



THE
Sophisticated
MARKETER'S
Guide to
**CONTENT
MARKETING**



New for 2016
Vol. 1

THE *Sophisticated*
MARKETER'S
Guide to
**CONTENT
MARKETING**

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A Note to the Sophisticated Marketer

You likely don't need convincing that content marketing is vital to the success of an integrated, full-funnel marketing strategy. In fact, content marketing is helping fuel the success of businesses of all sizes, in many industries. And that success is being spearheaded by sophisticated marketers like you.

And as a sophisticated marketer, you're probably aware that the world doesn't need more content—it needs more relevant content. Relevancy is the linchpin to finding and keeping your audience engaged.

You also know that you need to understand how every aspect of marketing—from demand generation, email and social to PPC, PR and everything in between—fits together to help your organisation reach its goals. By orchestrating the use of both modern technologies and tried-and-true marketing techniques, the sophisticated marketer can achieve new heights.

This guide was written with you in mind: the sophisticated, multi-dimensional marketer. In it, you'll find everything you need to know about content marketing

in general and on LinkedIn, written both strategically, and instructionally. It's your one-stop shop to understanding what works when it comes to marketing with content—and will help you be on the bleeding edge of all things content marketing.

Ready to dive in? Read on!

Jason Miller, *Senior Manager,
Global Content Marketing,
LinkedIn Marketing Solutions.*



Why Should I Be Reading This Guide?

Unless you're living under a rock, you know that content marketing is a critical component of every marketing strategy.

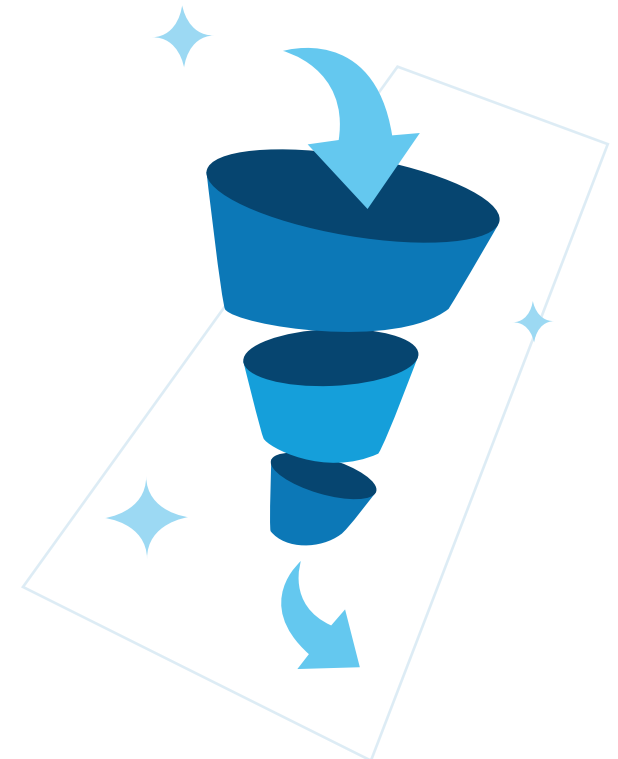
In the digital world, content underpins most—if not all—of your marketing efforts. Why do you create content? You create content because the buying process has changed and content is the way you now start conversations and engage prospective buyers. And that means you shouldn't create any content that doesn't address a problem or offer an innovative twist on an old approach.

Content marketing is about publishing content in a variety of forms, in the channels where your audience spends time so you can address their interests and concerns. Do this right and you'll attract, engage and convert more prospective buyers on the path to purchase.

Your focus today should be about how to win big with content marketing. That's because content marketing is no longer a nice-to-have—it's a must-have and an essential part of an integrated marketing approach. It builds awareness, drives interest, and ultimately helps generate revenues.

Like all our Sophisticated Marketer's Guides, this one is a labor of love. We created it to provide a definitive resource for everything a marketer needs to know about succeeding with content marketing. Don't think of it as an instruction manual—think of it as strategic guide with lots of input from top thought leaders and LinkedIn marketing experts combined with the expertise of the LinkedIn Marketing Solutions team.

We call this The Guide for Sophisticated Marketers because we feel it's time to take content marketing to the next level, moving beyond theory to enlightened practice. It's time to get real results with your content marketing, and this is the guide that will help you.





1

Why Does My Business Need a Content Marketing Strategy?





What is Full-Funnel Marketing?

Full funnel marketing is about using content to stay top of mind with prospects throughout the buyer's journey. In the upper funnel, you're reaching your target audience, even when they are not in the market for your offerings. In the lower funnel, you're nurturing prospects until they are ready to purchase.

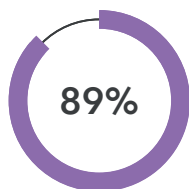
In a very short time, content marketing has found its way into the common vernacular of B2B marketers in companies of every size across just about every industry.

And with good reason:

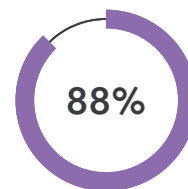
Content is the fuel for demand generation and a full-funnel marketing approach. It enables all the programs that marketing spends time and money to create with the goal of driving awareness, generating demand, and converting prospects to

customers. In other words, it's the key to effective branding, search engine marketing (SEM), search engine optimisation (SEO), email marketing, display advertising, PR, events and more.

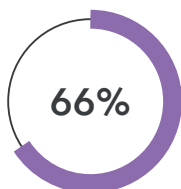
Here's what the Content Marketing Institute (CMI) found in its latest survey of the content marketing scene:



of marketers are using content marketing¹



of marketers are creating more content than they did one year ago²



of marketers plan to increase content marketing spend in the next year³

1: Content Marketing Institute, Content Marketing in the UK 2016 - Benchmarks, Budgets and Trends.

