ORACLE
MARKETING CLOUD

MODERN MARKETING ESSENTIALS GUIDE

CONTENT MARKETING

A Prescriptive Guide Fortified to Build Stronger Marketing

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INTRODUCTION

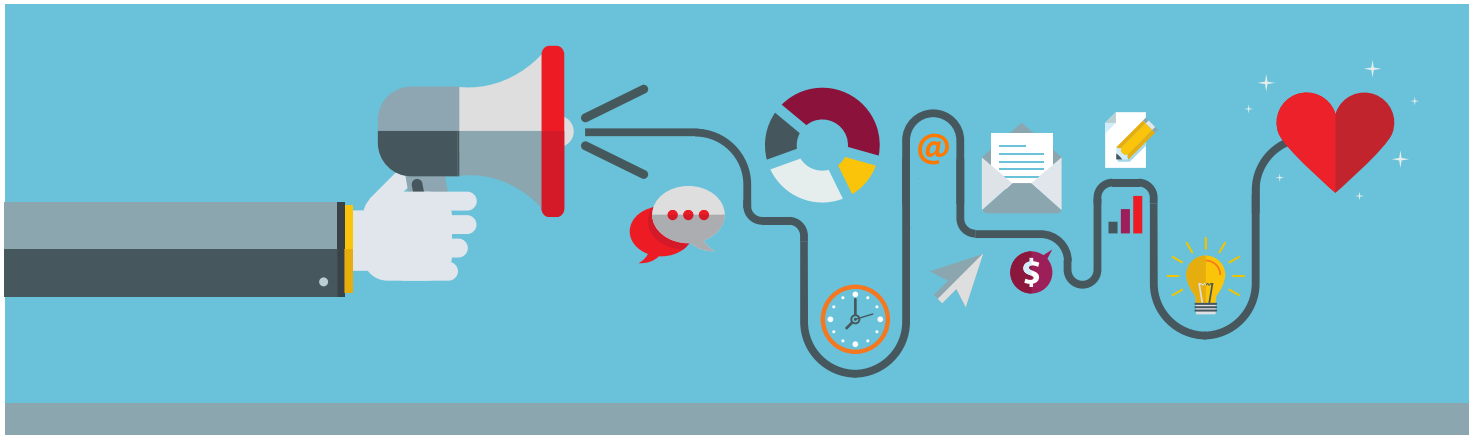
The sheer volume of marketing information available today is nearly impossible to sift through, and it can be hard to decide how to allocate your valuable time. *Ain't nobody got time for that. We've got marketing magic to make!*

The Modern Marketing Essentials series gives marketing leaders and practitioners the opportunity to supplement their existing marketing strategies with helpful insights into the topics you hear marketers must know about, and more importantly those that are affecting your bottom line.

It's more important than ever—essential even—to ensure that you're keeping up with smart marketing tips to maximize your success. We've got you covered. Modern Marketing Essentials Guides are a quick but detailed, compact but thorough resource for topics and education Modern Marketers need the most.

Think of them as helpful vitamin supplements to your daily marketing diet.

Like any nutrition plan, this one will continue to evolve and help your marketing stay healthy and thrive. We have several guides in the works, but we want to know which topics are essential to your marketing! Tell us and you can be entered to win a Marketer's Essentials Pack!



MODERN MARKETING ESSENTIALS: CONTENT MARKETING

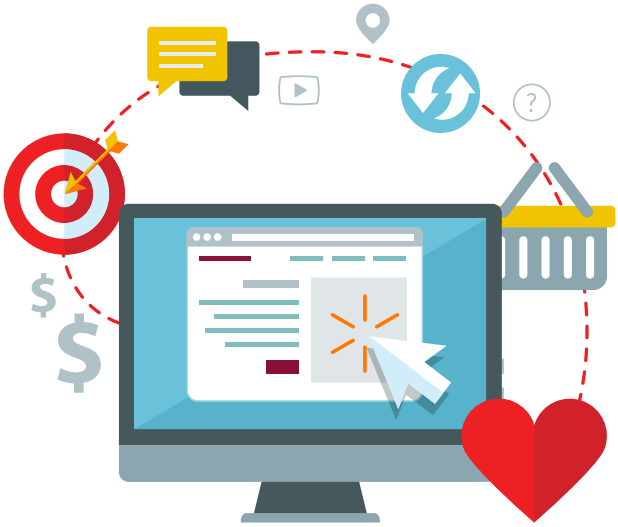
THE 411 ON CONTENT MARKETING

Content marketing is driving the way marketing organizations are engaging their audiences. But in our consumer-empowered world, it's become more difficult for marketers to cut through clutter and a lot more challenging to garner loyalty with their audiences. That's why smart content delivered in context will make you stand out in the crowd.

Content marketing supports awareness and demand generation by establishing digital, value-based relationships that give marketers a way to excite and empower existing customers. It also enhances sales enablement by offering information to those who need it.

THE BIG 3

Regardless of where your content marketing stands, this practice is an evolving strategy. We've compiled three core points to support your ability to ramp up your activities.



