



FOR BRANDS, ENTREPRENEURS & SMALL BUSINESSES

# Creating a Successful Social Media Content Marketing Plan

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LAUNCH & HUSTLE

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# What is content marketing?

Content marketing is a form of lead generation that attracts potential customers by providing useful content. The arrival and growth in content marketing has been facilitated by two events: 1) The ever-increasing ad blindness and diminishing returns from online advertising and 2) the growth of social media.

Let us take a look at the benefits of content marketing:

1. It helps to bring consumers closer to your brand.
2. Many forms of content can be used to disseminate information including blog posts, articles, whitepapers, social media status updates, forum posts, webcasts, videos, emails, etc.
3. Does not require heavy investments and hence is well-suited to fulfill sales and marketing objectives of small businesses.
4. It is one of the most effective ways to generate new leads.
5. With content marketing, you can establish yourself as an influential voice in your niche and also as a resource for actionable and helpful ideas.
6. Along with brand building, content marketing is also a tool to build relationships and take them to the next level – customers become clients and clients become brand evangelists.
7. Spot trends and place yourself favorably to react to events that are yet to occur.
8. Improve a customer's overall experience of interacting with your brand.
9. Play an influential role in your prospect's purchase-related decision-making process.
10. Use content marketing to make email marketing more effective.
11. Content marketing forms the basis of viral marketing and inbound marketing.
12. Your business will exercise greater control on the nature of your interactions with your audience and the kind of messages you wish to put out.



Image Courtesy – [Leah Baade](#)

## Where does social media fit in your content marketing strategy?

Social media is where the content media marketing action is. Facebook, Pinterest, YouTube, Twitter, etc. are some of the social media channels that bring their own advantages to the game. The nature of content is influenced by the choice of channel; content amplification depends upon how effective your social media content marketing plan is.

A great advantage with social media is the amount of data it puts at your disposal for creating a content marketing blueprint. With so much information out there, businesses can really hone in on their target audience and settle upon the most effective kind of content for their situation. Along with your website, social sites serve as a destination for content. Popular content on social media sites influence search engines as well as readers visiting such sites in a very positive manner. Well-crafted content contributes to search engine rankings. Paid advertising plays a big role in amplifying the reach of your content; it allows you to be at the right place at the right time to reach the right kind of audience.

Let us now take a detailed look at how a social media content marketing plan can take your business to the next level.



Image Courtesy – [Marketing Strategy Template](#)

# Know your content marketing objectives

Developing a content marketing strategy requires developing some objectives. You should have the answers to these questions ready before you can get down to formulating a plan: What would you like to accomplish by placing content on different sites out there? How many likes, followers, re-shares, or reposts are you aiming for? What are the topics around which content will be created? Which channels do you plan to focus on?

It is very important to develop your plan before beginning to implement a content marketing campaign. Jumping in without a good plan could squander opportunities to develop customer relationships and could even lead to social media embarrassments. You can, by all means, expand on your objectives and tactics as you grow.

Your objectives should be specific and measurable, with reasonable but specific timetables. List your key performance indicators. Know their present status so that you can map their progress as you move ahead with content marketing on social media. KPI's can include an increase in website traffic from social media, more leads from social media, sales from social media traffic, etc.

