



**CONTENT
CLARIFIED:**

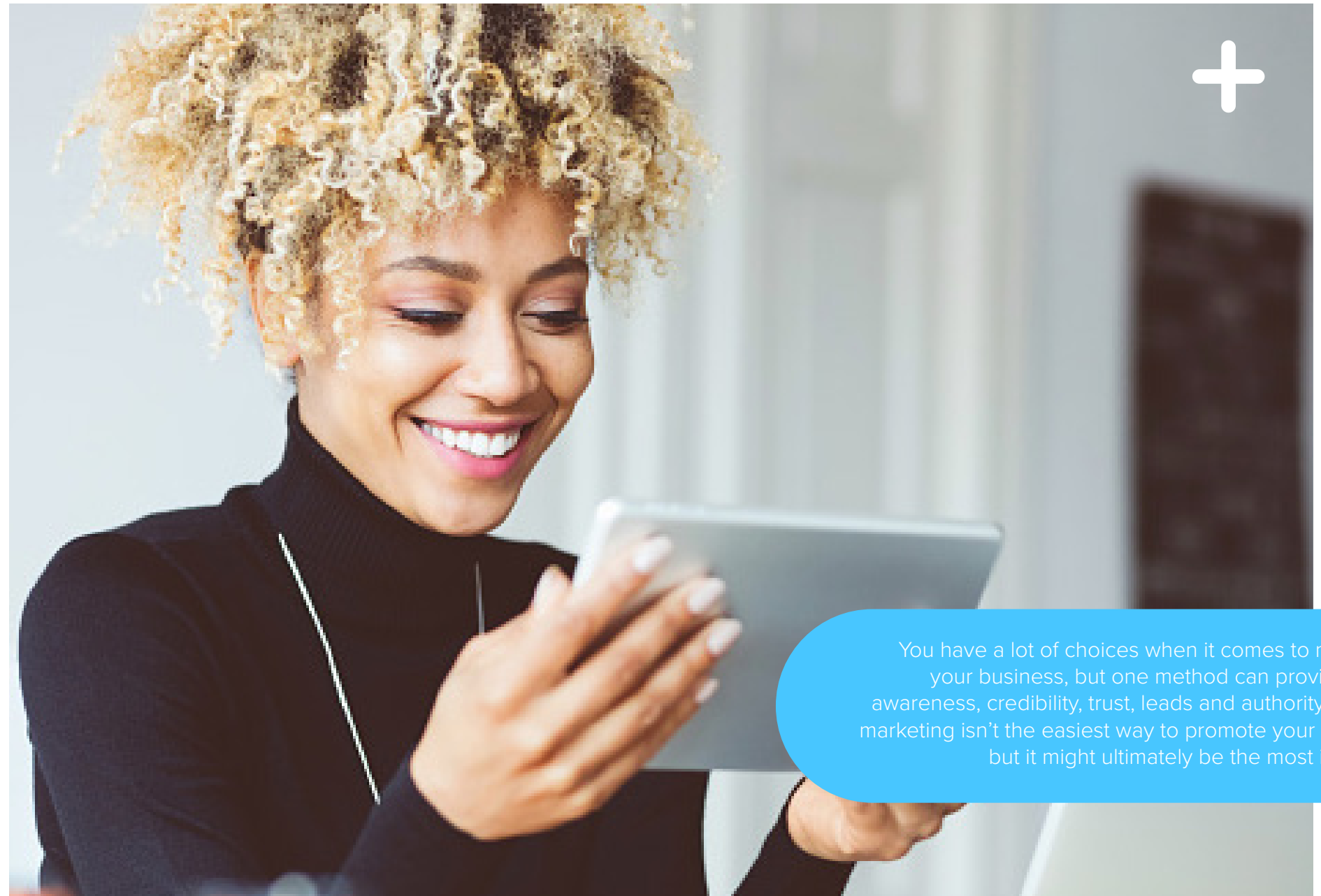
Understanding How to Capitalize on B2B Content Marketing



Introduction

It could be reasoned that all marketing is content marketing. After all, marketing of any kind requires substance, and that substance could generally be considered content. But in the context of an overall marketing plan and strategy, we're talking about the organized creation and distribution of online material designed ultimately to promote a brand or business. The content itself may not necessarily be crafted in a manner that directly promotes the brand, but the nature of the modern buying journey has dictated the need for a robust content marketing approach that both directly and indirectly promotes the business.

