



# Content Marketing

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## **Content Marketing**

Content marketing is a form of marketing focused on creating, publishing, and distributing content for a targeted audience online. It is often used by businesses in order to achieve the following goals: attract attention and generate leads, expand their customer base, generate or increase online sales, increase brand awareness or credibility, and engage an online community of users. Content marketing attracts new customers by creating and sharing valuable free content. It helps companies create sustainable brand loyalty, provides valuable information to consumers, and creates a willingness to purchase products from the company in the future.

Content marketing starts with identifying the customer's needs. After that the information can be presented in a variety of formats, including news, video, white papers, e-books, infographics, email newsletters, case studies, podcasts, how-to guides, question and answer articles, photos, blogs, etc.

## **History & Evolution of Content Marketing**

Sometimes, when we speak of Content Marketing, one is led to think that it is something new and innovative designed especially for the internet, but history says that is not so.

Content Marketing is a success coming from the past, it is something of a practiced craft with a longer history than we might expect.

The story of content marketing spans the past 120 years, beginning with a baking powder manufacturer that published a revolutionary practical cookbook. By the way, we often read or hear about “Content Marketing”, i.e. the creation and sharing of media and editorial content by companies in order to acquire customers, it is natural to think that we are faced with something relatively “new” and designed specifically to be conveyed through social media, but let’s look at this infographic created by the Content Marketing Institute<sup>2</sup>, which illustrates, in short, the history of the Content Marketing.

As we can see, Content Marketing is anything but new: Content Marketing has a long history behind it, it is a tried and a true marketing strategy that has been utilized by several brands to successfully build or consolidate their reputation.

Though the types of content created by brands today are very different from the type of content distributed a hundred years ago, the core concept it still the same. We will show different examples:

## **August Oetker**

In 1891 August Oetker<sup>4</sup> sold small packages of his Backin baking powder to households with recipes printed on the back. In 1911 he started publishing a cookbook that has gone through several updates over the past 100 years and now it is one of the most “best-selling” cookbooks with more than 19 million printed copies. All recipes originated from the test kitchen of the Oetker company and the book was carefully written as a textbook to teach cooking from scratch.

Oetker was very aware of the need for good marketing and practical communication, and used to lend authority to his marketing. The goal was to communicate the quality and reliability (“succeeds every time”) of this brand-name product, which more than a century later remains a best seller.

## **Nike**

In 1966, the founder of the Nike<sup>13</sup> company, Bill Bowerman, after observing a jogging club in New Zealand, began to understand the value of jogging as a traditional fitness routine and so he published a booklet on jogging that basically brought the sport to America.

This 19-page booklet, titled Jogging, was written by Bowerman and an experienced cardiologist to help the average American get fit through running, not sell shoes. Along with Bowerman’s other involvement with professional athletes, his work helped inspire the 1970s running boom that Nike clearly benefitted from.

The booklet never once mentioned Nike shoes. It didn’t need to. Great content brings big movement all on its own. Content creates movement because it focuses on distributing ideas and adjusting consumer behaviour.

Nike’s strategy was based on a perceived need. As first, that need wasn’t for better running shoes, but rather for jogging itself. Once the trend was ingrained, the need shifted and the “jogging shoes” themselves became the felt need. Bowerman’s original goal was to promote a sport and an idea that he believed in. Nike probably wouldn’t be what it is today without Content Marketing.

## **Red Bull**

In 2007 the Austrian company Red Bull<sup>20</sup>, the media company that just happens to sell energy drinks, launched its official magazine The Red Bulletin, which now has over 5 million subscribers. This is also inserted in newspapers as a free

publication. The Red Bull publishing is extensive both in media, channels and formats. It includes mobile apps, print, web TV, web radio, newsfeeds, social networks, video, and even a full length film. It owns 900 different domain names spread across 36 languages.

Red Bull understands the importance of mobile; in fact it has developed apps, games and platforms that work for all devices.

