

The Beginner's Guide to Content Marketing

The Who, What, When, Where,
Why (And How) of
Content Marketing



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About this Whitepaper

The Content Marketing Hype

There is a lot of *buzz* around content marketing, but there is also a lot of confusion. It's hard to figure out exactly **what** content marketing is, **why** it can be valuable, and **how** it should be executed.

Learning the New Ways

This whitepaper seeks to create understanding for marketing professionals and executives who realize that the old sales process doesn't work as well as it once did. Customer interaction has changed. We need a new way.



Content Marketing: Defined

Content marketing is the creation and sharing of content in order to engage current and potential customers, thereby building trust with the audience.

The Role of Content Marketing

Importantly, the content is not about you or your organization – *it's about the audience*. True content marketing delivers value to that audience. It provides information that helps people do their jobs better or live their lives better. When you provide high quality, relevant and valuable information, you educate. Content informs. It expresses an opinion, analyzes where an industry is headed, or presents new information that is newsworthy.



Content Marketing is not...



Although all of those channels can be used to market the content, they are typically more promotional, rather than informational.

Got it? Good.

Why?

(The Business Case)

Tectonic shifts in technology and marketing have changed the game. Where once advertisers held all the control, the customers are now in control.

As Christine Crandall wrote in Forbes,¹ “Buyers took control when information became ubiquitous on the Web. No longer dependent upon marketing for information on trends or new ways to solve problems, and equally no longer dependent on Sales to navigate the pros and cons of solutions they were considering – buyers threw off the shackles and rewrote the rules.”

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What Your Customers Really Want

Your prospects and customers crave information. Simultaneously, the Internet is filled with information, some of it good, some of it bad. It can be difficult for the audience to determine which information is accurate and worthwhile; consequently, they're searching for a trusted source. Your organization can be that source.

Consider these statistics:



57 percent of marketers have acquired customers from their blogs. ²



82 percent of consumers say they like reading relevant content from brands. ³



78 percent of consumers believe that organizations providing custom content are interested in building good relationships with them. ⁴



48 percent of consumers say content makes them feel more positively toward the brand. ⁵



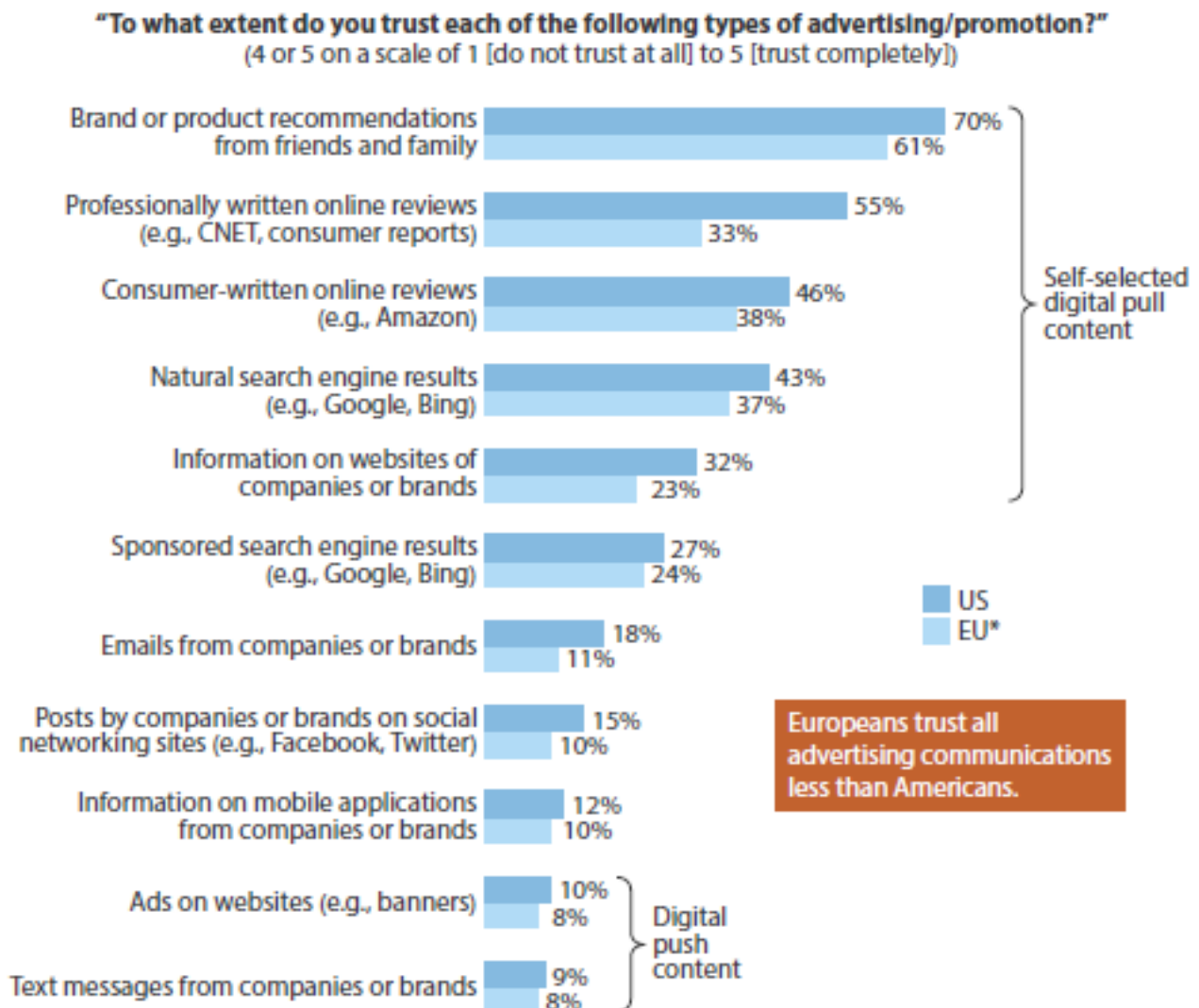
Content costs **62 percent** less per lead than traditional outbound marketing. ⁶

