

Content marketing

(This article is from the mailchimp website [1])

Introduction

Content marketing is a marketing strategy used to attract, engage, and retain an audience by creating and sharing relevant articles, videos, podcasts, and other media. This approach establishes expertise, promotes brand awareness, and keeps your business top of mind when it's time to buy what you sell.

A content marketing strategy establishes your brand as a thought leader, boosting trust among your audience by creating and distributing content in various ways. Content marketing is a type of inbound marketing that attracts customers and builds loyalty, making it effective for customer retention.

Content marketing definition: What is content marketing?

Content marketing is the development and distribution of relevant, useful content—blogs, newsletters, white papers, social media posts, emails, videos, and the like—to current and potential customers. When it's done right, this content conveys expertise and makes it clear that a company values the people to whom it sells.



The consistent use of content marketing establishes and nurtures relationships with your prospective and existing customers. When your audience thinks of your company as a partner interested in their success and a valuable source of advice and guidance, they're more likely to choose you when it's time to buy.

Why is content marketing important?

Content marketing is a go-to tactic that's proven to work. Also, it provides a competitive advantage. Take a look at what the data says about content marketing:

- Businesses with blogs get 67% more leads than other companies.
- 72% of business to business (B2B) marketers say content marketing increases engagement and the number of leads they generate.
- 88% of people credit branded videos for convincing them to purchase a product or service.



Content marketing benefits businesses in many ways. When done right, an effective content marketing strategy can:

- Increase online visibility. A content strategy can help you attract more customers and website visitors, especially when people are constantly looking for solutions to their pain points. Offering educational and informative content about a topic they're interested in can help you increase visibility online through your website or social media accounts.
- Generate more leads. You can increase leads when content marketing is used to drive traffic. Since educating customers builds trust and helps them feel more comfortable purchasing from your business, you can generate more leads and start to develop relationships with potential shoppers.
- Boost loyalty. Loyalty is essential in marketing and business because the more loyal your customers are, the more repeat purchases they'll make. Offering content that informs consumers can help them begin to build trust with your brand and see you as a thought leader.
- Improve authority. Developing content is ideal for improving authority and becoming a thought leader in your industry. Not only does content help you build trust, but it can position your brand as the most authoritative on a particular topic.

How content marketing works

Your business can use content marketing to attract leads, [make a case for your product or service](#) when someone is researching what to buy, and close sales.

To use it effectively, you'll need to deliver the right content at each stage of the sales cycle—from awareness through consideration to purchase. If this sounds complicated, don't worry: Approaching content this way actually simplifies the process.

Here's how companies use content marketing in each stage of the sales cycle to engage and sell.

Awareness stage

At the first stage of the sales process, your content should focus on the top concerns of your audience. Writing about their pain points, challenges, and questions gives you the best chance of engaging with them. Content at the awareness stage should be educational, how-to advice. Save your selling for the consideration and closing phases.

The best content for this stage includes articles, blog posts, e-books, videos, and newsletters.

Examples:

- A restaurant writes a blog post about how to plan a menu for a graduation party in the spring.
- A bike touring company creates a short video on the topic "3 Ways to Choose the Right Bike Trip."
- An architecture firm creates an e-book called "Questions to Ask Before Hiring an Architect."

Consideration stage

In the consideration stage, content should offer a hybrid of helpful information and marketing. It should educate the reader about what features or functions to look for and how various features address their needs. Of course, your content should lean toward what your business offers.

The best content for this stage includes case studies, how-to articles, how-to videos, and checklists or worksheets.

Examples:

- A cloud-based phone system company creates a checklist entitled "8 Ways to Improve Your Phone Customer Service" that details the features and functions that make great customer service possible.
- A landscaping company creates case studies about "The Biggest Mistakes Most People Make When They Hire a Landscaper."
- A catering company features case studies of successful events with a focus on the benefits they offer, such as "How to Accommodate Food Allergies at Your Next Event," or "How to Ensure Your Caterer Uses Sustainable Practices."