The company sponsors a music school and a month-long event called Red Bull Music Academy. It also sponsors different sporting events, such as diving, Formula One Motorsport, plane racing, snowboarding and cycling, just to name a few.

Red Bull has learned to entertain first, it understands that if you do this, the sales will come. They create conversations “around” their brand: they understood that no one wants to talk about a drink, but they will talk about music, share amazing photos and embed videos that are epic.

They created a focused and powerful content strategy by setting up a separate media company. No distractions are allowed from the goal of publishing awesome content.

### **Why are companies using Content Marketing?**

There are numerous reasons why companies apply content marketing solutions. Basically, these reasons are the same as in the case of any other marketing practice. It does not come as a surprise that practically every company aims at winning customers (or maintaining the existing ones) and, as a result, at increasing the sales of its products and services. All actions within marketing are focused on this very objective. Content marketing is no exception.

However, if we assume that generating income is the objective, we will easily come to the conclusion that this objective is too obvious and too general. In particular in the context of the budget of the marketing actions, you must be perfectly aware of what the money is spent on and what effect you can expect. Precisely defined objectives will come in handy.

The major objectives of the marketers who decide to launch content marketing are as follows:

- Increasing brand awareness
- Lead generation
- Converting leads into customers

- Building the image as the industry leader
- Customer engagement
- Customer retention
- Website traffic
- Sales

Depending on the approach, the objectives can be defined more or less precisely. Some marketers agree that generating leads and converting them into customers are completely different actions. However there is a lot of truth in the opinions of those who simply reduce the objectives to three categories:

- Higher sales
- Customer loyalty
- Brand recognition

This list (whether in the short or full version) seems familiar, doesn't it? After all, everybody wants to sell a lot and be recognized within the industry. Here the key question arises – if the objectives are the same as the ones of the traditional marketing, then why content marketing?

No need to look for the answer. Traditional methods do not always correspond to the real needs of the businesses. If you carried out a survey checking which of the above marketing objectives are not important for the company, you would learn that, regardless of the industry, company and market size or the turnover, everybody wants to sell and be recognized. This is what we know. We also know that if several companies try to win the customer, this is quite a challenge.

Bombarding customers with advertising content is becoming less and less effective. The human brain becomes resilient not only to the number of outdoor messages, but also the more or less classic forms of display. There are more and more advertisements, but the number of them noticed by us is dropping.

As customers, we also rebel against spamming (as we see it) in spaces, whether public (a lot of cities introduce restrictions on outdoor advertising, especially in the tourist-attractive district) or private (filters blocking the ads in the internet browsers is a standard) with such messages. Yet after all, the marketer wants the best for us. They just want to let us know about a new chance which we could otherwise miss. Like a hundred other marketers in a hundred other industries.

In consequence, the classic marketing often turns out to be ineffective, or at least insufficient. In principle, it focuses on the direct message put in front of the customer, which stands in their way. It aims at stopping them in their tracks even for a moment and forcing them to react to the offer. While reading e-mails from our colleagues, we need to filter the promotions, and while visiting our favourite websites, we must look for the content among the aggressive banners. Can it work properly?

Inbound marketing is an alternative – it is based on the assumption that the customers will come to us themselves and get interested in what we offer, if we provide them with an interesting content. Instead of irritating them and often misleading by manipulation with the ad, we make them find us themselves. And it works best if we are able to offer them the access to what they are currently interested in and what they need.

It is difficult not to deem this approach ambitious, as effective implementation of content marketing is truly an art. However, the market enforces such actions and for some time they have already been a standard for many companies.

### Benefits of Content Marketing

- i. **More inbound approach:** Content marketing is one of the tools of inbound marketing. As we mentioned above, it is a situation where a company strives to draw the attention of potential customers by providing them with quality content. These actions are effective only after some time, as it is not easy to build one loyal group of recipients who we can expect to buy our product.
- ii. **Customer engagement and innovation:** A customer interested in the given subject is an engaged customer. Logically, any person reached by content marketing must be interested in the subject which the content relates to. Interest does not mean already a potential purchase, but one person who voluntarily subscribes to the company blog is a more valuable lead than a hundred recipients of e-mailing.

