

CONTENT MARKETING
**QUICK
START**
WORKSHOP WORKBOOK

digitalsummit

 **VERTICAL
MEASURES**

CONTENT MARKETING: WHAT IT IS

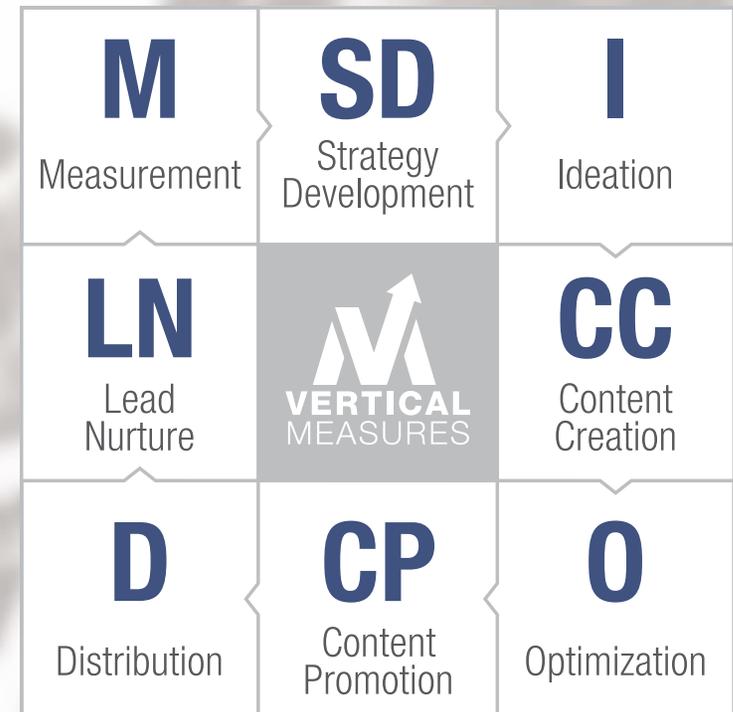
Content marketing is very different than traditional marketing. At its core, it's all about **creating content that helps people**. You're helping your customers understand your business or your products. Rather than "renting" space via traditional advertising, you rely on the online real estate that you **own** to inform, educate, and entertain your audience.

DEFINITION OF CONTENT MARKETING

1. Content marketing is the art of providing relevant, useful content to your customers without selling or interrupting them.
2. Instead of pitching your products or services, you are delivering information that makes your customers more informed before they buy.
3. If you deliver consistent, ongoing valuable information to your customers, they ultimately reward you with their business and loyalty.

THE 8 STEP PROCESS

Content marketing is a dynamic, continuous process. Based on years of working with clients on their content marketing programs and driving our own business growth in the same way, we have developed The 8 Step Process, a framework that holds the major elements that must be implemented for content marketing strategies to be successful. Remember, content marketing is iterative and by no means a 30-day ROI. Use this framework to establish a structure around your program and align your people, priorities, and processes around common goals.



CONTENT MARKETING: WHAT IT IS CONT'D

CONTENT MARKETING ADOPTION

Content marketing is still a relatively new marketing practice, but has been adopted swiftly over the past few years. According to Gartner's Five-Step Hype Cycle, they place content marketing just beyond the "peak of inflated expectations," moving towards the "trough of disillusionment." Don't worry, this is normal for many maturing marketing practices. However, as content marketing adoption grows, it's important to follow best practices and understand where other companies have succeeded and failed.

THEY ASK. YOU ANSWER.

One of the biggest mistakes an organization can make is not creating content people are actually looking for. Start with asking your team a simple question:

WHAT QUESTIONS DO YOU GET ASKED ALL THE TIME?

This prompt opens the door to understanding what people are looking for online, and how you can be the best answer on the end of their search. Turn these questions into topics, and then titles that get scheduled as content pieces on your calendar.

CONTENT MARKETING IS A CULTURE

Content marketing is not just a strategy or a tactic. It's ultimately a culture. The most successful organizations are able to tap into their internal subject matter expertise to create content their audience truly needs. Don't just relegate your content marketing to the marketing team. Look for opportunities to create a culture of content throughout your organization for the best results.



CONTENT MARKETING: BASELINE SCORECARD (HOMEWORK)

You most likely have been doing content marketing in some form or another for awhile now if you chose to attend this workshop. Let's examine your current efforts to get a baseline of where you are now. That will inform where you should go next. What does your organization do well? Where can you improve? How would you grade yourself or your team on a scale of 1-10 on the following?

