disclose if these are paid-for recommendations.

Benefits

The benefits of influencer marketing include:

- **Power.** This is a great way of super-charging word of mouth and getting higher retention rates than traditional advertising.
- **Connected.** Being able to connect with an individual influencer’s audience and leverage that audience, will add great reach and significance to your individual marketing proposition.
- **Native.** Influencer marketing is native, so it will be seen by your audience.
- **Benefits SEO.** Research done by Procter & Gamble found that 25% of search traffic is generated by user generated content on social media.
- **Authenticity.** Influencer messaging has the benefit of a peer-to-peer recommendation and can appear as a more organic endorsement.
Limitations

The limitations of influencer marketing include:

- **Control.** There is no way to control these one-person media outlets, so choose wisely. A paid placement dictated by a contract would help exercise that control for your brand or business. But not all influencer marketing campaigns will have a contract in place.

- **Declaration.** Declaration is incredibly important. It is the brand marketer’s responsibility to make sure that any paid or sponsored partnerships are declared by the influencer. You can be heavily fined for misleading consumers by seeding out what appears to be organic content, but is actually paid for.

- **Industry-specific regulations.** Be aware of industry-specific regulations, particularly around the marketing of alcohol, insurance, and pharmaceuticals – these are heavily regulated industries. Make sure that any influencer you’re working with is aware of them too, to make sure that you’re compliant.

- **Authenticity.** Influencer marketing that is too heavily branded can discredit influencers and compromise the integrity of their own channels. So make sure you work with influencers to make sure that the content is relevant, credible, and authentic.

- **Heightened visibility.** This can mean tighter regulations and scrutiny on the content pushed out through influencer channels, which the marketer is responsible for.

- **Costs.** Depending on the level of influence, placing your message on their channels can be an expensive undertaking.

Online influencer balance

It’s far more beneficial for you to work with an influencer who has a smaller, more relevant audience for your brand, than an influencer who has a larger audience that is less relevant. Remember, for the most efficient use of influencer channels, relevancy should always trump reach.

For example, a piece of rugby content could be seeded with David Beckham for £10,000 for one Instagram post. This would reach 23 million followers. However, his audience are football fans and not really that enthusiastic about rugby. A cheaper activity would be seeding a tweet with Scottish rugby player David Denton. This would cost £150, and would actually have a 100%, or near enough, relevancy to that audience.

Value exchange

To work with influencers as a channel, a value exchange must occur. This doesn’t always have to involve money, but it should always benefit both parties. Brands can offer benefits such as free products, experiences, exclusive behind-the-scenes access, or discount codes. In return, a brand might look for vlogs, blogs, social media endorsements, check ins, or shares of content.

Tactics

Tactics that you can implement when conducting influencer marketing include:

- **Seeding product.** Show or place product in the individual social post of an influencer for either testimonial or review purposes.

- **Personalized online discount codes.** Provide influencers with online discounts to seed out to their audiences. You can track this personalized discount code to ascertain whether the influencer has delivered a good return on investment for you.
UGC around your brand. Generate some nice user generated content around your brand by leveraging a partnership with an influencer. For example, if you are a pizza brand, you could team up with a famous boy band; they could then generate content by showing pictures of pizza on their Instagram account every night that they’re on tour. This is a great way of creating content in conjunction with an influencer that also serves your purpose as a brand.

Channel takeover. Influencers take over your channels and their audiences follow for the activation. This can add individual personality to your brand. If it's perfectly aligned with your tone of voice, it can be very powerful.

Content produced in partnership with brand/business. This should be seeded on the influencer channel first, with later amplification from the brand.

Declaration and legislation

Declaration

It’s crucially important that any paid influencer partnerships are declared, to prevent consumers from being misled. Anything that is an advertisement should always be declared as such. This can be done by the influencer saying, “I am working with x-brand,” or they could include #ad or #spons in the post copy. Making sure the influencer declares the nature of the relationship is the responsibility of the brand or the business. So make sure this is included in any contractual arrangements.

Truthful

Make sure that anything that is published by the influencer on behalf of your brand is truthful. You need to be able to stand over its veracity.

