

# Content Marketing Strategy Guide

How to evolve your content and maximize ROI



# Content strategy: Simply fundamental.

According to the Content Marketing Institute (CMI), **content marketing is a strategic approach “focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience – and, ultimately, to drive profitable action.”** Content strategy is not some shiny marketing object or buzzword. Here’s why it’s a deep-rooted fundamental:



## Hundreds of years old

**The content marketing discipline traces its roots to 1732**, when Benjamin Franklin began publishing the annual Poor Richard’s Almanack to promote his printing business. Content marketing got its official name at a newspaper editors’ conference roundtable in the 1990s.\*

**Powerhouse companies like John Deere, P&G and Microsoft have used content marketing successfully for years.** Content exploded in the 2010s when countless B2B and B2C brands focused on constructing rich digital experiences. The pandemic that upended life around the world in 2020 brought the people-first power of content front and center. **Today, 82 percent of marketers actively use content marketing.\*\***



## Customer-centric philosophy

Buyer expectations for brand experiences have never been higher. Your audience cares more about their own business challenges and personal pain points than your products and services. **Content marketing leverages your powerful stories in a connected experience to help customers solve their problems and do their jobs better** (earning you trust, leads, sales, loyalty and brand advocacy in the process).



## Content strategy = content core

**At the heart of all your content marketing is your strategy.** Your content strategy defines the reasons behind everything you create, clearly identifies who you’re serving and what they need, and outlines the unique expertise and support your brand offers them. It’s part art and part science.

\*[The History of Content Marketing, Copy Press, 2022](#)

\*\*[Hubspot, State of Marketing Report, 2021](#)

# Elements of a content strategy

There's no one template for a content strategy — every business has its own program and needs — but **a well-rounded content strategy includes the following elements and documents the answers to these questions:**

## + Goals

What is your content mission? What are you trying to accomplish through content? For example, build an audience, educate customers and prospects, nurture leads? How do you measure success?

## + Content audit

What content do you have to work with, and where are your gaps and opportunities? According to a study by Sirius Decisions, up to 70 percent of brands' content goes unused.

## + Audience personas

Who exactly are you trying to reach and motivate? What do you know about the audience? What type of content resonates with them? The more specific the better.

## + Customer journeys

What are the goals, mindsets, needs and activities of your audience on their path to purchase?

## + Message pillars

What do you want your audience to learn, understand and remember about your brand?

## + Priority stories and topics

Where do your expertise and strengths intersect with the needs of your audience? That's your sweet spot for content.

## + Connected content calendar

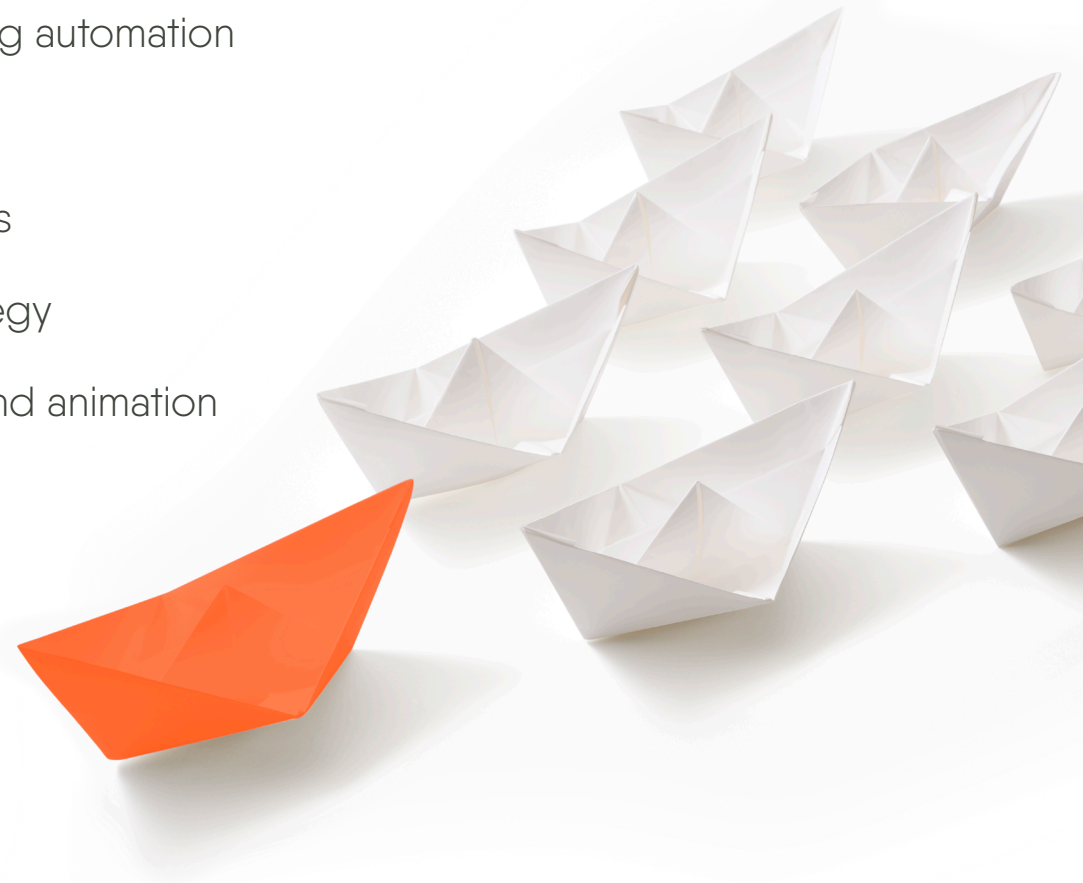
Which platform(s) should you prioritize when constructing or growing your content program? How can you integrate content across channels to create a memorable content experience and maximize ROI?