Part 1

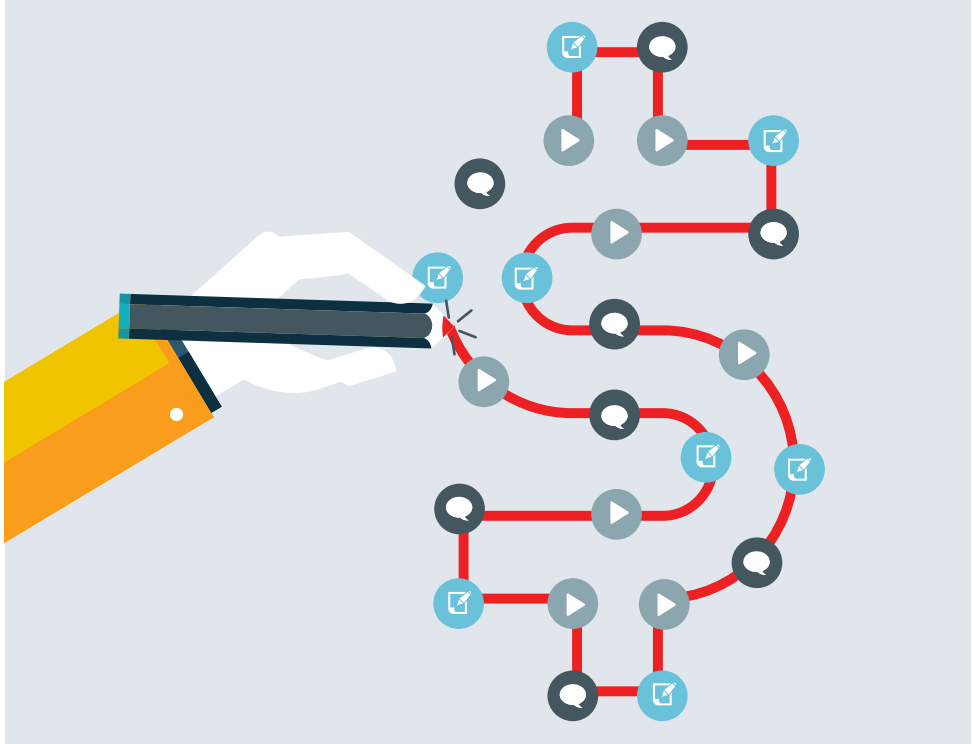
CONTENT TO SUPPORT MARKETING AND BUSINESS OBJECTIVES

Content marketing is the most direct way to relay your "marketing message"—but let's call it "value proposition"—to your audiences. Content supports engagement with your brand because it employs a storytelling-based approach that people can relate to as a brand narrative. Engagement breeds loyalty and repeat purchasing. The Amazon.com "You May Also Like" experience we've come to expect as consumers in our everyday shopping has trickled over into nearly every shopping or business buying decision.

Content is vital to supporting meaningful engagements across all channels with your audiences. Smart content supports the needs, challenges, and triumphs of current and prospective customers. Content should enable the organization to streamline marketing activities by building solid brand and thought leadership stories that evolve into mutually beneficial relationships—for the customer and for the brand's bottom line. While marketers are increasingly executing on their understanding of messaging and delivery, it still can be challenging to create seamless processes that align business objectives with earned, owned, and paid media activities.

"Consumers of all types are hyper-researching purchases like never before, due to smartphones, tablets and always-on Internet access. This puts pressure on CMOs and marketing teams to create more and more content to cover every product attribute and potential area of inquiry. Operationally, however, marketers can increase their content production volume most efficiently by repurposing and repackaging their existing assets, rather than reinventing the wheel each time. This concept of 'atomizing content'—breaking big ideas into many small executions is an enormous time-saver for thoughtful marketers."

— **Jay Baer**
Content Marketing Expert and Bestselling Author
Youtility: Why Smart Marketing is About Help Not Hype

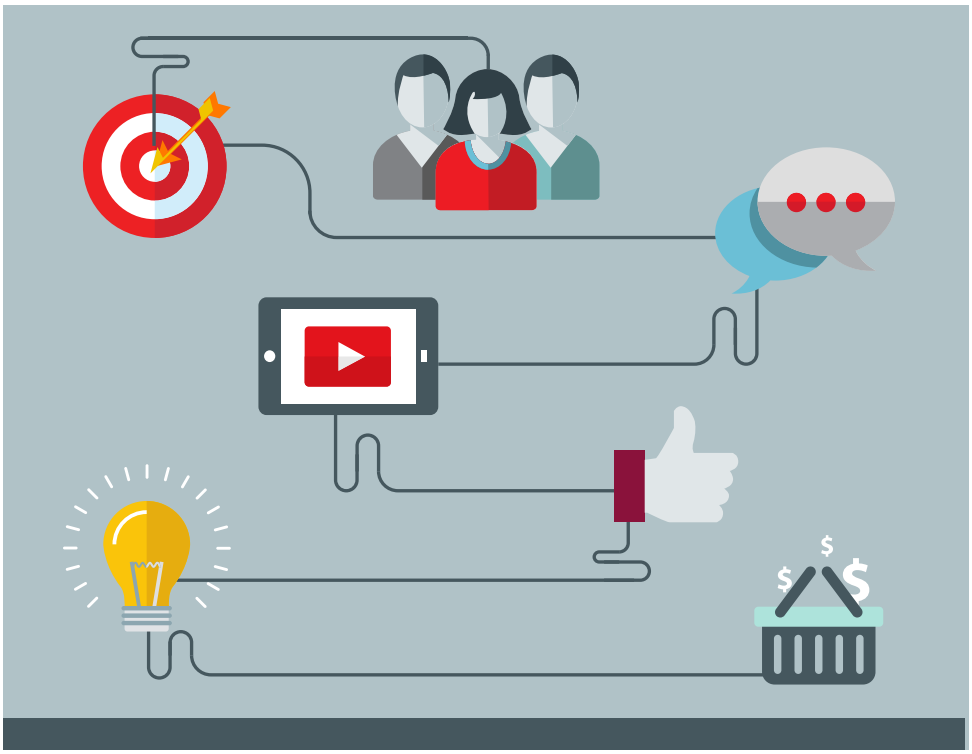


Content marketing is driving the way marketing organizations are engaging their audiences. Content marketing has evolved to become a core discipline that organizations are putting budget and bandwidth into to maximize all engagement activities. If you haven't seen it already, the majority (78%) of the most effective B2B marketers are creating more content than they did one year ago, compared with 57% of their least effective peers, according to the Content Marketing Institute and MarketingProfs' annual *Content Marketing Benchmarks Report*.