Responsible

It’s important that any influencers you work with do not encourage any illegal or irresponsible activity on behalf of your brand. Just because the message is coming from a platform that isn’t owned by you explicitly, it doesn’t mean that you are not responsible for it. Use common sense.

Regulated

Several industries are highly regulated. These include alcohol, cosmetics, banking, and insurance businesses. Make sure that you’re compliant with your particular industry regulations.

Case study: Diclegis

Let’s look at a case study relating to a U.S. anti-morning sickness drug, Diclegis. The brand entered into a partnership with popular reality TV show star, Kim Kardashian. The pharmaceutical company responsible, Duchesnay, were ordered by the FDA to have Kim Kardashian remove an Instagram post that didn’t comply with their regulations on drug usage. They stated the ad was false and misleading, because it failed to disclose the side effects of using the drug.

The star was forced to repost the original image, with an additional 300-word verbatim disclaimer on the potential side effects. This was embarrassing for both the influencer and the brand, as they failed to comply with the individual regulations of the pharmaceutical industry. While the content reach was incredibly high – over 44 million Instagram users saw the content – it undoubtedly drew higher scrutiny for the content message.
Tools

Why should you use influencer marketing tools? They will help you to:

- Identify and define the influencers to target or partner with in your region or vertical
- Measure the reach and the engagement with that individual's audiences
- Help you deliver real insight into the success or failure of any content partnerships

Some of these tools include:

- **NeoReach.** This is a great tool for managing a lot of mid-level influencers at scale. This is perfect for larger markets like the U.S. where the influencer base is quite large. Being able to input designated keywords and interest segments and being able to pull out suggested lists of influencers in those areas is a handy asset to have at your disposal.
- **TweetReach.** TweetReach will help you estimate the reach of an individual’s tweets and measure a content partnership’s success or failings.
- **Followerwonk and Brandwatch.** Using tools like Followerwonk and Brandwatch will help you pick up mentions of untagged brands. So, if you are looking toward a campaign around a particular brand of ice cream, but you are not on Twitter at that particular moment in time, or users aren't tagging your brand, you'll be able to use these tools to determine where social conversation is happening.
- **Talkwalker.** This social analytics tool allows you to identify key influencers relevant to your brand or business.

**WORD-OF-MOUTH MARKETING**

Defining word-of-mouth marketing

Word-of-mouth marketing traverses both the online and offline spaces to deliver on your business objectives, but it also generate great buzz. It allows brands to deliver a 360-degree approach to their brand or business marketing.

Benefits and limitations

So what are the benefits of word-of-mouth marketing?

- For a lot of brands, it delivers 'big bang' moments of brand awareness, which are perfect for product launches
- It delivers a great opportunity for brands to enter an exciting and innovative space
- Brands can benefit from great online buzz, where people get very excited and share images or videos from your particular word-of-mouth-marketing stunt
- It’s great in terms of PR and brand visibility, from both a B2B and B2C perspective

Limitations of word-of-mouth marketing include:

- It can be quite expensive
- It involves single moments that don't offer any evergreen opportunities, ongoing consistency or interest
- It can be hard to measure the direct return on investment
- It can be hard to link the activity back to sales moments, because it’s generating buzz, not clicks to a website or an acquisition page
It can appear as gimmicky, which could damage your brand reputation

**Key principles**

Word-of-mouth marketing activities should follow a number of key principles:

- **Building advocacy.** Turn occasional passing interest into a more engaged and fanatic user, by generating increased excitement and interest.
- **Rewarding.** Reward existing fans and use activities as a way to give back to them.
- **Creating dialogue.** Create a dialogue or conversation around a brand or business that hasn’t been talked about in a while, or has generated negative conversation in the past.
- **Measuring ROI.** Measure sales, search, or acquisition spikes around word-of-mouth marketing stunts, so you can identify the value to your business of these activities.

**Tactics**

Word-of-mouth marketing comes in many varieties and is a fantastic way of creating dialogue. Word-of-mouth marketing can be a mix of the following:

- **Guerrilla activity.** This is unexpected marketing, often done as a covert and genuine activity, with a brand revealed at some stage to be behind it.
- **Stunts.** This is large-scale branded activity, executed to gain media coverage and provoke conversation.
- **Surprise and delight.** This involves rewarding members of the public at random with no warning, to ingratiate the business with consumers.

