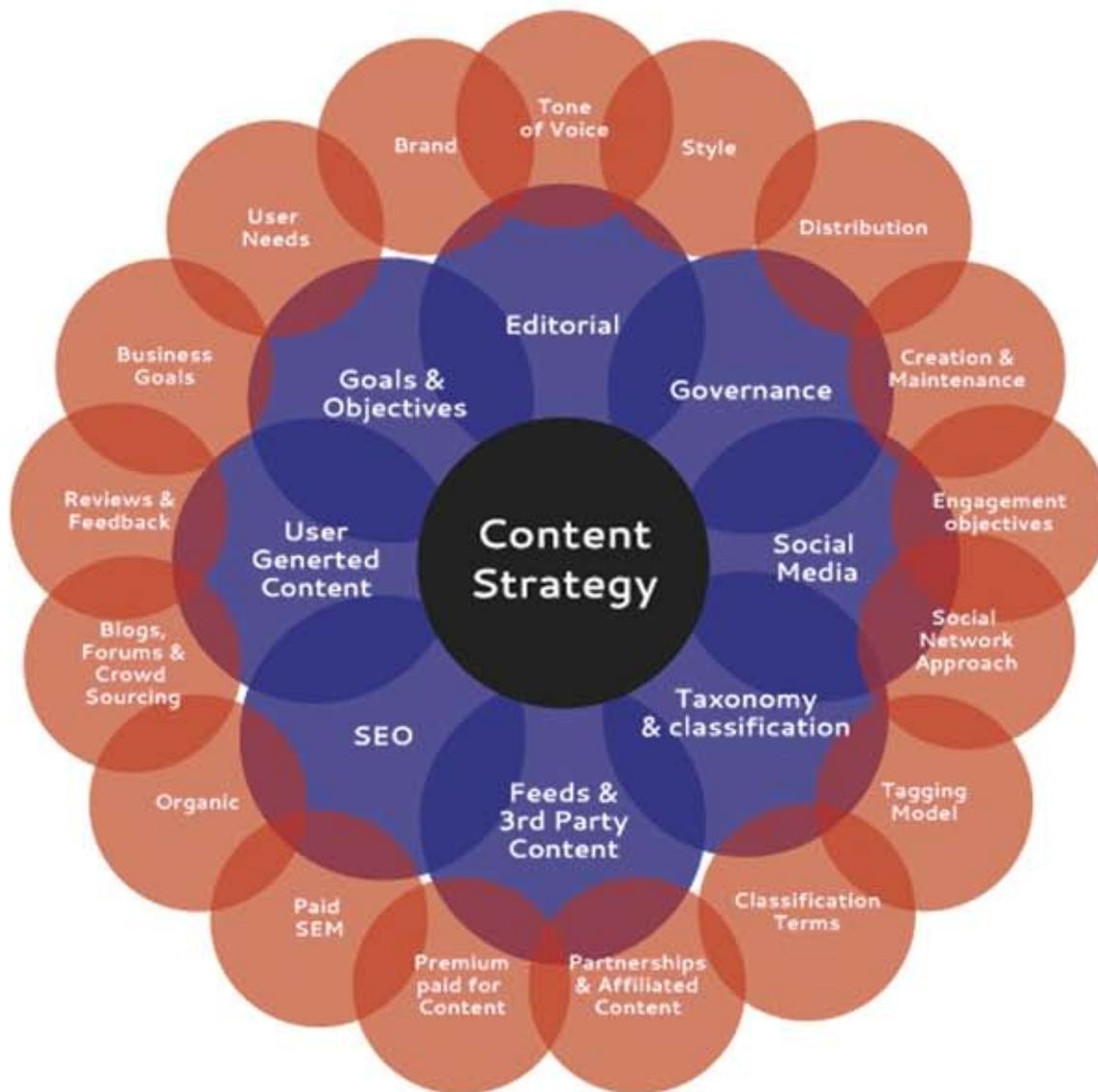


Nutshell



An ISA Publication

Volume 4, October - December 2019



Understanding Content Strategy

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From the Chairman's desk

Dear Member,

Content is the backbone of every communication strategy across platforms, as it can create the perfect link between your brand and your audience. Content can transform your audience into loyal customers and even a powerful, engaged community or even end up making your brand undesirable.

The way people consume content today is influenced by few key factors such as the widespread reach of the internet as well as the adoption at a global scale of mobile phones. With a vast majority of people owning smartphones with internet access, content has suddenly become available to anyone at anytime.

