

A Guide to Building Your Content Curation Strategy

BY MARISSA BURDETT

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A Guide to Building Your Content Curation Strategy

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Most companies have “gotten with the times” and invested in their social media strategy as part of their marketing efforts. In fact, The CMO Survey reports that the share of marketing budgets spent on social media is expected to more than double over the next five years, from 11% today to 24% by 2020! A necessary piece of that social media strategy—content curation—may make the list of must-dos, but rarely does it get the attention it needs to serve brands effectively. Instead, curation needs its own strategy instead of being tacked on to the end of a much broader marketing plan.

Considering the content boom of the last several years and the birth of content marketing, we can all agree that the exchange of meaningful and powerful information establishes thought leaders, builds strong communities, and elicits action. However, now there are over 800,000 pieces of content being created,

shared, and repurposed every MINUTE. As a result, it is important to invest in an intentional curation process that will serve both you and your network, instead of simply contributing to the noise.

By actively participating in your own curation, you maintain just as strong of a presence as the content you're sharing.

Even with an intentional strategy though, current methods for curating content can be inefficient and time-consuming. For example, you might scroll for hours on Google, Pocket or bookmark your favorites, read and sort through your options, open up your scheduling tool, write your social media posts, paste the links, and then finally hit publish. It's no wonder that curation ends up being automated to the point of feeling robotic or put to the backburner for "later."

Understanding the true purpose of curation, utilizing streamlined tools, and building ethical strategies can help you curate content more effectively for better conversations.



WHAT IS CURATION?

When you think of a curator, you probably think of someone who acts as the “keeper of the artifacts” at a museum. Curators spend a great deal of time selecting which pieces to display, especially in relation to one another, often grouping them by theme, time period, artist, medium, or expression in order to convey a certain feeling or connotation.

In a similar fashion, a content curator carefully chooses articles, blog posts, rich media, and social statuses that are of particular interest, organizes them, and shares them with their networks, friends, and/or colleagues to accomplish a particular goal.

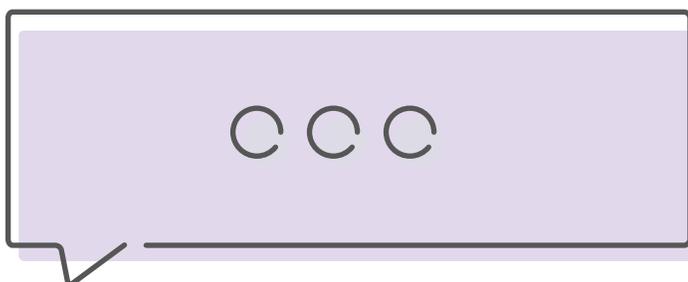
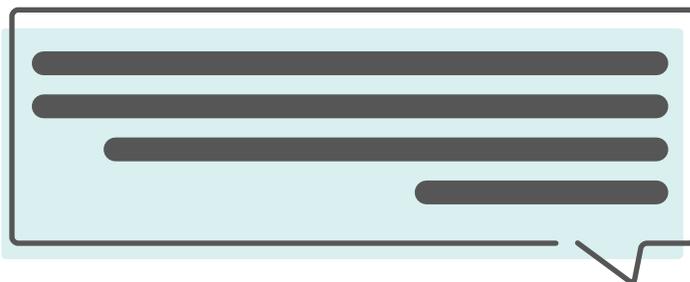
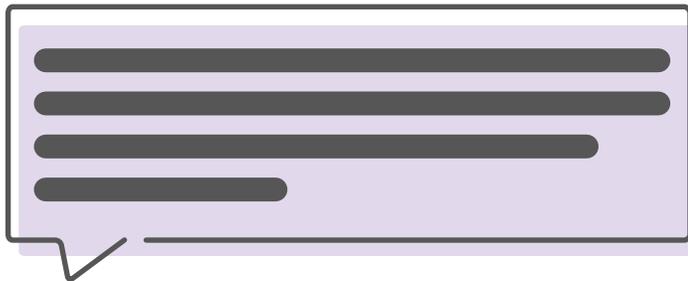
Curate (v): “to select, organize, and present, typically using professional or expert knowledge.”