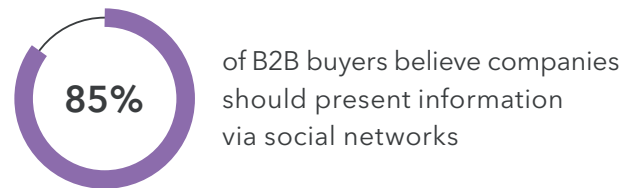
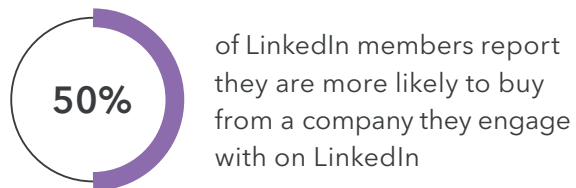
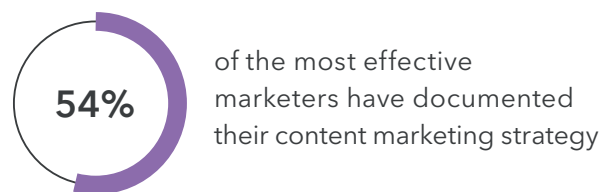
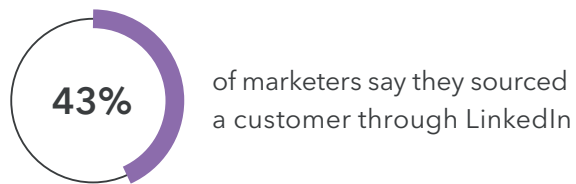
2-3: Ibid

While not every marketer approaches content marketing from a strategic perspective, those that do see better results. The CMI study found that **54%** of the most effective marketers have documented their content marketing strategy.⁴

So what does this have to do with LinkedIn? It turns out that **85%** of B2B buyers believe companies should present information via social networks.⁵ And the companies that answer this call are reaping the rewards. **80%** of B2B social

media leads come from LinkedIn⁶ and **50%** of LinkedIn members report they are more likely to buy from a company they engage with on LinkedIn. In fact, **43%** of marketers say they sourced a customer through LinkedIn.

This guide will show you how to use content marketing to deliver results for your business.



of B2B social media leads come from LinkedIn

4: Ibid

5: Earnest Agency, Vital Statistics for B2B Marketers

6: Oktopost, LinkedIn for B2B Lead Generation: Why, When, How

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You're known as the 'Godfather of Content Marketing.' How did that come about?

Ha...a couple of blog posts started to refer to me in that way about five years ago. At first, I thought it was just funny. Then, we (at CMI) started to play into it and at the start of Content Marketing World 2012 I was introduced that way in my opening keynote. We just "leaned" into it. **Whatever works, right?**



Joe Pulizzi on content at large

Founder, Content Marketing Institute

If you were starting a content marketing program from scratch, where would you begin?

I would focus on one key type (audio, textual, visual), one key platform (blog/website, iTunes, Twitter) and consistently deliver content over time. Focus on a defined niche and a well-defined audience where you can present yourself as the leading expert in that niche.

In your eyes, what is the biggest difference between content marketing five years ago and content marketing today?

Five years ago, most everything was experimentation and campaigns. Although this is still the case, more organisations are defining a real, integrated content marketing strategy and approach as a key part of their marketing process. In other words, this is serious business. At the same time, some who started off with lackluster results have become disenchanted and need to take a fresh look at the approach.

If you are tasked with hiring a content marketer, what is the #1 attribute you are looking for?

Attitude is always number one. Are they a fit within the organisation's culture? Second, do they understand the practice of publishing and building an audience over time? I prefer to work with people who have worked in publishing and media over marketers in general.

Tell us about a brand that has impressed you with its content strategy and execution.

I love what Jyske Bank has done in Denmark, building Jyskebank.tv. They've been able to move from pure advertising into building an audience and asset that has positioned Jyske as a clear industry leader and a brand worth talking about.

When you think about the future of content marketing, what excites you most?

It's democratic. Anyone, anywhere, with any budget can develop a valuable audience over time and make an impact. In other words, there are no excuses for not doing this well, as long as you have a plan and execute against that plan.

2 Lay a Solid Foundation





A winning content marketing strategy focuses on creating and sharing helpful relevant content that **inspires, educates, solves problems and sometimes entertains.**

Through testing and learning, content marketers can progressively improve their results. So they need a solid foundation in place to support all that experimentation.

According to **AdAge**, nearly every CMO is under more pressure to deliver measurable ROI.⁷ And with content marketing becoming entrenched in businesses of every size across nearly every industry, more marketers are being held accountable for tying content to revenue.

That's why it's critical to understand how your content will help you move prospective customers along the path to purchase. Put another way, it's important to track and measure how well you are answering prospects' questions at every stage of their journey—and ultimately converting them to customers.

Put a Stake in the Ground

Start by documenting what you hope to achieve with your content marketing. Is it raising brand awareness? Driving higher quality leads? Establishing your organisation as a thought leader? Better engaging prospective buyers?



If you truly embrace the principles of content marketing, then your goal is to answer every question your prospects pose as they try to make a purchase decision. With that in mind, you will associate many goals with your content, likely aligned with the different stages of the buying cycle. At the start of the cycle, you'll be focused on generating awareness and interest, perhaps by positioning your company as a thought leader in its field. At the

next stage, you'll be focused on helping buyers understand and compare their options—with the goal of zeroing in on those who are truly looking to buy and can benefit by using your solution. In other words, you'll be focused on generating high-quality leads. Finally, you'll want the most fitting prospects to choose your solution—and perhaps do so more quickly over time.