Additionally, content marketing usage among B2C marketers has risen from 86% last year to 90% this year, the same study shows. However, not even half of those marketers have a documented content marketing strategy. And according to Forrester, 85% of B2B marketers can't connect content activity directly to business value. Clearly it's time to connect those dots.

While these numbers validate the growth in content marketing as a science, for many, getting started is half the battle. That's why documenting a content strategy can be challenging. And the classroom of execution and maintenance is always in session. In that regard it can feel like you're always getting started on new content marketing programs.

Whether you're new to the content party and want to get your feet wet, or already have an existing strategy in place that's working well, it's important to stay committed to the following principles at every point in your organization's content marketing planning process.



CHECK YOURSELF, BEFORE YOU WRECK YOURSELF (AND YOUR CONTENT)

Before you map out a content creation initiative, assemble a core strategy around value-based themes for your audience. Examine your existing content and ask: "Are you talking about yourself, your product, or the service it provides to the enablement and success of your customers?" Go for the latter! Your customers should always be the centerpieces of your content ideas. Counting the number of times your company and/or product names appear in your collateral is a soft, but helpful, exercise to test your commitment.

Subscribing to a customer-first philosophy is an imperative. The very premise of content is to support your audience's needs by answering their key questions and supporting their research and discovery. An easy mistake to make is to forget that your customers already are actively searching for information—with or without your help. The idea is to cultivate a role in that process and establish your brand as a source of insight.

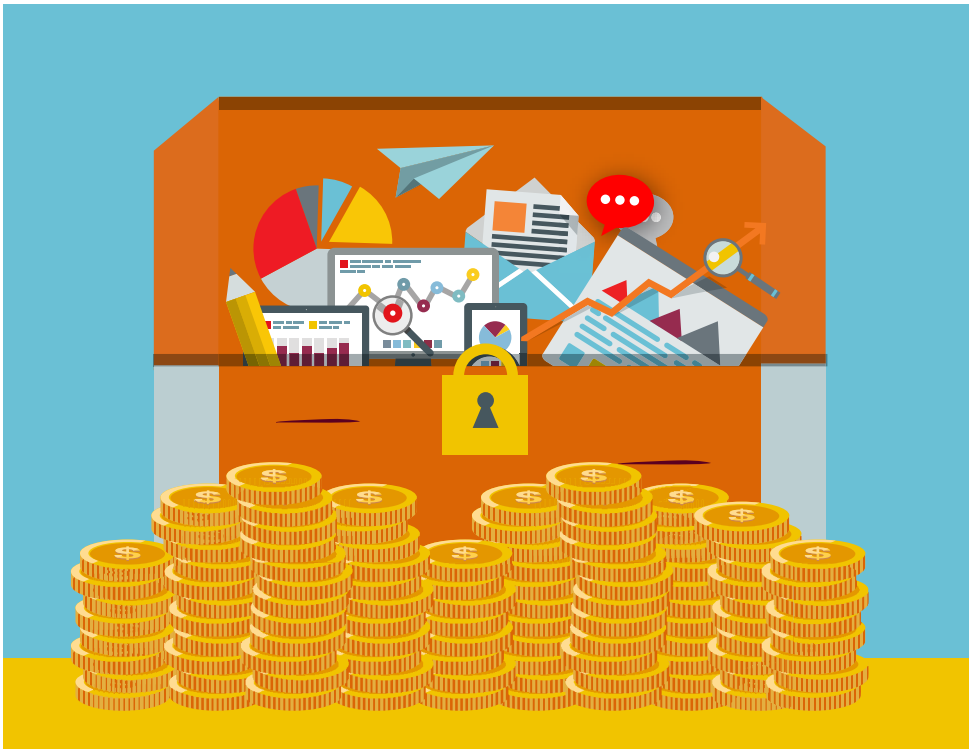
Talk to your customer communities—via social media or even better in your dedicated customer community forum if possible—to get them involved in the discussion. For example, we find that in most cases, the threads of discussions our users are having in our Topliners community prove to be great sources of content inspiration. These conversations offer insight into how our existing customers are using our products and services, as well as how they can be supported to achieve success.

While not every organization is afforded the opportunity to host such discussions, these conversations are happening in various places such as LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook—or even blog comment threads. These are helpful places to garner valuable information about how you can be a better information concierge — a source that guides people in a supportive and helpful (but not intrusive) way.

AIM TO BE THE #1 SOURCE FOR NEWS YOU CAN USE FOR YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE

You might cite yourself as "the number one provider of…(fill in the blank)". You can and should be that! Provide information that is of organic value to your existing customers, purely based on problem solving and success building exercises. Start by making a list of the 3-5 core benefits your product enables, and share content assets that support these themes. Refine your theme strategy by testing with customer surveys and various feedback initiatives.

Ask yourself—as a consumer of content—how many times per day do you feel as if you're immersed in news you can really use? With the incessant stream of information from across all sources—online, in store, via social media—it can be nearly impossible to sift through and find rich resources that offer real value. When you do get that valuable information, you're grateful to the source, and therefore more inclined to give credence to that source. *Hey, that sounds like a relationship forming!*



ALWAYS REMEMBER TO MINE THE GOLD BURIED DEEP IN YOUR OWN BACKYARD

Content such as sales sheets, benchmark reports, and other assets that may be classified as later stage information—specifically for complex sales cycles—is actually incredibly helpful in concept development for earlier stage engagement content.

