



CONTENT MARKETING FUNDAMENTALS



IMPORTANCE OF **CONTENT MARKETING**

Digital and internet marketing techniques have significantly changed the way we share information over the last decade. It has introduced a profound impact on the business world and primarily many business content marketing strategies.



At this point, we all have likely heard of cloud computing, responsive web design, big data and all those other strategic systems that have been search engine optimized (SEO). The latest to join that list is Content Marketing Strategy. This refers to the ability to understand just how much power content marketing has, and how to tap into that marketing power and generate the right content to attract the right kind of attention and audience.



At this point, we all have likely heard of cloud computing, responsive web design, big data and all those other strategic systems that have been search engine optimized (SEO). The latest to join that list is Content Marketing Strategy. This refers to the ability to understand just how much power content marketing has, and how to tap into that marketing power and generate the right content to attract the right kind of attention and audience.

For the last few years, more importance and focus has been placed on a kind of inbound strategy as opposed to outbound strategic tactics. Far more businesses have discovered the advantages to consistently generating content specific to their business, instead of simply embedding ads outside of their website. This has historically levelled the playing field for companies worldwide, with geography playing very little importance to success



and size becomes equally irrelevant. With the advent of social media and blogging, the business world has become a kind of democracy and even small fish become whales with the right content marketing strategy.



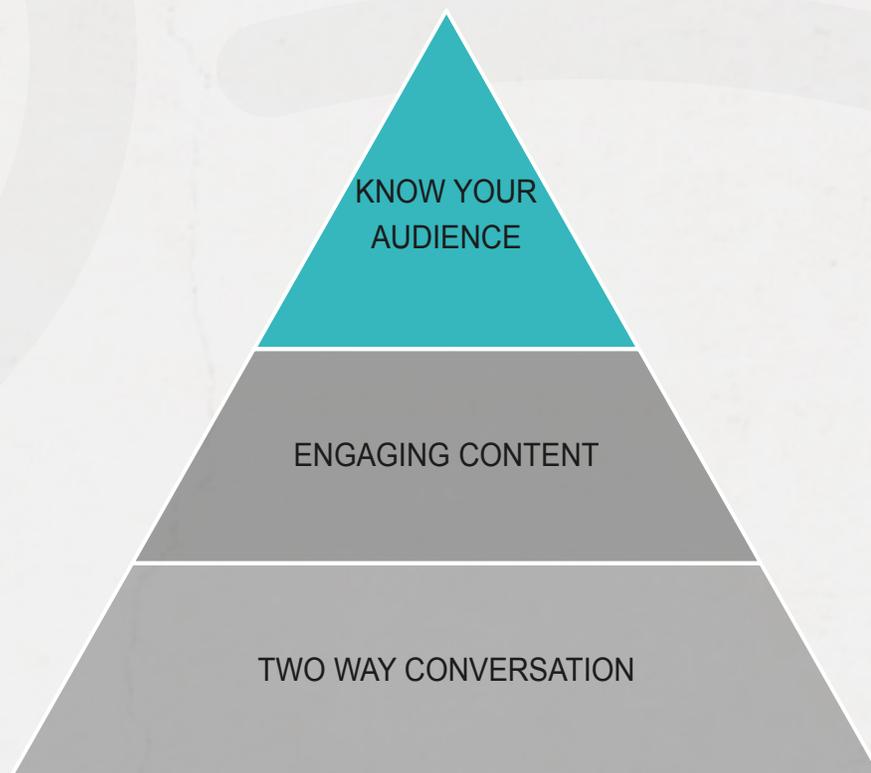
CONTENT MARKETING **FUNDAMENTALS**

The simple point of having an online presence is to ensure you maximise visibility, and create an on-line reputation that can be seen by your customers. For this to be possible, there is one basic rule of thumb, provide your customers with enough quality content to engage them and keep them talking about your business.

The foundation of any good content marketing strategy is that it must initiate and maintain a two-way conversation. You don't want your content to only be shareable and a kind of one hit wonder; it should trigger a cascade of discussions and encourage people to follow your site or the comments. This in turn ensures they keep coming back.



The second rule of thumb is that your content must not only be engaging but must also target your customers and search engines- this helps to increase search engine rankings as well as generate sales. It makes absolutely no sense to have



engaging and gripping content if no one can find it and at the same time, demographics is not half as important as knowing your audience outside of the obviously definable characteristics.

Yes, you read me right. Focusing on the textbook definition of demographics can be more counter-productive than you realize. To maximize this branch of content marketing you need to be more of a multi-dimensional thinker and learn how to categorize your customers productively.

GET TO KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

One very important thing to remember when thinking about your audience is that demographics are simply attributes of a particular population - age, gender, race. People sometimes superficially recommend you get to know your demographic', this strategy leaves a lot wanting. Do not think of your prospective clients as obvious attributes; think of them as an audience - an intricate network of likes, dislikes and an open slate waiting for you to introduce them to your product with a wow factor.

