



A Whitepaper provided by Accent Technologies



# Streamlining **content management**

An efficiency guide for marketing teams

**Marketing's role within business processes is often undervalued and underutilized. The value of marketing lies in writing clear and effective content that targets buyers and draws them in – something sales reps often fail to do well.**

**While a content-driven approach is a step in the right direction, it opens up a new problem. Content is being used by two different departments, which makes it difficult to manage content and keep it updated on a regular basis.**

**This whitepaper strives to give an easy solution to that problem. It discusses practical strategies for streamlining the content management process to give more time back to your marketers for original content creation and provide sales reps with quality, consistently updated materials to drive deals forward.**

# The content problem

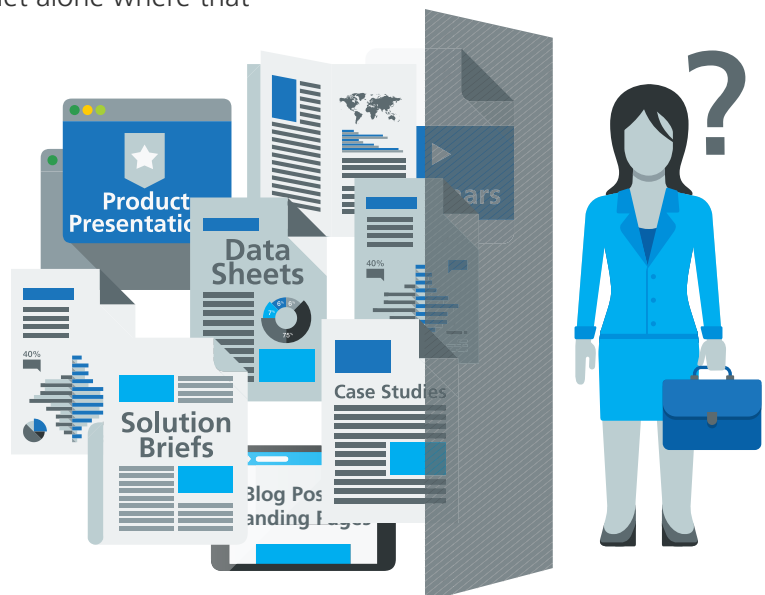
## Creating content

Any large business has lots of content. In fact, the majority of businesses have far more content than they actually use. There's content sitting on individual computers, network drives, Sharepoint, CRM... And when an employee needs a piece of content to send to a customer or prospect, they often end up making something new.

Why? Because they have no way of knowing there's already finished content that meets their needs, let alone where that content is located.

This results in employees with little background or skill in writing, such as sales reps or sales support professionals, creating non-branded and low quality materials to send to their clients.

The content may not seem so bad when it's a one-time incident, but when hodge-podge content is sent repeatedly, it can override the intended messaging and branding of the company.



## THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM

The vast majority of content management problems are symptoms of a few larger issues:

- Decentralized content
- Lack of visibility
- Unclear process flow

On the other side, marketers put a great deal of effort, time and money into creating content for sales to use, but the reality is that sales isn't using 60-70% of the content marketing creates for them (Sirius Decisions, 2013). Here's why:

**Unneeded content**—marketing has no idea what sales reps actually need, so they end up creating content that serves no purpose.

**Lack of buyer visibility**—marketing has no visibility into how buyers respond to content, so they cannot effectively replicate success.

**Time constraints**—developing new content from scratch takes too long, and opportunities are often passed by the time the content is ready.

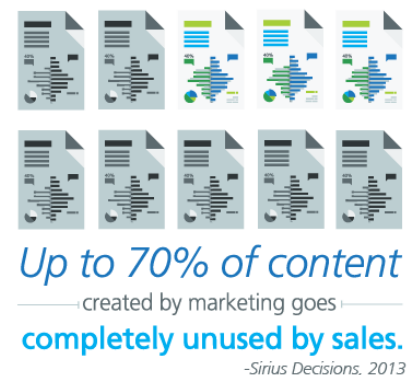
**Lack of easy accessibility**—sales reps cannot find the content marketing creates, so they end up creating their own content.