Content strategy is the process of getting the right content to the right user at the right time through strategic planning of content creation, delivery, and governance. It is a process of approaching a business's content as a medium that needs to be strategically selected and placed to engage the audience, convey a message and eventually, inspire action.

This issue of the Nutshell attempts to understand the complexities of creating the right Content Strategy in an ever evolving customer world and understand the process for its effective deployment. We would love to hear from you. Do send-in your feedback to isa.sg@insocietyad.com

Regards,



Sunil Kataria
Chairman

Understanding Content Strategy

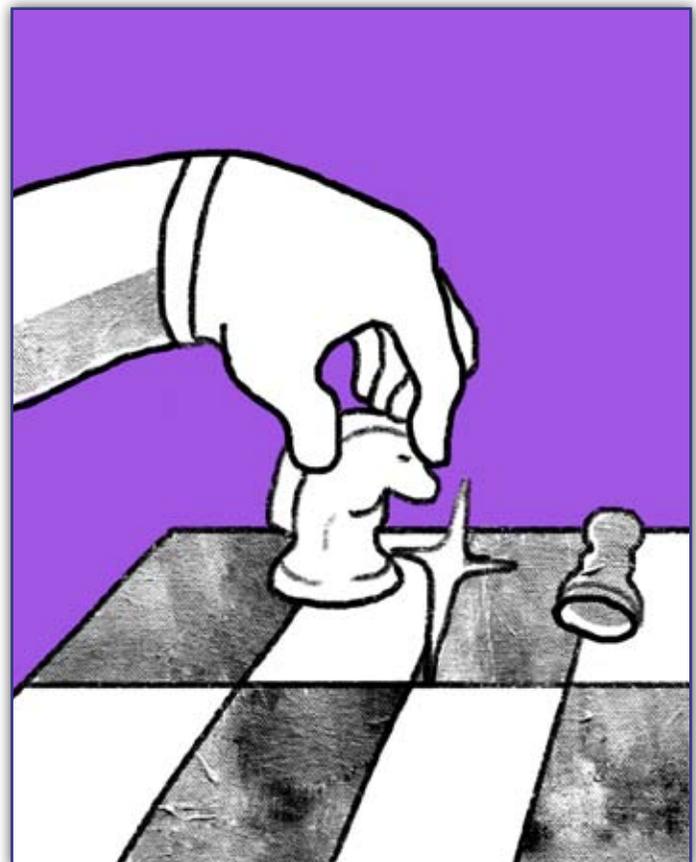
Content is the backbone of every communication strategy across platforms, as it can create the perfect link between your brand and your audience. Content can transform your audience into loyal customers and even a powerful, engaged community - or end up making your brand undesirable. Content Strategy is a high-level vision that guides future content development to deliver against a specific business objective. It is a process of approaching a business's content as a medium that needs to be strategically selected and placed to engage the audience, convey a message and eventually, inspire action.

Content Strategy Basics

Content is the backbone of every communication strategy across platforms, as it can create the perfect link between your brand and your audience. Content can transform your audience into loyal customers and even a powerful, engaged community - or end up making your brand undesirable.

The way people consume content today is influenced by few key factors such as the widespread reach of the internet as well as the adoption at a global scale of mobile phones. With a vast majority of people owning smartphones with internet access, content has suddenly become available to anyone at anytime.

Content strategy is the process of getting the right content to the right user at the right time



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through strategic planning of content creation, delivery, and governance. It is a process of approaching a business's content as a medium that needs to be strategically selected and placed to engage the audience, convey a message and eventually, inspire action.

Content strategy focuses on the planning, creation, delivery, and governance of content. Content not only includes the words on the page but also the images and multimedia that are used. Ensuring that you have useful and usable content that is well structured and easily found is vital to improving the user experience of a website.



Content Strategy is therefore a high-level vision that guides future content development to deliver against a specific business objective. It is a process of approaching a business's content as a medium that needs to be strategically selected and placed to engage the audience, convey a message and eventually, inspire action.



Whom are you creating content for

Who's the target audience for this content? For how many audiences are you creating content? Just as your business might have more than one type of customer, your content strategy can cater to more than one type of reader or viewer.

Using a variety of content types and channels will help you deliver different content to each type of audience you have in mind and engage everyone your company does business with.

