



THE FUTURE-PROOF GUIDE TO CONTENT MARKETING STRATEGY

GO FROM HECTIC TO AHEAD OF
THE CURVE





Marketing is not all the glitz, glam, glory and three martini lunches that it's portrayed as on screen. Being a marketer in today's environment is challenging.

Customers have become increasingly savvy and their expectations for the content experience are at an all-time high. That means marketers are required to elevate their level of sophistication and output to meet and exceed the needs of the modern customer. Sorry marketers, this is no longer a nice to have, but a necessity to compete.

But is there a way to future proof your marketing strategy to account for present and future needs that focus less on content quantity, and more on content impact?

Here's the basic truth: marketers are still struggling with content strategy. In fact, according to our 2017 content planning survey, 64 percent of marketers said "developing a comprehensive content strategy" was a top challenge.

If you want to create an effective content strategy, start by creating order out of chaos: conduct research, outline your goals, align sales and marketing, and document your process. Know which metrics will correspond to your top content goals. And you need the right marketing tools in place to maximize productivity while keeping campaigns organized and on-task.

To help you plan for now and in the future, we've tapped into some of the best and brightest minds in the industry. These marketing veterans have experienced and overcome many of the same hurdles that you're facing today. And we're very thankful that they're willing to guide us towards a better future.

Don't try to win today's battles with yesterday's strategy. It's time to embrace the future (because it's here).

LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR CONTENT MARKETING IMPACT

All great content starts with a purpose — a problem it promises to solve. Before you begin the work of creating content, your strategic planning will build a foundation for driving strong content ROI. This means identifying and developing personas that are meaningful to your business, pulling together tools to create, distribute and manage content that is meaningful to those audiences, and sourcing the best talent to build a winning content team.

***Your customers have a problem. You are the solution.
But first you need a strategy capable of connecting
those dots.***

ROBERT ROSE



CHIEF STRATEGIST, CONTENT MARKETING INSTITUTE

APPLY THE 'SAY/HEAR/LISTEN' RULE

I like to use a framework that triangulates how I can best serve customers. It's Say/Hear/Listen. The first step is asking "What are they saying?" Here, we can use tools to look at the zeitgeist of what's going on with our audience in a particular time. The second is "Who are they hearing from?" Here, I want to look at not only my competitors, but also the media brands that are also talking to my audience and making note of what they are talking about and what is resonating. And, the last (and most important) is "Can I listen intently?" Here I want to have direct conversations with my audience - and not about me or my product. I want to listen to my audiences and just hear who they are as people, to know where I can add value to their lives. Triangulating these together as an ongoing process can give you a powerful set of tools to not only notice NEW trends - but to also identify gaps in opportunities to develop new ideas that have yet to be explored.

PREDICTION FOR THE FUTURE: We will see more and more artificial intelligence tools roll out that will attempt to automate and predict the trends and research about our audiences. This is not necessarily a good thing.



"I like to use a framework that triangulates how I can best serve customers. It's Say/Hear/Listen."

 Tweet This

ARDATH ALBEE



CEO & B2B MARKETING STRATEGIST, MARKETING INTERACTIONS

THOROUGHLY RESEARCH YOUR BUYER PERSONAS

To get started with buyer personas, look inside your organization first. Interview your salespeople and product marketers and line of business managers to learn what they know. Most importantly, find out what salespeople consider a highly qualified lead. Buyer personas should be designed to attract people sales wants to talk to.

Next, based on what you've learned, interview roles at your customers who match your buyer persona objectives. Focus on what they're responsible for and the problems they face and how they go about solving them. If you need examples, you can find interview questions and more advice on the Marketing Interactions blog.

Third, do external research to validate and expand what you know about your personas. Look at LinkedIn profiles representative of your personas, review industry research and find the thought leaders they turn to and see what they're talking about.

This should give you pretty much what you need to build an in depth buyer persona.

PREDICTION FOR THE FUTURE: B2B marketers will learn that while data, machine learning and AI provide great insights, buyer personas still need the human touch (interviews and interpretation) to inform relevant content marketing strategies that hit the mark with target audiences.