**BLOGGING AND SOCIAL BOOKMARKING**

**Blogger outreach**

A blogger is anyone with a personal site on which they publish interest-specific content. Sometimes this is done under an assumed name or a personal brand.

Blogger outreach is important for building relationships and favorable content for your brand or business. It can also help you earn valuable backlinks to your website. Examples of value for bloggers include:

- Blogger ambassadors for your campaign or your business
- Blogger exclusive invitations to events or briefings
- Blogger discount codes to share with their audiences
- Gifting product or tickets to build relationships

**Tactics**

Here are some tactics for conducting blogger outreach:

- Treat bloggers with respect – treat them in the same way you would treat journalists
- Use third-party authors or guest bloggers on your site to curate your channels or to guest blog for you
- Take personal recommendations from bloggers and incorporate them into your marketing mix
Highlight a blogger of the week

Remember, higher relevancy is more important than higher reach. So always be aware of who the audience of an individual blogger is.

Defining social bookmarking

The importance of peer-to-peer recommendations is not to be underestimated. Social bookmarking is an entirely peer-to-peer-led way of discovering content that has been recommended by audiences who have similar interest sets to you.

Social bookmarking allows you to store bookmarks, add tags of your choice, and designate individual bookmarks as public or private. Visitors to social bookmarking sites can search for content by keyword, person, or popularity, and find content that’s been tagged by like-minded users for discovery.

Benefits

The benefits of utilizing social bookmarking in your content promotion strategy include:

- **Competitor analysis.** Track the keywords you’ll be posting to find insights and content created and tagged on your competitors’ sites.
- **Discovery.** Tagging your content will help audiences discover your content in new ways.
- **Drives links.** With the exception of Google no-follow links to your page, all real social bookmarking content will include a backlink to your site.
- **User discussions.** User discussions on social bookmarking sites can certainly help inspire ideas around content promotion, but they can also help you identify any negativity toward your brand. Reddit is a particularly good resource for this.
- **Content seeding.** Submit your content into a specialized group or category within social bookmarking to deliver it to a highly relevant audience.
- **Research.** Social bookmarking can be a great research tool. It helps you scope out the content that you want to create and also identifies the content behaviors of your consumers.

Content seeding

While it’s not necessary to maintain an always-on presence on social bookmarking websites, it can be beneficial to use them at certain moments in time.

Examples of social bookmarking websites include:

- **Reddit.** A newsfeed of user-submitted content, where content is voted up or down based on its popularity.
- **StumbleUpon.** A social bookmarking plugin, which sits on top of a web browser. When you sign up to StumbleUpon, you complete an interest profile and get auto-directed to websites that match with your interests.
- **Digg.** Another great website, where all content is user-submitted. Stories get promoted to the front page by people clicking on them.
- **Pinterest.** A great social platform, where users pin content to boards. This content can be found anywhere across the web. Boards are curated by the users themselves.
RESOURCING

In-house social media marketing

For your social media marketing, resourcing is a very important issue to consider. While having someone responsible for your social strategy in-house is crucial, managing all aspects internally can take considerable resources. Let’s look at the pros and cons of having an internal team working on all aspects of your social media marketing.

The pros would include:

- **Specific industry knowledge.** Internal teams have great insight into exactly what your competitors are doing, and really understand what your key USP is in the marketplace.
- **Targets and crisis issues.** In-house teams have a full understanding of target audiences and crisis issues.
- **Developing social media culture.** A positive social media culture for your business or organization is most effectively developed by in-house teams.
- **Cost and flexibility on budgets.** Budgets are easier to manage and navigate when they are maintained in-house.
- **Personality-based channels.** Some content and platforms just work better from an internal perspective. So, for example, Snapchat, which is very much a personality-based platform, works best when there’s an internal social media team running it.