Closing stage

Content marketing plays an important role when a prospect is close to buying. At this stage, you can focus on sales, as long as you continue to drive home why you're the best choice rather than just how great your services or products are.

Your central message here should be your expertise, knowledge, and the differentiating benefits of what you sell.

Best content for this stage: case studies, user-generated content, buyer's guide, product video, research report

Examples:

- A consulting firm creates a research report proving that businesses that engage in strategic planning, assessments by outsiders, and other services—shaped by what services it offers—experience higher growth.
- A design agency creates short videos showcasing the variety in its work across different industries to demonstrate its diverse expertise.
- An orthodontist practice encourages patients to contribute testimonials about its state-of-the-art equipment and top-notch service.

How to get started with content marketing

Content marketing can feel overwhelming, but it doesn't have to be. A successful content marketing campaign should be manageable and sustainable. Take these steps to get started:

How to get started with content marketing



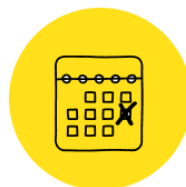
Identify your audience



Determine the right formats



Determine how you'll distribute



Choose a sustainable schedule



Follow best practices

Identify your audience

To create content for a particular reader, you need to have a clear idea of their priorities, challenges, and preferences. If you have detailed descriptions of your various segments, choose 1 or 2 to write for. Otherwise, craft profiles of your audience members and prospects before starting.

Determine the right formats

The right format corresponds with what stage of the sales cycle you're creating content for. Another important consideration includes what formats will best help you showcase value. For some, this will be a video; for others, a checklist.

An audience will judge your content on its quality, and they should. Identify the right resource, internal or external, to create this work. Regardless of who creates it, hire a professional proofreader to review anything before it goes out the door.

Determine how you'll distribute

Will you post content on your site, email it to people, or print it for an event? Start with "where" you know your audience is likely to be, and choose formats that make sense. For example, an article makes sense to send via an email, a checklist or worksheet can be posted on social media, and a buyer's guide is a good follow-up to a pitch.

Choose a sustainable schedule

Once you know who your target readers are and the best formats for every stage in the sales cycle, create a short-term (3-6 months) plan. It's easy to develop a content marketing plan that's overly ambitious. However, the plan you design should have content elements you can realistically make based on your budget and resources. Keep track of how long it takes you to create each piece of content so that you can build that time into your schedule.

Follow best practices

Compelling content is clearly written and doesn't contain jargon that only you and your peers will know. It should also include detailed how-to advice. A short, relevant, actionable piece of content is best.

SEO and content marketing

Content marketing makes it easy for good prospects to find your business. However, you can boost your efforts with search engine optimization (SEO).

Here are a few important best practices:

Keywords are the foundation of your SEO effort. These all-important words and phrases are the terms a prospect types into a search engine when they're looking for a company, product, or service.

When you include the right keywords in your content, you'll attract more traffic. The best keywords are:

- Plain-language: language your audience uses to describe their pain points and needs
- Relevant: keywords that match the expertise, products, and services you provide

- Specific: a combination of your focus, industry expertise, prospect pain points, and other relevant details

SEO has evolved so that search success depends in part on how well your content does what it says it'll do. Search engines review content copy, assess its relevance, and determine whether it delivers on what the headline promises.

Because of the importance search engines place on copy, using keywords throughout your content is important. Use the following guidelines:

- Focus on 1 to 2 keywords. Avoid “keyword stuffing” by writing about what matters to your prospects with a focus on just a few keyword phrases.
- Use keywords in the title. Make what the article is about clear and explicit.
- Use keywords throughout. Find a way of naturally incorporating your keywords into your content.
- Stay on topic. Good-quality content that provides advice related to a headline will perform best.

Social media and content marketing

Once you have content, it's time to get the word out about it. [Social media](#)—[Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [YouTube](#), [Twitter](#), Medium, [Instagram](#), [and others](#)—is a proven and easy way to promote your content. You write a post and link to your content, and then voila! People are engaged.