**Lack of effective organization**—without a way to easily see and organize existing content, marketing ends up duplicating content that has already been created before.

**Lack of pipeline visibility**—marketing can't stick to an editorial calendar and get ahead with content because they have no visibility into future needs, just current needs.

**Constant demands**—marketing has to drop what they're working on in order to meet time-sensitive needs for content.

**And what's the result? Sales reps often end up sending content that has not been approved by marketing, risking grammar, style and branding inconsistencies. Or the reps miss the opportunity altogether, risking losing a deal.**



## Organizing content

Each department has their own unique sets of content, but the problem lines mainly in the areas where content overlaps.

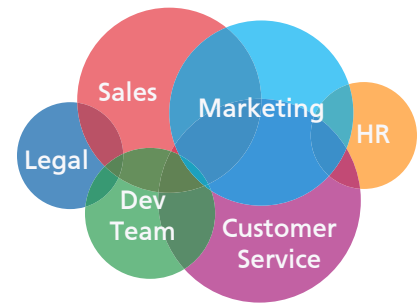
Should managing integration guides be the responsibility of the sales team or the dev team? Should marketing or sales handle all of the whitepapers? Do renewal contracts belong to legal or customer service?

When content ownership isn't clear, the result is often redundancy (or worse, missing documents). Many companies try to avoid this problem by making all content the responsibility of marketing, but that creates a whole new set of issues.

From a marketer's perspective, manually wrangling in all that content and organizing it into an effective library is more than just a big project; it's an unrealistic dream.

Marketers can create processes to funnel content requests, rules for everyone to follow and guides to finding the right content, but unless they have the tools to streamline everything, their attempts at efficiency will quickly fall apart.

Marketing will be overrun with requests, the content calendar will become backlogged and sales reps will revert to their old habits when put under the pressure of a time-sensitive client request.



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“Manually wrangling in all that content and organizing it into an effective library is more than just a big project; it’s an unrealistic dream.”

## Updating content

Beyond managing existing content and creating new materials, the process to update content is typically very manual, absorbing a huge amount of staff hours on a regular basis. It is a serious pain.

When updating materials, teams face a number of challenges that cause bottlenecks, force delays, introduce errors, and result in excessive staff hours:

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**Redundancy of materials**—because the same information is located many different places (slides, pages, charts, etc.), it has to be updated multiple times.

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**Problems in locating information**—without knowing where all the data is located, there's no way to know what needs updating.



Content updates are rarely a 1:1 process. The same content may be stored multiple places. The update team has to go on the hunt across repositories to update a file everywhere someone might access it, and there's no way to be 100% sure that the file was updated everywhere.

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**No centralization**—team members have to go to several locations to find where all client-facing materials are stored.

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**Lack of control**—there's little or no oversight into who can (or should) update materials and when those updates should occur.

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**No update tracking**—it's difficult to tell whether materials have already been updated and, if so, who updated them.

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**Problems in versioning**—it's difficult to tell where the latest version resides.

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**Lack of easy collaboration**—teams relying on methods such as email don't have sufficient granular control or efficiency in update collaboration.

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**Manual review and approval**—after updates, teams must have all changes vetted for approval, often creating a bottleneck of materials awaiting sign-off before they can be used.

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**No clear end**—it's difficult to know when the process is complete, with the high risk that some updates were missed.

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The cost of an inefficient update process is more significant than you might think. Staff and production teams often spend weeks and still don't accurately capture all the updates necessary. And the cost goes well beyond the man hours required to update the client-facing materials and performance data.

The delays for business development and client services teams put meetings and engagements on hold while the materials are updated – often for weeks. Responses to client requests suffer, new customer acquisition is affected and compliance teams are heavily impacted with manual approval cycles plagued with inconsistencies and inefficiency.

**Worst of all, this process occurs on a regular basis.**

# How to shift to a streamlined approach

Manual content management processes don't work. That's how you get the problems mentioned previously. The solution is automation. It's taking the processes your marketers have to do tediously and slowly and implement technology to ramp up efficiency, speed and usage.