Content marketing, with its wide array of distribution channels, provides opportunities to influence prospects and buyers along all stages of the customer journey, making it useful for generating awareness, leads and sales. But accomplishing all those things with content marketing requires time, resources, planning and effective execution. It's much more than posting a few blogs or writing a white paper. If you want to capitalize on the power of content, you've got to have a solid grasp of what it is and how it works, and to know what you don't know. What follows in this guide should provide you an understanding of what content marketing is, what it can do for you and how to make it work.



You have a lot of choices when it comes to marketing your business, but one method can provide brand awareness, credibility, trust, leads and authority. Content marketing isn't the easiest way to promote your business, but it might ultimately be the most impactful.



Table of Contents

1 WHAT IS CONTENT MARKETING?	6	4 CONTENT CREATION	13
Historical Context	6	Types of Content	14
What Exactly is Content?	7	Choosing Topics and Subjects	15
2 WHY USE CONTENT MARKETING	8	5 CONTENT DISTRIBUTION	16
What Content Marketing Can Accomplish	8	Owned Media	17
How Content Ties Into Other Tactics	9	Paid Media	17
Proof Content Marketing Works	10	Earned Media	18
3 BEFORE YOU START: DEVELOPING A CONTENT STRATEGY	11	6 CONTENT OPTIMIZATION	19
Understanding Objectives	11	Understanding SEO	21
Understanding the Targets (Audience)	11	7 CONTENT MANAGEMENT	22
Don't Forget the Non-Human Audience	12	8 MAJOR CHALLENGES	24
Know the Competition	12	Resources	24
		Getting Engagment	24
		Proving ROI	25
		9 CONCLUSION	26

WHAT IS CONTENT MARKETING

Historical Context

You probably aren't reading this to learn the history of content marketing, but it's never bad to have a little perspective on how things developed to where they are today.

You probably aren't reading this to learn the history of content marketing, but it's never bad to have a little perspective on how things developed to where they are today. Many marketers point to John Deere's "The Furrow" as the origin point for content marketing. It was a brand magazine aimed at American farmers. It started in 1895 –about a century before the term "content marketing" started getting tossed around –and it still exists today.

In truth, there were earlier examples of using content for marketing purposes, such as Benjamin Franklin's "Poor Richard's Almanack," which promoted his printing business. The rise of content marketing as we view it today began to emerge around the turn of the 21st century, with B2B examples like paint company Sherwin-Williams distributing

STIR magazine to commercial interior designers. Another example you may be familiar with is American Express OPEN Forum, which started in 2007 and was designed to help businesses and business leaders.

These modern examples tend to coincide with the development of the digital economy, one in which buyers began to rely more on their own research than on sales reps. It was the evolution of the internet that really opened the floodgates for content marketing. The barriers to publishing content came crashing down. At the same time, the ease of finding and utility of using content on the internet fueled buyers' thirsts for the information –which is why content has become an indispensable part of a complete marketing strategy.



What Exactly is Content

Content has several definitions, the most relatable in this instance being "the principal substance (such as written matter, illustrations, or music) offered by a website" (Merriam-Webster). When we talk about content for marketing, we generally mean anything produced and published for the purpose of offering it to your audience. As technological capabilities have advanced, this content has evolved from text copy to commonly include visuals, audio and video.

While the definition of what constitutes content is pretty loose, there are a few key characteristics that good content for marketing should always have. Among those are that it should be:

- Relevant
- Useful
- Insightful
- Educational, insightful or entertaining
- Authentic
- Engaging and compelling
- Easy to consume

In its infancy, the internet was primarily relegated to words and some imagery. Today, content can range from text to high-quality video and even augmented and virtual reality. Limits to content are consistently being rewritten. But irrespective of its form, content used for marketing must serve a purpose.

WHY USE CONTENT MARKETING

What Content Marketing Can Accomplish

We've already mentioned content marketing can be effective for each stage of the purchase funnel, but let's explore that in more detail because understanding what all content marketing can do for your business helps underscore a commitment to the resources required to succeed at it.

ATTENTION/AWARENESS At the top of the funnel is awareness, where you need prospects to know about your business—that you actually exist. Getting attention is the first step to earning business, and content can attract the attention of new prospects and customers.