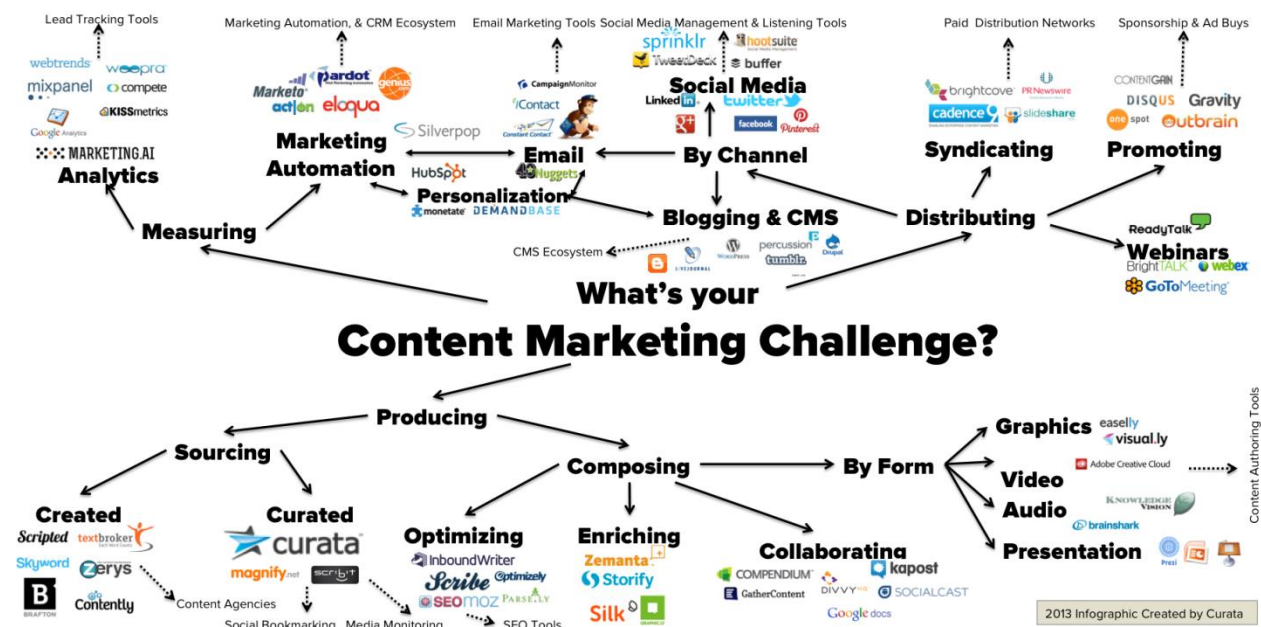


Image Courtesy – [Six Estate](#)

## Target the right people

Targeted content is the Holy Grail of content marketing but most assuredly not as elusive. It is easy to target your content to the right people once you know who they are. This is achieved by creating profiles or personas of your potential audience members. The sales funnel tapers thus – awareness, interest, desire, and action. Tony Zambito, who has pioneered the concept, defines buyer personas as follows –

*Buyer personas are research-based archetypal (modeled) representations of **who** buyers are, **what** they are trying to accomplish, **what** goals drive their behavior, **how** they think, **how** they buy, **where** they buy, **when** buyers decide to buy, and **why** they make buying decisions.*

Buyer personas are created by knowing your own product and service inside out and deducing from social media interactions. Surveys and website analytics also provide insights into where the different persona types congregate on social media and what it will take to guide them further down the funnel. The information used is both qualitative – answering the question “Why” – and quantitative – answering the question “What” – with respect to user conduct. Surveys help in understanding web behaviors and are a great help in qualitative analysis. Qualitative analysis covers motivation factors, expectations, complaints, pain points, influence in the purchase process, and need fulfillment achieved through the purchase. Quantitative data includes industry, income, age, gender, address, job title, etc.

With your audience persona types ready with you, you can create content to shepherd them to the next step and keep the engagement going. You can place yourself in the customer’s shoes and empathize with them. You learn what the “deal breakers” are. Personas serve to not only help you break the one-size-fits-all mold for online content marketing but they also enable you to craft bespoke communication across print and electronic channels. It is worth noting that persona types are not static. They evolve and grow. Therefore it is essential to keep tabs on where your audience is headed. Using data on people’s decision-making processes eliminates guess work and improves the reliability of your content marketing. Factors that influence buyer persona changes include new products in the market, their financial status, age, satisfaction levels with your product, etc.



Image courtesy – [Social Media Today](#)

## Putting together a plan

If you have ever worked on a popular Facebook page or a major blog then you probably noticed that many of these pages and sites have multiple administrators. And Facebook is just one of the social media channels out there. The success of your social media content marketing venture depends a great deal on the quality of the team that you assemble. The scope of your effort increases with the scale of your project. There are three key tasks associated with content marketing on social media; these activities have to be performed regardless of the size of your project. They are coming up with content ideas based on research, content creation, and relationship building and outreach.

Factors that determine the nature of your content marketing plan include –

1. Your objectives. These decide the subjects around which the content will be created.
2. The amount of content required
3. Social media channels that you will be present on
4. Type of content produced; videos, webinars, podcasts, infographics, email newsletters, etc.
5. Workflow optimization and schedule of posting.

The two most vital cogs of a content marketing machine that churns out valuable content are the editor and the subject matter expert. It is the editor's responsibility to ensure that content is put out on time and that it adheres to pre-approved standards of style, tone, and construction. The subject matter expert creates content, often with the assistance of a writer, so that you can steadily approach your content marketing objectives.