Goal	1-10	Comments
Strategy		What are the overall business goals? Is everyone on the same page?
Ideas		If you or someone has a marketing idea, what is the process to bring that to life?
Content		Do you currently contribute content ideas, outlines, photos, articles?
Optimization		Do you make your online content user-friendly and Google-friendly?
Promotion		How do you try to drive people to your website through other channels?
Distribution		What channels do you use for marketing and distributing your content?
Lead Nurture		In what ways do you communicate with prospects to keep the relationship alive?
Measurement		How do you measure success in your role?



CONTENT AUDIT (HOMEWORK)

It's important to understand what content is already existing on your site to see the depth and breadth of our current content footprint. To completely understand what you have, you've got to do a content audit.

This audit will help you evaluate where you are strong and where content gaps exist. You'll find great pages and you'll find pages that need refreshing. We're sure you'll find some illuminating things.

NOTES

TIP: Download [Screaming Frog](#) to crawl your site. This software will give you a report of all your pages and posts in a spreadsheet format. This will save you time and give you a complete list without any manual action. Add columns to the spreadsheet to help organize what content you will keep, what content needs refreshing and what content is outdated and needs to be deleted. Even use the ROT format to mark things quickly: - "R" for redundant, "O" for outdated, and "T" for trivial. Create a column to mark your letters quickly and then go back in depth later.

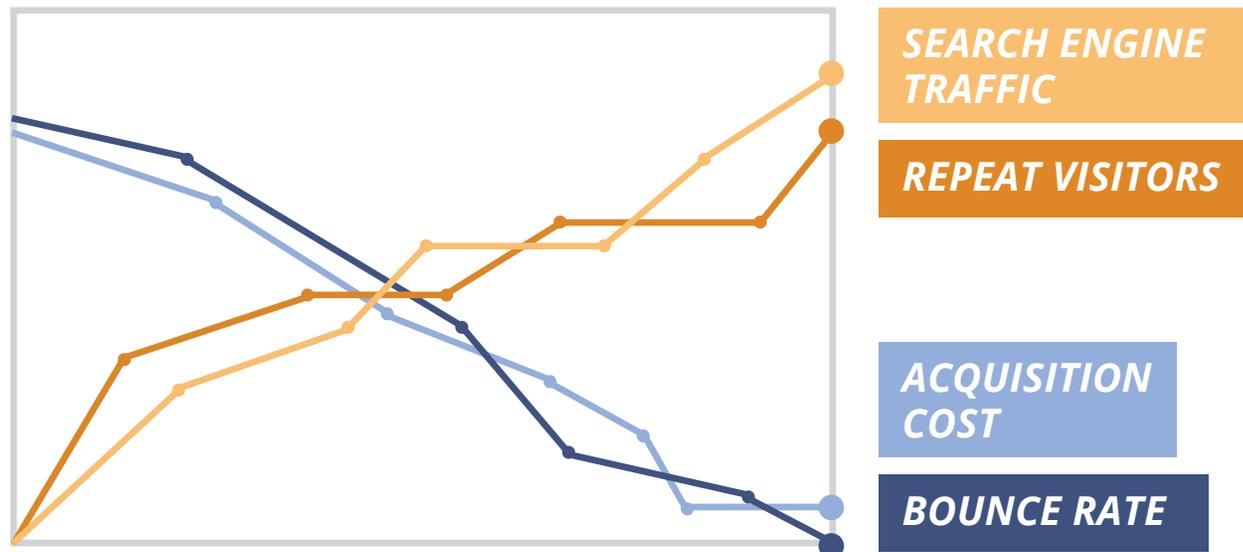
Review your content in Google Search Console to determine the most popular content, highest converting pages, pages with the longest user engagement, and the content where users tend to leave your site the most. This review will help you identify what content is resonating with your audience and what content needs to be improved.

CONTENT MARKETING GOALS AND METRICS

COMPANY-WIDE GOALS: Start with the **BIG** company goals and work your way down to your department or sphere of influence. Set goals high enough to move out of the status quo.

EXAMPLES

- Increase organic search engine traffic by X%.
- Improve repeat visits/registrations by X% year over year.
- Drive down customer cost/acquisition by X%.
- Decrease bounce rate for top pages to X% below site average.
- Increase new business revenue by X%.
- Decrease customer service costs by X%.
- Shorten the sales cycle by X amount of time.



CONTENT MARKETING GOALS AND METRICS CONT'D

MARKETING GOALS: Record the most important marketing goals for your company. Goals should have corresponding metrics. What will you measure? How will you know you're successful? How will you know if you are not? *See previous page for even more examples than below.*

SAMPLE GOALS	SAMPLE METRICS
---------------------	-----------------------

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sales or retention _____ • Leads _____ • Brand awareness _____ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Return website visitors, phone calls, appointments scheduled • Request Information forms, content downloads, subscribers • Website traffic, social shares, content on other sites, inbound links |
|--|--|

GOAL

HOW WILL YOU MEASURE?