The point is to capture any and all goals and determine how you will measure the effectiveness of your content marketing. In other words, your goals dictate your metrics.

Trying to drive higher quality leads? Perhaps you should measure the change in funnel velocity or time to close. Want your organisation to raise its profile as a thought leader? Perhaps track the number of speaking engagements and executive-level meetings you secure.

Once you start measuring the effectiveness of your content, your most relevant and engaging content will surface to the top. In other words, you'll be clear about the content that resonates with your audience and triggers them to take action.



You can't determine your content goals if you haven't defined your content marketing strategy (which is true of **51%** of companies⁸ according to CMI). Plus, CMI's research found that those with a documented content marketing strategy:

- > **Are far more likely to consider themselves effective at content marketing**
- > **Generally consider themselves more effective in their use of all content marketing tactics and social media channels**

Follow the “Five W’s” of Interrogative Investigation

Who?

Consider each member of the B2B buying committee.

Why?

Discover a reason why a prospect would buy from your company by understanding what the buyer wants to achieve or overcome.

When?

What information do buyers need at each stage of the buying journey and what will trigger them to move from one stage to the next?

What?

What content—and in what format—can you provide to answer buyers’ questions?

Where?

Where do your prospects turn for information during the research and decision-making process?

Decide What Content to Produce

Figuring out the topics to cover is a matter of understanding what information your buyers want and need. And you find that out by developing buyer personas, which are composite representations of your ideal buyers—the people you must engage and convert in order to make a sale. The first step is to identify your ideal customer. First, which company types make the most fitting targets for your offering?



Once you’ve defined the right company types, focus on pinpointing the people within those target companies that will be involved in the purchase. Interview a sampling of existing and potential customers, as well as anyone within your company that interacts with your customers, to learn about:

- Top-of-mind issues
- Their typical workday
- Their decision-making process
- Purchase motivators
- Information needed at each stage of the buying process
- The language prospects use to describe their problems and aspirations
- Where they turn for information

Pair this with insights gleaned online, such as conversations taking place in relevant LinkedIn Groups, to uncover additional, germane trends. A solid, well-researched persona will highlight the topics your prospects care about most and inform the content you need to produce for the entire buying cycle.

The goal is to understand what questions potential customers ask as they move from top to bottom of the funnel. Make sure you find out the language they use to describe their challenges and aspirations, the keywords they use as they search for information, and

their top sources of information and inspiration during the decision-making process. Go a step further and find out what motivates them to make a change and what triggers a purchase. All of these insights will help you develop content that resonates with your target audience and ideally spurs them to take action. Put another way, the more deeply you understand your prospective buyers, the more clarity you'll have about which topics to cover—and the easier it will be to deliver relevant information. You can then shape those topics into an editorial calendar that will serve as your guide for staying on track over an extended period of time.



SEO and Content Marketing were Meant for One Another

Content fuels your search engine result rankings and SEO helps that content get found. As **Lee Odden** of **TopRank Online Marketing** says...

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“Think of SEO this way: If a customer-focused content marketing program is the sandwich, then SEO is the mayonnaise. It touches nearly everything and enhances the overall flavor of the sandwich, but on its own, it’s not very appetising.”



Search engines are tasked with serving up the most relevant answer to a search query.

Your job as a content marketer is to provide that answer.

Own the Conversation

Ultimately you want your prospective buyers and existing customers to view your business as the experts on a certain topic. In other words, you want them to see you as “owning the conversation.” To help organisations get in the right mindset, Jay Baer of Convince & Convert asks, “What’s your one thing?” In other words, what’s the topic you on which you can share lots of expertise and offer an interesting perspective? As long as this topic is top of mind for your audience, you’ve found the sweet spot.

As we mentioned earlier, you identify the topics that will resonate with your audience—in other words, the burning questions—by developing a deep understanding of your prospects through buyer personas. At the same time, conducting effective keyword research to

identify hot topics and develop the most relevant content is key to establishing your company as the authority on a topic. Here are ways you can find out what is keeping your prospective buyers up at night:

- www.moz.com
or the very smart folks at www.iProspect.com
- Go it alone using a tool like [Ubersuggest](#) or [Buzzsumo](#)

First Be Helpful

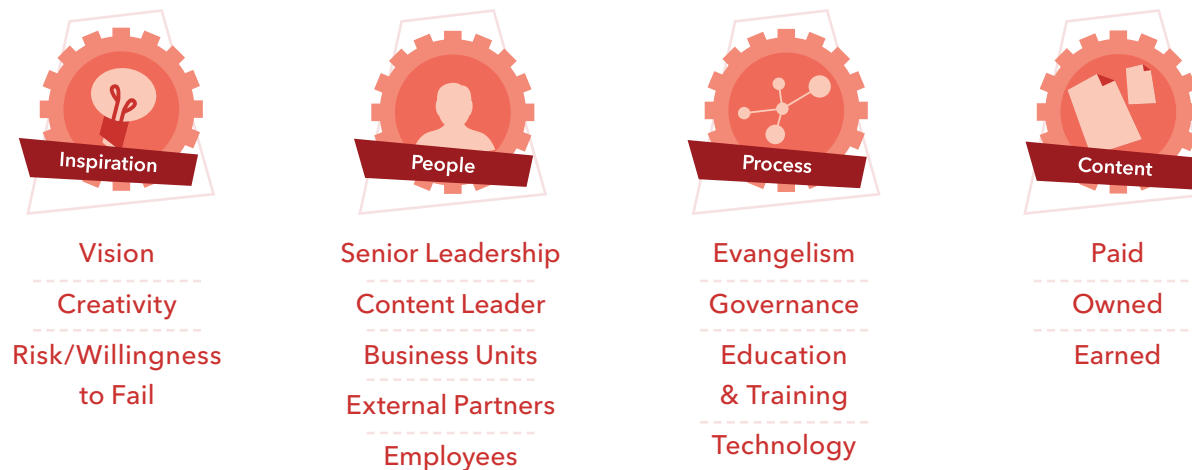
If you truly embrace the concept of content marketing, you will develop content to help prospective customers make their purchase decision rather than develop content focused on a hard sell. It's a subtle—yet critical—nuance because the right mindset is essential to succeeding with content marketing.