ENHANCE REPUTATION Content can gain attention of prospects, but with consistent high-quality, useful information, those users will also start to recognize not only that your brand exists, but that it holds a place of influence and credibility in the marketplace. This enhancement of your reputation can also translate to loyalty over the long run.

LEAD GENERATION Leads are the lifeblood of B2B businesses, so perhaps more than any other advantage to content marketing, lead generation is a significant benefit. In fact, a Content Marketing Institute report from 2017 found that, per dollar, content marketing produced about 3x more leads than traditional outbound marketing (and at 62% less cost).



LEAD NURTURING More than just generating leads, great content can nurture those leads all the way through the purchase phase, providing potential buyers with key information they're seeking as they work through the consideration phase of purchase decisions.

SALES Leads are great, but if they aren't converting to sales they're not really worth much. Content can play a significant role in closing sales. Say you've got a prospect on the fence about his purchase with you or a competitor, but you send him a case study showing how your product successfully helped another firm solve the exact problem he's having. It's as powerful as just about any conversation a sales rep can have.

How Content Ties to Other Tactics

Trying to isolate content marketing into a singular envelope is a bit of a fool's errand because content is such an important part of most marketing tactics, both paid and owned. Here are a few examples of where content marketing intersects with and enriches other efforts:

SEO Search engine optimization is directly linked to content. The primary goal of SEO is to increase your organic search engine results page (SERP) rankings, and content marketing sets a foundation for this through keywords and backlinks (when other websites link back to your content—Google considers this important for your credibility).

SEM Search engine marketing is essentially the paid version of SEO. But in order to stand out from all the other paid ads in SERPs, many marketers are providing content through their paid displays, as opposed to simply links to a website or webpage.

SOCIAL MEDIA Being effective on social media means regular posting and activity. Sharing and liking content from other publishers is great, but in order to establish credibility and engagement, you need your own content for users to share and comment on. Whether it's promoted or owned posts, effective content is the foundation of your social media presence.

EMAIL As it relates to email, content could refer to the actual contents of the email itself, or the conversion to content your email is attempting to provoke. Email is a highly effective and efficient vehicle for sharing your content marketing, and email campaigns intended to nurture leads are most effective when supported by quality content. Owned Media



Proof of Content Marketing

Plenty of research has shown the potential and benefits to content marketing. Consider some of these statistics:

82% of B2B marketing leaders agree that content is important to achieve their marketing goals. (Heinz Marketing)
Over 3 in 4 B2B marketing leaders believe it's important that other areas of their business have content to support their goals. (Heinz Marketing)

96% of the most successful content marketers agree their audience views

their organization as a credible and trusted resource. (Content Marketing Institute)
Email and educational content are the top two ways B2B content marketers nurture their audience.

(Content Marketing Institute)

The average B2B organization spends 26% of total marketing budget on content, but organizations most successful at content marketing allocate 40% of budget to content marketing.

(Content Marketing Institute)

Businesses publishing 16+ posts per month get almost 3.5x more traffic than businesses publishing less than five articles.

(Content Marketing Institute)

BEFORE YOU START: DEVELOPING A CONTENT STRATEGY

Understanding Objectives

Content marketing can take many forms, which is why it's imperative that you understand your goals and objectives prior to creating the content itself. These goals will help you understand what types of content you need to develop. Common objectives for content marketing might be generating leads, increasing social media followers, increasing website views or growing brand awareness. They're all useful objectives and all goals that can be addressed through the applicable forms of content.

It can also be helpful to quantify your goals, such as increasing web traffic by 30%. This will help you compare the results of different campaigns and give you some statistical guidelines for judging the results of your efforts.

Understanding The Targets

With your objectives clearly defined, it's time to home in on the audience you'll target to achieve those

As with any marketing tactic, content marketing shouldn't be approached haphazardly or aimlessly. You need to spend some time developing your strategy, which will be influenced by a number of factors, including available resources and goals you hope to accomplish.

objectives. It can be easy to think of your entire target market as the audience, but this may not necessarily be the case, dependent upon your goals.

After narrowing the target audience, it's time to understand their needs and how you can resonate with that audience. Think about the specific problems they're dealing with, the dilemmas they're trying to solve. Try to craft content that will speak to these situations, and will speak to them in a language they'll comprehend. If you're aiming for top of funnel prospects or people who may not be veterans of the industry, you'll want to avoid buzzwords and jargon that might confuse or alienate them. It's these types of considerations of your audience that must take place before any content is created.