Remember that each product or service being sold solves a core need or challenge for the customer buying it—the question for your organization to constantly be answering is: "What is it?"

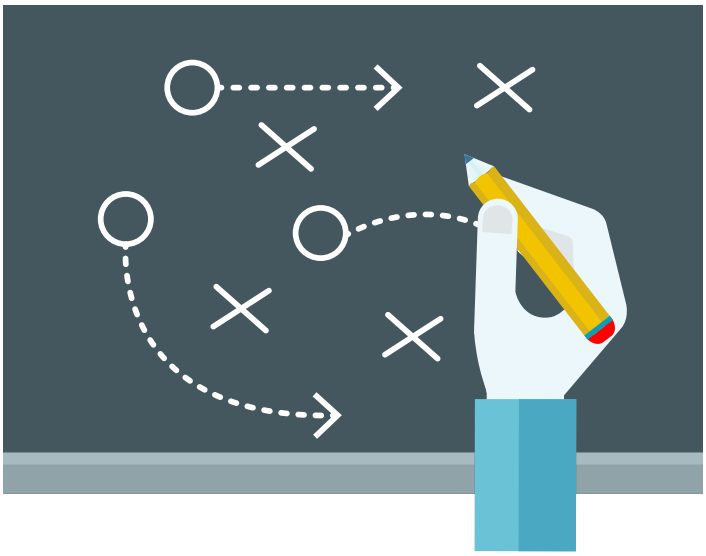
Every organization, perhaps without even realizing it, likely already possesses its own unique resource center of assets that can be helpful in crafting stage-specific content based on proven effective formats across the research and discovery journey. Regardless of your team's size or makeup, make sure to meet regularly to discuss how you can maximize the value of your individual efforts and turn initiatives into content marketing themes and assets.

CONTENT Q&A:

Q: Marketing objectives vary based on organizational goals and demands. How do you find a healthy balance of content to support marketing objectives versus content that your specific audiences want?

A: "I use data to drive these decisions. I'm an advocate of conducting surveys. There is nothing more valuable than hearing directly from your target audience. Often, their needs and interests are quite different than what the marketing team might believe. Knowing your audience will ensure you create content that will resonate with them. It is much easier to create the right type of content when you have data, rather than opinions, to guide you. "

— **Caroline Lalla**
Digital Content Manager
Ecosystem & Cloud Services,
Lenovo



Part 2

CONTENT PLANNING BEST PRACTICES

A documented strategy helps keep your content in check, so your teams can maximize the value of the assets you're creating, and your audiences feel the value of interacting with your content. Whether you're starting from scratch or knee deep in planning, here are four basic questions to keep top of mind when crafting content:

1. How is this relevant to my audience?
2. What are our success metrics?
3. How do I maximize my daily efforts?
4. What purpose does my content serve?

The content you create will support all of your efforts. Therefore it is vital that you plan before you initiate your content marketing strategy. It is equally vital to remain nimble to adapt to the changing needs of your business and your audience.

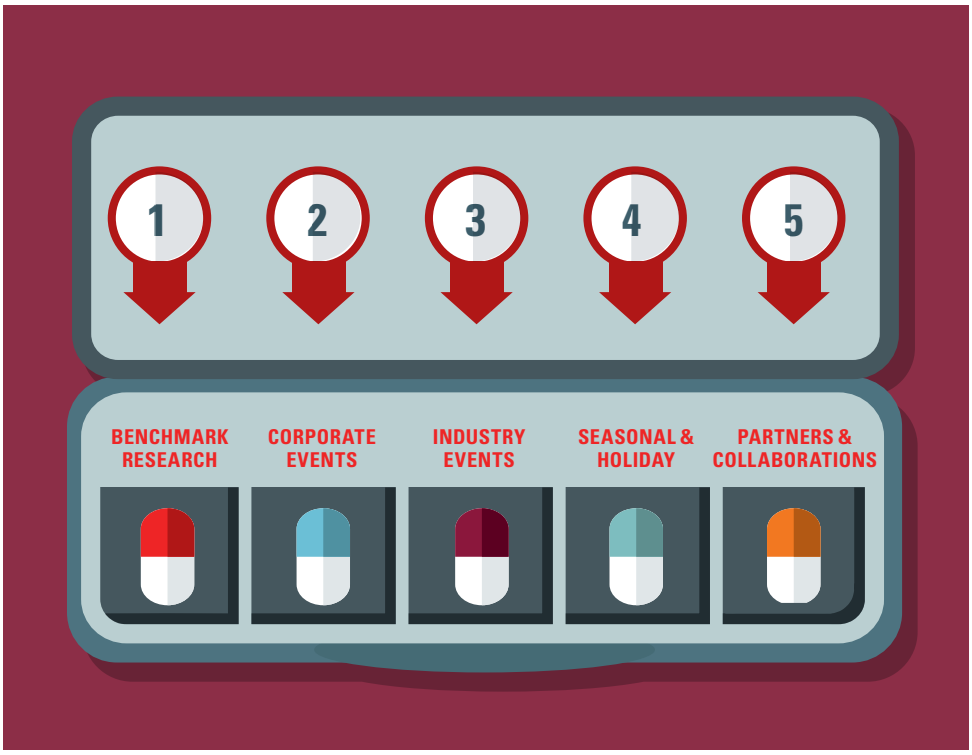
Start with your mission statement (or create one if you haven't already).