There are a variety of goals you can achieve through curation. A successful curation strategy can help you:

- Create opportunities to start conversations on topics you care and are knowledgeable about
- Become a go-to expert in your niche
- Build trust through the consistent posting of high-quality content
- Establish relationships with other top influencers whose content you are sharing

- Support and complement your own created content with related articles or blog posts
- Maintain an active presence on social media to stay top-of-mind
- Learn what your audience likes and wants to see more of to shape your future content

We can bet that these are goals any brand would like to accomplish.



THE DANGERS OF CONTENT CURATION

Be warned: curation done incorrectly can do more harm than good for your brand.

Curation is not meant to serve as an aggregator of content.

Social media schedulers have made curation smart and seamless, but if you're scheduling content just because, and not adding your own perspective, throwing out content randomly, or not following up with interactions as a result, you've missed the point.

YOUR CONTENT MATTERS, TOO.

Finding your balance between creation and curation can take some trial and error, but your audience wants to hear your own thoughts and ideas, too, not just what you think of others'. Make sure you're creating your own content and not letting curation act as your excuse not to create. Self-promoting too often can be off-putting, but the inverse is also true (and can drive precious traffic away if you're not balanced!).

Remember, content curation should be seen as a tool to spark conversations, not as a replacement of interaction and your own creation.

MAPPING OUT YOUR CONTENT CURATION STRATEGY

Now that you see the value in content curation and you're aware of the challenges you might face if implemented incorrectly, it's time to map out your strategy!

Before you get overwhelmed by the details, though, let's start with a simple process that will help you remember the steps to effective content curation: FACE. (No, not the purple face from Nick Jr., for all the '90s kids out there!)

F. A. C. E. (Find, Assess, Curate, Engage.)

Let's break it down.

Find. First, discover the right content for you and your audience.

Assess. Next, evaluate the selected content to make sure it aligns with your goals and provides additional value to your audience.

Curate. Then, add the content to your social media feeds or use as supporting evidence in your blog posts.

Engage. Finally, follow up with those who have interacted with your curated content and continue the conversation.

Finding the Right Content

Currently, the search for good content typically involves multiple processes and tools, from endless pages of Google searches and Pinterest results to Pocketing and bookmarking favorites. While these tools and platforms are wonderful and useful, there are a few alternative approaches that can simplify the process, while still ensuring that the quality of the content you find is still very high.

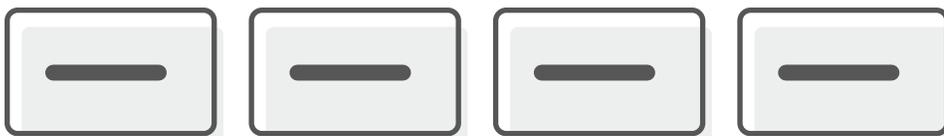
Skim through your newsfeed regularly.

Chances are you're already following individuals or brands that are publishing interesting, relevant content that would also resonate with your audience. By sharing content from your own network, you are strengthening the relationships you already have and starting conversations that can lead to future opportunities.

SEARCH

A search bar consisting of a long rectangular input field on the left and a smaller square button on the right containing a magnifying glass icon.

SORT

Four square buttons arranged horizontally, each containing a horizontal line, representing sort options.

Streamline your content sources.

If you know you want to continually curate from a group of trusted sources, compile them into one place using an RSS Reader like Feedly. While you will still need to click on each post, you can share directly to social media or add the content to your favorite social media scheduler.

Use a curation tool designed specifically for finding targeted, meaningful content.

Often times, Google searches provide only broad results or content that has been ranked based on virality. Additionally, the content shared on social media has likely already been shared numerous times across your network. Take a different, more efficient approach with a content curation tool like UpContent.

UpContent's unique algorithm crawls the web and pulls news articles and blog posts that can be expanded and read right within the platform. Content can be sorted by things like relevance, recency, shareability, and even influence to make sure you're always reading the best, most up-to-date content from industry thought leaders. You can also favorite or share content with your audiences right away, either directly or through your favorite social media automation tool.

Assessing Content for Sharing

Before you curate your findings, you need to evaluate the quality and relevance of each piece of content. If you've streamlined your content sources like we suggested in the previous section, this should no longer take you hours, but minutes! Remember, it's much better to curate fewer, more relevant pieces than to share everything and anything with your audiences.

SHARE



First, determine if the content is published by a reputable source. Using UpContent's influence filter eliminates the need to check for author credibility because it already shows only the top influencers based on your search. Otherwise, do some research to make sure this individual or brand has the authority to speak on the topic at hand.