Building Trust

Deliver a constant flow of relevant, high quality information, and your prospects will be grateful. They'll feel like you're looking out for their interests. They'll feel connected. The company that delivers quality content is the one they're going to trust. And in today's opt-in marketplace, building trust is necessary before a sale takes place.

Consider the results of a study done by Forrester Research. This chart shows that consumers simply don't trust other forms of marketing:

Figure 1 Consumers Trust Self-Selected Content More Than Push Communications



Base: 57,499 US online adults (ages 18+)

*Base: 15,654 EU-7 online adults (ages 18+)

Source: North American Technographics® Online Benchmark Survey (Part 1), Q2 2012 (US, Canada)

*Source: European Technographics Online Benchmark Survey, Q3 2012

Establishing Presence on the World Wide Web

Additionally, great content locates you on the Internet. Search engine algorithms have been transformed to reward websites that provide great information, and actually punish old SEO tricks.



What?

(The Topics You Should Write About)

A frequent refrain – especially among B2B professionals – is our industry is **boring**; there's nothing to write about. For some businesses, that is true, but for most it is not.

Case Study #1

For proof, check out the story of content marketing superstar and swimming pool salesman, Marcus Sheridan.⁷ Sheridan's pool company was on the brink of extinction when he decided to pursue content marketing.



“ We embraced the power of content, and we established very quickly the most successful blog in the swimming pool industry. Essentially, all we did is we just answered every single question that we had ever received from a consumer, without filter. That's what we did, and immediately, within six months, it was on top of the industry. The leads and the traffic and the sales started pouring in because of it.”

Swimming pools!

What Should You Write About?

The important thing to understand is what will be valuable to the audience. There are many content strategists who will tell you that you can repurpose your sales materials as consumable content, but that is typically not true. But there *are* things to write about. Here's a quick checklist of places to search for ideas:

- ✓ Client questions you receive
- ✓ Case studies
- ✓ Industry articles (offer your analysis)
- ✓ Your keywords
- ✓ Interview your partners
- ✓ Social media conversations
- ✓ Other websites and forums (but don't plagiarize!)
- ✓ Conversations you have at industry events
- ✓ The news

We recommend to our clients that you not focus on blogging about the company barbeque, or your kids' softball team. Occasionally, these topics are fine to showcase your culture, but your content strategy should not read like an internal company newsletter.

Who?

(Identifying the Audience)

Understanding the audience is a critical first step before launching a content strategy.

Step 1

Begin by sitting down with your marketing and/or content team and designing a *persona profile*. A great content marketing effort requires that content be audience-centric, so creating a deep understanding of the audience is Step One.

The Persona Profile

The persona profile should identify key aspects of audience members. Questions that should be answered include:

- What are the demographics of the group?
- What are their daily pressures?
- What are their daily responsibilities?
- What keeps them up at night?
- Why do they buy?
- What are the decision points?



Who?

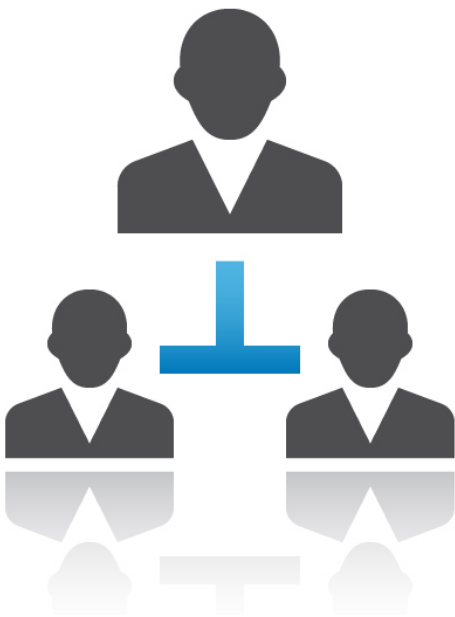
(Identifying the Content Producers)

This is where so many content strategies get bogged down. The strategy is all set, topics have been decided upon and the audience has been identified. But the strategy is, in many ways, the easy part. The ongoing production is where content marketing comes to life.