Taking stock of your existing content is a good starting point. You may already have valuable content at your disposal. You can repurpose this content to suit a given social media channel. Find out about the topics that have historically garnered attention, the seasonal hot topics, and content formats that are popular. Once you have this information, you can create a content plan. Think about information and skills your team has that would be relevant to your community; for example, a podcast forecasting future trends in the niche or a how-to video explaining the disassembly and assembly of a piece of equipment. Brainstorm. Segregate content ideas by channel, your requirement, and buyer personas. There are a number of tools such as [AdWords](#), [UberSuggest](#), [Bottlenose](#), etc. that can help you generate ideas for content.

Once you have content ideas in place, you need to have a publishing calendar in place for an extended duration of time; maybe 6 to 12 months. As mentioned above, it is vital to have a subject matter expert who should take ownership of the content. SEO Authorship is a big plus that boosts credibility on social media and also provides SEO benefits. Peer to peer conversations and recommendations are based on trust and if you are going to become a part of that ecosystem then authorship is a very useful aid.

Apart from text, you need to create content in other formats as well. The same parameters of quality and absorbing content that are applicable to text should be applied to visual media as well.

## CONTENT MARKETING USAGE (BY TACTIC)

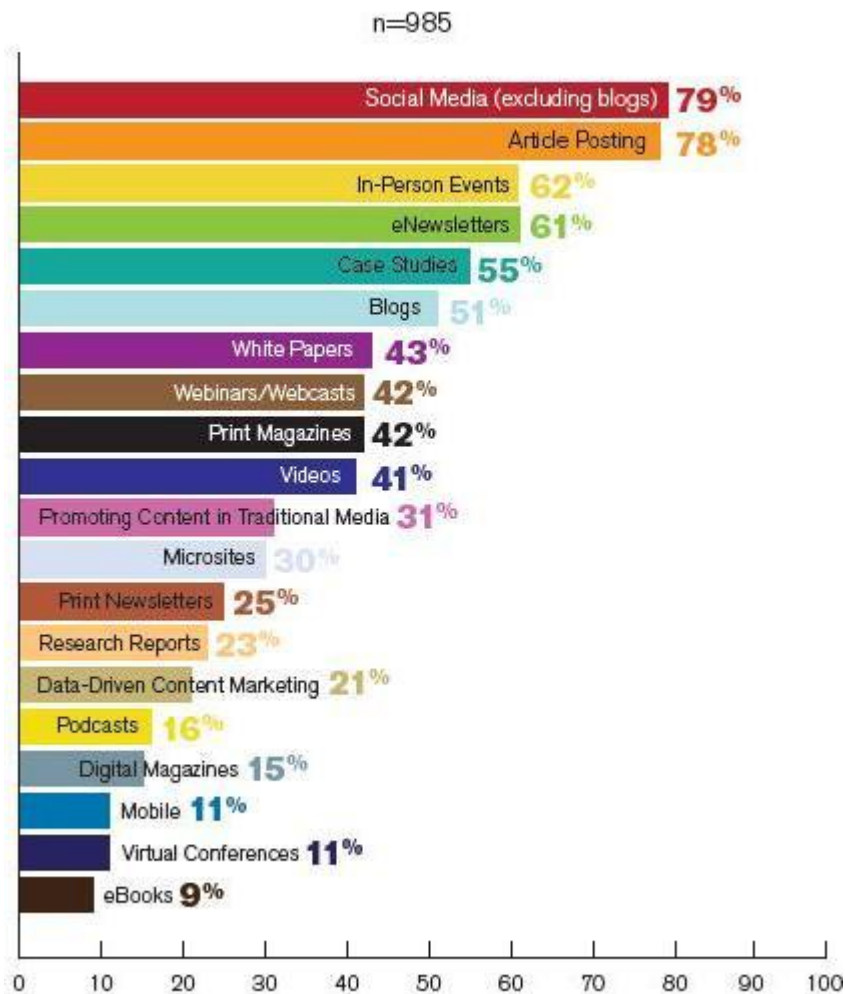


Figure 1

B2B Content Marketing: 2010 Benchmarks, Budgets and Trends | MarketingProfs/Juniper42

Image Courtesy – [Marketing Profs](#)



## How to keep the content ideas flowing?

The single biggest challenge that businesses face in the consistent implementation of a social media content marketing plan is the regular creation of engaging content. If relevant content is not published in a timely manner, then engagement levels begin to peter off. This is the reason that you must at all times have a stock of content ideas to use. Here are some ideas on how to generate great content for social media.