“Buyer personas should be designed to attract people sales wants to talk to.”

 Tweet This

PAM DIDNER



SENIOR MARKETING CONSULTANT, RELENTLESS PURSUIT

KNOW THE GOALS OF YOUR CONTENT

In general, content is likely created to build awareness, showcase thought leadership or drive demand generation. Understand why you create content and tie content objectives with the overall business and overarching marketing objectives.

PREDICTION FOR THE FUTURE: With voice recognition as the next generation of search, brands will need to generate content that responds to customers' voices.



“*Understand why you create content and tie content objectives with the business and marketing objectives.”*

 Tweet This

IAN CLEARY



FOUNDER, RAZORSOCIAL

INVEST IN EDITORIAL, SEO, AND SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS

To be successful with your online marketing you really need to have a good strategy in place. If you combine this with a good set of tools, you can achieve more success in less time. If I was to name 3 types of tools that I find indispensable for creating, distributing and managing content to build on your strategy it would be:

Editorial Calendar Management Tool - It doesn't matter if you have a small or large team - you absolutely need a tool to manage your editorial calendar. You need to build out your process, going from an idea all the way through to content being published, and it's essential you have a tool in place for this.

SEO Research and Optimization Tool - The majority of your traffic will still come from Google, so you need to feed Google with the right information to get the best chance of getting ongoing organic traffic.

Social Media Management Tool - You'll need to promote this content across social media channels and manage responses. For this, you'll need a good social media management tool that provides support for your core platforms to share, schedule, respond and analyze results.



“If you combine marketing strategy with a good set of tools, you can achieve more success in less time.”

 Tweet This

JASON MILLER



HEAD OF CONTENT AND SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING,
LINKEDIN SALES & MARKETING SOLUTIONS EMEA

FACILITATE CONTENT OWNERSHIP

Empower individual team members to make decisions on the fly. Not only will this give rise to a sense of ownership, but it will keep things moving along without any bottlenecks.

I like to assign one big rock project for each team member and have them own the project from soup to nuts. I'm involved early on in the project with inspiration, direction, and objectives, but after that, they only call on me for roadblocks or showstoppers. Of course, I'm there if they need me at any given time throughout the entire process, but I've found that if you have great team members, they will shine much brighter with a bit of autonomy.

Using this approach, you can be much smarter when it comes to tracking team performance based on not only the number of content deliverables but also the performance of each of the campaigns collectively at the end of the quarter. Consistency in creation will lead to consistency in measurement, making your quarterly recaps much easier to pull together and share with the C-suites.



“I’ve found that if you have great team members, they will shine much brighter with a bit of autonomy.”

 Tweet This

CREATING A STRATEGY FOR CONTENT PUBLISHING

Today's content lives on many different channels. According to our own survey, at least nine different digital channels are used by marketers on a regular basis, and this doesn't account for specific platforms within each channel, i.e. YouTube and other publishing platforms for video marketing campaigns.

With such a complex workflow to oversee, every company needs a streamlined approach to production management. Each piece of content should be assigned to a creator, placed on an editorial calendar, and created with both the audience and the content channel in mind.

Organizations need to build the right toolset to facilitate content creation, from a CMS to research tools to A/B testing and beyond. Each company needs a unique production cycle and content workflow — one that is well-defined, documented, and catered to the needs of both your creators and your consumers.



SCOTT ABEL



PRESIDENT, THE CONTENT WRANGLER

UNIFIED CONTENT IS CONSISTENT CONTENT

To succeed today, marketers must borrow engineering techniques from lean manufacturing. One way to do that is to adopt a unified content strategy.

Coined by the “mother of content strategy,” Ann Rockley, a unified content strategy is “a repeatable method of identifying all content requirements up front, creating consistently structured content for reuse, managing that content in a definitive source, and assembling content on demand to meet your customers’ needs.”