The cons would include:

- **Limited resources.** Limited resources internally can be a challenge. You need to dedicate an entire role, if not more, to managing the social media platforms of your business.
- **Limited knowledge and expertise.** Limited in-house expertise is another challenge. It can prevent ‘big picture’ thinking. Make sure that the individuals who are looking after social media in your business are upskilled.
- **Limited relationships.** Limited relationships can also be a challenge. Building relationships with media and influencer networks takes time.
- **A lack of fresh, new ideas.** We all suffer sometimes from a lack of fresh thinking or creative new ideas. It’s very important to stay motivated and inspired.

Outsourcing social media marketing

So, what are the pros and cons of outsourcing your social media marketing?

The pros would include:

- **Industry marketing knowledge.** Agencies have extensive knowledge of social media campaigns across multiple industries.
- **Campaign experience.** An agency’s campaign experience will help to prevent any first-time mistakes when launching campaigns.
- **Strategic and planning focus.** Any activity planned will have a long-term strategic aim.
- **Tools.** Agencies have access to a wide variety of tools, which you can leverage as a client.
- **Content creation expertise.** Content creation expertise is usually higher in agencies, with dedicated staff for different content formats.
Synergy awareness. Agencies have a strong awareness of synergies and competitor activity. They can identify great affiliate partnerships, and opportunities for you to team up with other brands and like-minded media organizations.

Frees up internal resources. Outsourcing to an agency helps you free up internal resources.

The cons would include:

Costs. Outsourcing can be an expensive undertaking. Make sure that you have adequate budget to dedicate to it, to maximize your return on investment.

Company understanding. An agency may have a limited understanding of your company culture. Make sure that you have a fully briefed agency, who understand the intricacies of your business.

Reporting. Reporting can be inconsistent. This can be a challenge, especially if you’re engaging multiple agencies. Make sure that you dictate exactly what metrics and objectives you wish to use for reporting campaign successes and failures.

Awareness of internal expectations. An agency will have limited knowledge of internal expectations and boardroom politics.

No 100% dedicated team. An agency team is not necessarily 100% dedicated to your business. Agencies have a vast array of clients, so it’s likely that you’re just one of many clients on their roster.

Who can content be outsourced to?

62% of companies outsource their content marketing. It helps them introduce efficiencies and leverage industry experience. You can outsource your content marketing to:

Digital/social agencies. These are experienced within the social field, they’re content creators, and they understand the technical aspects of social media.

PR agencies. PR agencies understand brand marketing, they’re great writers, and they can funnel a huge amount of brand activity into one consistent message. They are strong relationship builders.

Advertising agencies. Ad agencies are good ‘big picture’ thinkers, but can be less strong at relationship building.

Media outlet creative teams. Media outlets are now employing creative teams in-house to create content for their platforms. While it may not be a long-term solution, it certainly could be a solution for a particular campaign platform or for a short period of time.

Freelance writers/journalists. Freelance writers and journalists, obviously, have great writing skills, so could help you generate content for blog posts or social media. Freelance graphic designers can also be considered in this arena.

Professional photographers/videographers. Professional photographers and videographers can also help you create great content for your social media platforms, and can introduce new innovative formats for you to utilize as a brand.

Considerations for hiring an agency

Considerations to take into account when hiring an agency include:

Budgets. Are their hourly rates comparable within the industry? Is their plan or pitch coming in on budget? Are they outsourcing to an expensive third party?
Reputation and awards. Consider their reputation within the industry. Have they won awards? Do they have a good name? Do they have comparable brands and clients in their stable, who would be at a similar level to your own brand or business?

Conflicted clients on their roster. Is it possible that their client base just isn’t compatible with your business? Do they have conflict procedures in place?

Team profiles. Have a look at the profiles of agency team members. Research the people who you’ll be working with on a day-to-day basis. Are they thought leaders within their industry? Do they have a good profile online?

Experience in the vertical. Consider the agency’s experience within your vertical. If you work in an industry that has specific marketing codes, such as alcohol or pharmaceuticals, do they have experience working with clients in that industry?

Local knowledge. Make sure that you’re activating with somebody who has in-depth knowledge of your local audience and your local consumer.