1. What are the problems faced by your customers? Giving advice on solving these problems can create engaging content in different formats to inform your audience on how to fulfill their requirements with your products, address the state of affairs in your industry, and provide relevant content to educate them.
2. Track the kind of content that works best with your audience. As a rule of thumb, videos draw excellent response when the objective is to inform. What does this mean for your YouTube content marketing plan? Will you include Google Plus Hangouts on Air in your plan?
3. If your business has an offline presence, then your salespersons are an excellent starting point for information on what works when they close deals and questions asked by customers. The front-end staff is also aware of what your competitors are doing right. Ditto for customer service representatives. The information can easily be used to put together a body of content to inform your audience about things that you are doing right and draw them to your stores or website.
4. Track conversations floating around. This will keep you in the know about immediate customer concerns and pressing issues in your industry. Be present on the forums and social media sites on which your customers are active. Facebook groups, Yahoo groups, Google groups, industry forums, and Twitter are places to explore.
5. Which content published by you elicited the desired response from the audience? Study examples of such content and replicate it.
6. Newsjacking works. The concept of newsjacking is an interesting one and offers excellent scope for creative utilization of news stories that are currently breaking. Take a story and weave your brand's narrative around it. If possible, you can directly address the central figure in a news item. Businesses do it day in and day out and it gets them valuable exposure, you should too.

# Website Content Ideas

- Articles
- Blog Posts
- Workbooks
- PDF Reports
- Ebooks
- Checklists
- Pre-records audios
- Podcasts
- Teleseminars
- Webinars
- Streaming Video
- Screen Capture Video
- Audio and Video Transcripts
- Email broadcasts
- Pre-schedule autoresponder emails
- FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions)
- Patterns
- Flowcharts
- Coloring Sheets
- Fill-in-the-Blanks
- Spreadsheets
- Games or Quizzes

Image Courtesy – [Savvy Marketing Secrets](#)

## Content formats to choose from

A mix-n-match of content formats ensures wider reach and better engagement. Experiment with content and enjoy the process. Avoid salesy content as a rule. Not only does such content do nothing to engage, it can actually drive visitors away from your pages. Choice of content formats includes –

1. Blog posts – Businesses that maintain blogs report higher levels of customer engagement. Blogs give a business a human face and make it easy for them to approach their audience. Blog posts are easy to share on social media. Blogs support all kinds of content format. Stimulating content on blogs generates discussions and also gets you one-way backlinks. A successful blog brings the same versatility to your social media plan that a knight brings to your chess game.
2. Presentations – Presentations allow you to showcase your points in a crisp manner. eBooks, whitepapers, and webinars provide ready material for presentations.
3. Newsletters – Newsletters tie in nicely with a social media content marketing plan because it allows you to create bespoke content for leads gathered from social media. They are a perfect instrument for taking audience engagement forward.
4. Webinars – A webinar is an online seminar. Webinars are a great tool to gather information about your audience during the registration process. Webinars are interactive and it is possible to maintain enthusiasm levels for the length of the discussion. Celebrities and opinion influencers in the niche can bring a lot of value to a webinar; big names also boost subscription rates.
5. E-books – These are the all-time favorite lead generation tool and lend themselves favorably to guides and similar evergreen content.
6. Videos – Videos are to a social media content marketing plan what mustard is to a hotdog – perfect complements. Videos are a powerful tool to promote your brand's identity. With a little creativity, you can capture and transmit the vibes you want to project. Videos can be fun, informative, provocative, and along with images and infographics get a lot of shares.