A unified content strategy is a coherent content strategy. Organizations can rely on content being the same wherever it appears, providing both internal and external customers with a consistent message, brand, and accuracy. A unified content strategy can help an organization avoid the Content Silo Trap, reducing the costs of creating, managing, and distributing content, and ensuring that content effectively supports your organizational and customer needs.

A unified content strategy (like the one designed by Rockley) allows you to create “intelligent content” — content that is both human-readable and machine-processable. Marketers are good at creating content for humans, but they are ill-equipped to create content that the machines understand. Voice interfaces like Amazon Echo and Apple Siri rely on intelligent content to deliver the answers consumers seek. When voice-enabled interfaces are unable to provide a useful answer automatically, it’s usually because the content lacks intelligence.

In short, marketers must become content production efficiency experts and look for every opportunity to streamline production and eliminate waste.

“A unified content strategy is a coherent content strategy.”

 Tweet This



TRAVIS WRIGHT



CMO/CHIEF MARKETING TECHNOLOGIST, CCP DIGITAL
& AUTHOR OF WILEY'S, DIGITAL SENSE.

ALIGN CONTENT TACTICS TO YOUR AUDIENCE NEEDS

With the right kind of content and targeted advertising, you can influence B2B sales in unique ways. For instance, video is such an important part of any content marketing strategy today - especially considering that many executives don't want to talk with a sales guy but may want to see how certain enterprise technologies work.

After having demoed well over 1,200 marketing technologies in my career, we decided to launch a new video series specifically for B2B marketing technology companies called MarTech Talks. The video acts as a modern day infomercial for marketing technology companies by aligning sales and marketing to determine precisely the companies they're actively pursuing, and then targeting only employees of those companies with advertising to drive targeted views and move them down the sales funnel.

“With the right kind of content and targeted advertising, you can influence B2B sales in unique ways.”

 Tweet This



CATHY MCPHILLIPS



VP OF MARKETING, CONTENT MARKETING INSTITUTE

DOCUMENT AND MANAGE YOUR CONTENT WORKFLOW

“Define & document content workflow, even if it’s all in your team’s head & you’re all on the same page.”

 Tweet This

Define and document your content workflow, even if it’s all in your team’s head and you’re all on the same page. Stop quickly and write it all down together. Ninety-nine percent of processes break down because of workflow and mismanagement, rather than because of a lack of expertise or knowledge. Define the tasks in your workflow, then assign those tasks to the best person on your team to handle that task. That person should know from experience the amount of time needed to effectively handle a particular step in the process. Lastly, have one person oversee the process to keep everything running smoothly.

After that, know that your workflow should be fluid. Adapt and grow as you learn about the process and the people on your team, as well as the tools used, so your process is always improving.

EFFECTIVELY PLANNING FOR CONTENT DISTRIBUTION & PROMOTION

Every company needs great content. But great content on its own won't find your audience. Too many business leaders believe that creating strong content is good enough to get a content marketing strategy up and running, but this couldn't be further from the truth. Without smart and strategic promotion in place, creating content — good or bad — is pointless.

Instead of waiting to be discovered, take fate into your own hands by leading the charge on distribution and promotion. Seek out the right talent to oversee distribution and amplification, building an audience for your content and developing channels to drive continued engagement.

Feed your audience content by doubling down on your top-performing channels. Choose your most successful pieces of content and amplify them through paid and other promotional campaigns. When you push your content and paid distribution budget toward your most successful channels, better content ROI awaits.



CARLOS ABLER



LEADER - CONTENT MARKETING & STRATEGY::
GLOBAL ETRANSFORMATION, 3M

WORK WITH THE RIGHT INFLUENCERS TO BUILD TRUST

Influencer marketing will be ground zero of the place where modern business finds its soul. As businesses optimize technology-driven 'network jacking' in the social space, and max out and dissolve trust by reliance on churn-intensive commoditized transactional pseudo-relationships in the influencer space, the premium will be on sincerity.