Don't Forget The Non-Human Audience

You're creating content for the enjoyment of humans, but there's a very important hidden audience you simply cannot ignore –the search engines. These platforms, like Google, use complex programs called crawlers to analyze the content your produce in order to index and rank it. These are the backdoor operations that affect search engine optimization and how your content is considered for search engine results pages (SERPs). Concepts for pleasing these crawlers are explored in further detail in later sections.



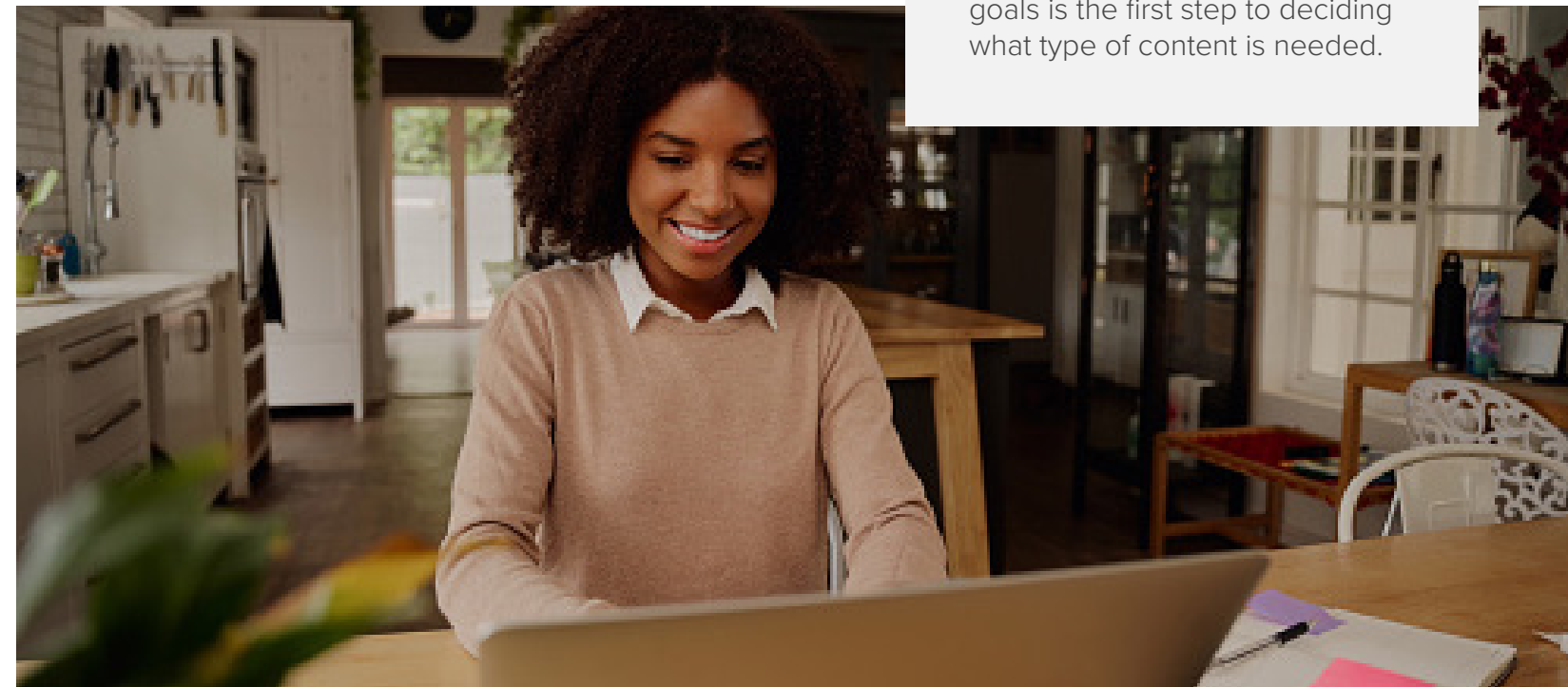
Know the Competition

You've probably noticed there's a lot of content on the internet. A lot. Because of that, being unique has become more difficult, yet more essential to reaping rewards of content marketing. Knowing what your competitors are producing and publishing can help you find gaps on which to capitalize. That's not to say you shouldn't produce certain pieces of fundamental content that anyone in your industry should have, but look for opportunities to be where the completion isn't (or craft content that's better than what they have where they already are).