There are several technologies and features—some small and some large—that will completely revitalize and streamline content management.

## Integrate a centralized content library

A centralized library serves as a single-source location for all of your company's content, from marketing materials used to generate leads to sales presentations used to close deals to support documentation used during the purchasing stage.

Instead of forcing sales reps to go to multiple locations to find materials to send to prospects, now they can have one access point. Marketers will no longer have to struggle to decide where to place materials or spend extra time hunting down content for all the sales reps with buyers waiting on specific materials.

All that extra time that was spent on inefficient organization processes can then be spent on high value activities such as more original content creation for marketing and more interaction with buyers for the sales team.

**Remember those common content management problems outlined earlier? Here are the ones a centralized library can solve:**

**Lack of easy accessibility**—with a centralized library, sales reps can easily find relevant content from anywhere, any device. With immediate access to content, sales reps avoid having to create their own non-marketing approved content.

**Lack of effective organization**—a centralized library gives marketing a way to easily see and organize existing content, avoiding duplication of content already created before.



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**Problems in locating information**—content centralization makes it easy to know where all the data is located when it comes time to update content.

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**No centralization**—this one is a no-brainer, but it's worth restating. A centralized library keeps team members from having to go to several locations to find materials.

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**Manual review and approval**—a centralized library makes it easy to subdivide out the content that needs approval and the content that's ready for use. Built-in permissions keeps all the content located in the same folder structure, but unavailable for download or viewing until after the approval process.

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## Integrate content personalization

Content personalization technology allows sales reps to take slides, documents, videos, etc. and customize them for individual prospects.

Instead of requiring reps or marketers to build presentations from scratch, a content personalization solution uses factors such as core business issues, persona information, buying stage, etc. to intelligently recommend the best content for the prospect.

The sales rep can then choose the content they want to send and add a personalized message—without having to download the file and open it in the source program for editing.

In just a few moments, sales reps get sales content uniquely tailored to their buyer. Reps don't have to put a huge amount of effort into creating something from scratch and marketers don't have to worry about low quality, unbranded materials being sent to buyers.

## Integrate automated content expiration

If you don't want to ever worry about outdated content being used by team members, set up an automated content expiration system. Used in conjunction with a centralized library, content



expiration is an easy “set it and forget it” solution to avoiding outdated content.

Whenever someone uploads a document, they’ll have the option to set an expiration date (whether a week or 5 years), along with the flexibility to simply send a notification upon expiration or to remove the content from active usage completely.

## Integrate automated content updates

There’s no reason for your content managers to spend all of their time searching for and updating files when it can be done with a single click.

Using a single-source content updating system, you can assign “master files” that link to every copy of that document, slide, chart, graph, etc. When a change to that file needs to be made (from updating the copyright to fixing a typo to a complete design overhaul), all you need to do is update the master. Then every single linked document will update automatically.



### How does this relate to those common content management problems? This is how:

**No update tracking** — an automated content update system will track everything done to each piece of content, from publication to update to final deletion.

**No clear end** —automation makes it easy to know when you’ve finished all updates because of the built-in tracking, especially when integrated with a centralized library.

**Redundancy of materials and problems in locating information**—content automation within a centralized library uses a single source of truth to push updates to all materials based on the master.

**Manual review and approval** —because updates automatically propagate from the master to all other linked materials, the approval process shortens drastically. Instead of having to review every single slide or document where a change was made, those in charge of approving materials can look at just the masters.

**No centralization**—because updates automatically propagate from



the master to all locations, the update team members only have to go one place for updates.

**Lack of control**—A centralized library uses individual permission restrictions to ensure content is only visible and modifiable by authorized users.

## Integrate content tracking

Organizing content is just one small piece of the marketing pie. According to research by the Content Marketing Institute, marketing leaders' top three goals for content marketing are brand awareness, lead generation and buyer engagement.

How does streamlining content management help marketers achieve those goals?

For one, when marketers aren't bogged down in inefficient content management, they can focus more on their departmental goals. Second, marketers can integrate content tracking as part of their streamlining process.

