

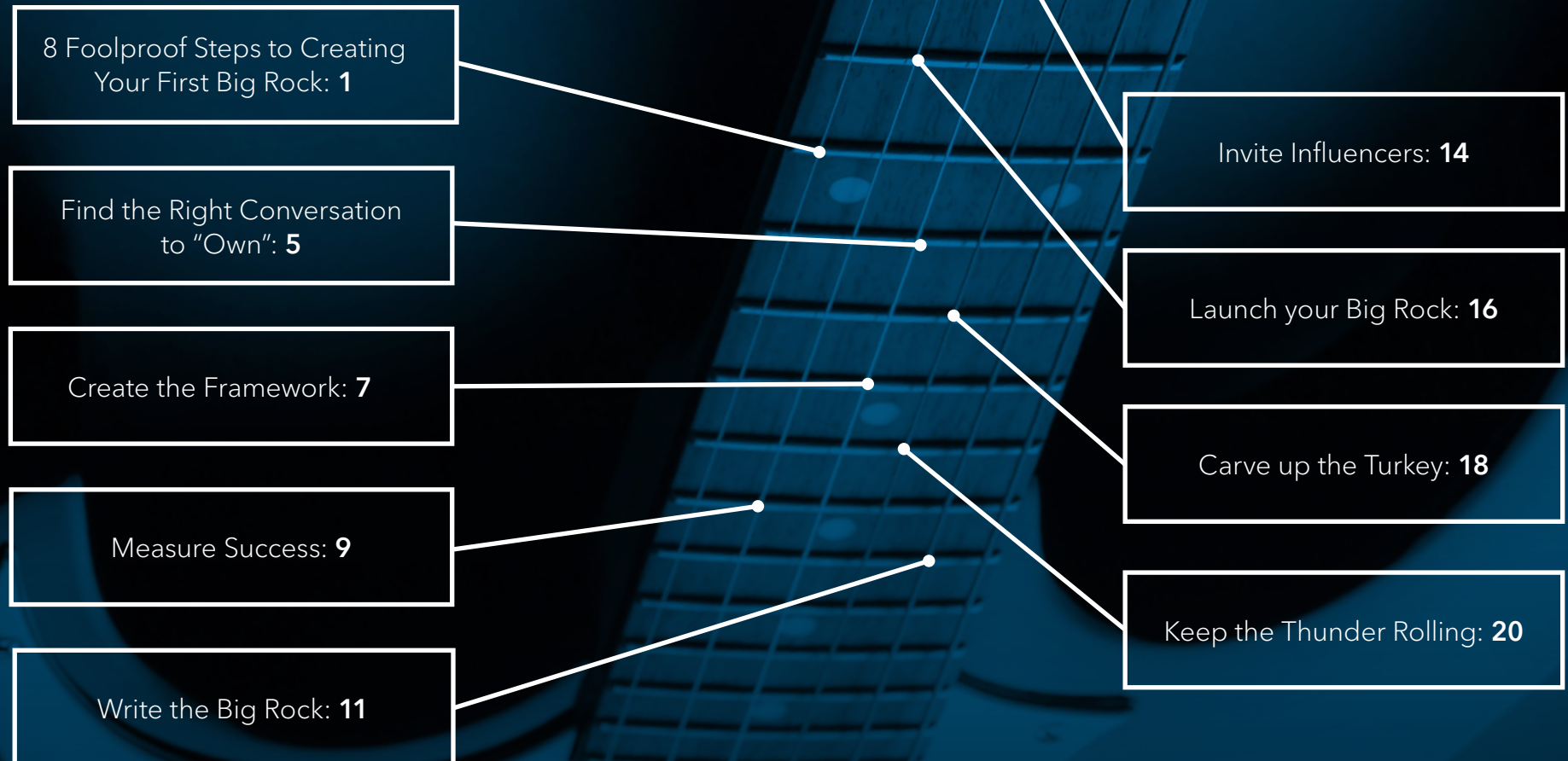
The background of the entire graphic is a stylized, high-contrast illustration of a rock concert. A black electric guitar stands vertically on a dark, jagged rock formation. Behind the guitar, a large, semi-circular stage structure is visible, with several bright blue lightning bolts striking down from the top. The overall color scheme is dominated by dark blues, greys, and bright white highlights from the lightning and the text.