It probably also goes without saying that keeping informed about the trends and evolving standards in your industry will help you develop timely, relevant content that's ahead of the competition.

CONTENT CREATION

We've already touched multiple times on different aspects that impact content creation, but when it comes to actually putting pen to paper (digitally speaking), there's a lot to consider. As noted previously, understanding your goals is the first step to deciding what type of content is needed.



For instance, if you want to generate leads, an e-book or guide might be a solid choice because it meets middle-of-the-funnel (MOTF) needs and you can gate the content, meaning a reader must provide you certain information before they can download the material (and now you have a lead).

On the other hand, if you want to increase social media performance, you might lean toward something visual, like a chart or infographic. If you want to show a new product in action, a video makes sense. Knowing what to use starts with knowing what options are available.



Types of Content

How you approach certain types of content is open to plenty of creativity, but there are commonly several types of content standard in content marketing. A few examples include:

EBOOKS/WHITE PAPERS/GUIDES/CASE STUDIES These are typically long-form pieces of content that take ideas and concepts wider and deeper than what you would post in your blog. They're also great for acquiring leads because they can generate data for you when they're downloaded. You probably downloaded this guide, for example. These shouldn't just be useful to you as the publisher, though. These pieces should be informative and provide real value to the reader. If you do, they're more likely to be shared and more likely to help you build credibility when it comes to future pieces you publish.

INFOGRAPHICS/IMAGES This could be as simple as a photo, or you could include useful information with images to create an infographic. Graphical content such as this is highly engaging and easily digestible, which is why it's frequently used for social posts. This "snackable" content has understandably grown in popularity because it can be visually pleasing while also providing a collection of data.

VIDEOS The age of video has arrived for the internet. Barriers that once made television a bridge too far for many have come crumbling down and anyone with a smartphone can create quality videos. Furthermore, they dynamic and engaging aspects of video make it one of the most effective methods of communication. There's so much that can be done with video, from how-to demonstrations and tutorials to reviews, advertisements and even vlogs (video blogs).

PODCASTS Podcasts burst onto the scene years ago, then hibernated for a bit. But they've come roaring back and it's probably hard to find a topic out there without a podcast (or several). These audio broadcasts require appropriate planning and production, so they shouldn't be approached without careful consideration of the resources to do them effectively, but plenty of examples are out there attesting to the success they can have for B2B brands.

Choosing Topics and Subjects

The type of content you choose to produce can be affected not only by your objective, but by the nature of the content itself. In other words, what it is about. Some topics might lend themselves better to different types of content, but all topics should share a few common attributes.

First, the subject should be relevant. That probably sounds like a no-brainer, but no need to fill the world wide web with unnecessary and pointless content. Stick to topics that make sense for your audience. Secondly, is the topic unique? We've already touched on this –but without giving your content an element that separates it from other content out there, it won't gain traction and it won't meet the objectives you set for it.

Timely topics are always relevant. If there's breaking news in your industry, find a relevant and unique way to report or provide perspective on that and you can't go wrong.

CONTENT DISTRIBUTION



You can craft the most poignant, creative, informative content ever, but without a distribution plan to get that content into the hands of your audience, it amounts to very little. That's why a calculated approach to sharing the content is a necessary part of any content marketing initiative.

As with other aspects of your content marketing plan, the distribution channels for your content will be largely determined by the type of content and the audience. Just as there are multiple types of content you can create, there are a number of channels you can utilize to maximize the effectiveness of your content.

CHANNELS include social networks, email, search engines and others. It would seem obvious that a blog post would be distributed on a website, or a social post on a social network. And while these channels can be organized in different ways, a particularly helpful method of breaking them down is to group them into owned media, paid media and earned media, because this method factors in control. Several channels, such as social media, can fit into both owned and paid media, but how you use those channels in a paid vs. owned situation is different, thus the benefit of viewing them from this perspective.

Owned Media

As implied by the term, owned media are any properties you control. This would include your website, your social media accounts and possibly your email. It's always a good idea to have your content living somewhere on your site, such as hosting your blog, videos and long-form resources. The control factor is an advantage to owned media, but much of this content is inbound – meaning you're relying on users to find it. That's why having push distribution options are important. Your own social profiles can help with this, but the most impactful is good old email.

It's been some time since email was the shiny new medium. Social platforms have come and gone, but no challenger has been capable of dethroning email as an effective content distribution channel. Consistently the best channel for ROI, email offers a direct delivery tool for content and links to content, and importantly, good opportunities for performance measurement. With a good mailing list, email can play a fundamental role in content marketing success.