The Problem it's Going to Solve for that Audience

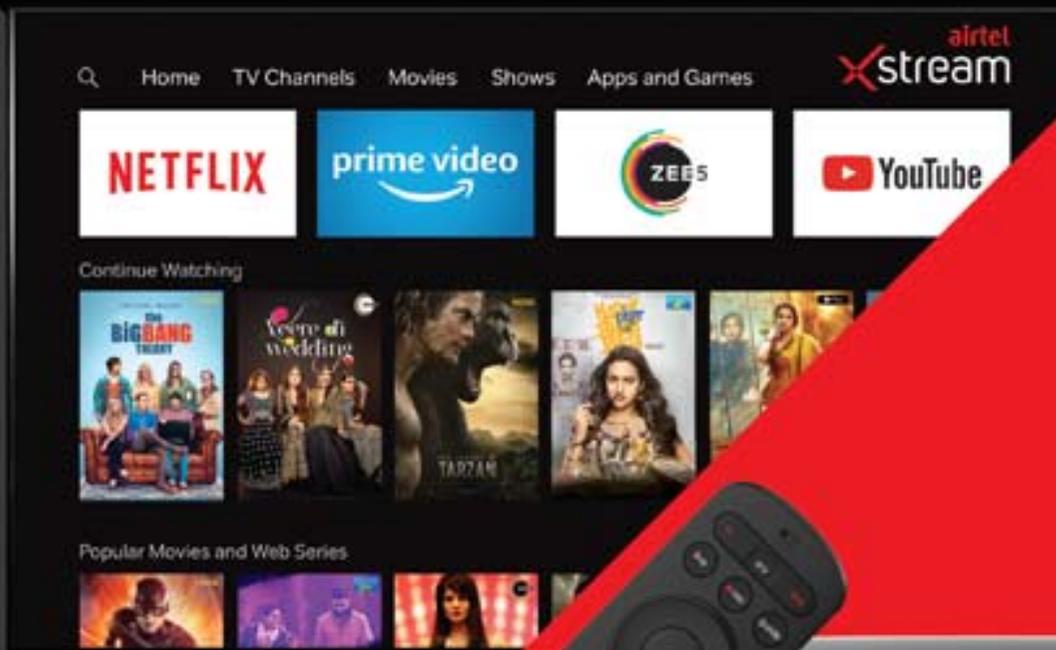
Ideally, your product or service solves a problem you know your audience has. By the same token, your content coaches and educates your audience through this problem as they begin to identify and address it.

A sound content strategy supports people on both sides of your product: those who are still figuring out what their main challenges are, and those who are already using your product



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to overcome these challenges. Your content reinforces the solution(s) you're offering and makes your customers more qualified users of your product.

What Makes You Unique

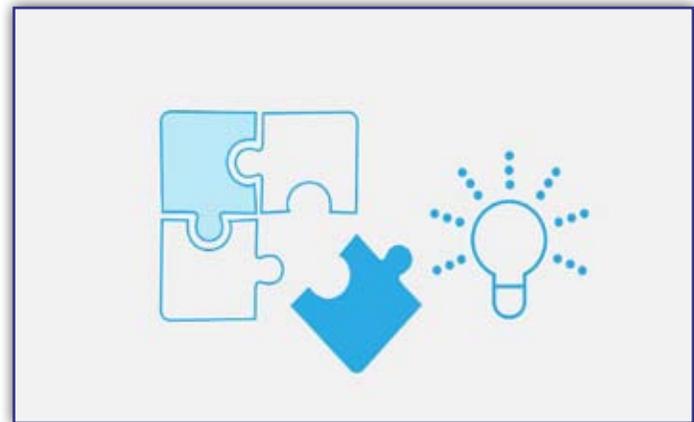
Your competitors likely have a similar product as yours, which means your potential customers need to know what makes yours better -- or, at least, different. This is where content comes in. In order to prove why you're worth buying from, you need to prove why you're worth listening to.

The Content Formats You'll Focus On

What forms will your content take? Infographics? Videos? Blog posts? Having identified the topics you want to take a position on, you'll need to determine which formats to budget for so you can best express that position.

The Channels Where It'll Be Published

Just as you can create content in different formats, you'll also have different channels you can publish to. Channels can include owned properties, such as your website and blog; and social media properties, such as Facebook and Twitter. We'll talk more about social media content strategy in the step-by-step guide later in this article.



How You'll Manage Creation and Publication

Figuring out how you'll create and publish all your content can be a daunting task. It's important for a content strategy to know who's creating what, where it's being published, and when it's going live.

Today's content strategies prevent clutter by managing content from a topic standpoint. When planning a content calendar around topics, you can easily visualize your company's message and assert yourself as an authority in your market over time.