Putting together a people plan

If resourcing internally, it’s important to plan effectively. Items to consider when resourcing internally include:

- Plan ahead. For example, if video content is an objective for you and you’ve noticed that the social platforms are prioritizing video content, look ahead and consider hiring a videographer.
- Involve stakeholders. Make sure you involve your key internal stakeholders. Get their input into decisions around resourcing, such as resources you could pull from their departments or divisions.
- Define goals. Always link resourcing back to delivering on a business or brand goal, to help support your case for hiring additional employees.
- Job descriptions. Define job descriptions internally, to make sure that everybody knows exactly what their role is in terms of the social media marketing mix.
- Training/hiring strategy. Have a hiring and training strategy, where you invest in your staff to upskill them. Try to spot opportunities where people’s natural talents can be amplified and built upon. For example, if somebody has a creative flair, they may benefit from a design course. You can then further utilize this asset internally to add towards your team.
- Exit interviews. Make sure you conduct exit interviews. Use the insights you glean to optimize your team and plan for the future.

Structural challenges facing companies

Some structural challenges to consider when trying to resource in-house include:

- Budgets. Budgets are under pressure from a number of key areas when it comes to marketing. So make sure that you carve out a dedicated budget for your social media marketing purposes.
- Education on the value. Educating organizations on the value of social media marketing can be a challenge, especially in more traditional businesses.
- Breaking down silos. Organizations can have many silos, so it can be difficult to align all areas to produce cohesive content plans. Making sure everybody is on the same page with your social media marketing strategy will help break down these silos.
- Complexity of B2B sales. B2B sales can be a very complex area. They require more in-depth content, relationship building, and thought leadership.
Highly regulated industry. If the industry is highly regulated, navigating particular codes of conduct or standards authority guidelines can be tricky. Make sure that you're fully up to speed with the regulations in your particular vertical.

Risk of lacking a human voice. With any brand or business communication through social media, it's always important to use a human tone of voice and not to appear cold or corporate.

Content team skills

Just like snowflakes, no two content marketers are the same. So what traits should you look for when hiring a content marketer?

- **Creativity.** Creativity is essential. You are looking for someone who will add ideas and flair.
- **Active across social media.** They should be active across social media, be social media savvy, and have a good online profile.
- **Self-motivated and visionary.** They should be self-motivated, and have a vision for what they want to do and what they can bring to your business.
- **Great listener.** Try to find people who are good listeners and who focus on solutions, not problems.
- **Multi-channel disciplined.** Someone who has got some understanding or experience in other marketing areas such as SEO, PPC, or PR would be very beneficial.
- **Analytics driven.** Somebody who is results- and analytics-driven will be able to understand results and use them to optimize your content going forward.
- **Good communication skills.** Ideally, you want somebody who is a good communicator, both verbally and visually.
- **Strategic thinker.** Look for somebody who doesn't jump on trends without solid, strategic reasons.
LESSON 3: CONTENT ANALYSIS
Defining your goals

Before you think about creating a piece of content, it’s important to start by defining your goals. What do you want to achieve with your social media content?

Consider the following objectives:

- Lead generation
- Lead nurturing
- Increased brand awareness
- Customer acquisition
- Customer retention
- Cross-selling or upselling

Your goals might be all of the above or some of the above. Whatever goals you choose, always make sure that they are SMART: specific, measurable, actionable, relevant, and time-bound.

The importance of KPIs

Establishing key performance indicators, or KPIs, that are aligned to your business objectives will keep your content marketing strategy on track. Monitoring your KPIs allows you to adapt and optimize your campaigns going forward. Benchmarking your results against industry competitors allows you make comparisons, and helps you mature your campaigns. It’s important to always be very realistic when establishing KPIs and not set your sights too high.

Business objectives and goals

The overall business objective of an organization should always be its overarching goal, with the individual campaign, platform, demographic, content, and channel goals feeding into this overall goal.

Example: Coca-Cola’s Diet Coke campaign

Here are some examples of goals within specific areas.