CREATING YOUR FIRST
BIG ROCK

A Step by Step Guide for Marquee Content

INTRODUCTION

This guide will walk you step by step through the process for creating your first Big Rock piece of content, an asset that will serve as a cornerstone of your content marketing strategy. The guidance you'll find is based on award-winning strategies from leading marketers at such companies as Marketo, HubSpot, and even here at LinkedIn. This is the secret sauce for doing more with less while driving real revenue using content.



FROM THE AUTHOR

One of the biggest challenges for marketers is to produce enough high quality content to fuel both their social media and demand generation channels. But volume is not the answer. The solution lies in not producing more content, but instead producing more relevant content.

That's where the concept of the Big Rock comes into play. The Big Rock is a substantial piece of content based on the idea of becoming the definitive guide to a conversation that you want to own. If done right, one Big Rock piece of content can fuel an always on content strategy for up to a quarter and many times far beyond.

Inside this guide is the exact formula being used by leading content marketers around the globe to create content that drives awareness, leads, engagement and ultimately revenue. Whether you are just getting started with content or you have solid strategy in place, the Big Rock is an essential piece of the puzzle. It can be the first feather in your content marketing cap or the smash hit of your ongoing marketing plan; either way it's going to make a big impact.

So let's dive in and get started on your first Big Rock.

—Jason Miller, Author, Keynote Speaker, Leading Global Content Marketing for LinkedIn Marketing Solutions



8 FOOLPROOF STEPS TO CREATING YOUR FIRST BIG ROCK

Seems everyone's doing it, but few are doing it well. We're talking about Content Marketing. And according to the 2016 B2B Content Marketing Trends report from the Content Marketing Institute and MarketingProfs, only 30% of marketers feel their organizations are effective when it comes to content marketing. So how can you break free from the pack and truly succeed? As a first step, you need to develop Big Rock Content.

30%

of marketers feel their organizations are effective when it comes to content marketing

–2016 B2B Content Marketing Trends report from the Content Marketing Institute and MarketingProfs



THE WHAT

Big Rock Content is a substantial piece of content around a topic or conversation that you want to “own” and that will be repurposed into smaller pieces. Using a rolling thunder approach combined with the one-two punch of social media and content, this piece of content can fuel social and demand generation channels for up to a quarter, and sometimes longer depending on the breadth of the topic. In other words, done right, a Big Rock can drive leads into the funnel for months on end.



*“The first step any company wanting to start with content marketing or improve it is... **aim for one home-run piece. One great piece.** One thing that is the definitive take on an issue.”*

—Doug Kessler, Co-founder and Creative Director, Velocity Partners

THE WHY

So why is a Big Rock the way to go? Because it's your opportunity to focus on a single, key issue or theme that truly resonates with your target audience. And that's the type of content that matters these days. Content marketers need to focus their efforts not on creating more content, but on creating more relevant content. Don't believe us? Hear what the surveys have to say...

+78%

"During 2013 and 2014, the volume of content per 8,800 brands studied increased by 78%."*

-60%

*Over the same time frame, the engagement produced by that content decreased by 60%.***

60-70%

*SiriusDecisions estimates that 60-70% of B2B content goes unused.***

+76%

*of B2B marketers say they will produce more content in 2016 than in the previous year.****

* *The Content Marketing Paradox: Is More Content Really Better?*,
trackmaven.com/resources/the-content-marketing-paradox-report/

** heinzmarketing.com/2014/02/siriusdecisions-turning-b2b-readers-revenue/

*** *B2B Content Marketing 2016 Benchmarks, Budgets and Trends—North America.*
Produced by Content Marketing Institute and MarketingProfs



STEP ONE

Find the Right Conversation to "Own"

FIND THE RIGHT CONVERSATION TO “OWN”

First you want to choose a topic that you know a lot about, can offer a unique or interesting perspective on, and is of great interest to your prospects and customers. Oh yeah – your product or service should also somehow relate to this topic.