Creating a Comprehensive Strategy and Governance

The goal of content strategy is to create meaningful, cohesive, engaging, and sustainable content. Your strategy helps you identify what already exists, what should be created and, more importantly, why it should be created.

The components that come together to help you create a successful strategy and governance can be seen below:

Content Lifecycle

Producing compelling and sustainable content means that you need to understand and follow the content lifecycle. There are essentially five stages in the lifecycle. In general, content lifecycles include the following:

- **Audit and Analysis:** Content stakeholder interviews, competitive analysis, objective analysis and evaluation of the content environment (site, partner content, sister, parent sites).
- **Strategy:** Determining topical ownership areas, taxonomy, process/ workflow for content production, sourcing plan, voice and brand definition.
- **Plan:** Staffing recommendations, content management system customization, metadata plan, communications plan, migration plan.
- **Create:** Writing content, asset production, governance model, search engine optimization, quality assurance.
- **Maintain:** Plan for periodic auditing, advice the client, determine targets for success measures.

Several of the deliverables related to each of the above phases overlap with the deliverables of other fields, including information architecture, user research, project management, web analytics. Instead of thinking of who owns each deliverable, it's important to think of who contributes to each and how those different contributions come together to define the final product. There's value in including multiple perspectives on deliverables.



Best Practices for Creating Meaningful Content

Here are the best practices to help you create meaningful and relevant content. Each piece of content should:



- Reflect your organization's goals and users' needs. You can discover your users' needs through conducting market research, user research, and analyzing web metrics.
- Understand how users think and speak about a subject. Content should then be created and structured based on that. Doing this will also help you with search engine optimization (SEO).
- Communicate to people in a way that they understand. Embracing plain writing principles helps with this.
- Be useful by being purposeful; omit the needless.
- Be up-to-date and factual. When new information becomes available, update your content or archive it.
- Be accessible to all people. You have a responsibility to make sure that all people can access and benefit from your information.

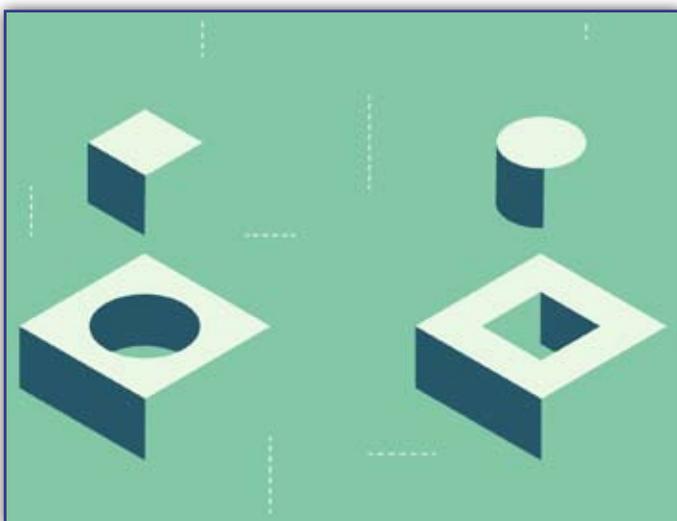


other content pieces, consider which ones you want to make. For instance, if you've been doing weekly blog posts for the past year, creating an ebook that distills all your blog posts into one ultimate guide would be one of the ways to offer information in a different format. We'll go over several different types of content you can use further down the list.

If you've been in the business for a while, review your content marketing efforts and the results from it in the last year. Figure out what you can do differently in the upcoming year and set new goals. (Pro tip: Now is a great time to align your team's goals with the rest of your organization's goals.)

4. Choose a content management system.

Have a system in place where you can manage your content. A few vital parts of content management include content creation, content publication, and content analytics.



5. Brainstorm content ideas.

Now, it's time to start coming up with ideas for your next content project.

6. Determine which types of content you want to create.

There are a variety of options out there to design your content.

7. Publish and manage your content.

Your marketing plan should go beyond the types of content you'll create -- it should also cover how you'll organize your content. With the help of an editorial calendar, you'll be on the right track for publishing well-balanced and diverse content on your website. Then, create a social media content calendar so you can promote and manage your content on other sites.

Content strategy

On the other hand, content strategy delves deeper into the "creation, publication, and governance of useful, usable content." Note that content strategy often goes beyond the scope of a content marketing strategy, as it helps businesses manage all of the content they have.