# The core of your content marketing

Content strategy unites, aligns and informs content throughout your brand experience.

- + Creative
- + Blog
- + PR
- + Social media
- + Influencer marketing
- + SEO
- + Digital marketing and emails
- + CRM
- + Marketing automation
- + ABM
- + Websites
- + UX strategy
- + Video and animation



| Now that you know what content strategy is all about, let's talk benefits for your brand.

# Bevy of benefits

When your marketing world is spinning fast and furious, content strategy can slip below content execution on your to-do list. That's understandable and not uncommon. But, now more than ever, it's important to consider that de-prioritizing strategy work leads to costly missed opportunities, wasted motion and fragmentation.



In a recent SEMrush survey, 40 percent of respondents reported not having a documented content strategy.\*

Content strategy has a variety of benefits, including:

## + Perfectly aimed content

When you gain a deep understanding of your audience and the content they need, you ensure everything you create for them will be highly relevant and on target.

## + Target-audience building

Hyper-relevant content delivered consistently attracts a better customer — one more likely to buy from you, stay loyal and become a brand advocate.

## + Faster execution

With a clearly defined content strategy to work from, all the components of your content program can make more effective content at a higher velocity.

## + Increased content KPIs

Leveraging smart, fast-moving content across channels — such as your website, social media and marketing automation — guarantees every piece of content will work as hard as possible for you.

## + More ROI

Strategic content is extremely economical. While some marketing tactics have a very short shelf life, the right content deployed in the right places can capture attention, earn mindshare and deliver ROI for years to come.

\*SEMrush, 40+ Content Marketing Statistics to Power Your 2022 Strategy

# Powerful impact

In short, a smart, connected **content strategy empowers you to produce and deliver the right content, to the right people, in the right place, at the right time, for the right reasons.** By doing so, it helps you build your brand, craft better buyer experiences, create lasting connections and elevate your performance.

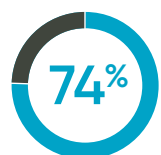


| Interested in harnessing the power of content strategy? Next, learn how to make yours better than ever.



# How to build up your content strategy

While many brands have a content strategy, most are a work in progress.



of marketers say their content strategy is either “first steps,” “young” or “promising”



describe their strategy as “excellent”\*

No matter where your program is on the continuum of “first steps” to “excellent,” there are building blocks you can use to fortify your content program.

\*SEMrush, 40+ Content Marketing Statistics to Power Your 2022 Strategy

# Even a modest investment in content strategy can make a significant difference. Here are a few scalable strategy initiatives to consider as you look to level up your content.



## Content strategy assessment

Obtain a partner's high-level review and analysis of the current state of your content strategy, including goals and KPIs, audience targeting, messaging, topics, channel utilization, content performance and connectedness.

Make sure to get recommendations on next steps to prioritize.



## Content strategy workshop

Collaborate with a partner to work through the elements of your content strategy, including:

- + Current state of strategy
- + Mission, goals and KPIs
- + Audience personas
- + Customer journeys
- + Message pillars
- + Priority stories and topics
- + Channel plan
- + Connected content calendar

A workshop can help you identify and prioritize evolutions.



## Content audit

Organize and evaluate your existing content to understand availability, gauge effectiveness, and identify gaps and opportunities. It's ideal to include a competitive audit component.