Do a bit of keyword research and social listening to find the topics and questions on the minds of your customers and prospects. Once you find these keyword phrases or topics, then analyze these. You want to figure out if you can make a dent in the conversation around this topic or if the topic is too broad and is already being covered by the competition. Remember—the goal is to stand out, not add to the noise.

HERE ARE THE TOOLS YOU NEED FOR THIS STEP:

- For keyword research, you can hire a pro like [Moz.com](https://moz.com) or the very smart folks at [TopRankMarketing.com](https://toprankmarketing.com).
- Or you can go it alone using my favorite quick and dirty tool: [Ubersuggest](https://ubersuggest.io).
- For LinkedIn-specific content, try [Trending Content](https://trendingcontent.net).
- Want more suggestions? Check out [Internet Marketing Ninjas'](#) post on free keyword research tools.





STEP TWO

Create the Framework

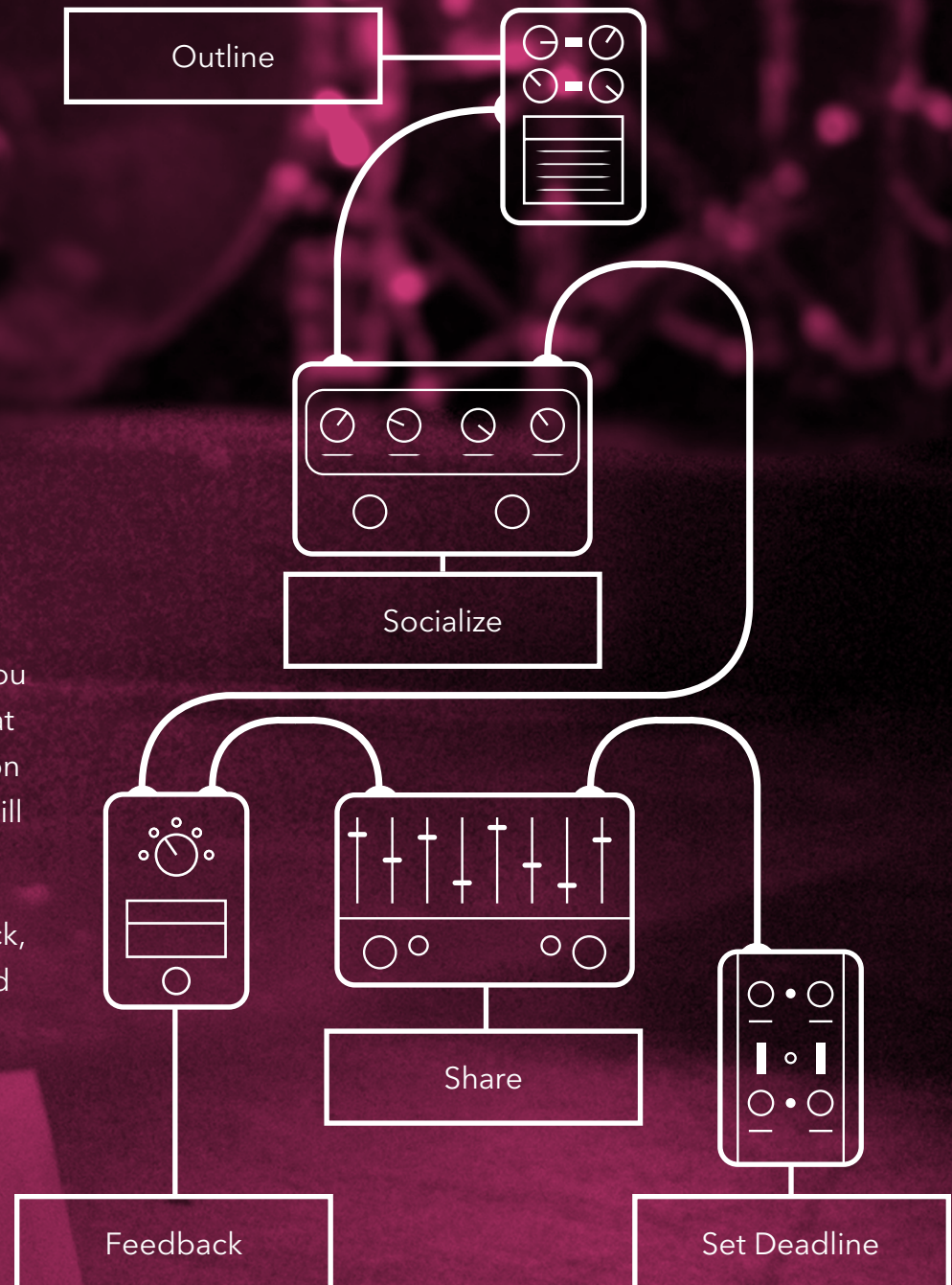
CREATE THE FRAMEWORK

Once you've got a solid storyline in mind, write the outline for your Big Rock. Don't skimp on the details because you want everyone involved to be clear on what you'll be covering. Plus, this is your chance to see how well your story holds together from start to finish.

Next socialize the outline with your product team and executive stakeholders for feedback. If you are planning to take this piece global, now's the time to share it with your global marketing teams as well.

Remember to clearly explain the theme and goal of this content asset so reviewers can weigh in accordingly. The last thing you want is a free-for-all with everyone giving you their 0.02 on the theme they think will work best. With that in mind, underscore that you've chosen the topic based on your research and are confident that this is the one that will gain the most traction for your organization.

Once you've given clear guidelines for providing feedback, set a firm deadline and stick to your guns. You can't afford to miss dates if you want to get a hefty piece of content like this out the door on time.