We know you are in business and need to help your company achieve its goals. Moreover, “nearly nine out of ten

respondents (89%) to the 2015 Benchmark Report on B2B Content Marketing and Lead Generation said their primary high-level objective for investing in content marketing is to acquire new customers.”¹⁰

We're not advocating that you toss aside all thoughts of making money. It's simply that instead of focusing on making a sale at every turn, you should focus on helping...the sales will follow.

A Culture of Content is an Engine of Content ¹¹



¹⁰: Starfleet Media, [The 2015 Benchmark Report on B2B Content Marketing and Lead Generation](#)

¹¹: Altimeter Group, altimetergroup.com/2014/12/a-culture-of-content/

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Cultivate a Culture of Content

“When content becomes an ingrained element of an enterprise’s culture, the culture functions like a well-oiled engine, producing, circulating, and begetting content, creating numerous efficiencies in the process.”

—Altimeter Group



Remember, content marketing is not a siloed effort. In fact, you can realise a multiplier effect by embracing a team approach that calls upon experts both within and outside the organisation to support your content marketing efforts. Marketo and Kapost have rounded up a **plethora of best practices on building a content marketing machine.**

Select the Best Mix of Resources

One consistent finding year after year across content marketing surveys is that many marketers lack the time and/or skills to produce all the content needed to engage prospects at every stage of the buying journey. But you don't have to go it alone. Build a team by calling upon a mix of resources:

Marketing colleagues

Collaborate with marketing colleagues throughout your organisation—including those responsible for branding, social PR, and global marketing—to identify opportunities for cross-pollinating content plans.

Internal thought leaders

Identify thought leaders within your organisation who are prolific writers and recruit them to drive a relevant conversation with your target audience.

Freelancer writers

Freelance can act as an extended part of your internal team, and foster creativity while inspiring new ideas.

Outside agencies

Agencies can do the same as freelancers but at scale and usually offer a wider scope of offerings (such as design and SEO).



Remember: A team approach is essential to content success. That means you need to break down the silos between the folks responsible for demand gen, social, and PR and work as a cohesive unit. Working this way can dramatically boost the impact of your individual efforts.



Michael Brenner on content strategy and the editorial calendar

CEO, Marketing Insider Group and Head of Strategy at NewsCred

If you were starting a content marketing program from scratch, where would you begin?

I've started a few content marketing programs from scratch. And started at the same place every time: keyword research. Start by thinking like the target audience, quantifying the questions they ask Google, checking out the sources that show up in the top position in Google, understanding the categories and structure of the content that gets ranked and shared. Anyone can do this research. Then you have to build a content marketing destination that is best structured to answer those questions.

In your eyes, what is the biggest difference between content marketing five years ago and content marketing today?

Content marketing five years ago was the realm of rebels. We stood and saw the waste going into advertising and promotion and said "enough." There was a small and passionate group of early evangelists like Joe Pulizzi, Ann Handley, Jay Baer, Lee Odden, and Andrew Davis. And there was a small group of early adopters like Marcus Sheridan, Todd Wheatland, Joe Chernov, Amanda Maksymiw, Julie Fleischer, Tim Washer, and others who led the way.

Now, you have titled positions inside large corporate brands. People with "Chief Content Officer" and "VP of Content Marketing" behind their name are driving real maturity in the content marketing landscape.

If you are tasked with hiring a content marketer, what is the #1 attribute you are looking for?

The one thing I look for is anyone with a track record of creating content at scale that gets people to read and share without breaking the bank. It starts with great content (publisher mindset) but you also have to understand budgets and political constraints (management and operational expertise) and how to measure what works (analytics). Ok, that was more than one attribute so I'll try to combine it into one trait required for effective content marketing: Know how to create great content at scale that doesn't break the bank and performs well in a measurable way.

”

Tell us about a brand that has impressed you with its content strategy and execution.

I love this question. I have so many content brands that I follow and admire. Let's start with the best modern content marketing example, American Express and their OPEN Forum. VanWinkles.com by Casper is my new favorite. The team at Intel is doing great things with Intel IQ. Adobe's CMO.com is awesome. L'Oreal's Makeup.com is great in the consumer space. Cleveland Clinic's Health Hub for the healthcare folks out there. Zillow is doing a great job targeting home buyers. CapGemini's Content-Loop.com is one of the best examples of how to convert readers into leads. These are a few of my favorite (content marketing) things.



Michael Brenner on content strategy and the editorial calendar

CEO, Marketing Insider Group and Head of Strategy at NewsCred

Why does so much content miss the mark?

My most retweeted tweet is "Behind every piece of bad content is an executive who asked for it." And we all know this is true. Most people want to do meaningful work. But for some people, "meaningful" means "what my boss asked me to do."

Businesses struggle with being ego-centric by nature. Add the mass of good people blindly following bad leaders and you get the mass of crap we see today. We are all responsible for solving this problem. Behind every piece of great content is a marketer, publisher, author who passionately and empathetically sought to help his or her audience. But how do you teach empathy to an executive who has none? The answer is fear. You have to show them that if you don't create the best answer to your customers' questions, someone else will.