## Audience personas

Research and assemble target audience profiles with insights to drive content strategy. Personas feature:

- + Demographics
- + Titles
- + Role in purchase process
- + Attributes
- + Goals + motivators
- + Mindsets
- + Pain points and challenges
- + Beliefs and behaviors
- + Content preferences



## Customer journeys

Map buyer goals, needs, mindsets and activities throughout their journey to drive strategic content for the awareness, consideration, selection and loyalty stages.



## Scalable strategy initiatives *(continued)*



### Message pillars

Develop a matrix of distinct core messages that prove brand positioning and help the company stand out from the competition in content.



### Topic archaeology

Identify priority stories and topics. Perform research, social listening and analytics review to uncover topics, questions and SEO keywords target audiences are interested in.



### Connected content calendar

Create a map of insights-driven earned, owned, shared and paid content to maximize integration and impact around key themes and milestones.



### Initiative-level content strategy

Apply content strategy fundamentals to plan content for an upcoming campaign, quarter, or other priority initiative or seasonal time frame.



### Website content strategy

Strategically align website content, and zero in on content topics and SEO keywords you can leverage to develop engaging content and make it easier for your target audiences to engage with you online.



### Content training

Participate in training with a strategic partner to equip your internal team to better manage your content program.

| Next, see how an inventive company used some of these building blocks successfully.

A photograph of two men in industrial workwear. They are wearing dark blue long-sleeved shirts with 'STELLAR' and their names ('Theodore' and 'Dylan') on the chest. They are also wearing black hard hats and safety glasses. The man on the right has his arms crossed. The background is a blurred industrial setting with metal structures.

## CASE STUDY

# How is Stellar using content strategy to help create an elite brand experience?

Stellar is an industry leader in quality work trucks, trailers and accessories with operations in multiple U.S. locations and a growing international presence. The company wanted to take their marketing to a new level. They engaged strategic partner Performance Marketing (PM) to help elevate their brand, content program and customer experience.

## CASE STUDY: STELLAR

**One key focus area of the marketing expansion was content strategy. To build up their strategy, Stellar and PM collaborated on:**

### + Target audience research

that uncovered beliefs, needs, and communication behaviors of distributors, end users and employees

### + Messaging pillars

to create a clear, consistent brand message for the audiences

### + Content auditing

to promote use of relevant existing content and identify valuable content opportunities

### + SEO content strategy

to ensure a web experience constructed around search

### + A connected content calendar

to deliver a customer-centric connected experience with the highest content ROI

### + Quarterly editorial meetings

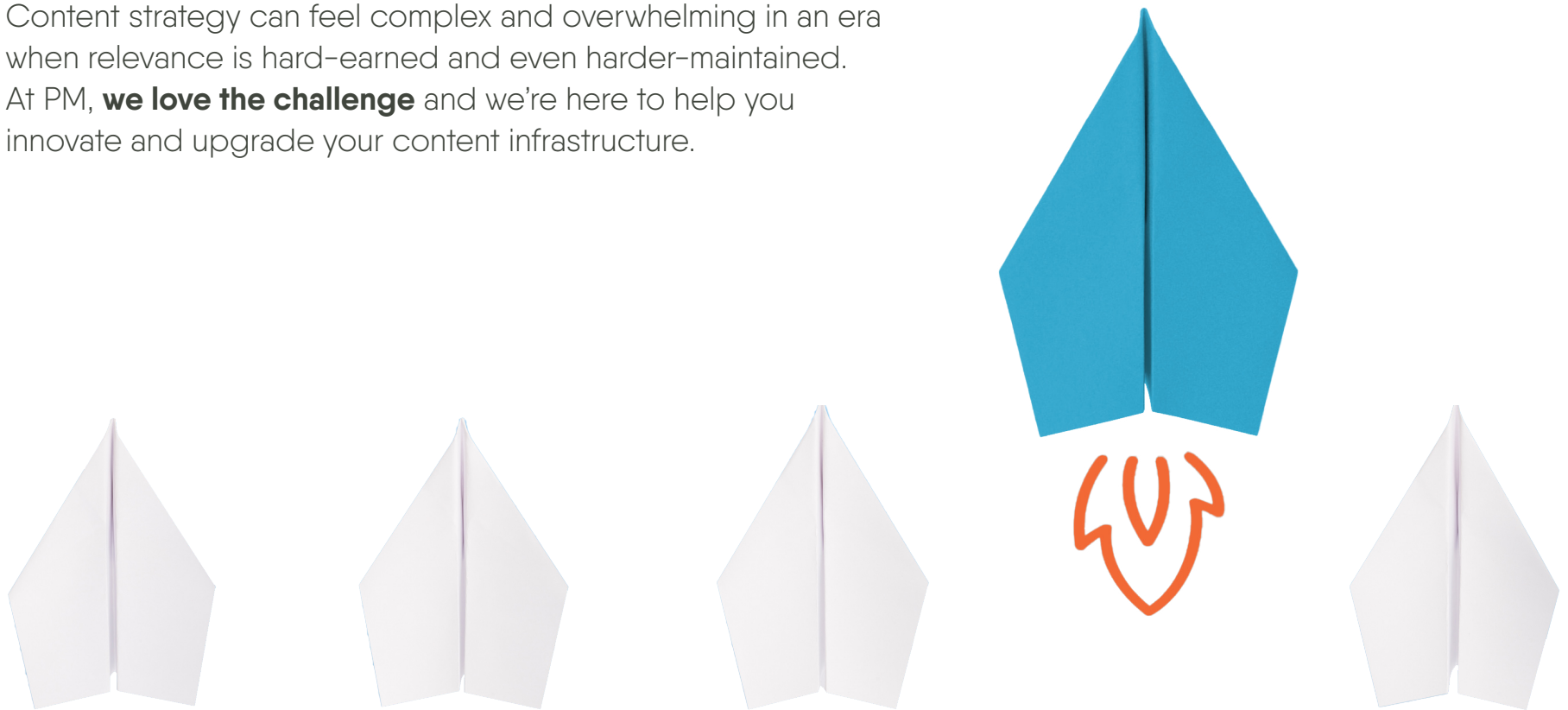
to ensure strategic alignment and integration of all content execution