Ask yourself, do I really know WHO my customers are?

To answer this you must think of people, vibrant and alive separated by behavioural patterns. Of course people will represent a segment of a demographic so demographics are not to be completely ignored.

However, within each demographic are individuals who can occupy more than one demographic box. Individuals identify with services that interest them, not simply going with a crowd they fit into, but rather a specific topic. For this reason, democracy was previously used as a description of what online business has become.

Therefore, to understand your audience you need to develop your personas. Many business psychologists believe that you can and should go through the ropes of mapping a comprehensive buyer persona, but more often than not this is not feasible. You cannot limit the people you cater to in a box of stereotypical assumptions; however, this general info can be a guide.



All the same, figuring out exactly WHO you are talking to is imperative. For every distinct group you target

you will need a persona. This is to say that for every unique buying cycle a person goes through a different persona exists. So how do you go about strategizing and implementing this?

It all goes back to what you know or need to know about these people.

- **Who is this person?**
- **What does he/she need?**

This is not to be confused with why they would need the product. Focusing on the why is a bit shallow and does not take into consideration the deeper significance of acquiring the product. The what' gives far more information and hints as to why their future necessities than the why which is almost always situational.

- **Why should they care about you and what you offer?**
- **What is YOUR unique value proposition (UVP)? What is so different about you?**

After you have successfully answered this question you can begin creating an engagement cycle.

An engagement cycle is defined as the process that your audience goes through as you help them to become increasingly aware of and engaged with your brand. You will use this process to not only map and track sales but also to engage consumers in a process that will help to deliver the right conversation at the right time. Think of this process as calling a customer service center.

The agent asks you questions and based on what their answer is you deliver the right conversation of strategy to ensure they get what they want. Your content strategy needs to do this on its own. Basically it is;

- **Content; What it is you want to say?**
- **Context: When is the right time and place to have this conversation?**

The next step in knowing your audience is the sales process. This is how you keep an eye on how your customer proceeds through all your marketing and sales efforts. No matter what you call your steps, your customers will identify you a certain way:

- **They know nothing about you.**
- **They know something know something about you- this is called a lead.**
- **They are interested in you and what you have to offer- a subscriber.**
- **They will compare you to other solutions- this makes you a prospect.**
- **They will do what you want them to do, which is buy or keep coming back.**

After all this you can build a grid which is made up of existing and new content geared at a matrix of your personas and specifics within your sales process. Each step goes hand in hand and not a single one should be ignored.

Why? Simply because it helps to point out the gaps in your content marketing strategy, by allowing you to see where your content is either too light or too heavy. It also helps you to perfect your timing. As a consumer nothing is more annoying than the right content at the wrong time.

Next comes the buying process where you must now map out how your customers buy from you. In an effort to keep them coming back, you map what you want them to do next. Business psychology defines this as a linear process, but you must remember that consumers can sometimes be grasshoppers. They don't always move along a spectrum, they sometimes skip steps and jump to what is individually relevant.

Nevertheless, you must plan for all steps which include:

- **Awareness** - they become aware of what they want

- **Information search** - this is where search engine optimization and rankings are extremely important in ensuring their search brings up your product.

- **Pricing Vendor** - if your product is one to be purchased this is where cost is considered.

- **Purchase decision** - no, this is not where they purchase your product. This is when they make the decision that a particular product is what they need and so they will purchase it.

- **Competitive Alternatives** - this is where what you offer needs to be far more attractive than your competitors.

- **Short List** - they shortlist the options they have and again attractiveness is necessary to make this cut.

Remember, regardless of what persona you are targeting or where your content falls in the buying process, it needs to support your content marketing mission statement. In this case, the WHY must come before the WHAT.

Now once you have completed all of the above, the final step in knowing your audience is the actual engagement cycle. This is why you get a better overview of the content you actual have and what you will need. This is where you specifically design content to target the most relevant people at the best times. Whereas you need to map persona to figure out your content, you do not need to map content for every product process. You need to consider the following questions though;

- **What language you should produce the content?**
- **On what device context and interface is the content to be used?**
- **What do you hope to do with the content?**
- **Why people will want the content through that channel?**

This is the final step in the getting to know your audience phase, but it is important.

An effective content marketing strategy not only takes into consideration what the content will entail and ease of access. It also takes into consideration how to optimize usage, and for this you need to know how your audience will access it and make this specific to them.

WRITE CONTENT THAT IS RELEVANT TO CUSTOMERS WANTS AND NEEDS AT THE RIGHT TIME

Now that you know your audience you must now figure out how to write content that is specific to their wants and needs.

One very important thing to remember is that having excellent business skills and being able to create the perfect online site does not mean you are best suited for creating the content. Creating content is more of an art form rather than skill. Think of all the times you needed to get something and quickly skipped sites because the content did not grab you or failed to make its impact. For this reason people tend to outsource engaging content creation. There are many copywriters and content creators available to do an excellent job for you for a few extra marketing dollars.