Paid Media

On the other side of owned media is paid media, which as it sounds, is any channel you pay to use. Common paid media channels include social networks, search engines, video and influencers. Social media as a paid channel (as opposed to your owned social profiles) would be sponsored posts. Search engine examples would include SEM and display ads.

The drawback to paid media is obviously the costs involved, but paid media can be a useful "push" tool for spreading your content, especially when using the targeting capabilities of digital media. Paid media is often less labor intensive than owned media. Depending on the resources at your disposal, paid media might get the job done faster when time is a concern.





Earned Media

A third group of distribution channels are commonly called “earned” media (or sometimes referred to as “free” media). When other publishers promote your content at no cost to you, that is earned media. This could include reposts, social shares and mentions, reviews. This can also include syndication, whereby your content is republished on a third-party site.

Earned media are great when you get free publicity and that helps build credibility. However, beware the downsides of earned media, which are that you often lack control and it can be hard to measure.

While each piece of content will have its applicable channel(s) based on its type and objectives, a good marketing plan will work to incorporate owned, paid and earned channels to create a synergistic mix. A blog alone is not a content marketing plan, nor is a few social accounts. A complete content strategy will incorporate multiple distribution channels, which requires appropriate resources. That’s why planning and vision are such an important part of succeeding with content marketing.

CONTENT OPTIMIZATION

One of the clear advantages to digital marketing is the ability to analyze and track data, which provides insights that can be used to tweak campaigns to make them more effective. This is, of course, known as optimization –and it applies to content as with other digital marketing efforts.

Evaluating the performance of content can be challenging, though. There’s seldom a direct line of attribution from a sale to a piece of content. (Though it’s great when there is.) It’s also important to remember the goals of your content marketing, which may not always be directly tied to the bottom line.

Over time, the marketing world has developed some different approaches to tracking the success of content in order to quantify its performance like other tactics, and a few common metrics have emerged. The channel you use to distribute content will play a primary role in the metrics you track. Video, for example, has some specific KPIs (key performance indicators) like length of view and skips. Emails have traditional KPIs like opens and clicks. Social posts can be analyzed by shares and likes. Websites can be tracked by visits, new visitors, session duration.

There are a few metrics related to content that really help demonstrate the impact your content is having. Conversions is one such metric. A conversion is basically the desired action you want the reader/viewer to take. For instance, the goal of your email might be to have the reader download a white paper. If she does that, it’s a conversion.

Your definition of a conversion can be different for different content. It could be to like a social post. It could be to visit your website. It could be to complete a purchase. Tracking conversions provides you with vision into how effective your content is at provoking the user to take the desired action. Armed with this information, you can understand if the topics you’re choosing and the content you’re offering is meeting its objectives. When it’s not, you can tweak your approach to optimize the results.



Understanding SEO

We've established that content plays a major role in your search engine ranking. And, given we're talking about machine algorithms that carry out this process, there is a science behind it. Search engine optimization (SEO) is the process of optimizing your website and content for the search engines and the crawlers they use to index and rank the content. (It's worth noting this is a fluid science, given that platforms like Google often change and tweak their algorithms, sometimes without notice.)

SEO can get complex pretty quickly, and could be a full guide of its own. But what you need to know as you're getting started in content marketing is that SEO includes both on-site and off-site optimization. On-site considerations relate to your actual website construction and the content housed on your site. Off-site relates to external factors like backlinks and third-party references to your content.

When it comes to the content itself, one of the primary elements to consider is something you're probably familiar with, but may not often think about it in the framework of content creation, and that is keywords. A keyword(s) is a word or phrase you want to associate with your content.

If you've ever done a search on Google (and who hasn't?) you're familiar with keywords. But how you incorporate those keywords into your content is, well, key. The crawlers are looking for the keywords, but are smart enough to recognize when the keywords don't naturally fit. You also can't trick the crawlers by stuffing your content full of keywords. In fact, too many uses will flag the content and damage its ranking.

As noted, search engine optimization can be so deep that SEO specialist is a career path. Thus, the more knowledge you can gain about SEO, the more you can understand how to create and optimize your content. But importantly, like other digital marketing tactics, content provides mechanism for evaluating its performance and adjusting it to increase its impact and effectiveness.