If our recipients regularly read the contents which we provide, then in their eyes we are the experts and innovators of the industry. This is often decisive when it comes to a purchasing decision. The reach achieved by whisper marketing is an extra gain. People who frequently take part in webinars that we organize, will sooner or later tell their

friends about it. Meanwhile, it is hard to count on the recipient of our e-mailing or brochures to become our ambassador.

- iii. **Search Engine Optimisation:** Probably everybody heard the mysterious term “SEO”. It is also commonly known that it involves actions aimed at affecting the processes of content search on the Internet in such a way that Internet users encounter our content as often as possible. A situation when the customer googles the name of our industry or a term referring to it and our website is in the front position of the search results, it seems to be the utmost accomplishment. Obviously, in times of huge competition almost in every sector, it is really difficult to achieve.

There are numerous myths on how the suitable website software can help to achieve such a result, but the truth is just the opposite. Indeed, an unsuitable preparation of the website does a lot of harm, but a suitable one does not help. The proper SEO actions ensure a good starting position to achieve excellent results, but the latter depend on the content. Key words, metadata and efficiently and clearly written codes are friendly for the robots whose aim is to evaluate the usefulness of our website, but this is not enough to deal with the key issue. The robots give a high index to the websites which offer good content. How do they do this? They automatically analyse what is on the website. As they are not able to evaluate the content quality in terms of the subject matter, they check whether the visitors forward the content (e.g. by placing a link on a thematic forum or in the social media). Thanks to content marketing, which is based on nothing else but creating and publishing interesting content, a static company website can become livelier and increase its index significantly.

- iv. **Better use of company resources:** In many organisations, knowledge about tools as well as resources are wasted. Companies often prepare data for industry reports, but do not always have an idea of how this data can be used beyond the in-company circulation. Meanwhile, if it is properly processed and described, it can constitute a perfect and – most importantly – required white paper. Others willingly apply the tools in video conferences and they do not realize that often a tool used for the purposes of in-company meetings can be useful also as an online seminar tool.

The conclusion is that we can make a better use of our knowledge and other resources which we already possess and which in big part have

not been used so far. The argument for this kind of use will convince everyone – lower operating costs and a better marketing effect. It cannot be assumed straight away that content marketing allows creating “something” out of “nothing”, but the preparation and launch of a campaign in a way forces us to analyse the resources and think about what we can get out of them and what extra costs we will need to incur. This way quite a few managers who were convinced that they perfectly knew their company discovered completely new areas.

## **Content Marketing Strategy**

Before you create a content marketing strategy for your business, you need to define the goals first. What are you trying to achieve with your content? Is it more subscribers to your blog? Or is it traffic acquisition? Or maybe, you want certain sales pages of your website to convert? Whatever they are, you need to clearly list the goals before you even begin laying down the strategy.

That being said, there are certain overarching elements to a content marketing strategy which are the same, regardless of your goals. They are listed in brief below, as we will look into them in detail later in this tutorial:

- Understanding your customers
- Building your brand message or story
- Defining the content you want to create
- Measuring the success of your content marketing efforts

## **Content Creation**

Marketing gurus and pundits have often repeated the line that it's the company that tells a better story wins and not the company which is bigger in size. This truism is even more relevant today with the growth of new forms of online media, which have empowered consumers like never before.

However, the question still remains largely unanswered. How do you tell a better story? Do you create a 10x10 feet poster, listing out the features of your product, and stick it on every billboard in town or do you create a swanky television advertisement? Which is the option that will give you more business and more revenue? Well, to be honest, building a good story and creating great content requires much more than that. It requires you to answer the 3Ws: who, what, and why.