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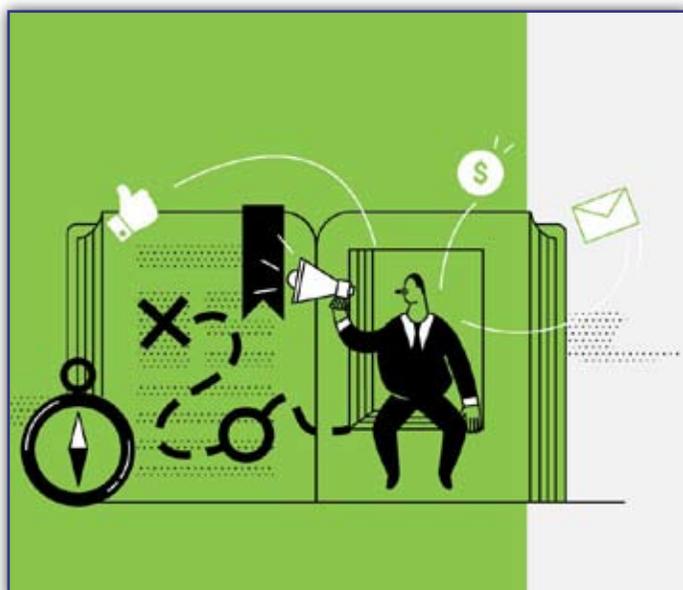
If you want your content to get to the right place at the right time – or you want readers to discover related content and become more engrossed in the content on your site – your metadata is key.

Five Content Strategy Practices That Will Make You a Better Marketer Metadata

Blog categories and tags are two types of metadata that you can probably easily visualize. Among other benefits, categories and tags give people – both within and outside the business – an easy way to surface related content by topic (for example, measurement) or by content type (for example, templates). In some cases, this surfacing is built into the interface so that related topics appear automatically. In other cases, people bring up related topics themselves by clicking a category name or tag name.

Digital Governance Framework

Digital governance formalizes which members of your digital content team are responsible for all the various aspects of content creation, production, distribution, and maintenance – and creating, maintaining, and communicating those content standards across the organization. Think of it as a way

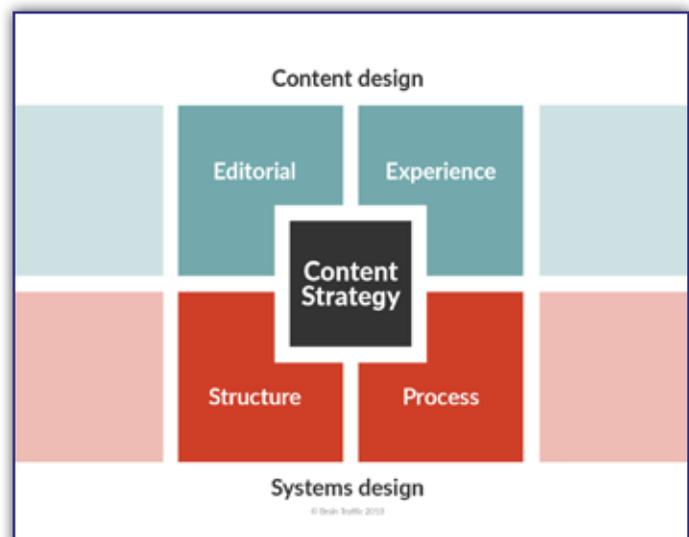


of assigning roles and responsibilities for making decisions about your company’s digital presence – particularly important for behind-the-scenes responsibilities, such as procedures for revisiting and refreshing older content.

It’s tempting to think that it’s okay for your team to be in chaos if you are “getting the job done.” However, teams in chaos aren’t really getting the job done from the customer’s point of view.

Agile Marketing

An Agile process helps teams prioritize – and do – what is most critical for the business. Agile marketing gives marketers a way to focus on appropriate activities within their spheres of responsibility. Not only does it