Content tracking uses software to automatically track and record what resources sales reps are viewing, customizing and sending to buyers. More importantly, the software tracks which content is opened, shared and viewed by each buyer—right down to the seconds spent looking at each slide or page.



## Integrate a PowerPoint Plugin

Let's face it: your sales reps are going to download their favorite slides and store them on their computer. So how do you convince your reps to download the latest and greatest versions of slides and presentations on a regular basis?

You don't. Instead, you use a plugin to automatically update slides every time the rep opens PowerPoint. Updates happen seamlessly in the background, with zero effort on the part of rep or marketer.



## Integrate built-in revision history

Tired of storing 10 different versions of the same document, but afraid that as soon as you delete one, someone will need it after all? Simplify version control by using revision history.

Built-in revision history helps by only showing the most recent version of the file in your centralized library, but still offering a revision history for the file when needed.

## Integrate a full sales enablement platform

Last but most certainly not least, the best thing you can do to fully streamline content management is to integrate everything for sales AND marketing into one sales enablement platform.

A sales enablement platform integrates with other systems such as CRM and marketing automation to give team members all the resources they need in one central location, from content to buyer information to team collaboration tools.

Marketers get complete visibility into future pipeline opportunities and current content needs. Sales has an easy way to collaborate directly with marketing with zero barriers. Integrated analytics offer insight into next steps to move deals along.

**And nobody is having to go back and forth between email, CRM, a content library, etc. It's all in one place.**



# Best practices for content management

## Put strategy behind organization

In addition to traditional organization methods such as meta data, take a good look at the structure of your content library.

Yes, you could stick with organizing content by date, author or content type, but let's be realistic: is that the easiest way for sales reps and marketers to find the information they're looking for?

Consider organizing content in ways that make sense for your company. Here are some methods for content organization that make it easy and intuitive to find the perfect content:

- **By buyer persona**  
When a lead comes in, sales reps can select that lead's persona and find all the content they should send to that buyer in one place (if you're using content personalization wizards, persona-specific content is surfaced automatically).
- **By topic**  
If a buyer has a specific need, your reps want to be able to send content targeted for that need. Organizing resources by commonly needed topics makes it easy.
- **By products or services**  
If your buyer already knows what he or she wants, they're not going to want generic content. Sort by specific product to avoid sifting through multiple locations.
- **By buyer's journey**  
Buyers just entering the sales cycle are going to want different content than buyers who are about to close. Create a buyer's journey content map to identify which content should be sent at each stage.

### Best-in-Class Marketing Teams are...

**100%** more likely to have visibility into how sales is using their content.

**69%** more likely to align marketing content to the sales funnel.

**65%** more likely to have visibility into leads not converted by sales.

**54%** more likely to have visibility into how buyers are consuming content.

Source: Aberdeen

### THE BEST PART

If you use a centralized library with single-source updates, **you can store the same files multiple ways.**

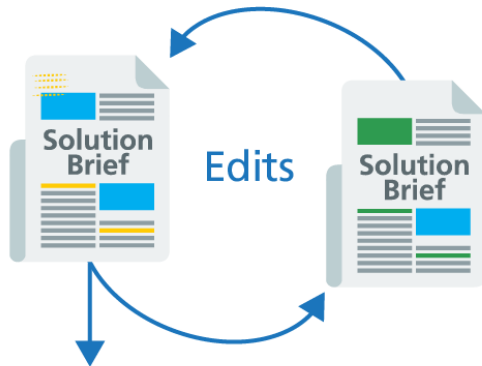
Your reps could search by topic, content type, author, buyer persona, product... and find it the first time, no matter where they searched.



## Creation



## Review



## Approve



→ Publish

→ Add to Library

→ Set Expiration

→ Notify Users

## Create easy workflows

Make content management as easy as possible for your team by setting up intuitive and structured workflows. Who reviews first drafts of content? Who gives final approval after edits? What happens to the content after publication?

Ask your content managers to list out every step they go through when handling content, from first coming up with the content idea to retiring old and outdated content. The odds are likely that you will notice some inefficiencies in current processes—tasks that are missed completely, delayed or take too long to accomplish.