Do not sell yourself short just to save on a few pennies as important as those pennies might be. A part of the creating the content procedure is being realistic about what you can and cannot do. If you intend to learn the art of creating gripping content then do so, in the meantime outsource.

That being said, when creating content you need to think of the following:

Audience NOT Demographics

Remember the steps you took to get to know your audience and all the questions answered? That process should be what guides your content creation.

Brand

1.8 hours

This is the point where you will make a name for yourself. Your content must be informative, unique and resourceful so as to make you a brand. Remember that you also need to engage, it is a two way street. If you fail to do this in your content then your brand will be lost in the clutter. Branding is also what keeps people coming back. The next time they need a similar product they will go directly to your business.

When to distribute

Content distribution is synonymous to cycles and seasons. The content you create now might not be effective in two months. The content you create now might not even be perfect now. This is why knowing your audience is so important. It helps you to time content distribution to a T. Hark back to that call center analogy? It is not simply about having the content and the information; it is about knowing when to deliver it.

Knowing when your customers are looking for you

There are two aspects in this stage, SEO optimization and again market and audience supply and demand. Whether you simply have a blog or you are providing products for purchase you are part of a supply- demand system. This is what makes up the basis of any transaction in life. Someone needs something and someone else provides it. In the virtual world, Search engine optimization (SEO) is the primary means to track this supply and demand. Keywords and the likes help you to do a market analysis of how often your audience demands a particular thing and so you can ensure you have content to fill this demand. All of this is part of the getting to know your audience process.

MONETIZE YOUR CONTENT

The downside to content marketing is that we can easily get lost in the planning, writing, publishing and engaging aspects of things and forget that the bottom line is, more often than not, to generate a profit. The ultimate aim of content marketing is to increase traffic and generate sales.

There are several ways you can do this:

1. Paid membership

Paywall is not the key to a great membership. Before people will be willing to pay for your content they need to see and feel the value in paying for it. This is where they must see the following benefits:

- High-value information - outsource if you cannot create this yourself
- VIP treatment and elite statuses
- Networking opportunities with other members

- Inside and direct access to owner and/or director of the site
- Members only forum or even a private google group

Your content marketing strategy should target as many benefits as is possible. In this arena too much is never a bad thing.

2. Affiliate programs

There are many affiliate programs that generate profit from back-marketing. If you are a blogger this should be of particular interest to you. By being an affiliate/sales rep for other brands out there, you earn a commission on each sale made. This is an excellent starter option for beginners, though some businesses focus primarily on being affiliates or sales reps with great success.

3. Create front-end and back end products

Most marketers tend to have one entry level type product which serves the purpose of providing basic information about their central topic.

This is usually done as a kind of incentive strategy to get customers to purchase the higher end quality information. It is like a teaser.

They then provide back-end high information quality products for sale and this information is more holistic and targets a wider range of troubleshooting or product information.

The type of business or blog you have is irrelevant;



you can always provide more information at a cost to generate income. Just ensure to think of your audience and do not overprice your product- be economically competitive.

Your aim is to provide an excellent experience with flagship products that customers will not be able to walk away from.

4. Provide lots of freebies with memberships or one time premium purchases

This gives added value for money and shows your customers that every penny they spend with you is well worth it.

Ensure that your freebies are of the same quality as the purchased goods. They do not need to contain the same information but quality is of utmost importance.

5. Sponsorship

Though this is not as popular as the above listed, it is lucrative. If your site generates a significant amount of traffic you can attract sponsors who will pay you to benefit from your traffic. Creating ads and by lines on your site will direct people to other sites making it a mutually beneficial arrangement.

THINGS TO REMEMBER

It doesn't matter what has inspired you to join the content marketing wagon, the aim is still the same- to engage your audience and generate sales. Hence, remember these things:

- Focus and direct your plan around consistently providing high quality content.
- Ensure your strategy covers a wide range of varying content types- within your focus area.

- If you need to outsource content then do so. However, ensure you have strict guidelines for tone, voice and style so that the content provided does not miss its mark.

- Identify the problems within your industry and know your audience inside out. This will ensure you are in a position of authority and can command and generate the attention you desire.

- Spend as much time marketing the content as you spend creating it.



Aaron Agius from Lauder Online, who has had a hand in the content strategy marketing of organizations such as Ford, IBM, MLC, Million Dollar Woman as well as several small business stated that, “The importance of content marketing cannot be understated”.

Realistically speaking, content is the foundation of any successful online marketing campaign. A great content marketing strategy needs to fuel social media activity in order to create a pay per click marketing system and drive increases in search engine rankings and more visibility. The size of the business is irrelevant; it is the products and quality of service provided that become the real deciding factors in content marketing. And it is no secret that every organization that exist into today's technologically dependent world, need a virtual footprint, brand and marketing plan to be able to drive sales and success. It's either that or risk falling behind.



Marketing experts and thought leaders around the world, including the likes of Seth Godin, have long since concluded that content marketing strategies isn't simply the future, it is the present.