Separately, for the purpose of internal planning (and your team's sanity!) consider the language and plans in place for your strategies as they relate to both internal and external activities. While your audience—as well as the experiences you are creating for them—is top of mind, you should be thinking equally about how your internal planning translates to that experience.

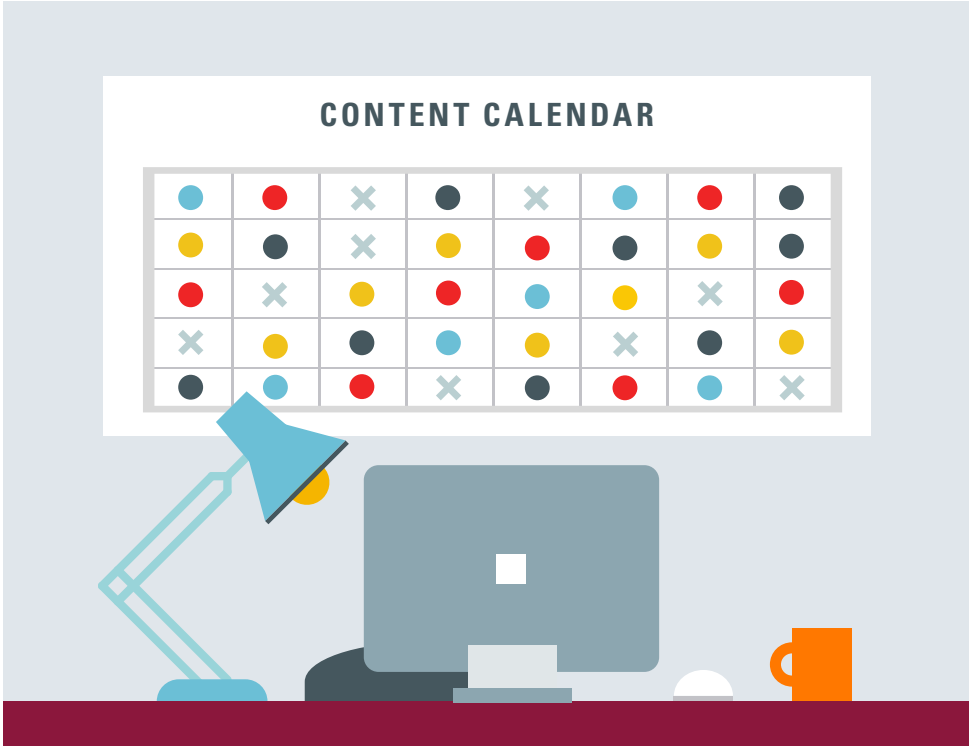
For instance, our content team uses "Categories" and "Topics" to support our content development, specifically as it relates to our blog. Categories are used to inventory the keywords and themes our audiences are most interested in hearing about, while Topics are used to classify the activities we are supporting from a content marketing perspective.

This strategy helps us stay focused in delivering content to support the initiatives of our various organizational teams, as well as the relevant information our audiences need and deserve. This also makes measurement more seamless because we can track the amount of content being created to support the respective activities.

While Categories of key themes will vary heavily across different businesses, brands, and industries, your planning, Topics are generally conducive to your marketing and overall business objectives. Here is a sample of some of the topics we use to classify content to support important activities across the organization. (You'll notice these terms are not necessarily germane to our audience. These are exclusive to our internal planning and can support your content marketing best practice arsenal now!)



Organizing your content planning practices around the categories and topics most relevant to your audience is a helpful way to ensure relevance, but also to become more systematic. The key to effective content planning and measurement—which we'll cover in the next section—is to implement repeatable processes for success.



CREATING A CONTENT CALENDAR

Regardless of the makeup of your organization or the size of your team, every committed content marketing plan requires a simple way to organize an effective editorial schedule. Particularly if your organization is leveraging insight from multiple departments to contribute content to the cause, it's imperative to centralize these activities. Here are three simple steps to help you implement a company-wide content calendar:

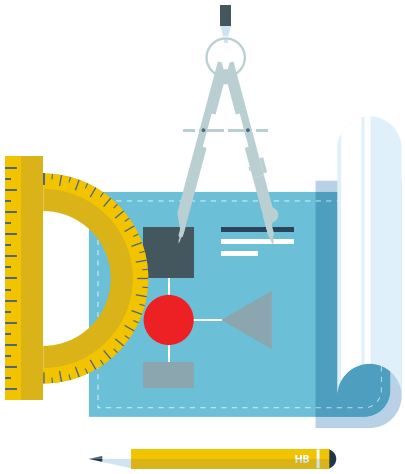
1. **Decide on your content calendar locale.**
   A content calendar is dead on arrival if no one knows where to find it. Consider the key content stakeholders in the organization, and how you can most effectively facilitate the planning process. For instance, you may have a centralized workspace or cloud-based account to manage your content. It's important that your calendar is easy to access, update, and share.

2. **Simplify your calendar.**
   The more complex the calendar, the less ikely you will get the participation you need from your team. Keep the details to a minimum and do not treat your content calendar as a distribution strategy document. Remember your calendar is an enabler, not an obstacle!

3. **Keep it updated.**
   The team needs to be in the know. Relevancy and real-time adjustments can cause road bumps in effectively implementing a content calendar. The key is persistence. Make it a distinct part of your team's workflow.

MAP OUT YOUR CONTENT STRATEGY

Savvy marketers think broadly about the channels on which material will live. Think about how to maximize the value of your output, while allowing content to support audience input.