After skimming or reading the content, ask yourself the following questions:

- Will my audience be informed or entertained by this content?

- Does this content offer a unique perspective on a topic my audience cares about?
- Does this content connect to, complement, or support my own content?
- Will I be able to add my own commentary to this content when shared?

If you can say **YES** to these questions, you have a winner.

Curating for the Biggest Impact

Though the ease of social media automation tools can often encourage people to adopt a passive approach to curation, they can still be useful for those who take an active, more effective approach, allowing for more strategically-timed and spaced out content sharing. Hootsuite, Buffer, and Edgar remain the top players in the social automation sphere and all have features that serve a variety of workflows and goals. Each of these platforms work seamlessly with UpContent, making the process from consumption to curation easier than ever.

Additionally, there's no replacement for "on-the-fly" curation, organically sharing content in real time when it might serve audiences best.

Simply sharing the title and URL to a relevant blog post or news article on social media isn't enough, though. When it comes to content curation, how the content is presented is just as

important as the quality of the material itself. Instead of seeing this critical step as a time-suck, think of it as an opportunity to get more out of the share than just a few clicks.

Here are some ways you can present the material:

Add your perspective. What do you have to say about this piece of content? What was interesting about it? How does it connect with what your business is doing or what your audience is interested in?

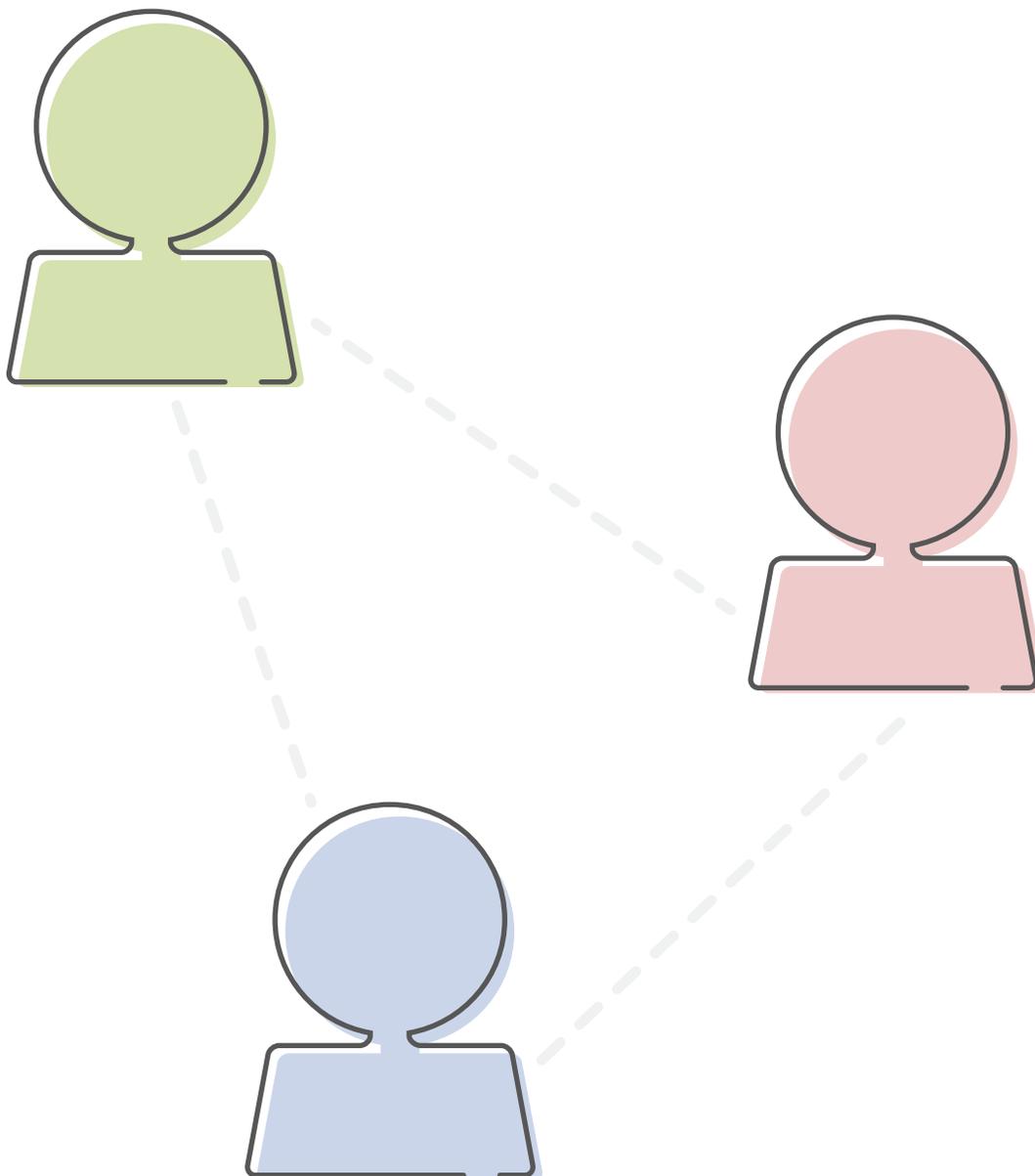
Ask a question. What do you want to know more about after reading this piece of content? What do you want your readers to weigh in on?