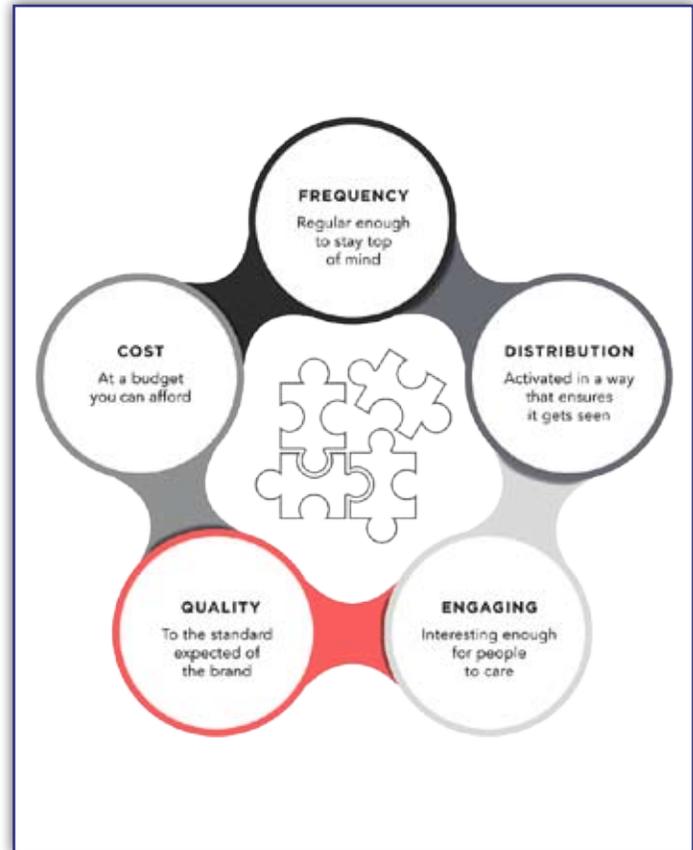




make us more accountable, but it also gives us the much-needed ability to say no – or not yet – to certain requests.

Agile processes help marketers get things done: the right things. If you are new to Agile, think about it like this: You have a list of priorities that your team has identified to be most pressing, and you have committed your next “sprint”. Sprints are set periods during which team members aim to complete a set amount of work that’s connected to a long-term plan. They typically last from one week to one month. When a new request comes in, you do one of two things:

- You stop and address it if it is more important than what you were working on.



- You record it as something to address in a future sprint – and you return to your priorities.

Of course, there is more to Agile than that, but can you envision what an improvement even these basics could make with your process?

Core Content Strategy Statement

Core content strategy statement is a single statement that includes business goals, target audience, and audience needs. This statement can then be used to brainstorm and prioritize topic ideas.

A core content strategy statement is different from an editorial mission statement or vision statement because it is not something that is crafted once and applies to everything you do. It’s more flexible and more performance-oriented, and you can create as many as you want. You might create one for a given content marketing initiative or for a specific audience. You can make it broad or narrow.



Data Asset Management

Digital Asset Management (DAM) solutions can store – and retrieve – all kinds of digital assets, including text, images, videos, etc. With all of your content in one place, your team can use and reuse content more efficiently. A DAM also helps with version control and consistency. DAMs are much more robust than cloud-based storage systems, such as Dropbox and Box.

Content Plan

In contrast to the other two, a content plan is very tactical. It documents the specifics of how you will execute your strategy, and who on your team will be handling each task. It's important to understand that you need a content marketing strategy before you build your content plan. Think of it as a marketing plan that specifically relates to content; thus, it should include details such as the key topic areas you will cover, what content you will create, when and how to share your content, and specific calls to action you will include.

When it comes to creating successful content marketing initiatives, it is found that most of the tasks can be divided into four key areas (with a bit of overlap here and there): thinking, planning, doing, and improving.

The Thinking Phase

In this strategy development phase, your business must determine why and for whom

it's creating content and what goals it will achieve. It's also the phase where you elicit the stakeholder support you need to position your content marketing program for optimal success.

Getting buy-in: A lot of moving parts need to be tended to if you want to run a well-oiled content marketing machine. But there's one barrier in particular that is sure to throw a monkey wrench into the works if you don't attack it head-on: lack of executive support.

Building a strategy: According to the Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends research, 53% of the most effective content marketers have a documented strategy. A strategic road map is essential for enterprise content initiatives, as it helps everyone in your organization understand the opportunities and challenges involved, prioritize projects, and execute on each effort with a shared purpose in mind.

Developing a mission statement: A content marketing mission is an outline of a company's reason for creating content, and the priorities and perspectives it will uphold in pursuit of that mission. As it helps to define the unique content marketing value your business provides, it's a critical component





for governing your content creation efforts and keeping them focused on your business goals.

Building audience personas: A buyer persona is a composite sketch of a key segment of your audience; it characterizes who they are, what their relevant needs are, and what role they are likely to play in the purchasing process. Without personas to guide your decisions, you are more likely to revert to creating content around what you know best (your products and company) instead of around the information your audience is actively seeking.

Mapping it all out: Once you determine your mission, target audience, strategic goals, and objectives, the next step is to build a framework that defines how your organization will use content to achieve them.