CONTENT MARKETING GOALS AND METRICS CONT'D

TIP: Validate your goals. Collaborate with your team to tweak these and get buy-in. Set up the systems to measure and track results. Measuring is very important as it validates your strategy and tactics and proves your ROI.

LEARN MORE: Check out these resources to learn more about goal setting and determining what metrics you should be tracking for your website.

[Google Analytics Set-up Checklist](#) – The complete checklist of resources for setting up your website tracking correctly.

[5 KPIs All Content Marketers Should Know](#) - Understand the five major metrics you should be looking at regularly.

[Content Marketing Works](#) - 290-page content marketing book by Arnie Kuenn that goes into an 8 Step Process to frame your efforts

[Youtility](#) - Smart Marketing is about Help not Hype – Jay Baer



DOWNLOAD: [Your Content Marketing Strategy Template and Checklist](#)

This 12-page template is the perfect tool to use when sitting down with your team to brainstorm a new or revised strategy. Download to get prompts, questions, and insights that will help you refine your content marketing strategy.

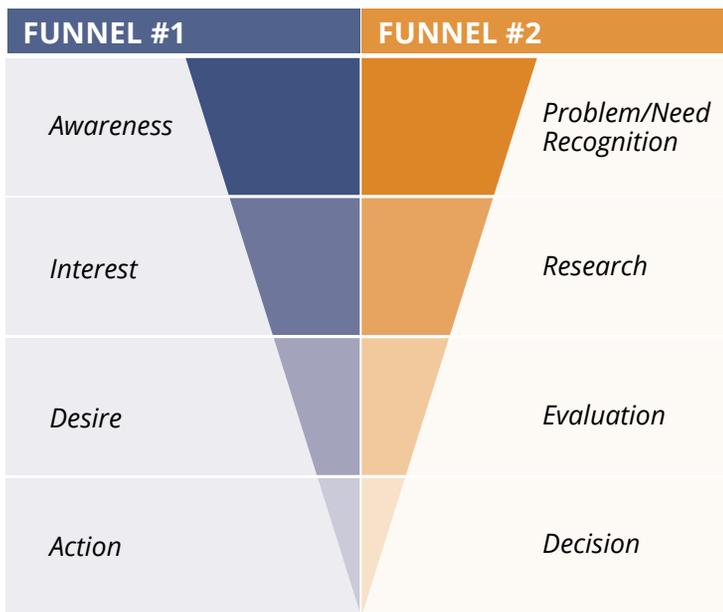
NOTES



THE SALES FUNNEL (HOMEWORK)

Your customers follow predictable patterns in the buying process. As a best practice, you should have their stages mapped out, from the earliest point of your relationship where they've never heard of you, all the way through where they decide to purchase from you. Each piece of content that you publish might reach your prospects in a different stage of the funnel, and each piece should help your customers advance to the next step or even skip a step as they move closer to a purchase decision.

There are many ways to describe each step. Here are 2 distinctly different funnel processes:



MY FUNNEL PROCESS

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

TIP: These buying process examples are generic. Take the time to evaluate your customer's buying process to make sure you understand all the steps. Remember, each piece of content should focus on a stage of the buying process and should meet their focused interest to move them further down the funnel. Are you creating content that is useful and helpful?

LEARN MORE:

[Understanding the Buying Process](#) - E-Book

[Create Content for Every Stage of the Buyer's Journey](#) - Blog Post



PERSONAS

DEFINE YOUR AUDIENCE - Why a buyer's persona? These are examples of buyers who make or influence decisions about our businesses.

Whether it's B2B or B2C, small business or enterprise, each one of us has an audience. For some it is very clearly defined and narrowly focused. For others, our businesses cover a broad range of demographics. The key is to define that audience so you know who they are, their habits and activities and how you can reach them.

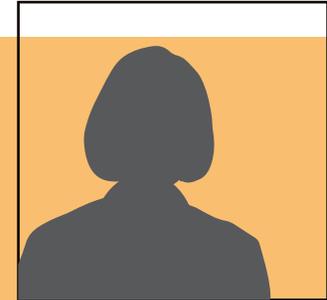
These insights will inform your content marketing strategies, content formats, promotional and distribution efforts. They will also help you align your efforts with current company marketing efforts.

Put as much detail as you can into the persona; age, gender, where they work, what their leisure habits are; really anything that will shape and define your audience segments.