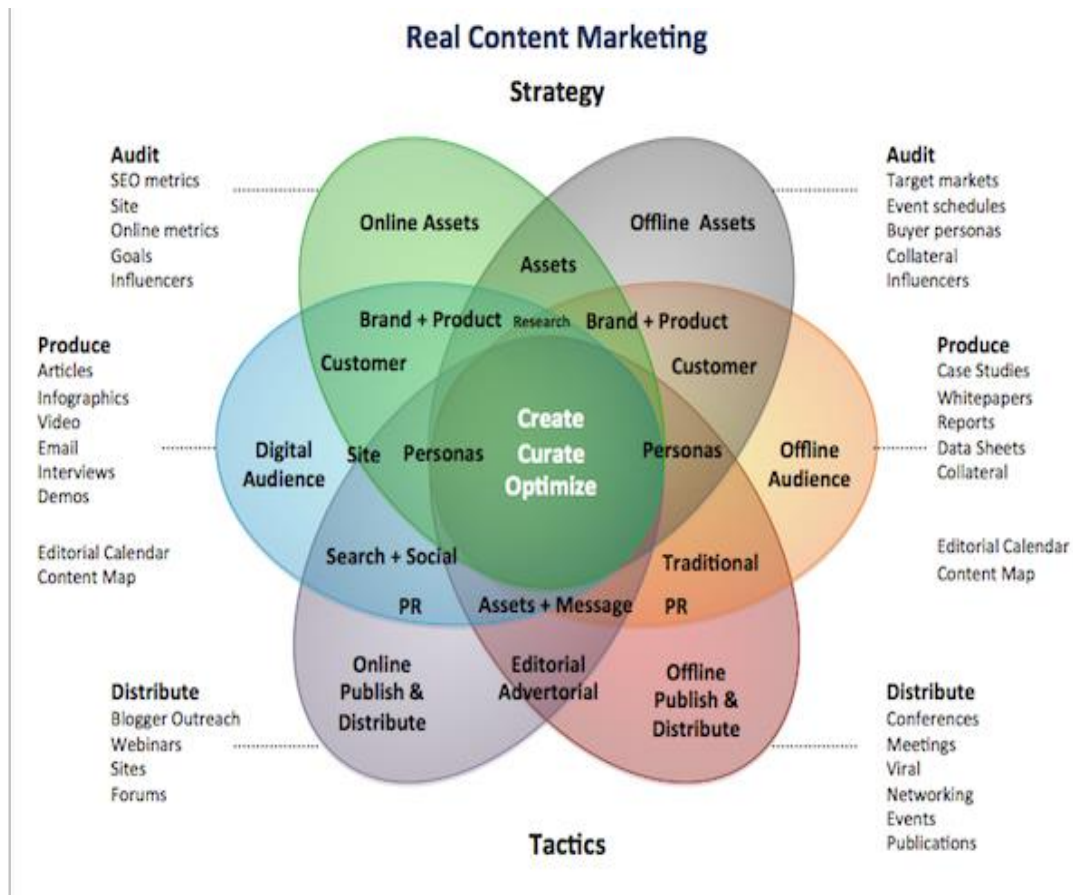


Image Courtesy – [Search Engine Watch](#)

## Hook them with viral content

Creating content that goes viral is every content marketer's dream. In the past marketers used linkbait. In fact, good linkbait articles are now a subset of viral content. Viral content can get you social shares, top of the mind recall for your brand, and it is great for SEO. Any social media content marketing plan worth its salt simply must put in place a strategy for viral content. Here are some excellent ideas for viral content.

1. Create a huge list. Lists are not going out of fashion any time soon. A list with 31, 99, 101 points or any number that you fancy has the potential to do well provided the points are strong, compelling and interesting reading.
2. Attention-grabbing headlines are great, especially when followed by relevant content because the headline generates curiosity and the content validates the catchy headline and quenches the reader's thirst for something exciting and informative. A great headline can lift a good article and make it go viral.
3. Create a stir. Voice your opinion on a controversial subject. See if you can shake things up a little in your niche. Dissent invariably attracts comments and then some counter-comments. If ideas are hard to come by, try writing a counter-argument to another piece, preferably by an industry expert or a well-known opinion influencer.
4. Give them hope. One of the most powerful viral content types is that in which you inspire through personal experience. Be it video or text; explain your path to success in an endeavor. DIY guides also come under this category. Tell them about how you lost 30 pounds in four months, teach them fly fishing or origami, or inspire them to overcome a cigarette addiction.
5. Capitalize on the current craze. This is somewhat similar to newsjacking mentioned earlier. Connect a current happening to your event, product, article, etc. If you can't think of anything, try to come up with a meme or a short video spoof.
6. Create interactive events. Quizzes work because of their participatory nature and high scorers love to show-off their performance. User-created lists, recipes, or videos are other examples of collaborative content that can go viral, not only because it is great content but also because the contributors want to share their work.