How important is it for marketers to use an editorial calendar, especially as it relates to syncing across functions?

Editorial strategy requires a commitment to publishing content that an audience actually wants, within a small group of topics, and then committing to publishing on a regular and consistent cadence. The best content marketing brands publish every day or more on each topic they commit to covering. I think the strategy, the commitment and the cadence are more important than the calendar.

My one rule of content marketing is to make sure there is an appropriate balance of helpful vs. promotional content. One final point: Managers shouldn't make editorial decisions. Editors should. Brand content editors should advocate for quality and customer focus. And manage the calendar and those contributing to it.



3 The Essential Tools for Managing and Producing Content





Once you've figured out the topics you're going to cover and who is going to create the content that answers all your prospects' questions, you need a plan and tool to keep it all organised.

It's hard enough to keep track of a few content projects just using email. Imagine doing the same for tens or hundreds of content assets when you're taking an integrated approach to content, working closely with colleagues in different roles.

Stay on Track With an Editorial Calendar

An editorial calendar helps tame the chaos, keeping everyone on the same page and on track when it comes to the content you need to produce. In addition to making it clear who is responsible for what and when, the calendar helps align efforts across marketing, sales, demand gen and the events group. That means you don't duplicate efforts—and everyone can take advantage of each other's content. You can use free collaboration tools like **Google Docs**, or go for a purpose-built tool like **Kapost** or **Skyword** if you need to manage lots of moving parts.

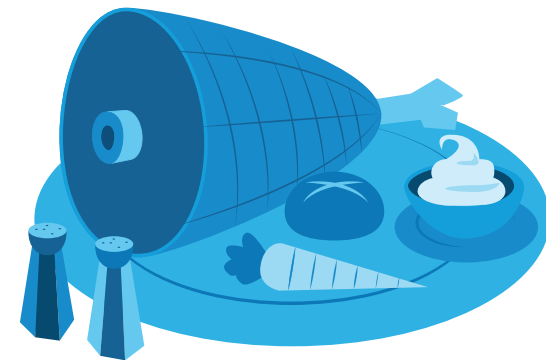


Keep Things Rolling With a Mix of Content

When pulling together an editorial calendar, it's a good idea to feature a healthy mix of content types—this keeps your content engine fresh and prospective customers interested over the long haul. We are big fans of the blogging food groups as originally coined by HubSpot's Rick Burns. Here's our updated take on the five essentials:

The Blogging Food Groups:

- A healthy serving of meaty posts (research and analysis)
- A side of vegetables (thought leadership articles)
- A serving of whole grains (how-to and influencer posts)
- A condiment or two to spice things up (bold statements)
- Every once in a while a sweet dessert (light-hearted, viral-worthy content)



Remember, you can supplement the content you produce with third-party content that you curate. By bringing in the voices of respected industry leaders to the conversation you are seeking to own, you add credibility to your own efforts. Plus, you can do more with fewer resources as you strive to establish your brand as the trusted source on a topic. This is where tools like **Curata** come in handy.

Tools to Give Your Content Wings

Percolate

A powerful, intuitive software platform to manage all your marketing in one place.

Spredfast

A software platform that enables large enterprises to manage their social media marketing, social advertising, content management, collaboration, advocacy and social media monitoring.

sprinklr

A social software platform that allows large companies to manage their online social media presences, build social media campaigns, and analyse social media performance.

Take Intelligent Content Risks

We've covered some basics about developing and promoting your content, but what about truly breaking free from the content pack? As Ann Handley—author, marketer, and Chief Content Officer of **MarketingProfs**—says, “The biggest missed opportunity with content is playing it too safe.” She advocates that content marketers focus on bigger stories, braver marketing, and a bolder voice in order to create memorable content. Here's what this boils down to:

- **Bigger story:**
goes beyond your company and product to truly engage your audience
- **Braver content:**
ignores the status quo and uses a truly unique tone of voice
- **Bolder voice:**
uses a truly unique tone of voice that draws your audience in (think honest and empathetic)

For many content marketers, this means throwing caution to the wind and stepping into previously unexplored territory. But taking that leap and experimenting with your content can be well worth it. Here at LinkedIn we took such a risk with our **Attention is Currency** eBook featuring the insights of best-selling author Brian Solis and the one-of-a-kind visuals by cartoonist extraordinaire Hugh Macleod. With this eBook, we embraced a fun and unique approach to storytelling to help marketers understand how they can earn and retain attention through remarkable content. And the results speak for themselves—it's been one of the best performing pieces of content we've ever produced.



LeadMD, a marketing automation and CRM consultancy, is blazing new content trails with its **Monsters of Funnel** eBook. In this fun and humorous eBook, LeadMD injects rock-n-roll attitude and shares the wisdom of a “monster lineup of rock star marketers.”



While at **Marketo**, Jason Miller of LinkedIn helped dream up the concept for **The Big Marketing Activity Coloring Book**, inspired by a coloring book embedded in the concert rider the Foo Fighters would give to music promoters. This eBook showcases 30 pages of “pure, unadulterated marketing fun,” as Marketo puts it, with a game of marketing automation mad libs, a content marketing word search, and a matching game (associating influential marketers with the titles of books they authored). The Big Marketing Activity Coloring Book has been downloaded tens of thousands of times since its release in 2011 and has been tied to over \$500,000 in revenues for Marketo.¹²

Why SEO Matters

We’ve already mentioned a few times the importance of considering SEO as you research topics and develop your content. Here’s why you need to take notice: Google continually tweaks its search algorithm and the last few updates have signaled a shift away from keywords and a focus on serving up quality content. By quality content, Google means relevant content. In fact, Google is so determined to serve up quality content that it **offers a course** in how to develop it.