STEP

THREE

Write the Big Rock

WRITE THE BIG ROCK

Since you want to own this topic, you can't just skim the surface - you need to take a deep dive and write the end-all, be-all guide to the subject. In other words, you are literally writing the book on this topic. You're going to be covering lots of ground and this Big Rock will be the jumping off point for lots of additional content. So plan on writing 2-3 drafts. And think like a publisher, not a brand. That means your guide to whatever-topic-you-want-to-own needs to answer questions, solve problems, provide inspiration and ultimately be helping instead of selling.

If it makes sense, reference a few case studies, but we suggest just teasing with the highlights and linking to the full case studies.

Remember to write strategically instead of instructionally. Because what happens when you get an instruction manual? You throw it into the trash and go to YouTube.





STEP FOUR

Invite Influencers

INVITE INFLUENCERS

The number one rule of top-of-funnel content is to not be over sales-y. If you stick to your topic with your audience's concerns in minds, you can stay on the path of helping, not selling. That said, adding in quotes from thought leaders and third-party stats doesn't hurt in validating your message. Plus, let's be honest: you'll likely get a positive response when you ask the folks who contribute thought leadership to your Big Rock to then share the content with their audiences.

Finding relevant quotes and stats online is one way to add thought leadership goodness to your guide, but it's also a great idea to interview a few thought leaders. Sprinkling their responses throughout the guide really adds value while also breaking up the chapters with some sound expert advice.

While there's no hard-and-fast rule when it comes to interviewing, we like to stick with five questions. This makes the interview manageable for both you and the thought leaders.