Whether your team is big or small, dispersed or actively working out of one location, everyone can benefit from this one tip: **Get to know your content comrades.** This can and will differ across organizations, but here's a simple breakdown of what we like to call the Oracle Marketing Cloud "Content Comrade Roster." Keeping in mind that titles and roles vary, this is a list we developed to help you rethink content roles in terms of responsibilities. Some teams may not have each of these roles formally filled, but it's important that all these areas are covered to maximize your content output:

THE CONTENT CHIEF

This is your ringleader, the content connector, if you will. This is the person responsible for managing the high-level content marketing initiatives who likely reports to your marketing leader and translates corporate goals into content realities.

THE CONTENT STRATEGIST(S)

This is the primary content conceptualizer, writer, and likely the manager of third-party vendors or freelancers, if used. This person also creates launch briefs to keep the content team in the know, and serves as a liaison for other organizational departments to enable and empower with content.

THE SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETER

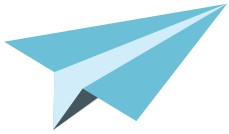
This is your strategic marketer focused on leveraging social advertising to extend the reach and virality of content assets. This person helps guide content development by providing visibility into the types of content that attract and engage in early phases of interactions with your brand.

THE COMMUNITY MANAGER

Your "social butterfly," if you will, the community manager helps spread the good word about content before, during, and after the release. This person can be instrumental in hyping up your audience, garnering feedback via social media, and supporting the circulation and reach of content assets.

THE DEMAND MAVEN

The person responsible for managing your demand generation initiatives, this person is an integral part of the content equation. You shouldn't map out content activities without consulting the schedule your demand professional is keeping, and likewise he or she shouldn't be developing demand generation emails without visibility into what's coming. This person also helps advise the content team on where there are content "gaps" in the engagement process.



THE CORPORATE COMMS/PR MANAGER

You may work collaboratively with an external public relations agency, or some organizations have their own team for managing these communications. Either way, one could argue that your content is dead in the water (particularly ungated assets) without the right person responsible for sharing it with the appropriate media outlets. This person is the wrangler of your earned media.

THE PROMOTERS (AKA THE REST OF YOUR ORGANIZATION)

If it takes a village, consider your entire company the village people. While the aforementioned key contacts are the primary players in content marketing, everybody has a responsibility for the circulation and success of your content. Ensure that there is a process in place for true enablement, and give your teams the resources they need to maximize your effort.

To maximize the value of your content output, consider the marketing activities surrounding assets as early as the idea phase. Make sure that your content comrades are plugged into content from the start so they can effectively support your efforts, but also to ensure that you're creating content with a purpose.

For example: When drafting a blog post, think of how you can extract data points for social graphics or infographics. How will you condense your long-form content down to social posts? How do you introduce your topic to LinkedIn groups? Will your next asset be a suitable featured content offering for the next demand gen email?

> "Content that is truly useful to the consumer is content that will break through the clutter. To create helpful content, it is important to keep customer needs at the forefront. What do they need to know? Why do they need to know it? How will it improve their life (or at least their decision-making around your products and services)? Determine what needs you can fulfill, and only after you've mapped that out should you consider what format your content should take. Saying, *'We need an infographic...'* is putting the modality cart before the usefulness horse. Instead, the process should be: We can answer this customer question. Is an infographic the best way to answer it?"
>
> — **Jay Baer**
> Content Marketing Expert and Bestselling Author
> *Youtility: Why Smart Marketing is About Help Not Hype*

Part 3

CONTENT AS DATA: HOW CAN YOU USE THAT DATA TO BENEFIT YOUR CUSTOMERS AND YOUR BOTTOM LINE?

In the era of big data, marketers need to be more strategic with the information they collect and access. But it's overwhelming to get your arms around that treasure trove of data—especially when it comes to content marketing and social media. Think of all the different channels, elements, and nuances that need to be tracked when you create content and promote it via social media. Yet at a time when you're under the gun to prove the ROI in content marketing, you must find a way to wrangle all that data.

If you're like most people, you can't make heads or tails of volumes of data when it's presented in a spreadsheet format. Instead, you likely prefer a graphical presentation that filters data into meaningful categories.

A centralized view of the following aspects assists in measuring content marketing effectiveness:

- All your content (including topics, format, keywords, and status)
- The volume of content you've created
- Your content productivity
- Content distribution channels
- Promotion status and activities
- Content timelines/calendars

Assessing this type of information about your content marketing allows you to configure strategies to better execute on your understanding of content status, gaps, and measurement.

"As marketers we must always remember that the goal is not to be good at content marketing, the goal is to be good at business because of content marketing. The metrics we use to measure content effectiveness must wherever possible gauge content's impact on customer behaviors that ultimately generate revenue (new or renewal). How you tie content to revenue necessarily differs by company and content type. The key, however, is to make certain that your measurement narrative is planned before the content is created.

— **Jay Baer**
Content Marketing Expert and Bestselling Author
Youtility: Why Smart Marketing is About Help Not Hype