Whereas SEO used to be relegated to an elite group of technical marketers who focused on keywords, today’s SEO experts must bring a more strategic and content-centered approach to their efforts. At the same time, content marketers must better understand and consider how SEO (and SEM) affect their initiatives.

¹²: <https://contently.com/strategist/2015/05/06/how-the-big-marketing-activity-coloring-book-fueled-marketo-s-insanely-lucrative-lead-gen-machine/>





Ann Handley on writing best practices: bigger, braver, bolder

Chief Content Officer at MarketingProfs

If you were starting a content marketing program from scratch, where would you begin?

The first thing I would do is hire a strategist, someone who can set the course for the content marketing program. Five years ago I would have said start with a writer, start with someone who can jump in and start creating content, but I don't think we can do that anymore.

We need to think about why we're creating what we're creating. We need to think about how we're going to connect with customers, and where we're going to connect with them. All these questions need to be answered before we can put pencil to paper, pixel to screen.

In your eyes, what is the biggest difference between content marketing five years ago and content marketing today?

First, we're long past the days when creating content for search engines is an effective practice. We need an audience-centric point of view first, and that comes from a strategist.

Second, quality matters a whole lot more than quantity these days. It used to be that publishing regularly was enough to boost you in search rankings and customers would find their way to you. We're beyond that now. You need to be creating content that has real empathy for the audience you are trying to reach.

If you are tasked with hiring a content marketer, what is the #1 attribute you are looking for?

It depends. If it's a marketing department of one, I would definitely look for a strategist first. I would need someone who understands the "why" behind the content and is able to articulate the plan so that they can sell it to the boss, the client, or whoever you need to convince.

If we're assuming the strategy is in place, and we have an audience-centric plan that makes sense, I would hire a writer over anybody else.



Ann Handley on writing best practices: bigger, braver, bolder

Chief Content Officer at MarketingProfs

Tell us about a brand that has impressed you with its content strategy and execution.

I really like what my friend Steve Sheinkopf is doing at Yale Appliance, right here in the Boston area. Yale Appliance redeployed almost all of its marketing budget away from advertising.

His content strategy has been extremely effective, and he's done it by simply answering his audience's questions. You wouldn't think there would be a whole lot to say about lighting fixtures and appliances, but he's killing it. The reason why he's killing it is he looks at his data, he figures out what his audience needs, and he creates content that **meets his audience's needs.**

Another brand in a completely different industry is REI. I love their Black Friday #OptOutside content program, which started as a social media campaign and has now expanded into a year-long program.

The reason why I love it is because it has such empathy for the people they are trying to reach—the people who have no desire to stand in line for a deal when they could be enjoying the outdoors.

What does "bigger, bolder, braver" mean to content marketers and what steps can they take to ensure they are breaking through the noise?

Bigger means telling a bigger story that puts your company in the larger context of what people care about. It's not about you, it's about what you do for others, so it's really about putting your product or service in the context of your audience's lives.

Bolder marketing means you upend the status quo. You tell a story that hits on the specific challenges of a specific audience, but no one else is talking about in the right way for that specific audience.

Finally, braver means taking a braver tone of voice. In a sea of mediocre content, a brave tone can be a big differentiator.

You built a tiny house where you spend time writing and being brilliant. What advice do you have for marketers on finding their "tiny house"?

(laughs) Metaphorically a tiny house is just a place where I can be hyper-focused on what I'm doing. Really what it does is eliminate

distractions. It's literally a tiny house that has four walls, a floor, a ceiling, electricity, an internet connection, and that's about it.

It gives me the tools I need to do my job but at the same time it eliminates other distractions that are inherent to my life. I think eliminating distractions holds true for all marketers. Whatever it is you're trying to do, make that a priority and find a way to block out everything else.



4 Mapping Content Throughout the Buyer's Journey



So what is the point of all this content?

The ultimate goal is to reach and then nurture prospects to drive them toward becoming a customer. As a marketer, it's helpful to think of your prospects' decision-making process on their path to purchase.

The reality is that the buyer now controls the research process. And because prospects aren't likely to reach out to your organisation at the start of their search, it's important to market across the buyer's journey so you can engage target prospects through multiple digital marketing touch points.

In line with our goal of keeping things simple, we recommend dividing the buyer's journey into two parts: early stage and later stage.

Focus on reach in the early stage

In the early stage, you "reach" your target audience with brand messages via content marketing, display, and other tactics. Your focus is on building favorable awareness and recall of your company among prospects who are currently unfamiliar

with your brand or not currently in the market for your offerings. In other words, you are trying to gain mindshare with those not ready to purchase.

With that in mind, your brand-building activities should include a mix of online and offline marketing strategies—so you can reach prospects wherever they may be spending time:

- Investing in public relations can help you secure earned media for your company, enhancing your credibility
- Engaging in content marketing and social media can introduce your brand to new audiences and further boost awareness
- Filling your company blog with helpful and illuminating posts about your industry can gain awareness for your brand
- Promoting your content on social media can help expand the reach of your blog posts and other content
- Targeting display advertising at prospects is a proven way to introduce your brand at scale



Remember: though many prospects will not convert to customers at this stage, your efforts here will make it easier to engage them once they reach the later stage.





Ways to Drive Early-Stage Prospects Into the Later Stage

- **Drive site traffic using search, social media, and advertising**
- **Offer engaging content, such as blog posts, white papers, eBooks, videos, and webcasts**
- **Gate valuable content in exchange for contact details**
- **Continue engaging prospects with compelling, relevant content offers and information**

Nurture in the Later Stage

In the later stage, you “nurture” prospects that have expressed an interest in your product or service. Your goal is to educate and influence them once they are aware of your brand but before they are ready to engage with a sales representative.