INTERVIEW ETIQUETTE

Make three questions the same for each interview and then write two that are specific to the person you're interviewing. For example, if your topic was content marketing, you might reach out to influencers who are expert at writing, project management, and promotion. You could ask all of the interviewees three general questions about content marketing. Then you could ask the writing expert two questions about crafting copy, the project management expert two questions about keeping projects on track, and the third expert advice on how to best promote content. In addition to getting multiple perspectives for your Big Rock, this exercise supplies terrific source content for a great blog post you can use to promote your Big Rock.

After identifying the most fitting thought leaders, reach out and solicit their participation. Once they agree, email the questions with a due date. Make sure you give them ample time to respond and explain when they can expect to see their responses be published.





**STEP
FIVE**

Launch Your Big Rock

LAUNCH YOUR BIG ROCK

With so much riding on your Big Rock, you want to come out with a bang. So how do you go about doing that? Make your Big Rock visible in every possible venue where your target audience can stumble upon it. Here's a checklist to make sure you don't miss any opportunities:

- ✓ **Blog:** Use your blog to announce your launch, but follow up over the weeks with blog posts that explore different areas of the Big Rock to keep awareness high.
- ✓ **Email:** Once your initial launch blog post and lead form are live, follow up with an email launch announcement.
- ✓ **LinkedIn Sponsored Updates:** If you're going to promote your Big Rock on LinkedIn (and you are going to, right?), then take advantage of Sponsored Updates to get the message in front of the right audience.
- ✓ **Twitter:** You should be able to pull all kinds of 140-character golden nuggets from your Big Rock. Line these up and then keep the Tweets flowing so no one misses out on downloading the guide. Just remember—you'll likely get better response if you keep the Tweets focused on interesting tidbits from the asset rather than just pushing people to download it.
- ✓ **LinkedIn Groups:** Throw out relevant points from the Big Rock in discussions going on in the LinkedIn Groups where your target audience spends time. When you're adding something worthy to a LinkedIn discussion, it's perfectly acceptable to also point people to your Big Rock for even more.
- ✓ **LinkedIn SlideShare:** Be sure to post your Big Rock to SlideShare. This will boost your SEO results and get you found by the 60 million who frequent this platform every month.
- ✓ **Influencer Outreach:** Remember those thought leaders you reference in your guide? Reach out with an advance copy of your Big Rock and suggested copy they can include about it in their blog posts and on social media. Don't forget influencers who aren't in your guide but are connected to the audience you're trying to reach - make them aware of your Big Rock so they can share it.
- ✓ **Paid Programs:** To complement all the organic ways you're going to promote your Big Rock, plan to pay for promotion where it makes sense (e.g., Sponsored Updates).
- ✓ **Printed Version:** Don't forget that your next interaction with your target audience may be in person at an event. Print some copies of your Big Rock to hand out in those venues.

A dramatic poster for 'STEP SIX'. The background is a dark, stormy sky with multiple bright blue and white lightning bolts. In the center, a black electric guitar stands vertically on a large, grey, textured rock. The rock has a jagged, carved appearance. The text 'STEP SIX' is prominently displayed in the center, with 'STEP' in a smaller, white, sans-serif font and 'SIX' in a much larger, bold, white, sans-serif font. The rock itself has some faint, dark markings that look like scratches or carvings.

STEP SIX

Carve up the Turkey

CARVE UP THE TURKEY

We know this eBook starts out by saying we need more relevant content, not a higher volume of content. However you do still need to supply your prospects and customers with all the information they want and need. No matter if you're producing 10 assets or 100 assets in a year, it can be tough to keep up the pace. The good news is that your Big Rock is going to help you in a big way. You're going to carve up that Big Rock into "turkey slices" that you will share in a variety of ways for the months ahead. By lifting these slices directly from the Big Rock, you can quickly churn out content with minimal effort. And just as important, all those ungated slices are going to lead back to your Big Rock, where you can collect lead information in exchange for the download.