Provide feedback. Do you have an answer to any questions the author may have posed? What insight can you add to what's already been stated?

In addition to adding your own commentary, tag the author and/or mention someone who might be interested in continuing the conversation. Not only is giving credit where credit is due just good ethical behavior, it can also open the doors to valuable connections and discussions.

Engaging to Build Community

Once you've found, evaluated, and shared some great content, there's one final step and it's arguably the most important of them all: converse with those who interacted with the content you've so carefully curated.



Instead of simply “liking” or favoriting responses to the content you’ve shared, follow up! Reply with additional commentary, questions, or feedback. There’s no perfect formula or script for what to say or how often, but the engagement strategy behind nearly every successful brand is this: be generous.

Be generous in replying to every comment. Be generous in expressing gratitude. Be generous in providing top-notch customer support. Be generous with a positive attitude.

This generosity will go a long way in setting your brand apart from others and will delight your audience every single time.

Additionally, a great way you can receive the engagement you are looking for is by modeling it yourself. Be the audience for someone else by interacting with their content by asking questions or contributing your own point of view. This commitment to engaging with others will encourage organic reciprocity and, ultimately, strong connections.

An intentional curation strategy may require some legwork, but the rewards certainly outweigh the effort it takes. Soon you’ll be having conversations that lead to more opportunities, stronger relationships, and bigger sales.

CONSISTENCY OVER FREQUENCY

There are a lot of proposed “formulas” for deciding how often to post curated content versus created content on social media. To illustrate:

TA McCann suggests the 5-3-2 formula: share five pieces of content from others, three no-pitch pieces of content from you, and two personal, non-work related pieces of content that helps to humanize your brand.

Another popular guideline is the 80/20 rule, based on the Pareto Principle: sharing 80% non-promotional, curated content and only 20% promotional, created content.

Lastly, the Rule of Thirds explains that content should be broken into three parts: $\frac{1}{3}$ promotional content, $\frac{1}{3}$ personal content, and $\frac{1}{3}$ curated content.

And the list goes on. There’s no right or wrong answer here...except maybe spamming your social media feeds with a post every minute. *Please don’t do that.*

Additionally, there is a lot of debate around deciding how much time should be devoted to content curation. Mark Smiciklas from Intersection Consulting estimates that most organizations spend about 2.5 hours per week curating content, while others may invest much less time.

So how often should you be posting curated content and how often should you spend trying to find content? I'm afraid we don't have a straightforward answer. Sorry about that.

Here's why: there is no one-size-fits-all solution for content marketers (or for any business, for that matter!). Your audience is different than our audience. Your company is structured different than ours. Your product or your services are different than ours. It takes trial and error, but only you can determine your formula and schedule based on factors like time, resources, audience needs, and niche.

What we can tell you is that regardless of your proposed curation plan, there is one strategy that always works:

Be consistent. Show up every time, stick to the schedule you've created, and do the thing. Consistency breeds trust and trust breeds loyalty. If your network can count on you to provide what they need on a regular basis, they will always come back.

MEASURING CONTENT CURATION SUCCESS

After investing in an intentional curation strategy, it's important to take a step back and measure the outcomes of your efforts. Without checking in regularly, you have no way of knowing if your actions are making the desired impact.

Before you start tracking every metric, however, start by defining what success looks like for you and your brand.