Progressive businesses will learn that they can't just hire specialists with influencer, community and customer relations specialties. They will increasingly hire people with a soul, who want to dissolve the space between personal and professional activities, who are the right fit to build real relationships based on affinity, and how commit to this with investment in more quality time with their influencers and audience.



“Influencer marketing will be ground zero of the place where modern business finds its soul.”

 Tweet This

MICHAEL BRENNER

CEO, MARKETING INSIDER GROUP



USE DATA TO UNCOVER TOP CONTENT

Content professionals absolutely need to master the art and science of analytics. It can be tough for text-minded journalists and former English-literature majors like me. But I honestly geek out a little bit when it comes to understanding the insights that can come from the metrics of our content. Measurement and distribution/promotion are really intimately connected to each other.

For example, the data will show you that an always-on approach to distribution beats one-time campaign-based approaches every single time. The data will also show you that you should test your headline, image, and filters before running too much promotion budget behind your content. And the data will tell you that you should only promote your best content vs. everything you publish. These approaches have delivered 3-10X improvements for my clients!



“Measurement and distribution/promotion are really intimately connected to each other.”

 Tweet This

CHRIS MOODY



CONTENT MARKETING LEADER, GE DIGITAL

START SMALL, AND SEPARATE YOUR METRICS

Don't be everywhere at once. An insanely high percentage of marketers launch a piece of content and run and promote it everywhere at once. In theory, you are trying to reach your audience on every channel - which isn't a bad thing. In actuality, you're broadcasting a message and stretching yourself thin - which impacts engagement and the ability to focus on how it is working and insights that could be gained. Instead, stagger the distribution of your content and do one channel well at a time. When the metrics that matter to you trail off, ramp up another channel. This allows you to have a concentrated launch over a longer period of time which can improve your results. At worst, you'll learn a lot more than you would have otherwise.

Separate awareness and demand metrics. Awareness is an important category of metrics for many companies. However, blurring the lines between metrics of intent and metrics of reach hinders your ability to tell an effective story to leadership. By grouping awareness metrics, you will have a better understanding of reach, impressions, clicks, views, and other indications of how your content is spread and consumed. By grouping demand metrics, you are able to better communicate acceleration through the funnel, return on your marketing spend, and what channels are most effective for leads and opportunities. This allows you to have two chapters to your content distribution story and an easier way to carve out the relevant message for various internal and external stakeholders. You can compare metrics across the board for the full picture, but compartmentalizing awareness and demand has always been useful for me in pulling out insights to guide continuous marketing improvement.



“Stagger the distribution of your content and do one channel well at a time to avoid stretching yourself thin.”

 Tweet This

MEASURING CONTENT EFFECTIVENESS

Even if you DO hit a homerun with your content marketing strategy, you might not know it if you aren't keeping tabs on the right metrics. With the right measurement tools in place, you can flush out specific metrics to gauge the success of your content, including your distribution and amplification efforts. This measurement strategy also lets you evaluate the performance of your content teams.

Effective measurement analyzes the overall success of each marketing campaign while breaking down your strategy to identify its strengths and weaknesses. No content strategy is ever perfect, so this measurement is crucial to understanding your results and continuing to evolve.