EXAMPLE PERSONA

MARY SMITH

43, MARRIED



- 3 Children 2 boys, 1 girl
- Soccer mom to the max
- CEO of her own interior design company
- Follows and read many lifestyle blogs, loves videos and visual content
- Often on the go, consuming information on mobile
- Likes to travel
- Decision maker in her family
- Active on Facebook & Pinterest
- Influenced by fellow moms and entrepreneurs
- Pain points come down to cost and ease-of-use

PERSONA EXAMPLE

Here is an example of a basic persona for a non-profit organization with the goal of gaining new supporters and donations for their cause.



Demographics

(Age, gender, marital status, location, education, socioeconomic status)

Persona Name

Boomer Bob

3 adjectives to describe them:

Generous Hands-on Conservative

51-69, retired, married with grown children (empty nester), lives in rural south, conservative politics, Christian, fixed retirement income

Lack of awareness, worry about trustworthiness of charities, has difficulty prioritizing donations

Wants personalized experiences that don't feel like advertisements, responds best to powerful messaging the shows what donations result in

Conservative news channels and individual influencers, influenced by adult children

Pain Points

(Barriers to purchase or conversion)

Trust Factors

(Those things that create trust and loyalty with brands)

Influencers

(Who or what are they influenced by? Can include media sources where they already consume content.)

Preferred Content Formats

Long-form content Case Studies Reviews
 Email Video Infographics
 Podcasts Blogs Webinars

Sample Content Topics

How to Prioritize your Charitable Giving in 2017

Preferred Devices

(Check the box on where they consume content the most.)

Mobile Tablet Desktop

Are they active on social media? Where?

For the most part, no, although some are relatively active on Facebook. They prefer email for staying in touch digitally.



YOUR PERSONAS

Now it's time to create the personas specific to your business. We've given you some blank faces to work from, so start to think about the type of people you already reach or want to reach and flesh out their persona here.



Persona Name

3 adjectives to describe them:

Demographics

(Age, gender, marital status, location, education, socioeconomic status)

Pain Points

(Barriers to purchase or conversion)

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Mobile Tablet Desktop

Are they active on social media? Where?



YOUR PERSONAS CONT'D

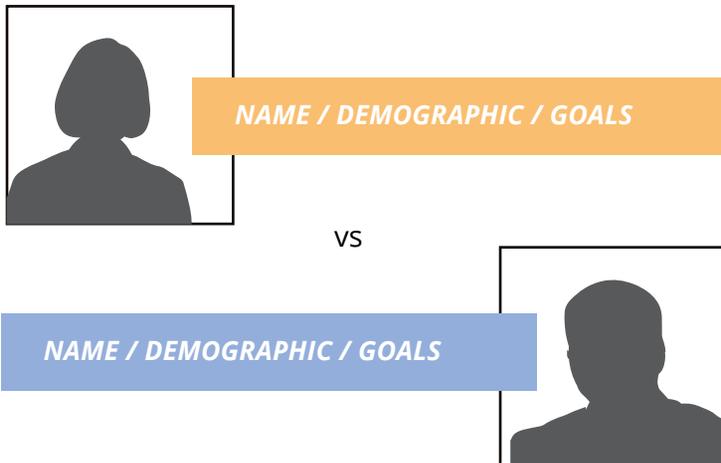
TIP: Spend some time with this exercise. It will help you identify your target audience. Each persona should be specific enough that your messaging will change accordingly. Imagine the difference between each of these personas you've created. How will you approach each of them with your content?

LEARN MORE

[Everything Marketers Need to Research & Create Detailed Buyer Personas](#) - Template

[How Buyer Personas Come to Life with Content Marketing](#) - Blog

NOTES



IDEATION: KEYWORD PHRASES

Most businesses have a few keyword phrases (common terms) that drive most of their online traffic and most of their revenue. It's important to know those phrases as well as other semantic phrases that users are typing into search engines to find your products or services – both high-volume and high-conversion. This will only serve to help you understand how to craft content that people will land on.

LONG TAIL TERMS

This concept was introduced by Chris Anderson in a *Wired* magazine article in 2004. It refers to the fact that in the aggregate, longer, more detailed searches can account for more traffic and business than the shorter 'head' terms. This is still true today, and you can learn more about long-tail terms in a white paper called, ["The Tail Behind the Tail."](#) Below, list the phrases that, based on industry knowledge or analytics insights, drive your online traffic:

KEYWORD PHRASE	1 VARIATION	2 VARIATION	3 VARIATION
<i>e.g. juicer combo machine</i>	<i>all-in-one juicer & blender machine</i>	<i>blender combo model</i>	<i>dual-purpose smoothie maker</i>
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IDEATION: COMMON QUESTIONS AND YOUR EXPERTISE

YOUR CUSTOMERS HAVE QUESTIONS. ANSWER THEM.