CONTENT MANAGEMENT

A complete content marketing plan requires exactly that –a plan. You need to approach content marketing tactfully, which means management. The administration of content marketing involves all the different aspects, from development to creation and editing to publishing and optimizing.

Technology can aid in content management. Applications have been designed to help, and these are often referred to as content management systems, or a CMS. WordPress is perhaps the most popular of the available CMS. Regardless of the specific CMS, the programs are designed to enable marketers the ability to collaborate and manages tasks. This becomes critical as your content marketing efforts scale.



You may require automation to distribute content on a specific schedule, or set automated protocols that deliver content when certain actions are taken. For example, you can establish maps that trigger delivery of a certain email when a certain other piece of content is viewed or downloaded.

Content marketing can be as robust any marketing you employ, but even modest efforts need proper management to reach their potential. The process involves so many elements, from planning to creating, publishing and optimizing, that lack of proper management will lead to disarray and inefficiency. Technology can help, but it's also important that you have buy-in from leadership and staff to ensure the process runs smoothly.

MAJOR CHALLENGES

If content marketing was easy, everyone would be great at it. But those who overcome the challenges and approach it thoughtfully and tactfully reap the benefits, which are leads, brand awareness and credibility, among other things. Though some of the trials of content marketing have been mentioned throughout the previous pages, there are a few that businesses will routinely come across as they try to implement and scale content marketing initiatives.

Resources

Producing content isn't difficult, but producing engaging, quality content can be –and that generally means more resources. Content creation requires development, research, writing, editing and the management to oversee it all. The upside of great content can be massive, but understand that it will require time and money –whether it's done in house or outsourced, you have to put quality in to get quality out.

Tied in with resources, the ability to consistently produce content can present a challenge. The more consistency, the more success. However, before committing to a schedule, make sure you can reasonably stick with it. It's better to have quality than quantity, but you also need to maintain at least some level of quantity to build on your efforts.

Getting Engagement

Just putting content out there won't immediately draw in engagement and followers. If you've done any extensive research on the internet, you've undoubtedly come across plenty of bad content. Engagement is directly tied to quality, and we've already noted the challenges to producing quality content.

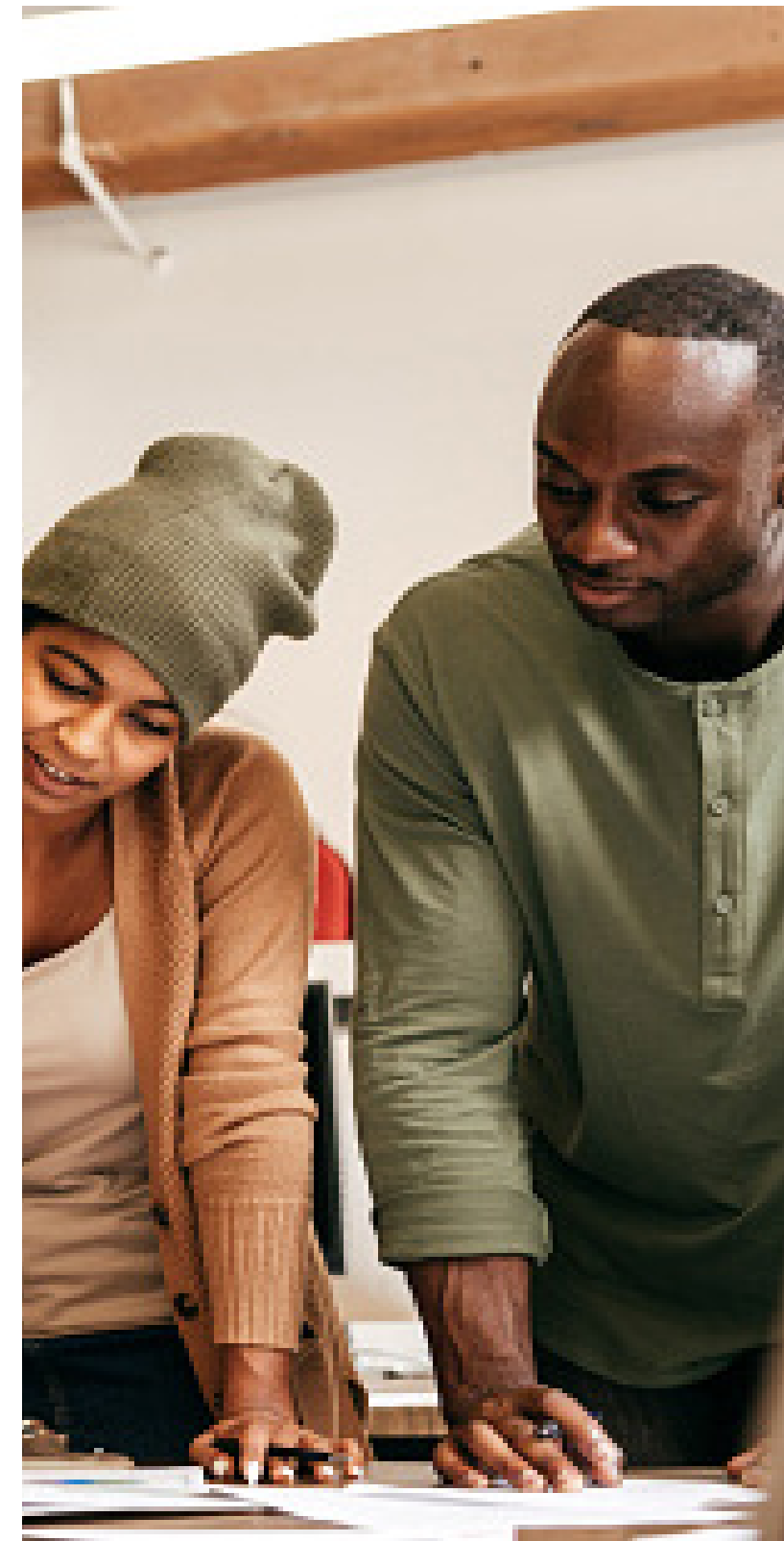
As you build a reputation for quality content, engagement and reputation will follow. Then, the shares and reposts will start to exponentially increase that engagement. The key is devoting proper time and attention to the creative planning process –ensuring that you're developing content that is useful, unique and relevant. The ultimate link to engagement is value. If you're giving the user value for their time, attention or information, you're on the right track.