## Do habitual reviews

Things change. Buyers' interests vary, technology advances, team members try new ways of doing things... Content management has to keep up with all of these updates.

On a regular basis, sit down with your team and review your process. Are there ways things could be done better? Any new issues that have cropped up? A simple brainstorming session can result in much more novel and efficient ways of managing and creating content.

## Assign content ownership

We all know the saying “if it’s everybody’s responsibility, it’s nobody’s.” There are always a million things to do, and something as simple as uploading a piece of content is going to consistently fall behind something more important and time-sensitive — especially if there’s no accountability for performing content management.

Create clear lines of responsibility for content management. Depending on the size of your organization, this may be one person in charge of all content or it may be a team of people with responsibilities divided up by content type, topic, time frame, etc.

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nobody’s.”

## Align your sales and marketing teams

Sales and marketing alignment is by no means a quick and easy process, but it is definitely worth it.

Sales and marketing alignment is all about getting your sales team and your marketing team working as one unified, collaborative force to engage effectively with buyers and win more deals. Without proper alignment, all that effort you're putting into content creation and management is probably going to waste.

So how do you align your sales and marketing teams? There are a lot of ways to go about it, but here's a general 3-step process to get you started:

### Establish expectations and goals

Get your sales and marketing teams talking on a regular basis about their upcoming goals, their plans to meet those goals and how that relates to the other department.

### Create a collaborative process

When marketing and sales have completely different workflows and processes, it's no wonder that there's miscommunication and inefficiency. Develop a clearly defined process that outlines when sales and marketing should work together.

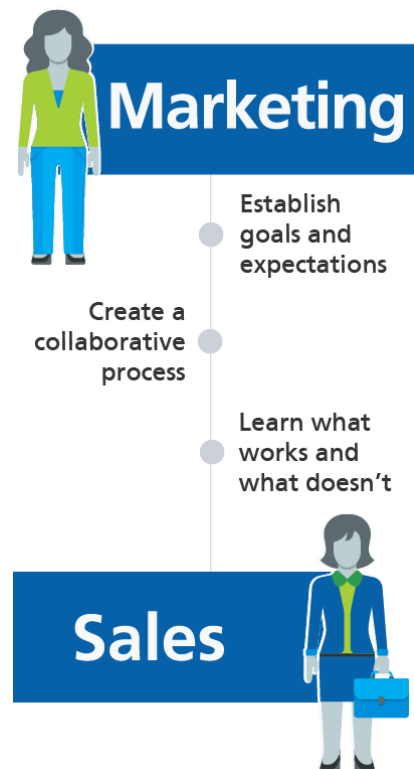
### Learn what works and what doesn't

Alignment strategies take time and effort to get right.

Maybe meeting once a week to discuss content needs for pipeline opportunities is too often. Maybe your collaboration software isn't cutting it. Maybe everything is perfect and your team is 100% aligned...How will you know unless you take a proactive approach to your alignment strategy?

## DEFINING SALES AND MARKETING ALIGNMENT

Sales and marketing alignment comprises the shared goals, consistent strategies and accepted success metrics that improve functionality, productivity, ROI and growth across departments and, more importantly, the business as a whole.



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When sales and marketing are aligned, businesses gain 27% faster three-year profit growth and close 38% more deals. —Hubspot

# Putting it all together

This whitepaper has discussed the inefficiencies and problems with traditional content management, offered technology solutions that fix those problems and suggested best practices that will enable your content management team to get even more value and efficiency out of a streamlined approach.

In order to improve content management, you certainly don't need to implement every single suggestion in this whitepaper, but each one can have a positive impact on your business. Find the options that will work best for your company's environment.

If you'd like more guidance on which content management solution is right for you, give us a call or visit our website.

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Accent Technologies is a cloud-based provider of sales enablement solutions for sales and marketing teams wanting to improve alignment and productivity.

Our sales enablement technology brings closer coordination and better use of resources to sharpen sales execution and improve win rates, impacting the key revenue-generating activities that have the biggest effect on sales success—planning, preparing and engaging buyers.

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