What questions are your potential customers asking? There are common questions almost everyone asks before buying during their “Zero Moment of Truth.” Use the questions to create topics and headlines. By answering their questions on your website, you are moving visitors through the buying cycle. They will be more informed and ready to buy when it comes time.

QUESTION

Ex: How much does content marketing cost?

HEADLINE

What You Should Know About the True Costs of Content Marketing



IDEATION: COMMON QUESTIONS AND YOUR EXPERTISE CONT'D (HOMEWORK)

YOU'RE AN EXPERT, ACT LIKE IT!

Let's come up with a few more headlines. Ask yourself: what am I an expert at? Then, convert these expertise areas into possible headlines.

AREA OF EXPERTISE

Ex: Corporate cyber fraud protection

HEADLINE

10 Expert Strategies to Block Corporate Cyber Fraud Attempts

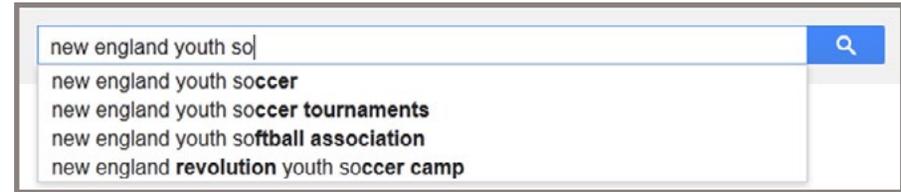
TIP: Interview your sales and customer service staff. They're the closest to your customers, and they're the people that hear the questions and concerns day in and day out. They also already know how to answer questions and address objections. You'll learn a lot from them, and you'll be able to generate topics and headlines from the interview.



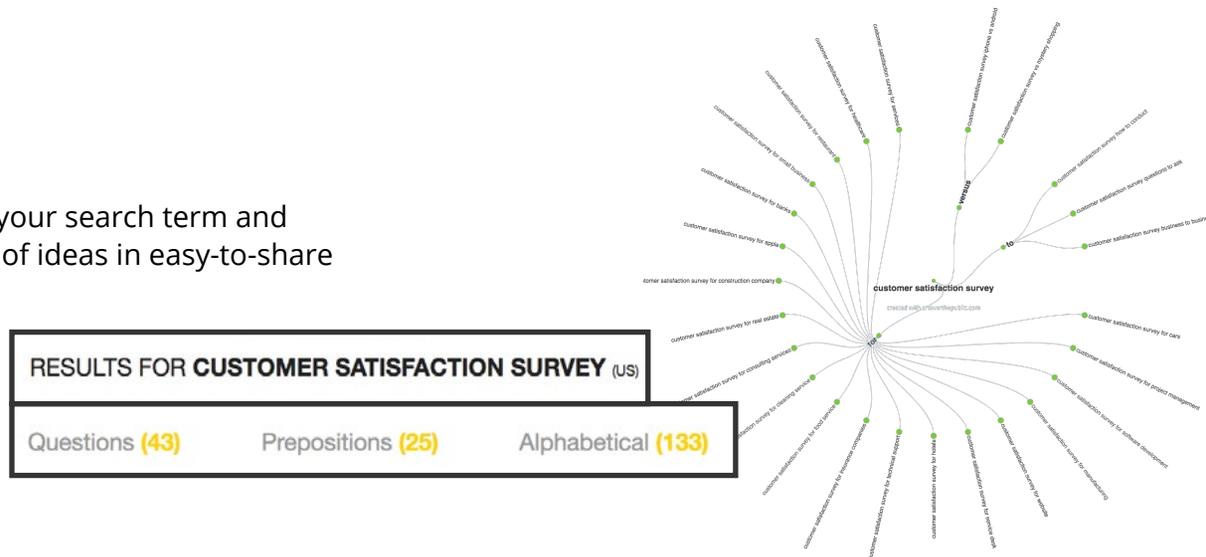
KEYWORD RESEARCH AND TOPIC IDEATION TOOLS

Need more ideas? There are a number of online tools you can use to help you develop more topics and headlines.

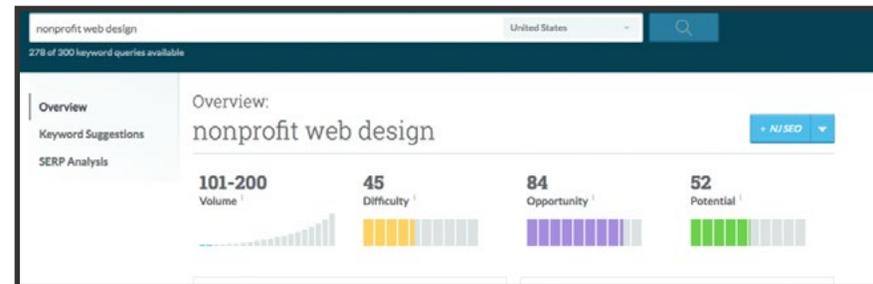
GOOGLE SUGGEST Go to Google.com, start typing in your search and look at the auto complete for more ideas.