Proving ROI

This can be the most critical challenge for marketers. Because content marketing requires the time and resources it does, leadership buy-in for it can be difficult. And directly correlating content marketing to sales and revenue isn't always easy.

As an example, say someone reads an article or blog post, which triggers an interest in the reader. That person then subscribes to your email newsletter. You've got a user hovering around the top to middle of the funnel. Maybe they're debating a purchase, but then a display ad reminds the prospect of your particular product and he clicks on that ad and completes a purchase. It looks in the data like that ad drove the purchase, and while that is the last-click attribution, reality is the entire purchase cycle started with a piece of content.

While some simple content metrics can be easy to track, it's this kind of key overall impact that can be extremely difficult to quantify. It's important for marketers to make sure leadership understands the ROI on content marketing shouldn't ever start and end with direct impact on revenue.



CONCLUSION

Given the modern buying journey, which starts on the internet more than 90% of the time, it's no surprise that businesses have shown a dedication to content marketing. This is especially true for B2B businesses, where lengthy sales cycles, group buying dynamics and the major stakes involved in each purchase mean that buyers want to be as informed and confident about their decisions as possible.

Information is the key to clarity, and providing this information through your content puts your business ahead of the competition. A complete content marketing strategy is no simple task, but if you agree with Theodore Roosevelt that, "Nothing in the world is worth having or worth doing unless it means effort, pain and difficulty," then your content marketing efforts will reward you for the commitment to them despite the trials and frustrations along the way.



CONNECT WITH US TO BEGIN CRAFTING YOUR

Customized Content Marketing Strategy Today

Multiview Introduction

Multiview, the leader in digital publishing solutions for associations and digital marketing solutions for B2B marketers, connects the B2B world.

We build digital publications that bring thousands of trade associations spanning nearly every industry together with millions of their members.

We also deliver digital marketing solutions that connect B2B companies with millions of their customers at every stage of the buying journey.

Connect with us

Multiview connects brands to their target audiences with digital media. As a leading digital publisher and marketing company for 20 years, we help over 1,200 associations and 11,000 companies find and connect with millions of B2B buyers. Using proprietary first party data you won't find from any DSP, a full-service creative department, and unparalleled marketing consultation – we're experts at getting your brand and message out. 7701 Las Colinas Ridge, Ste. 800, Irving, Texas 75063.

multiview.com | 972.402.7070 | salesinquiries@multiview.com