Image Courtesy – [PFS Web](#)

## Choose your channels

Decide early upon the channels you focus on. These are the channels that are most receptive to your kind of content, your audience is present on these channels, and you have the necessary skills to fully exploit the social media content marketing opportunities presented by the channel.

1. **Slideshare** – Use Slideshare as a repository of all your webinars, eBooks, and presentations.
2. **Instagram** – a mobile app that lets you tell a story in images while you're on the move. Capture the *here and now* and share it immediately.
3. **Tumblr** – Brands, big and small, have successfully used this micro-blogging platform to share content and gain followers.
4. **Google +** - It's got Google's backing and a clutch of really useful content marketing features such as Google Hangouts, authorship, Google circles, and Google plus local search.
5. **YouTube** – Build an audience and a list of subscribers through a channel on YouTube.
6. **Twitter** – Perhaps the most powerful voice amplifier out there. The folks on twitter are ready to engage and speak up for you. The most passionate speakers either for or against an issue are out there on Twitter.
7. **Facebook** – Everyone and their uncle is on Facebook. It is the best place to connect with an audience and find your target market.

## Social Media Landscape



Image Courtesy: [www.technolism.com](http://www.technolism.com)

## Put a workflow in place

A content workflow enables you to put your planned strategy into action. With responsibilities assigned and with the use of workflow automation tools, you can speed up the entire process, leaving you with more time to focus on the creative aspects of the project.

The first step to setting up a workflow is to write down the broad activities from idea generation to post-publication follow-up with the audience. Break down each activity into micro-tasks and list the tools required to execute the tasks. For example, creating a How-to video requires a webcam, a script, a host or model, and equipment. You will also need a person with the requisite video editing skills to insert your brand's logo, music, links, and anything else that you may want to do.

Build a table that can be used as a template covering all the responsibilities for all the tasks. Once roles have been assigned you can prepare an editorial calendar. The editorial calendar is your blueprint and all content marketing activities have to abide by it.

Keep the following information accessible to all members for quick and easy reference – personas being targeted, keywords to be used, style guides for content and design, editing rules, an image bank, guest post guidelines, and the overall marketing objective for which the entire social media content marketing is being done.



Image courtesy – [Divvy Hq](#)



## Optimize content for social media marketing

Social activity and its relevance to SEO have given rise to social media optimization (SMO). The underlying principle of SMO is the same as that of SEO, only the factors indicating endorsement and signaling good content have changed.

Implement the following social media optimization techniques so that your content contributes to the marketing objectives -

1. Content that engages and is share worthy does well. Everybody knows that. The key however, is to come up with such content. As a marketer it is your responsibility to make it easy for the audience to enjoy your content. Visual content scores on social media. Take a look at the image below to learn about the most popular SMO optimization tactics.
2. Create pithy, succinct, bite-sized content. People scan through content, which is the only way to sift through the deluge that we face on our social media timelines.
3. Give your content personality. It's an effective and classy way to get noticed without screaming on social media. Brands with personality are easier to relate to.
4. Facilitate sharing. Share buttons on your blogs are a useful tool to promote content. Anyone who has had the pleasure of a blog article going viral knows the satisfaction one derives from seeing the social sharing bar register hits in hundreds and thousands. No harm in messaging folks to ask for shares.
5. Reach out to the people who matter in your niche. These are the thought leaders and influencers. With everyone vying for their attention, you have to be creative as well as persistent. Subscribe to their articles, comment on their posts, write a list-based article and include them in the list, interview them, and impress them with your content.
6. Reach out to groups and communities. Create content with sub-niche audiences in mind. Hash tags appended to content make content searchable.



Successful social media optimization means that your content should be relevant, engaging, shareable, and findable.