ANSWERTHEPUBLIC.COM Add your search term and Answer the public provides tons of ideas in easy-to-share visualizations.



MOZ.COM See related terms and topics based on your entered query.



KEYWORD RESEARCH AND TOPIC IDEATION TOOLS CONT'D

YOUTUBE.COM The second largest search engine is owned by Google. Searchers have a different intent when they search here. Most often it's a 'how to' search.



KEYWORDTOOL.IO This tool pulls from the Google API, allowing you to see popular searches in alphabetical order along with questions.



CONTENT CALENDAR TEMPLATE (HOMEWORK)

Publishing content on a frequent basis will deliver more traffic and more leads. But many organizations go about creating content without a plan or calendar. This ad hoc approach is not effective or efficient.

Creating a content calendar allows you to look months ahead to ensure that you are:

- Publishing content consistently
- Focusing on business priorities
- Following your established strategy

The calendar format below includes the basics. The more detail you add to the calendar, the more effective it becomes. Consider adding: primary and semantic keyword phrases, promotion and social media channels, meta descriptions, calls-to-action, hub and spoke correlation, and a search volume and competition metrics field.

Content formats could include: blog post, social media, video, infographic, free guide, case study, etc. Are there hubs/spokes you can identify here?

BARE BONES CALENDAR

Date	Title	Goal	Persona	Phase	Format
Q3 2017	<i>Can I Get a Government Credit for Installing Solar Panels on My Home?</i>	<i>Organic Search</i>	<i>Homeowner Henry</i>	<i>Consideration</i>	<i>Written blog post</i>



CONTENT CREATION

There are so many different ways to develop content. From visual formats like videos to infographics, to written content like case studies and articles, the possibilities are endless.

But every business is different in terms of what their audience gravitates to and what they have the resources to create.

Use the checklist below to identify what content formats you can or want to produce that are aligned with your strategy, and how you would go about getting them created with internal or external resources.

CONTENT FORMATS	AVAILABLE RESOURCES:		NOTES
	INTERNAL?	EXTERNAL?	
Blog articles			
Videos			
Webinars			
Newsletters			
Case studies			
Podcasts			
Infographics / Datagraphics			
Quizzes			
Interactive Tools			
Downloadable Guides			
eBooks			
Curation			
Interviews			



OPTIMIZATION (HOMEWORK)

Optimization is a crucial element of content marketing. You should never publish a new piece of content until you ensure best optimization practices have been followed. If you're going to spend 10 hours creating a piece of content, at least spend 10 minutes optimizing it so it can be easily discovered. Optimization is also important for a good user experience that engages the visitor and encourages them to take the next step in their journey.

Below are the major elements that each web page or content should have. Check the box of the ones you already consistently do so you know where to improve.

WHAT DO YOU OPTIMIZE?

- Page title (shows in search results)
- Meta description (shows in search results)
- H1 Tag (only one per page!)
- Section headings (H2, H3, H4)
- Internal links
- External links
- Bulleted and numbered lists
- Font formatting
- Calls-to-action
- Image ALT text
- Mobile friendliness
- Page load times
- Schema markup or rich snippets
- Open Graph, Twitter Cards, Pinterest Rich Pins



CONTENT PROMOTION: DRIVING YOUR AUDIENCE TO YOUR CONTENT

Do the legwork to ensure the content you've put so much work into creating gets found. That means promoting your content to platforms off your website where your audience is already hanging out online.

The following are promotional methods - both organic and paid - that can be used to get the word out about your content and drive people to back to your owned channel.

Check off the channels below where you can promote your content. Pick the channel most aligned with your audience because most of us don't have resources to do them all well.

PAID CONTENT PROMOTION

PPC on search engines

Paid ads on social media platforms

Banner Ads

Sponsorships

Traditional media

Native advertising

Influencer marketing

Press releases

ORGANIC CONTENT PROMOTION

Facebook

Twitter

LinkedIn

Instagram

Pinterest

Link development

Internal staff promotion



CONTENT DISTRIBUTION: DRIVING YOUR CONTENT TO YOUR AUDIENCE (HOMEWORK)

The goal of promotion is to drive your audience to your content by reaching them where they hang out online and pushing them back to your owned channel - oftentimes your own website.