The rinse-and-repeat is what makes it effective.

Build a Strong Foundation

So, even though the question of who will do the work is in the middle of this whitepaper, you must consider this early on, typically before you decide to pursue the content strategy. If you're counting on in-house Subject Matter Experts, you need to have a support plan, if not a full-fledged Plan B; expecting busy principals in the organization to set aside time weekly (or monthly, or even daily) is a shaky foundation on which to build this strategy.



The Need for Journalists

We believe it's important to incorporate former journalists into the mix. Former reporters have the skills you're looking for – they can research, write and produce content, and do it all with an efficiency that's not present in most other professional disciplines.



How to Find Them

There are a number of avenues through which to pursue this talent – members of your marketing team may have a journalistic background and be able to execute the strategy, depending upon their other duties. There are many former journalists looking for freelance work. Or you can seek out an agency that is proficient at producing content across a variety of industries.



How?

(Getting Started- The Editorial Brief)

You've clearly defined your audience by creating persona profiles. The next step is to define the scope of the project to ensure that everyone is – literally – on the same page.

The Editorial Brief

You need to create an **editorial brief** that clearly defines the types of content you'll be creating, the tone, the frequency, and other key information that the content team and the marketing team need to fully understand. It provides a baseline expectation and helps to ensure that the content effort always matches your brand and business goals.



Editorial Calendar

Any successful content strategy requires an editorial calendar – a prioritized list of what you are publishing. Without one, things slide, and success gets further and further away. An editorial calendar should include:



*Often a subject matter expert to review the content before publication

Content Production

This is where content marketing either succeeds or fails – the rinse-and-repeat of day-in, day-out content creation. To achieve success, you need a dedicated team.

If your plan is to have company principals write in their spare time, it probably isn't going to work. Creating a steady flow of high-quality content can't be anyone's second or third job.

Who Should Be Part of Your Team

Whether you use freelance writers, build an in-house team, or a content marketing agency, it is recommended that your team include former journalists. The job of a journalist is to assemble a set of disparate facts and weave them into a story that makes sense to the audience. That's exactly the skill you're looking for. You need professionals who can research, conduct interviews, and produce a cohesive story that is compelling to your prospects and customers. Journalists can accomplish this for you, and do it efficiently.



When?

(Frequency of Publishing Content)

It is best to produce fresh content as often as possible. Many businesses feel that going from zero to five blog posts and a video every week would be too much for the audience, but research suggests that they're wrong. However, content for content's sake is not the way to win the day.

The Newsroom Concept

The best way to think about the question of when to publish is to embrace the concept of a newsroom. As Jerry Wind and Baba Shetty wrote at the Harvard Business Review,⁸ part of a newsroom's charter is to be prolific – to create a lot of content. However, it must be quality content. Producing a high volume of quality content is difficult, but that is the goal. A great starting point is to aim for a new article or blog post five days a week. If you fall short, so be it. But make it a stretch goal.



Conclusion

A Preference Marketing World

As marketers, we are now operating in a world of “preference marketing.” Whereas once upon a time, marketing raised awareness, it now creates preference.

The rise of the Internet and subsequent changes in technology has shifted the balance of power to the customer. She can search globally for goods and services, and she can purchase from anywhere too. The customer now has an exponentially higher number of options.

You Can Stand Out

To build preference, you need to build trust. By becoming a trusted source of information, you demonstrate expertise, but also begin to break down any obstacles to making the sale; you are building trust because you are “giving away” your knowledge.

And in the era of preference marketing, trust always comes before the sale.



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- 6 *Is Your 2013 Planning a Budget Battle? Try Something New - Preference Marketing*, by Christine Crandall, Forbes, September 9, 2012
- 7 *No excuses Content Marketing Interview with Marcus Sheridan*, by Pamela Muldoon, Content Marketing Institute, July 16, 2012
- 8 *Advertisers Should Act More Like Newsrooms*, by Jerry Wind & Baba Shetty, Harvard Business Review, February 15, 2013

ABOUT SCRIBEWISE

Scribewise was formed to help our clients bridge the gap between old school communications tactics and the rapidly emerging new way of doing business. We are a content creation engine; **an outsourced newsroom of experienced journalists** who can efficiently create high-quality content that builds a connection with your audience.

We combine journalistic content development and delivery with social media and email marketing, and marry it to your SEO strategy.

Established in 2012, Scribewise is a fast-growing company located in Center City Philadelphia. For more information, find us at www.scribewise.com.