Unprecedented content strategy initiatives have helped Stellar immediately evolve their content experience – across the website, social media, email and more – while laying the groundwork for future success. For the first time ever, Stellar’s content program is focused on delivering maximum impact and ROI for the long term.

# The content approach for bold brands.

Content strategy can feel complex and overwhelming in an era when relevance is hard-earned and even harder-maintained. At PM, **we love the challenge** and we're here to help you innovate and upgrade your content infrastructure.





# Plus, we're a part of something bigger.

## anthologic

We're part of Anthologic, a collective of marketing and technology companies that can seamlessly partner together to build brands, craft stories, accelerate business and more. The other Anthologic brands include:



Custom software + web development solutions that transform your business.



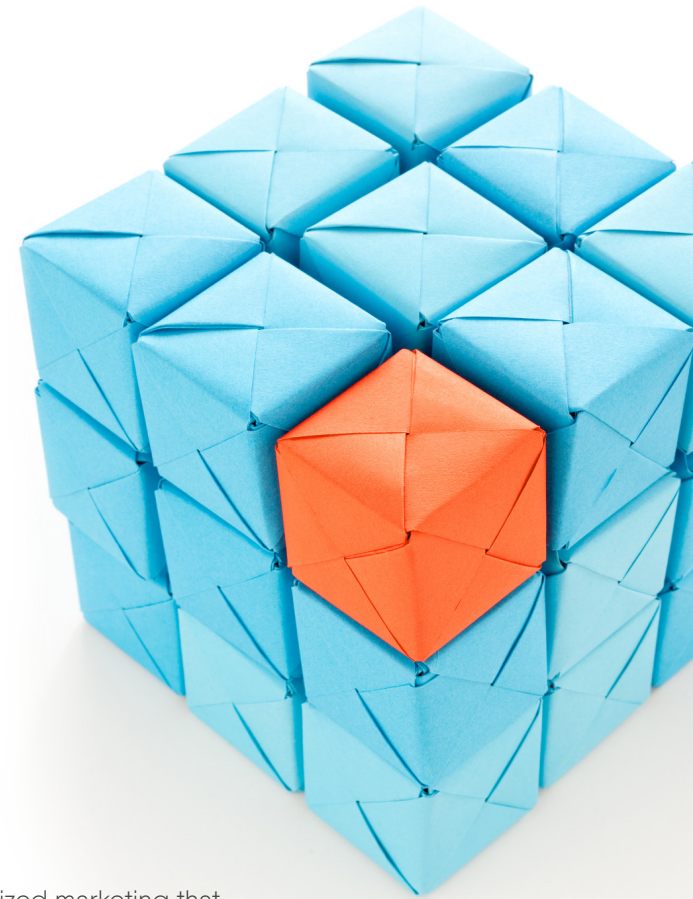
Solutions that maximize online visibility.



Videos + animation that bring stories to life.



Localized marketing that amplifies your brand.



**Want to build your content strategy together? Let's chat.**

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