Later-stage nurture also includes nurturing after a sales conversation but before a purchase. A terrific way to do this is by encouraging buyers to interact with and explore your website, landing pages, and social channels to learn about your solutions. By focusing on educational outreach, you can maintain contact with these prospects until they are ready to take the next step.

Once prospects are familiar with your brand and have learned about the solutions you offer, they may convert without any further prompting—or they may not. You can continue guiding the latter to purchase by employing the following:

A strong keyword-marketing strategy

Whether you take a paid or organic search marketing approach, make sure prospects continue finding you as they conduct research related to your company, industry, and offerings.

Email marketing

To nurture prospects that have shared their contact information, you can customise your emails based on the prospect’s demographics, website behavior, and previous engagement with your brand.

Newsletter signups and product trials

At this point, you are likely nurturing a group of highly targeted prospects ready to convert—they may just need a nudge to finally make the purchase.

Using data and sophisticated tools, you can discern the following about your prospective buyers:

- What kind of prospects are visiting the corporate website
- How they are responding to email marketing
- What they are doing on social media
- What content they are reading
- What paid search terms they are responding to

Then, using always-on programs—such as corporate websites, display advertising, search engine marketing, content marketing, and social media—you can keep your brand front and center with prospects until they’re ready to buy.



Doug Kessler on global content and scaling

Creative Director & Co-Founder at Velocity Partners

If you were starting a content marketing program from scratch, where would you begin?

I'd always start with a blog. It's easy, low-cost and a great way to start getting your content chops working. Try for a weekly cadence if you can. Figure out your content sweet spot—where your audience's information needs and your own authority and expertise overlap—and stay within it.

Then aim for one, big, chunky, high-value piece—maybe an eBook, SlideShare or video. Make it really, really good: It will be the bedrock of your content brand. Then pimp the living daylights out of it. And commit to getting better and better and better.

In your eyes, what is the biggest difference between content marketing five years ago and content marketing today?

Five years ago, just doing content for your prospects was enough to make you stand out.

Now it isn't. Everybody's doing it.

That's the bad news.

The good news is that there are so many ways to do it better. The content production platforms are better. The content distribution options are legion. The analytics apps are more granular. Marketing automation is slicker...

But the single biggest difference? Now there are lots of fantastic, smart people with real, front-line experience who are ready to help—like Ann Handley, Joe Pulizzi, Lee Odden, Jay Baer, Marcus Sheridan... the list goes on.

If you are tasked with hiring a content marketer, what is the #1 attribute you are looking for?

Curiosity. No, empathy. No, a passion for content and the subject matter itself. No, an eye for a story.

If forced, at gunpoint, to pick just one: empathy.

Content that understands its audience will be good content.

Content that doesn't can't be.





Doug Kessler on global content and scaling

Creative Director & Co-Founder at Velocity Partners

Tell us about a brand that has impressed you with its content strategy and execution.

So many! Can I do three?

HubSpot built a business on content. It's a firehose of useful, helpful stuff and they've built a major subscriber (and fan) base on it.

Everyone cites Red Bull but it really is amazing that they could turn a foul-tasting speed drink into a formidable media brand.

And I love what Adobe is doing with CMO.com—a proper media play that's owned by a brand but doesn't force its brand messages on its readers.

You recently published a great post on why case studies suck. What steps can B2B content marketers take to evolve the traditional case study?

That post was by Irene Triendl, one of Velocity's copywriters. (No, you can't lure her away, we've chained her to the desk and shower her in praise—a killer combination).

Her main point is that case stories should be great stories first and powerful cases second.

The case study genre is so bound by convention that it's been strangled of any sense of surprise or delight or fun. This is tragic because cases can and should be one of our most powerful weapons.

B2B content has a stigma of being boring. How can B2B marketers ensure they are connecting with their audience on an emotional level?

I love this question. The importance of emotional resonance in B2B came to me embarrassingly late in my career. Now, I know that it's hugely important (but still very infrequently practiced).

One route to emotion is to ask a chain of 'why's. To get to the deepest reason that your company does what it does.

The things that make it worthwhile working there.

Another is to follow up on the stories that your work creates. The people it touches.

You want to avoid being too saccharine but don't shy away from the heart stories.

B2B marketers obsess about the rational at the expense of the emotional.

The best stuff combines both.



5

Going Global: Take Your Content Beyond Borders





If you work for a company with a worldwide presence, adopt a global mindset when it comes to content marketing.

When you start a content project—especially a major one—include your geographically dispersed colleagues from the get-go. Think of these colleagues as influencers, ones who can help get your content in front of—and consumed by—your audience in every location.

Unfortunately, most US-based content marketing managers overlook their global counterparts until late in the game. The impact of that oversight is last-minute scrambling to try to pull off a global launch on time and on budget.



Planning to take an asset global? Follow these tried-and-true best practices:

Make geos part of the process

Don't just tell your global colleagues what you plan to do—include the folks responsible for marketing in your different geos from the start. Gather their input on time frames for translation, and thought leadership and case studies that will resonate best with their local audiences. That said, use universally global images and references whenever possible. And collaborate with your colleagues to determine who will be responsible for localising and promoting the asset in each geo. This is vital to targeting your content campaigns for local audiences around the world.

Simplify, simplify

Your marketing colleagues may want to personally localise your content asset. But to streamline and simplify the process, encourage them to work with the same agency you used to develop the original asset. This minimises the likelihood that someone will drop the ball so to speak. Just be sure to give each geo a minimum two weeks to translate and localise the asset once it is finalised. And remember: no matter how competent your US agency, you're almost guaranteed to run into translation errors when working with international translators—which can quickly become

frustrating for all involved. A good idea is to take the content as far as you can and then find a local translator, such as Cloudwords.