- **Campaign-specific goal**: Coca-Cola’s Diet Coke campaign aims to introduce a new occasion of the Diet Coke break.
- **Platform-specific goal**: Coca-Cola aims to increase Diet Coke break conversations on Facebook or Twitter by 25% in three weeks.
- **Demographic-specific goal**: Coca-Cola wants 80% of consumers who talk about the Diet Coke break to be female.
- **Content-specific goal**: Coca-Cola wants to stimulate 100 pieces of user-generated content around the Diet Coke break.
- **Channel-specific goal**: Coca-Cola wants to deliver a reach of one million through owned content promotion around the Diet Coke break.

Here you can see one overarching campaign KPI, with individual moments or smaller KPIs underneath this overarching campaign proposition.
Benefits and benchmarks

Social tracking is the process by which you compile results on your brand or business performance on social media. This helps to identify content that is performing well and content that may need to be optimized, improved, or completely removed from your content marketing mix.

Consider the following:

- Make sure you establish social tracking before your campaign kicks off. This is far more cost-effective than doing it retrospectively.
- Tracking will allow you to monitor individual search terms, as well as direct brand mentions.
- Tracking will allow you to amend and optimize your campaign going forward, as marketing progresses and matures.
- Social tracking will, at the end of a campaign, allow you to compile a full campaign report and visualize the results in an easy-to-digest fashion.
- Benchmarking the successes and failures of campaigns and content will allow you to optimize future campaigns. Make sure your social tracking reports always recap with learnings on how to improve going forward.

Common social media metrics

Social media metrics change based on your platform and your content type. Video views, for example, can be measured across Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. However, video views is not an objective metric for LinkedIn. Facebook has the highest number of metric types, which are measurable by any brand or business. Other common metrics include followers, retweets, impressions, likes, reactions, shares, and so on. Make sure that you familiarize yourself with the various metric types, to allow for establishing baselines, setting objectives, and recognizing good results versus poor results. While social metrics are worth analyzing, the true test should always be delivery on business goals.

Website or brand metrics

Outside of your social media platforms, there are other metrics to consider. Specifically, here’s a list related to your website or brand:

- Web traffic (conversions/leads) and time spent on website
- Subscriber growth
- Sales leads (quantity and quality)
- Direct sales and cross-selling
- Social media sharing
- SEO rankings
- Inbound links
- Lift of brand/product/service awareness
- Increased awareness/customer loyalty

Defining targets for as many of these metrics as possible will help your campaign keep on track. That said, planning a content campaign to deliver great results on every one of these levels will be very difficult to achieve. So consider grouping metrics into groups of four or five, and splitting them out over a number of campaigns.
MEASUREMENT AND TRACKING

Free and paid tools

Some third-party analytics tools that are worth considering from a social perspective include:

- Buffer
- Hootsuite
- Crimson Hexagon
- Brandwatch
- Social Bro
- Radian6
- SproutSocial
- Snap
- W-Insights

Google Analytics Tracking

For your website, make sure to use an analytics platform such as Google Analytics. This will enable you to track a number of key metrics for your website. To use Google Analytics tracking:

- Install the Google Analytics code on your website.
- Use Google Tag Manager and segment your content backlinks using specific platform, campaign, or format tagging.
- Measure user acquisition from social to see which networks are driving the most traffic to your site, and then optimize. Invest more heavily in terms of content promotion or content creation on these networks.
- Identify if specific networks are driving traffic to any specific page.
- Identify which content is popular across all the different social networks.
- Measure total conversions that originated as traffic from social media to establish a true return on investment for content marketing.
LESSON 4: CONTENT STRATEGY
CONTENT PROMOTION STRATEGY

**Key components**

When planning your content promotion strategy, there are a number of key areas to consider.

- **Audience.** Who are they? What platforms are they using? Where are they based? How do they consume content?
- **Content.** What job does this content have to do? Is it about convincing or converting? Determine the underlying theme of your content, or the pillars on which it is based. Then optimize your content per audience and per platform.
- **Channels.** Where is your audience? Which channels can you target your audience through?
- **Resources.** Do you need assistance with your content creation? Make sure that your content creation and promotion strategy is resourced effectively, both from a budgetary and from a human-input level.
- **Budgets/pricing.** Make sure that you have an adequate budget for content creation and content promotion. Assign common metrics to your budget objectives.
- **Scheduling.** Consider the time of day that your audience is online, and how they receive your messaging at that particular time of day. Make sure that your content is relevant at that moment in time.
- **Analytics.** Always track and measure social media and website analytics. Also, familiarize yourself with the analytics tools available to you through the individual social media platforms.
- **Future planning.** Take on board all learnings in terms of successes and failures of previous campaigns, so that you can optimize going forward.