Distribution, on the other hand, is about driving your content to your audience on other channels where your content can live and be discovered on its own. It's a subtle difference, but an important one to understand.

For example, you could promote your blog content on LinkedIn, but also distribute an entire piece of content and publish it on the platform itself. Or you could create a piece of content for an off-site media publication relevant to your industry.

Check off the channels below where you already are distributing content or where you would like to in the future. Pick the channels most aligned with your audience because most of us don't have resources to do them all well.

DISTRIBUTION CHANNELS

Industry related site

LinkedIn

YouTube

Vimeo

Pinterest

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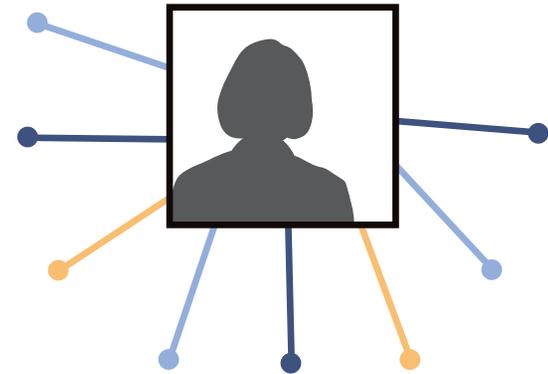


INFLUENCER MARKETING

People more and more are tuning out marketing messages and advertising, and their trust in peers, social connections, and experts is increasing. Influencer marketing can be a potent distribution strategy. By tapping into an influencer, you're also tapping into a built-in network and digital followers. The key to influencer marketing is establishing a long-lasting relationship based on trust and mutual benefit.

There are some questions you should ask when stepping into influencer marketing:

- What influencers does your target audience already follow online?
- Do your target influencers have a large built-in audience base?
- Where will influencer content live? Your site, their site, elsewhere?
- Who is creating the content: you, them, or is it co-created?
- Can you provide an easy way for an influencer to promote your content once published?
- What formats can you create for influencer content?



INFLUENCER IDENTIFICATION

Name experts in your industry or community that you could interview for either a blog post or video interview or other content piece.

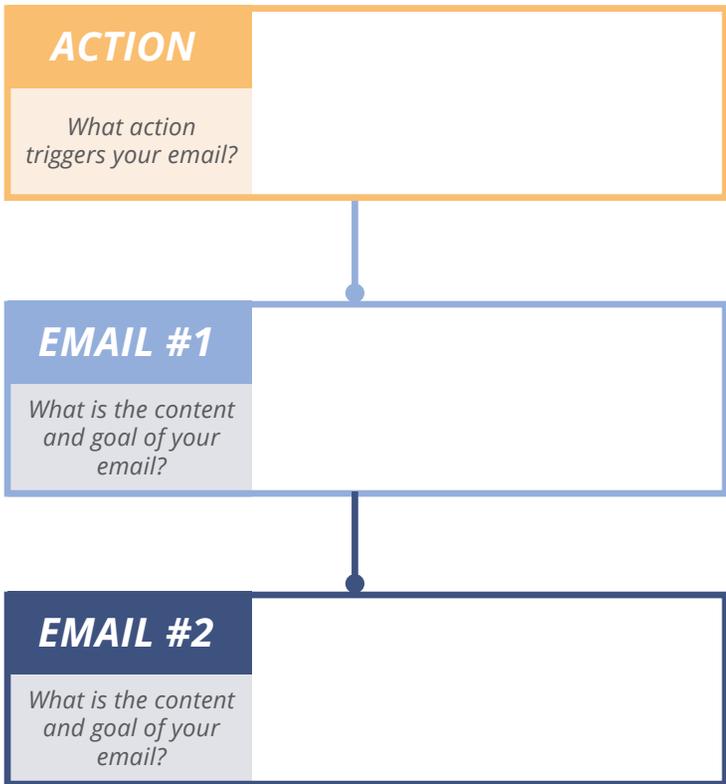
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

LEAD NURTURE (HOMEWORK)

Lead nurture is the relationship-building element of content marketing. It's just as important to keep the relationship alive as it is to create it in the first place. This is where trust and loyalty are built; by providing consistent value to someone who has shown interest in your products or services and delivering information that is helpful.

Lead nurture mainly takes the form of email. From newsletters to updates to promotions, email is a potent tool to stay top-of-mind (and inbox) to nurture an existing relationship, encouraging prospects to move down the sales funnel.

Sketch out a two-email lead nurturing process in the boxes below based on an action someone takes on your website. For example, if someone fills out a contact form, what happens next? How about a download? Also, write down one thing you can do to improve your email and lead nurturing program right away.