Traditionally, the goal for content marketers has been to drive more traffic to their websites. Over time, that goal has narrowed to driving qualified leads to their websites so that the people most likely to take a desired action, not just a lot of people, are heading to the website.

This goal is a valuable one, but it may not be what your brand needs at this time. Taking the time to evaluate what success looks like for you—not what it looks like for your competitor or for anyone else—will take away all questions surrounding both your content curation and other strategies.

Success can be defined at a macro level, broadly focusing on the overall business goals of the company, such as increasing sales. Or, success can also be defined at a more micro level, focusing on enticing customers to take a very specific action.

Maybe this means aiming for conversions such as opting into a newsletter or making a specific purchase.

Ask yourself and your fellow colleagues what success looks like now and schedule review sessions each quarter (or even more frequently) to assess and tweak what success looks like at every stage of your business.

Once you have identified what success is for your organization, then you can make specific goals. For example, if success looks like conversions, how many conversions are you aiming for in a month based on your content curation (and other marketing) efforts? These goals should be S.M.A.R.T. so you can always measure the outcomes.

**Specific, Measurable,
Achievable, Realistic,
Time bound**

Write these goals down and post them where you will see them every time you curate.

Choose metrics that align with your goals.

Now that you have defined what success is and means for your organization and defined goals, it is vital that measure success

consistently. In order to measure success you need to track metrics--numbers that help you gauge the outcome of the effort invested in content curation. There a lot of metrics that one can track but not all are meaningful or relevant to your S.M.A.R.T. goals.

Determining which metrics are the most meaningful to your content curation goals is dependent upon what you are tracking or measuring and the microsteps your customers take towards achieving those goals.

Here are some of the metrics you could track and measure that relate most to curation:

1. Clicks
2. Comments/replies
3. Likes/reactions
4. Shares
5. New followers
6. Referral traffic
7. Traffic to site

While all of these metrics are important, you will want to place an emphasis on engagement—the ways in which your audience interacts with your curated content. Because you are sharing

outside content, traffic to your site is less likely to be affected; however, over time, your curation efforts will encourage your audience to visit your site directly.

Once these metrics have been selected, make sure you have a method for tracking all of the moving pieces, whether that's through Google Analytics, the analytics on each social media platform, or the metrics provided by your social media scheduling tool. Compiling these results all in one place, such as in a spreadsheet, is the easiest way to track success. This allows you to compare results month-to-month so you can identify trends and growth.

FINAL WORDS

By now, you hopefully recognize that content curation deserves its own unique strategy that can work in tandem with your overall social media marketing strategy. Curation is no longer the “set it and forget it” process of the past, but rather an active and advantageous practice that helps you build trust with your audience, form connections with other influencers in your niche, and establish your credibility. By tracking the right metrics along the way, you can easily identify if you are meeting your carefully defined goals on the roadmap to success.

My Content Curation Strategy

Month: _____

WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE FOR YOU AND YOUR BRAND?

LIST UP TO THREE CLEARLY-DEFINED S.M.A.R.T. GOALS THAT CAN HELP YOU ACHIEVE THAT SUCCESS.

1.

2.

3.

WHICH METRICS DO YOU NEED TO TRACK IN ORDER TO MEET THESE GOALS?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clicks | <input type="checkbox"/> Referral traffic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Comments/replies | <input type="checkbox"/> Traffic to site |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Likes/reactions | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shares | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> New Followers | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |

AT THE END OF THE MONTH, WRITE A REFLECTION BELOW. WHICH GOALS WERE MET? WHY? WHAT NEEDS IMPROVEMENT?

Face it. You need a content curation strategy that works.

FIND THE RIGHT CONTENT.

Turn to your newsfeed first.

Streamline your sources by using an RSS reader.

Use a tool designed for curation, such as UpContent.

ASSESS THE CONTENT FOR SHARING.

- Is this content written by a reputable source?
- Will my audience be informed or entertained by this content?
- Does this content offer a unique perspective on a topic my audience cares about?
- Does this content connect to, complement, or support my own content?
- Will I be able to add my own commentary to this content when shared?

CURATE FOR A BIG IMPACT.

- **Add your perspective.** What do you have to say about this piece of content?
- **Ask a question.** What do you want to know more about after reading this piece of content?
- **Provide feedback.** What insight can you add to what's already been stated?

ENGAGE TO BUILD COMMUNITY

Be generous.

Model the behavior you hope to receive.