**Planning and objectives**

When we talk about content promotion, how can we set objectives for promoting the content itself? Start by reviewing and refining your company’s vision and mission. Then take a look at what the marketing team’s objectives and strategies are.

So, for example, in your company vision, you would state where you see the business going. The company mission would state why the business exists. Your marketing objectives would highlight what you want to accomplish with your marketing strategy. And your marketing strategy would state how you will accomplish your marketing objectives.

**Setting the objectives**

Here’s a few other objectives to consider:

- **Traffic.** Using tagged links will show you how much traffic an individual piece of content has driven to your website.
- **Awareness.** Some marketers use content promotion purely for brand awareness and for launching their business into the public eye.
- **Thought leadership.** Utilizing advertorials as a content promotion format can help build credibility for your business.
- **Downloads.** If your content is useful to others, it can help to drive downloads. For example, eBooks and whitepapers are very effective in this space.
- **Conversions.** Customer acquisition should always be your overall objective.
AUDIENCE SEGMENTATION

Impact on targeting

In general, you can group audiences into four broad-spanning categories. Being aware of these will help you determine how and where to promote your content.

- **Baby boomers.** Baby boomers were born in the 1940s to 1960s. They’re slow to adopt tech, because they’re an older generation. However, they have a higher spending power. The larger social media platforms are still accessible and can be quite popular with this audience. For example, Facebook.
- **Generation X.** People who belong to Generation X were born between 1960 and 1980. Generally, they’re settled with families by now. They’re parent marketing targets.
- **Millennial.** Millennials came of age in the 2000s. They grew up with technology. Smartphones weren’t around when they were born, but they were the first users of smartphones from a generational perspective.
- **Generation Z.** Individuals in Generation Z were born in the mid-2000s. They’ve never known life without smartphones. Instant content and social media are part of the everyday for this audience.

Tailoring your content

Segmenting your audience even further will make sure that your message content, placement, and context are hyper-relevant to your audience. Key areas to address when segmenting include:

- **Age.** Don’t just think about people’s date of birth, think about their life stage. Consider if they have children, the level of education that they have attained, and whether they have a full-time or a part-time job.
- **Gender.** Is it important that your campaign reaches a male or a female audience, or does it have an asexual focus?
- **Location/geography.** This includes everything from physical location in the world to cultural identification.
- **Platform.** Where are you placing your content? Are hashtags used there, usually? Does video work best? Identify the strengths and weaknesses of the individual platforms you’re using to reach your audience, and determine if your content is a right fit for them.
- **Economic demographic.** Consider the purchasing power of your audience. Is your client or prospective consumer looking for luxury or bargain goods?
- **Device.** Consider what device your audience is viewing on. Are they mostly using desktop computers or smartphones?
- **Operating system/browser.** Consider the browser your audience is using, how fast it is, and their access to the web.

Key considerations

With all campaigns, you should provide a final recap document or report. The purpose for this is to ascertain what worked and what didn’t. Be sure to take learnings from this document and implement them in future campaigns.

Key areas to address in this document include:
Consumer feedback. What was the sentiment from users? Was it negative or positive? Did you have great input from users or were they uninterested?

Analytics/data. How many actions did your content result in? Clicks to site, conversions, sales, and downloads would be key to measure here. Be aware of the cold, hard facts from the individual platforms, and make sure you measure and benchmark against them going forward.

Objectives. How many of your business objectives did you meet, exceed, or not exceed? It can be hard to single out your social media content as a single contributor to overall business goals, but tying it back to specific goals, such as number of leads generated, will help.

Relevancy scores. A nice thing to include in a summary document is how the individual platforms rated your relevancy. Facebook, Twitter, and Google all provide you with a relevancy score for your content promotion. Using a ranking of 1 to 10, with one being the highest, they can rank exactly how your content performed with social audiences when it was displayed.