SO HOW CAN YOU SLICE UP YOUR BIG ROCK? LET US COUNT ALL THE WAYS:

- Webinars
- Infographics
- Blogs
- SlideShare decks
- Memes
- Quotes

The only limit is your creativity when it comes to all the ways you can **break your Big Rock into smaller, bite-sized snacks**. There's no reason you can't slice and dice one Big Rock into numerous blog posts, multiple infographics, webinars, videos, SlideShare presentations, and much more.





**STEP
SEVEN**

Keep the Thunder Rolling

KEEP THE THUNDER ROLLING

One of the **biggest fails** for many marketers is giving their content a big send-off and then forgetting all about it. That's a huge mistake—especially when it comes to your Big Rock. Look, you spent all that effort to pull together a guide on the conversation you want to own. Now you need to give it legs so it'll keep giving back for months and months.

So first launch your Big Rock via the blog and email. Next share Turkey Slices every week or so to drive traffic back to the Big Rock. Then turn on LinkedIn Sponsored Updates

to go beyond your organic reach and proactively target your prospects and customers. All of this combined forms the basis for a rolling thunder approach that is a key part of an always-on strategy, where you deliver continuous content to your target audiences.





**STEP
EIGHT**

Measure Success

MEASURE SUCCESS

As marketers, we now live in a world where we need to back up our programs and initiatives with numbers. In other words, we need to prove the value of our efforts. The problem is that many marketers get distracted by vanity metrics that look impressive but do little to convince executive leadership that you're helping your organization reach its strategic goals.

"Going viral is not an outcome; it's a happening. Sometimes it happens, sometimes it doesn't. Just remember, fans are vanity and sales are sanity."

*—Lori R. Taylor, Owner of Social Caffeine & CEO
& Founder of Rev Marketing LLC*

MEASURE SUCCESS

WE RECOMMEND THREE SIMPLE METRICS TO MEASURE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF YOUR CONTENT MARKETING

ENGAGEMENT.

Are the right people liking and sharing your Big Rock? In other words, have you engaged your target audience? If so, you've have a potential hit on your hands. But don't let your ego hijack your content strategy. Instead of focusing only sharing metrics, take a deeper dive into who is sharing your content. Practitioners, decision makers, C-Suites, that's what really matters.

REFERRAL TRAFFIC.

Measure how much traffic is visiting your site and pinpoint the keywords that are driving them there. If you chose the right topic for your Big Rock content, related terms should show up here.

LEAD QUALITY.

Using marketing automation software, you can track engagement with your Big Rock and the leads it is driving into the funnel. Ideally you want to track this all the way to a purchase, for the true measure of success.

Don't forget to always be testing and optimizing your content and campaigns. Have an A/B test strategy in place so that you can refine your campaign for optimal results. For example, which images/messaging are getting the most engagement on which channels? Once you know this then it's time to scale.

CONCLUSION

Now that you have created, launched, measured, and (most importantly) celebrated the success of your first Big Rock, it's time to scale. Start planning out your next Big Rock(s) and work them into your editorial calendar for the next few months. Once you decide on the topics and conversations you want to go after, take this same formula and start work on your next Big Rock. This entire process is scalable and great for a long term and focusing on creating more relevant content will help keep your content strategy lean, while doing more with less.

Inspiration from this piece was taken from the #1 Best Selling book **Welcome to the Funnel: Proven Tactics to Turn Your Social and Content Marketing up to 11.**

Examples of Big Rocks created here at LinkedIn and for further reading on rocking and rolling your content strategy using LinkedIn Marketing Solutions:

The Sophisticated Marketer's Guide to LinkedIn

The Sophisticated Marketer's Guide to Thought Leadership

The Sophisticated Marketer's Crash Course in Lead Nurturing

The Sophisticated Marketer's Crash Course in Full Funnel Marketing



Today, LinkedIn members number more than 400+ million professionals. That's over one-half of the 600 million professionals on the planet, representing the largest group anywhere of influential, affluent and educated people.

For more information, visit marketing.linkedin.com