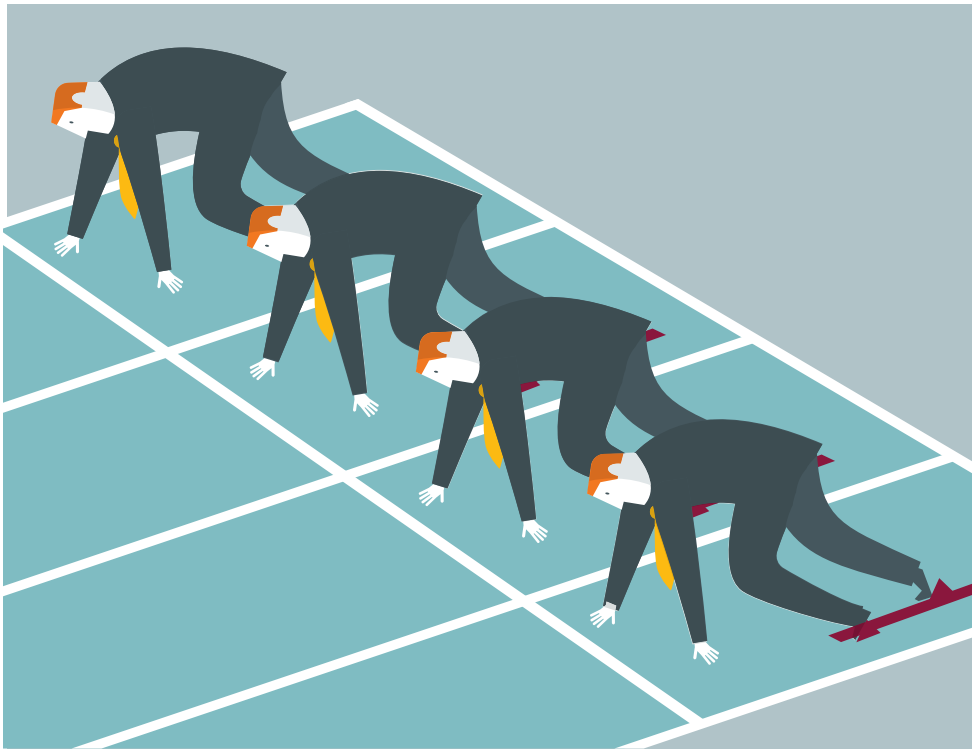
CENTRALIZING CONTENT SOURCES ALLOWS YOU TO MAXIMIZE YOUR CONTENT DATA

Most organizations—no matter what their size—use different tools to:

- Develop personas
- Create and manage an editorial calendar
- Author content
- Distribute content
- Promote content
- Track content
- Measure the results

Trying to connect all these dots usually gets a marketer's head spinning. Centralizing it enables you to manage every stage of the content lifecycle, from developing personas to measuring the impact of your content marketing. This helps you understand:

- Which of your content authors are producing the most effective content
- Which stage of the buying cycle leads to the best return on your content marketing investment
- Which persona is most responsive to your content
- Which geographic area is performing the best
- Which content is driving the biggest response
- Which type of content is performing best (video, text, image, etc.)



One of the biggest selling points of content marketing as a practice is that it is a highly measurable part of your marketing mix—one that can prove increased brand awareness, engagement, and even bottom-line results.

For content measurement to be truly meaningful, there must also be program goals that tie to specific quantifiable actions or outcomes that result from customers engaging with the content. Goals fall into four buckets.

BRAND AWARENESS AND GOALS

Metrics related to these goals should prove not only knowledge of your brand, but also positive sentiment that your audience associates with it after consuming content. Branding and awareness goals aren't typically quantifiable in terms of bottom line results. However, they are useful in helping you measure movement from those unaware of your brand to awareness among your target customer segments, which can help you acquire new leads.

Unfortunately, limiting goals to the awareness phase is an all-too-common mistake. We suggest setting branding and awareness goals as just one component of a plan. In the case of our banking thought-leadership scenario, a few actionable goals might include increasing:

- Followers of your LinkedIn company page by X percent
- Non-branded organic search visits from X to Y
- Social shares your magazine content gets from X to Y
- Views of content on SlideShare by X percent
- Interviews of executive leadership in media by X percent
- Links back to our website by general media by X percent

MARKETING GOALS

The metrics derived from these goals start to get to the heart of what you do as a marketer—that is, drive new business for your company. Marketing goals typically measure the number of people who go from the aware-and-unknown stage to interested-and-known. It's important that you capture the lead source for these individuals because it will help validate some of your awareness efforts. Examples of these goals are:

- Drive X number of new names from each webinar you host
- Capture X number of leads each month from presentations and from calls to action in an online magazine
- Increase overall inbound leads by X percent this quarter
- Grow quality leads from X to Y (usually measured by some kind of lead score)

SALES GOALS

When it comes to measuring the impact of content marketing, this piece of the puzzle often gets lost in the shuffle because marketers typically don't think about the effect of content on the sales cycle. However, well-timed, relevant content that educates prospects on topics related to your company's products or services can have a significant impact on the effectiveness of your sales team. Some goals for this category could be:

- Reduce the number of manual touch points that sales reps need to reach their prospects throughout the life of the opportunity by X percent
- Decrease the number of days it takes for an opportunity to go from created to closed from X days to Y days
- Increase the win percentage of all new business opportunities by X percent

RETENTION GOALS

Not only should you measure your content marketing efforts through to a sale, but you should also measure them in an ongoing way to see the effect your content is having on your company's renewal and retention rates. It's always more cost effective to motivate an existing customer to renew your product or service, or to make repeat purchases, than it will be to acquire a new customer. So here are some sample retention metrics:

- Increase your renewal percentage by X percent
- Grow the number of customers who make repeat purchases by X percent
- Widen share of wallet by X percent