The Planning Phase

This phase is the “reality bridge,” as it describes the actions necessary to take your content



marketing program from its existence as a lofty strategic ideal to its realization as a fully functional and productive content marketing engine.

Building the framework for your content plan: *Content marketing works best when you plan for its success.* Mapping key considerations, such as your topics and ideas, procedural guidelines, workflow processes, and channel priorities before you start to write will make it much easier to keep the high-quality content flowing smoothly, and overcome any unexpected challenges.

Identifying your customers’ journey: Providing your audience with a rewarding experience is the whole point of content marketing. So it’s essential to understand their consumption preferences, engagement habits, and pain points – as well as how those needs may change over time – if you expect your content to deliver the kind of value that will help you forge deeper customer relationships.

Aligning content ideas with business goals: If you want your content to reach the right people at the right time, on the right channels, and drive them to take action, you need accurate audience data to inform your publishing



plans, as well as the specific content ideas you execute.

Structuring your team resources: Because there are just so many moving parts to effective content marketing creation and distribution, it's imperative that everyone involved knows who is responsible for each task and that all the most essential tasks are being accounted for in your content marketing process.

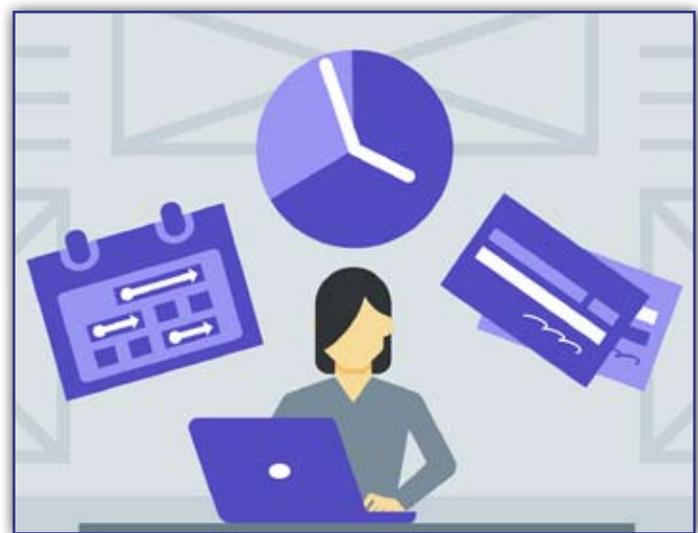
Establishing your editorial guidelines: At a minimum, your editorial content plan should outline the defining characteristics of your



brand identity (as it relates to the content you will publish), the preferred voice and style of your content, and the editorial standards governing your content efforts.

Setting your editorial calendar: This most steady and stalwart of tools in the content marketer's arsenal has transformed itself over the years, from a simple spreadsheet for tracking what we publish to an essential component for managing the entire life cycle of our organization's content marketing program.

Creating your channel plan: This component of your editorial plan governs how, when, and on what specific platforms you will publish content, as well as any rules of engagement that your organization would like to set for interacting on those channels.



The Doing Phase

Once you've set your strategy and outlined your plans for executing it, it's time to start creating those compelling, customer-driven stories that will help you reach that content castle in the sky. Though the creative process is unique to every business, plenty of tools can help with generating story ideas, organizing them into relevant content pieces, and sharing them with a target audience.



Brainstorming ideas: Team brainstorming sessions are a great tool for getting the creative juices flowing and coming up with new ideas for content creation.

Prioritizing your productivity: Not every suggested idea will be a good fit for your content marketing strategy. Some others may be fantastic on paper but require more time and resources than your team can spare. When these situations arise, it helps to have a process for determining which projects are urgent, as well as for handling essential go/no-go decisions.

Managing your ongoing progress: The more you blog, the more you need a simple, scalable way to track your previous blog posts and plan your future blog content.

Crafting compelling headlines: Headline writing may just be the most difficult part of content creation. Headlines need to grab attention and they need to be clear, relevant, and understandable, so readers find exactly what they expect when they choose to engage with your content.

Listening to your community: It's possible to create content that you think your audience will like, but the one true way to gauge the impact your content is having on your audience is to listen to the conversations they are having on social media about your business.



The Improving Phase

These tasks help you maintain, strengthen, and grow your content kingdom by identifying what's working (and fixing what isn't), enhancing the value and impact of your efforts, and amplifying your content's power through strategic promotion and optimization techniques.