To create a great story around your business, you need to clearly answer the following:

### [Why are You Creating the Content?](#)

Defining your content goals is the first step.

- Why do you want to create a specific type of content?
- What is it that you want to accomplish?
- Does the content strategy match your overall business goals?

These are important questions that need to be answered.

### [Who are Your Customers?](#)

It goes without saying that identifying your customers is the most important step of content marketing. You can refer to Part 2 of this tutorial to learn how to identify your customers. The bottom line is to list out the problems and preferences of your audience and figure out what kinds of content will they like best. Also, you need to answer the important question - what is the unique thing that you have to offer to you customers?

### [What do You Want Your Content to Achieve?](#)

You must ask yourself - how will my content help my customers? Will it help them to arrange a travel, buy a house, or train for an examination? You need to clearly define and understand how your content will affect the lives of your customers?

## **Content Marketing Tools**

Content Marketing tools come in different shapes and sizes. What will work for you is totally dependent on your business requirements and the scope of your content marketing strategy. The tools listed below cover the three central aspects of content creation, management, and optimization.

### [Content Creation and Publishing Tools](#)

These tools will help you create a website from scratch, build your blog, and send emails to your subscribers and publish almost any kind of content. Known as content management tools, these range from the simple and free ones such as Wordpress and Drupal to the paid ones such as Sitecore and Tridion.

## Conversion and Data Capture Tools

What these tools do is allow you to build online registration forms and surveys for your key landing pages. They capture data of customers visiting these landing pages, which can be integrated with sales tools like Salesforce.com. Examples include Wufoo, Equola, Manticore, etc.

## Content Optimization Tools

These are tools that help you to deliver specific content to targeted customers. Once users come to your website and identify themselves, these tools push content which are relevant to these users.

For instance, let's say you own a travel website and a user comes and identifies himself as a tourist looking for cars in the city, now these tools will filter your content and provide the user only the relevant information, while hiding the irrelevant ones. Examples of such tools include Google Website Optimizer, Adobe Omniture, Autonomy Optimost, etc.

## Social Media Management and Listening Tools

These tools are excellent for managing and tracking the content for your social channels such as Facebook and Twitter. One of the most frequently used tools is Hootsuite, which allows you to centrally schedule your social media posts. For Twitter, you can use Tweetdeck and for further analysis, you can grab tools like Radian6 and Sysomos.

## **Tracking Success**

Whether you're creating a content marketing strategy for your own business or a client, the primary question still remains - What's the Return on Investment (ROI)? For all the efforts you've put in your content marketing strategy, the ROI needs to be positive.

What constitutes ROI varies from business to business. However, every successful content marketing strategy needs to answer at least one of the three crucial questions listed below:

- Has it driven sales for the business?
- Has it saved costs for the company?

- Has it helped in making customers lives easier, thus increasing retention?

To sum it up, a growth in sales, decrease in costs, and customer retention are the three key areas which determine the success of a content marketing strategy. Let's look at each of these points in more detail:

### [Measuring and Tracking Sales](#)

Measuring and tracking sales is the part which answers whether your business actually made any money. The results of your content marketing strategy must need to answer questions such as:

- Did you make any sales through your e-commerce section?
- How many visitors came though organic or inorganic search and bought your product or service?

You can measure all of this by looking at you sales metrics in your own CRM and Google analytics.

### [Measuring and Tracking Cost Savings](#)

Cost savings is basically your actual profit: (Converted Leads – Total Cost per Lead). While calculating the total costs per lead, you need to factor in the money you spent paying employees or freelancers in creating the content for you. This also includes all the overheads such as the rent, insurance, utilities, design costs, hosting fees, subscriptions, and software costs.

### [Measuring and Tracking Customer Retention](#)

By customer retention, we not only mean the new leads coming in but also the average life of the existing customers. Your goals must be to keep all customers longer and happier. You can measure this via your CRM to track what kinds of content are being consumed by your customers and measure whether that content has helped in retention and renewal of subscriptions.