NOTES



HUB AND SPOKE CONTENT MARKETING

Now that you've gone through this workbook and identified goals and metrics, content ideas and formats, promotion and distribution channels, it's time to pull everything you've learned together into an actionable plan you can work on right away. The hub and spoke model of content marketing gives you a tight focus for a designated amount of time, with a main goal of driving traffic, leads, and nurturing relationships into business opportunities.

HUB - Hubs are comprehensive pieces of content that are often gated behind a form in order to drive leads. They can take many different formats, PDFs, kits, tools, e-books, an exclusive video series, or more. They should provide additional value that your normal day-to-day content may not.

SPOKES - Spokes are ancillary pieces of content created with the goal in mind of driving people to the hub. Topics are brainstormed in conjunction with the hub and planned out over a designated period of time (e.g. a quarter) in order to focus your content marketing efforts. Content from the hub can be repurposed for the spokes in different formats and for different content channels.



HUB AND SPOKE CAMPAIGN ABSTRACT SAMPLE

Business Goal / Background

Many people feel like they are failing with their content marketing, so this guide will address the major elements they need to revamp in the next 90 days to see improvements. Goal is to generate leads who are struggling, and nurture the relationship, introducing them to our Coaching program.

Initial Hub Topic and Title Ideas

Your 60-Day Content Marketing Plan Template
90-Day Content Marketing Course-Correction Plan
Guide to Revamping your Content Marketing Program in 90 Days

Content Format

Long-form downloadable PDF

Spoke Ideas (create as many as you can)

Insourcing vs. Outsourcing your Content Development [Infographic]
How to Revive Your Content Marketing Plan in 2 Months [Blog]
10 Industry Experts Share How to Course-Correct Failing Content Marketing Programs [Influencer Round-up]

Launch Timeline

Q2 2017



Audience / Persona

Marketing Mary - Marketing Director or Manager at B2B or B2C businesses, both small and large scale, who wears many hats. She is not the final decision maker, but regularly consumes content (mostly written articles and case studies), and attends industry events in order to bring back insights to her team.

Lead Nurture Sketch

A series of 4 emails spaced out over a few weeks after download. First few emails will be informational, with CTAs pointing people to published spokes that are relevant. Information on Coaching program to be included in later emails, with CTA to contact us to talk further.

Lead Content Creator

Freelance

Other Roles and Responsibilities

Susan - Content outline and editing, general management
Bob - Guide design
Tim - Social media plan and promotion
Jess - Lead nurture implementation



HUB AND SPOKE CAMPAIGN ABSTRACT

Business Goal / Background

Initial Hub Topic and Title Ideas

Content Format

Spoke Ideas (create as many as you can)

Launch Timeline



Audience / Persona

Lead Nurture Sketch

Lead Content Creator

Other Roles and Responsibilities



CONTACT US

VERTICAL MEASURES, LLC

Vertical Measures is a full-service Internet marketing agency dedicated towards helping our clients drive profitable growth through content marketing. VM produces integrated digital strategies, dynamic content pieces, and targeted SEO campaigns for a wide range of industries nationwide that are based on the principles outlined in Vertical Measures’ proven 8 Step Process. With an emphasis on content marketing, Vertical Measures puts on educational workshops and seminars, and can bring customized onsite training directly to any team. VM is a leader within the content marketing industry, publishing on outlets like CMI, Phoenix Business Journal, Marketing Land, Search Engine Journal, and more.

www.VerticalMeasures.com

SOCIAL MEDIA



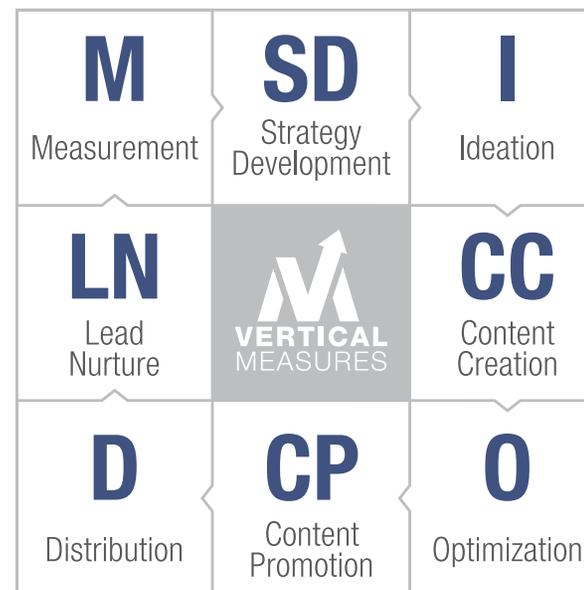
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