Maximizing the value of your platforms: These days, it seems like there's a hot, new content platform hitting the scene before the buzz has even started to cool on the last one. But that doesn't mean content marketers need to start publishing here, there, and everywhere to make an impact. Instead, your business may be better served by optimizing the content you are



already publishing on established channels, like SlideShare, LinkedIn, or your blog.

Promoting content: Content marketing promotion can take many forms, such as sharing your published content on your social channels, enlisting the assistance of industry influencers, incorporating native advertising and other paid media opportunities, or leveraging other non-obvious promotion techniques.

Optimizing for search engines: Optimizing your content marketing for search can feel like a game of Clue – a process of trial and error where you may encounter a lot of false starts and dead ends before finding the right path to success. But there are more strategic ways to plan and manage your SEO efforts so that your content draws in your target audience and delivers the value they are looking for.

Do I really need to create a content marketing strategy?

Yes! Not only do you need a strategy, you also need to document it. Those with a documented content marketing strategy:

- Are far more likely to consider themselves effective at content marketing
- Feel significantly less challenged with every aspect of content marketing
- Generally consider themselves more



effective in their use of all content marketing tactics and social media channels

- Were able to justify spending a higher percentage of their marketing budget on content marketing

What should my content marketing strategy include?

Think of a content marketing strategy as an outline of your key business and customer needs, plus a detailed plan for how you will use content to address them.

While there are no definitive “templates” for building a content marketing strategy – each one will be unique to the business that creates it – there are five components that they commonly include:

- Your business case for innovating with content marketing: By communicating your reasons for creating content, the risks involved, and your vision of what success will look like, you are much more likely to gain executive support for your strategy – and to get permission to make a mistake here and there as you figure out what works best for your business.



- Your business plan for content marketing: This covers the goals you have for your content program, the unique value you are looking to provide through your content, and details of your business model. It also should outline the obstacles and opportunities you may encounter as you execute your plan.
- Your audience personas and content maps: This is where you describe the specific audiences for whom you will create content, what their needs are, and what their content engagement cycle might look like. You may also want to map out content you can deliver throughout their buyer's journey in order to move them closer to their goals.
- Your brand story: Here you characterize your content marketing in terms of what ideas and messages you want to communicate, how those messages differ from the competition, and how you see the landscape evolving once you have shared them with your audience.
- Your channel plan: This should include the platforms you will use to tell your story; what your criteria, processes, and objectives are for each one; and how you will connect them so that they create a cohesive brand conversation.

Do I need to share our content marketing strategy with other teams / departments in my company?

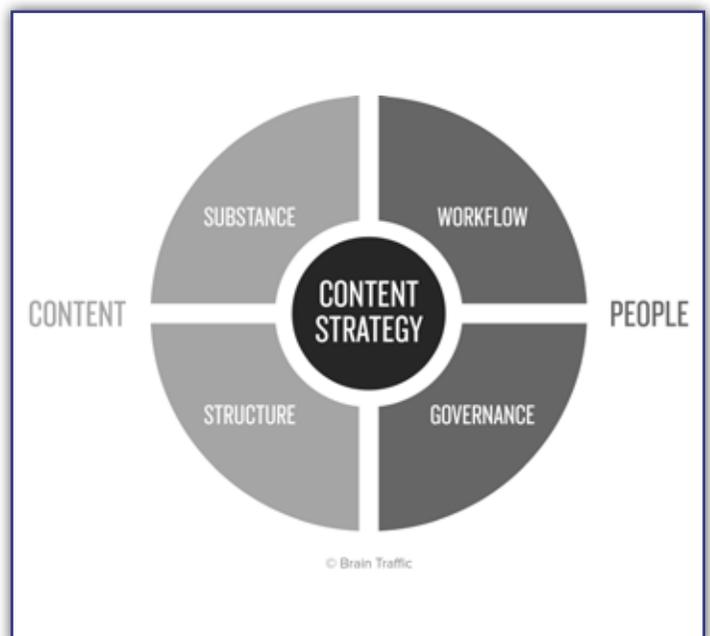
It's been found to be beneficial to give everyone in your organization access to your content



marketing strategy — even those who may not be directly involved in the content marketing process.

This is particularly critical in large organizations, as it can help keep siloed teams on the same page, minimize duplicated efforts, and ensure that everyone is working toward the same content goals. But sharing your documented strategy is also good practice for businesses that are just starting out with content marketing, for content teams that rely on internal or external subject matter experts, or for companies that outsource any part of the content creation and distribution process.

Of course, how you communicate your strategy depends on the structure and culture



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