### Most Important Tactics for Optimizing Content on Social Media

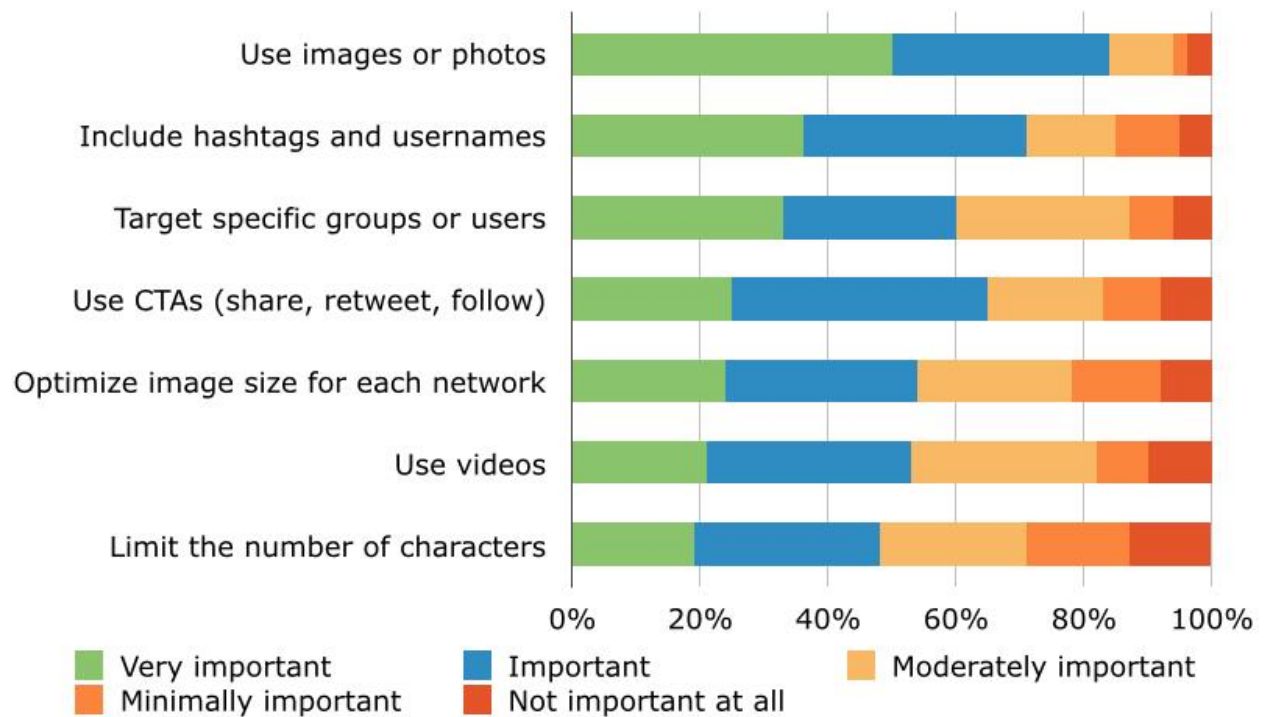


Image courtesy: [Brand Watch](#)

## Turbo charge content marketing with content curating

While the creation of original and insightful content should remain the cornerstone of your content marketing plan, you can bring a lot of information to your audience's notice through the process of content curating. Content exists in various forms in your own databases and out there. You can repackage and repurpose it so that it can be presented to interested audiences.

The different content types that you can curate include statistics, whitepapers, videos, blogs, infographics, surveys, contests, industry events, etc.

Curated content can be repurposed to target different audience types. There are immense SEO benefits with content curating. You get an opportunity to infuse keywords and long-tail key phrases across varying content types thereby increasing the chances of your content competing in the search engine result pages.

There are a number of wonderful tools that can help you collect content to curate. These include –

1. [Content Gems](#) – Emails you a digest containing content from social media, websites, blogs, and news sources based upon keywords and social signals.
2. [Scoop it](#) – It allows you to scoop great content from the web, add your touch to it and publish it.
3. [Pocket](#) – Pocket allows you to quickly save all kinds of content taken from websites and social media sites for later viewing, even without access to the internet.
4. [Woio](#) – It serves as your personal customizable internet station where you can tune into audio and video channels of your choice.
5. [Editorial calendar](#) – A nifty Wordpress plug-in that makes content scheduling easier.
6. [Curata](#) – Ideal for businesses looking to establish a workflow for their content curation process.

Do remember that content curating involves adding your inputs to the chosen content; this is what separates content curating from mere content aggregation.



Image courtesy – [Top Rank Blog](#)

## Conclusion

A social media content marketing plan is already a tried and tested method of marketing your business through content. The best part about it is that there is no one-size-fits-all template. You are free to improvise and get creative. It levels the playing field and you don't need a huge advertising budget to succeed with it. Indeed, you can create magic even as a one man show. You have at your disposal case studies, web tools, apps, and also an audience that will pitch in to promote your content. So what are you waiting for?