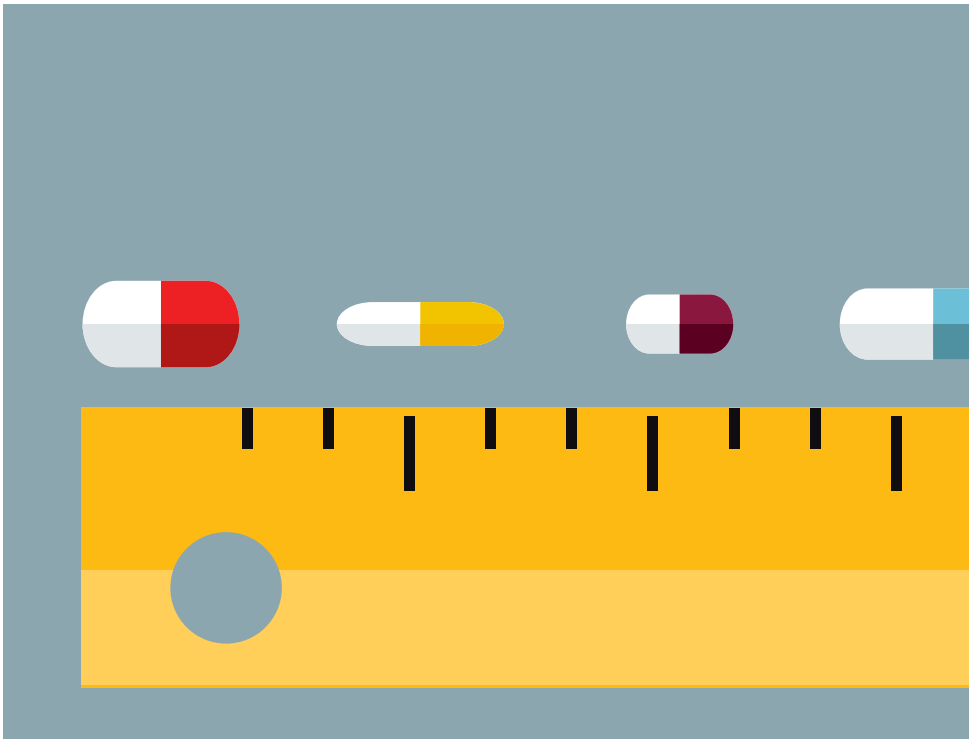
Keeping these goal buckets in mind, the more specific you can be—and the more clear the metrics—the more you will be able to prove the success of your content marketing initiatives.

MEASURING YOUR SUCCESS

How will you determine if your content is successful? Define your success metrics before you begin your content creation journey. Metrics can take many forms including:

- Social shares
- Goal conversions
- Engagement
- Form completion
- Downloads
- Contest entries
- Email collection
- Revenue contribution

Other high level goals that require a more holistic approach to measurement may include attrition, loyalty, and advocacy.



7 MUST-HAVE CONTENT MARKETING METRICS

Whether you're using an advanced metrics tool or basic analytics, there are fundamental metrics you should always pay attention to when measuring content.

1. **Website Traffic/Reach:** This metric measures the total of a company's website visits, email database, social media following, blog subscribers, and anyone else touching your content or marketing messages. It's useful to understand the percentage of traffic the content you create is driving. The key: It measures the very top of the sales and marketing funnel.

2. **Leads Generated/Prospects Acquired:** This is the most popular marketing metric, because it's important.The key: A lead with contact information can be moved through the path to purchase.

3. **Click Throughs:** This measures how well calls-to-action and offers work. The key: It shows the quality of the marketing content—or lack thereof.

4. **Lead to Marketing-Qualified Lead (MQL) Ratio:** Specifically for B2B marketers, you need to know how effective you are at converting leads beyond simply gathering contact information toward qualification. The key: Quality MQLs move further down the sales funnel toward becoming actual customers.

5. **Conversion Rates:** Specifically for B2C marketers, it's arguably the most important metric to understand the path to purchase—whether in-store or online—and to achieve the highest possible conversion rate.

6. **Average Deal/Purchase Size:** Number of customers is important, but revenue is the ultimate goal. The key: Understanding how purchase trends vary by segment impacts what type of content you create. If 5% of your customers drive 90% of your revenue, are you tailoring your content to attract and create more ideal customers like that important group?

7. **Revenue:** This is—literally—the top line of the entire organization and most visible at C-level. So measure it both at the end of your sales cycle and also throughout the month. The key: Revenue metrics will tell you if you are on target to reach your goals—or not. No surprises.

HOW HEALTHY IS YOUR CONTENT MARKETING?

ALIVE AND WELL

Our content marketing has a clean bill of health.

CAN USE AN INFUSION OF NEW BLOOD. IT'S A LITTLE UNDER THE WEATHER RIGHT NOW.

A dose of some fresh content would be the perfect magic elixir.

ABOUT TO FLATLINE. SOMEBODY CALL 911!

Our content marketing is on its deathbed. Send help stat!

YOUR ESSENTIAL RECAP ON CONTENT MARKETING:

1. Content marketing is the most direct way to relay your value proposition to a mass audience.

2. Content strategy starts with a mission statement.

3. Before you map out a content creation initiative, assemble a core strategy around value-based themes for your audience.

4. Social communities are helpful places to garner valuable information about how you can better be an information concierge.

5. The key to effective content planning and measurement is to implement repeatable processes for success.

6. To maximize the value of your content output, consider the marketing activities surrounding assets during the idea phase.

7. Data from content helps fuel smarter marketing decisions and enable better editorial offerings.

8. Branding and awareness goals aren't typically quantifiable in terms of bottom line results.

9. Marketing goals typically measure the number of people who go from the aware-and-unknown stage to interested-and-known.

10. Well-timed, educational content that educates prospects on topics related to your offerings supports sales effectiveness.

RESOURCES

BLOGS:

Content Marketing Institute
contentmarketinginstitute.com/blog

Convince and Convert
convinceandconvert.com/blog

MarketingProfs
marketingprofs.com

BOOKS:

Youtility: Why Smart Marketing is About Help Not Hype
by Jay Baer
youtilitybook.com

Everybody Writes by Ann Handley
annhandley.com/everybodywrites

Epic Content Marketing by Joe Pulizzi
epiccontentmarketing.com

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