ANDY CRESTODINA



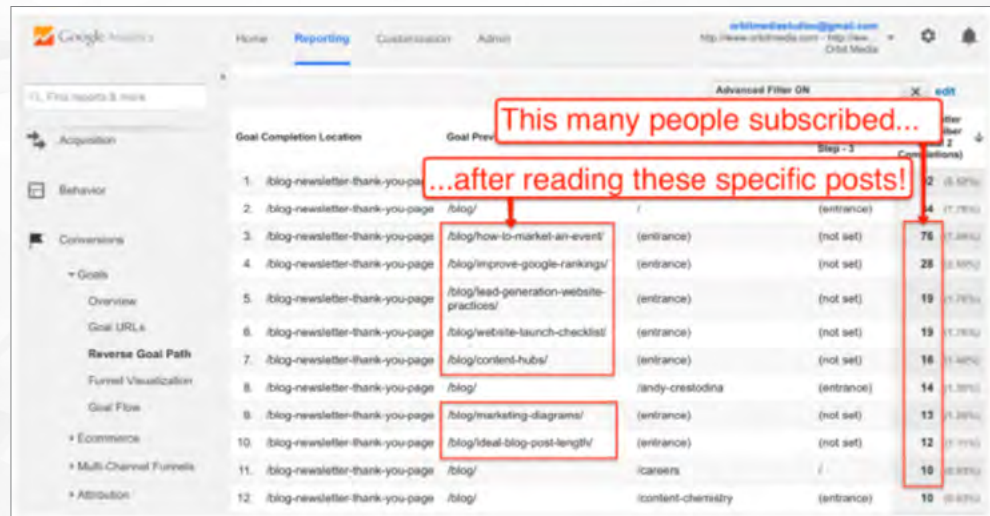
CO-FOUNDER & STRATEGIC DIRECTOR, ORBIT MEDIA STUDIOS, INC.

WATCH YOUR SUBSCRIBER CONVERSION RATE

If an article inspires a visitor to subscribe, it's gotta be good. So I like to track the conversion rate from visitor to subscriber per article. It takes a little math, but the insights are awesome. Find total conversions in the Reverse Goal Path report (image below) and divide by the pageviews in the All Pages report.

“If an article inspires a visitor to subscribe, it's gotta be good.”

Tweet This



You're about to find out that that some of your posts convert nearly 1% of visitors, and others convert .001%. Adjust your content and promotion strategy accordingly!



CELIA BROWN



CONTENT STRATEGY LEAD - CUSTOMER STORYTELLING, SAP

MATCH YOUR METRICS TO YOUR BUSINESS GOALS

When designing a distribution and promotion program for your content, marketers should first take a step back and ask: What is the business goal here? Is it brand awareness? Conversions? Customer loyalty?

For brand awareness, I look at 'hard' metrics that drive ROI, like organic vs. paid search traffic, and also take into account 'soft' metrics like page views, influencer shares/mentions and share of voice.

Conversions are pretty straightforward given we are measuring the number of prospects that become customers. The primary metric would be the percent of leads sourced directly by the content program, but we also look at metrics like new subscriptions.

Finally, customer loyalty aims to drive retention and upsell of products and services. Hence, for a company like SAP, the metrics would include customer lifetime value and license renewal.

“Customer loyalty aims to drive retention and upsell of products and services.”

 Tweet This

WHAT'S NEXT?

A man and a woman are standing in a futuristic, circular room. The room features concentric rings on the floor and ceiling, creating a sense of depth and modernity. They are looking out a large, bright window, suggesting a vision of the future or a new direction. The man is wearing a dark suit, and the woman is wearing a white sleeveless top and a white skirt with a black belt. Their reflections are visible on the glossy floor.

A strong content marketing strategy is a crucial asset for any organization, helping guide future marketing campaigns while coordinating creation and distribution across content teams.

Some marketers and business leaders may be eager to get to work creating and publishing content, but this ends up as wasted energy if the right strategy isn't in place. A good content marketing strategy needs to account for all stages of planning, creating, and amplifying content. Don't undercut your own efforts: Take time to build a strategy built for success from start to finish.

Once you've put the finishing touches on that content marketing strategy, it's time to focus on executing that strategy — something we call the “daily grind.”

YOUR FUTURE CAN START NOW



Since 2011, DivvyHQ has been guiding its customers to a better future. Great content starts with a solid foundation of content marketing strategy, consistent planning and streamlined production workflows. If producing more, better content is your goal, you owe it to your company to consider DivvyHQ, the easiest-to-use content marketing platform on the market.

We'd love the opportunity to show you how simple content planning and production can be. Just click the button below to schedule a demo today.

[Schedule a demo](#)

divvyhq.com
contact@divvyhq.com
1.877.573.4889

SPECIAL THANKS

A *HUGE* thank you to our 13 content experts for sharing some amazing insights into ways that all marketers can begin future proofing their content marketing today.

DIVVYHQ™