

CONTENT MARKETING BLUEPRINT



7 Content Marketing Best Practices

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The term "content marketing" confuses some people. That is because they have been approached by supposed content marketing gurus and social media specialists that intentionally try to make content marketing seem like an intricate, detailed and difficult thing to do. That is how they sell their goods and services. Make no mistake, content marketing can be summed up quite succinctly.

Content marketing is nothing more than the marketing plan you have for creating and distributing different types of content to attract new customers and retain current customers.

Content can take the form of audio, video, imagery and online or print text-based media. You may think of writing a great blog post as developing content, and you would be correct. Content creation can also take the form of making videos or recording podcast episodes. The autoresponder sequences you share with your email list are additional pieces of content. Social media posts, webinars, sales pages, brick-and-mortar point-of-sale material, postcards, flyers, business cards and videos posted on YouTube are types of content you can use to grow your business.

Where content marketing is concerned, there are several best practices used by successful marketers which can't be ignored. These are tried-and-true as well as up-and-coming content creation strategies which deliver high returns for the amount of money and time invested. Add the following 7 best practices to your content marketing plan, and this could be the best year yet for your business.

1 - Speak to Your Market's Pain and Pleasure Points

The best copywriters, salespeople, and marketers will always tell you that people buy for one of two major reasons. While a lot of minor emotions may factor into why someone purchases a good or service, when someone exchanges their hard-earned money for what you have to offer, the person did so for one of the two following reasons.

1. To alleviate pain
2. To receive pleasure

People buy solutions to problems, they don't buy products and services. If a man purchases snake oil medicine that promises to grow hair on his head, he is doing so to stop the emotional pain that comes from losing his hair. When that same man purchases his favorite decadent dessert, he is doing so to receive pleasure. Your content marketing efforts should never forget to speak to pain avoidance and pleasure attainment for a deep connection with your audience.

2 - Run Raffles, Contests and Giveaways

Many people have a strong competitive urge. Just about everyone loves a contest where they don't have to invest any money and very little time in the hopes of winning a valuable prize. Raffles and drawings are also popular online and can be great ways to build your email list in a hurry. Whether you decide to focus on video, audio or text-based content, make sure that contests, giveaways, and drawings have some place in your content marketing plan.

3 - Successful Content Marketing Means Using Testimonials

When you see a television commercial for a product you are considering buying, you understand the people you are watching and listening to have

a vested interest in you purchasing that product. A company will spend a lot of money hiring actors and producing a television commercial. Obviously, they are going to speak positively about the experience they believe you will receive when you become a customer.

Now consider a different type of experience. You see a television commercial for a product, and instead of listening to people paid by a company to say good things about their offerings, you hear testimonials from people just like you. Which scenario carries the most weight in your mind? If you are like most people, the opinion of the everyday Joe and Sally is going to mean a lot more to you and your decision-making process than anything the product creator has to say.

This is because of the power of what marketers call social proof. You have probably gone to see a movie or eaten dinner at a restaurant because you heard rave reviews from a friend. This is how testimonials work. Testimonials can be very powerful for influencing a buying decision. They may take the form of videos you share on social media, podcast episodes where you interview a happy customer or blog posts where you share a customer experience.

4 - Start a Podcast ... You're Competitors Aren't

How important can podcasting be for content marketing rewards? We can illustrate the point by comparing podcasting to another popular method for reaching your prospects ... blogging.

Analysts estimate that there are between 400 and 500 million blogs on the internet. Statistica.com tells there are 360 million blogs on Tumblr alone, so the number of total blogs somewhere online could be even bigger than anyone can imagine. If you have a blog, that is the competition you are up against. That isn't to say you should abandon

blogging as a content marketing strategy. Text-based communication that provides value and solves problems for your readers and followers is always going to be well received.

Now let's take a look at podcasts.

There are believed to be somewhere in the neighborhood of 165 to 200 thousand podcasts on some type of podcasting platform around the world. Going with the low end of the blogging estimates, that means if you host a podcast, you have 200,000 times fewer podcasting competitors than your blog does. Additionally, more and more people are listening to podcasts, yet this is still a type of content that most marketers and entrepreneurs are slow to adopt. Consider these 2017 podcasting statistics published by Podcast Insights.

- Half of all US homes are fans of podcasts
- 73 million people in the United States listen to at least one podcast every month
- 45% of podcast listeners who tune in every month have a household income of more than \$75,000
- 80% of global podcast fans listen to all of an episode's content

That data shows that listening to podcasts is very common in the United States. Similar trends have been spotted in the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, many countries in Asia and elsewhere around the world.

Podcast listeners have money to spend. Probably the biggest take away from those statistics is that once someone tunes into one of their favorite podcasts, they consume every bit of content, listening all the way through to the end.

Combine all of that data with the fact that the average marketer doesn't have a podcast, and you can see how powerful podcasting can be as part of a successful content marketing plan. If you have a podcast and your competitors do not, you have access to an untapped audience. If your competitors are also podcasting, it becomes even more important for you to add this type of content production and delivery to your content marketing strategy.

5 - Don't Set and Forget Your Content Marketing Approach

What works today may not work tomorrow. Any smart marketer understands the importance of analytics for revealing what is and is not working. Once you devise a content marketing plan, you should give that content time to produce enough data to analyze. Once you do that, don't ignore changes that need to be made.

Kodak was at one time one of the most popular camera manufacturers in the world, but they were slow to make the move to digital. By the time they began to produce digital cameras, their competitors had already cornered the market.

Today Kodak does not make digital cameras, because they did not make the necessary changes when they needed to in order to keep themselves viable as a digital camera manufacturer. Don't let the same thing happen to your business. Develop a content marketing strategy, analyze the results, and make changes as needed.

6 - Harness the Power of Live Streaming Video

When you publish a live video stream on Facebook, your followers are instantly notified. That content is sent to the top of the newsfeed of your friends and followers. This means whenever you host a Facebook Live

video, you benefit from the desire many people have to take part in something that is happening right now. People hate to miss out. Live videos carry more cachet, influence and "Oomph!" than recorded videos because they are instantly perceived as being relevant.

Plan live stream videos ahead of time. Record them on a set schedule that your audience can remember. Start performing a live feed on Facebook, YouTube or some other platform every Tuesday at noon, and your followers will greedily anticipate reviewing that content at that time every week. In 2017 video content received more views than text-based content, and live streaming is a video marketing tool that continues to grow in viewer popularity.

7 - Don't Forget SEO

SEO, or search engine optimization, is the practice of optimizing your content for Internet search engines. Whatever marketing you do online, and whatever content you create, your actions should always include smart SEO practices. This means placing your target keyword or phrase early on in headlines and blog posts. The images on your website should have relevant alt tags.

Add words and phrases that relate to your target keyword in your video description and all your text-based content. If you are not taking SEO into consideration when you develop and publish content, you are missing out on free traffic.