You can do this through 3 steps:

1. Focus on high-potential channels. The best social media outlets for you are the ones frequented by your audience. Consider the big, popular channels, as well as smaller, industry-focused ones that are likely to connect you with good prospects. Ask your audience what channels they favor and build a manageable list based on their preferences.
2. Craft your copy to fit the channel. Each social media channel has a level of professionalism versus fun, an accepted voice, and other details all its own. Before you write posts for a channel, spend some time reviewing posts to familiarize yourself with these details. Then, give your posts some of your own company spirit.
3. Test and modify your approach. A winning social media promotion effort involves trial and error. Track responses from the various channels for quantity and quality. Fewer high-potential engagements may mean a channel is a good fit, as opposed to a slew of clicks that never turn into an audience.

Put content to work for your business

Let your expertise and unique value shine through by creating content that attracts, engages, and sells. With some planning and systematic content marketing, you can reach the right people and drive brand loyalty.

Content marketing is used by leading brands [2]

Our [annual research](#) shows the vast majority of marketers are using content marketing. In fact, it is used by many prominent organizations in the world, including **P&G, Microsoft, Cisco Systems, and John Deere**. It's also developed and executed by small businesses and one-person shops around the globe. Why? Because it works.

An example:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rbKvoKeu4vc>

Content marketing is good for your bottom line — and your customers

Specifically, there are four key reasons – and benefits – for enterprises to use content marketing:

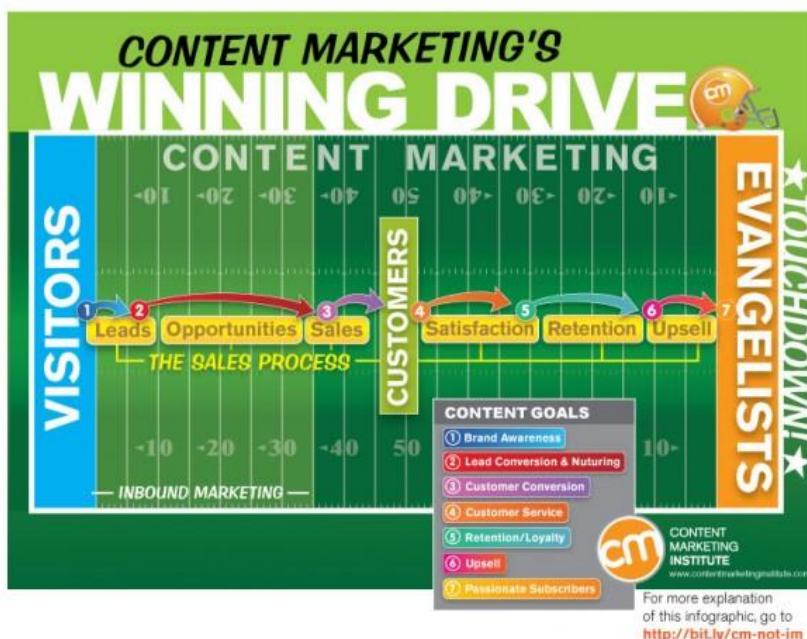
- Increased sales
- Cost savings
- Better customers who have more loyalty
- Content as a profit center

Content is the present – and future – of marketing

Go back and read the content marketing definition one more time, but this time remove the relevant and valuable. That's the difference between content marketing and the other informational garbage you get from companies trying to sell you "stuff." Companies send us information all the time – it's just that most of the time it's not very relevant or valuable (can you say spam?). That's what makes content marketing so intriguing in today's environment of thousands of marketing messages per person per day.

The history of content marketing through a video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9OHgMMpGLzk>



References

- [1] <https://mailchimp.com/marketing-glossary/content-marketing/> (last accessed: 2023. 06. 22.)
- [2] <https://contentmarketinginstitute.com/what-is-content-marketing/> (last accessed: 2023. 06. 22.)