Go to the source

Any geos that choose to localise and translate the content themselves will need the original source files from the agency that developed the asset for you. With that in mind, find out from the start if the agency will charge for these files and the process for sharing those with your colleagues.

Prime the pump on launch day

The morning of your content launch, send an email to everyone involved with an overview of the content asset and launch plan and a thank you for their involvement. Include a few social sharing messages and ask everyone to share the content with their social networks. And remember to keep different time zones in mind.

Celebrate as a group

It's fine—and wise—to measure the metrics for the launch and demand-gen efforts of each geo. Just be sure to bubble those individual stats up to a global view that demonstrates you are all working as a single team.





Kirsty J Brice on measuring success

Director, EMEA Marketing at 4C

If you were starting a content marketing program from scratch, where would you begin?

Start with your audience – and invest in quality analytics that can help identify the right content for different groups. Once you know who you are trying to reach, you can craft the right story for them, and work out how you'll use targeting to tell it to the right people. That's what storytelling means to me: it's the whole process from message management and content creation all the way through to efficient targeting.

The thing to remember when starting out with a content marketing strategy is that it needs to be sustainable. Lots of businesses come out with one big message, like a White Paper, and then find they have nothing more to say for six months. You need to make sure that you have a sustainable process in place for creating and managing content, so that it's not just a flash in the pan.

In your eyes, what's the biggest difference between content marketing five years ago and content marketing today?

The first thing that jumps to mind is video. Five years ago, the power of the written word was very important. Now, if you don't have video in your content strategy you are struggling. There's so much content out there that cutting through is getting harder and harder without video's capacity for capturing attention quickly.

If you are tasked with hiring a content marketer, what's the number 1 attribute you look for?

Number 1 has to be writing skills, because they apply across every type of content you work on. Even video content has to be essentially well written, with a strong narrative behind it. It's what provides your content with differentiation and originality.

As an important second though, I'd nominate research skills. The ability to gather relevant audience insight and respond to it is another factor that helps one brand's content stand out over another's.



Kirsty J Brice on measuring success

Director, EMEA Marketing at 4C

Tell us about a brand that's impressed you with its content strategy and execution

I believe that evolution and personalisation are central to effective storytelling – and for me, John Lewis embodies those qualities. This is a brand that I've grown up with, because it finds ways to connect with people at all stages of life. For me, that strength comes down to an ability to pitch the right story to each group. It all comes together for their Christmas advertising of course, which is one of the strongest examples of brand storytelling that we see each year.

Most marketers are looking to improve content measurement. What low-hanging fruit they should focus on?

Measurement in any form of marketing is tricky, because the type of return you are looking for from your investment can differ. But there are certain fundamental metrics that any content marketer can easily access – and which will make a difference if they are analysed in the right way: downloads of content assets, uploads of contact details, the number of subscribers to a content channel and the number of leads content is generating.

Engagement rates with your content can also be a powerful indicator of intent. The value of this low-hanging fruit really depends on how precise your targeting is to begin with. If you are buying in databases with a loose correlation to your objectives then that value decreases. If you are targeting a specific audience precisely, it becomes a lot more meaningful.

Where is measurement heading? What does it look like for marketers moving forward?

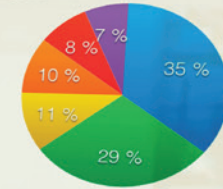
B2B marketing has tended to be lumped in with sales and its measurement has therefore been linked directly to revenue. But marketing needs the concept of ROI to be broader than that. Awareness, affinity and interest: they are all key to opening doors – and they need to be recognised. Marketers need the confidence to put forward their own measures of success, and agree these with sales from the outset, to avoid reverting to revenue as the only metric that matters later on. They need sales to buy into all of the ways that marketing activity can contribute to the bottom line – not just the most obvious ones.





Business plan

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J





Gilles Prigent

CEO Take Part Media - Leading Brand Publisher

If you were starting a content marketing programme from scratch, where would you begin?

You have to start by thinking about distribution: how you will reach an audience and how you will capture their attention. As my CEO puts it, content might be king but distribution is queen – and she wears the pants. This is why, during the 10 years our business has been operating, we've seen LinkedIn taking a more and more dominant role in content distribution strategies – it's because it's the first network to be optimised for sharing B2B content. I noticed that a company in the UK recently launched their business with no website, just using social networks as the hub for their digital content. That's how important distribution has become.

In your eyes, what is the biggest difference between content marketing five years ago and content marketing today?

Five years ago, content was the only thing that mattered. Now data and distribution are just as important – and you need to work with platforms that can provide both. Five years ago, clients would come to us asking for content that they could put

on their website. Now that's nowhere near sufficient – all the brands in your sector are doing content and you need to make sure that it's yours that gets in front of your target audience and captures their attention. Data, and the smart distribution it enables, can give you a competitive edge.

If you are tasked with hiring a content marketer, what's the number 1 attribute you look for?

Actually, I think there are three skills that you need. You need someone who understands about different contexts and how distribution is key. You need someone who can see what's important when it comes to data, who can make good use of A/B testing on LinkedIn, for example. And most important of all, you need someone who understands how to capture and keep attention, who can find different ways of telling a story across different formats: when to appeal emotionally and when to appeal rationally, how much to reveal in order to persuade people to click through to content, how to use visuals. A good content marketer knows that what works for one audience and one piece of content won't necessarily work for another – and they can vary their approach to deliver the right result each time.

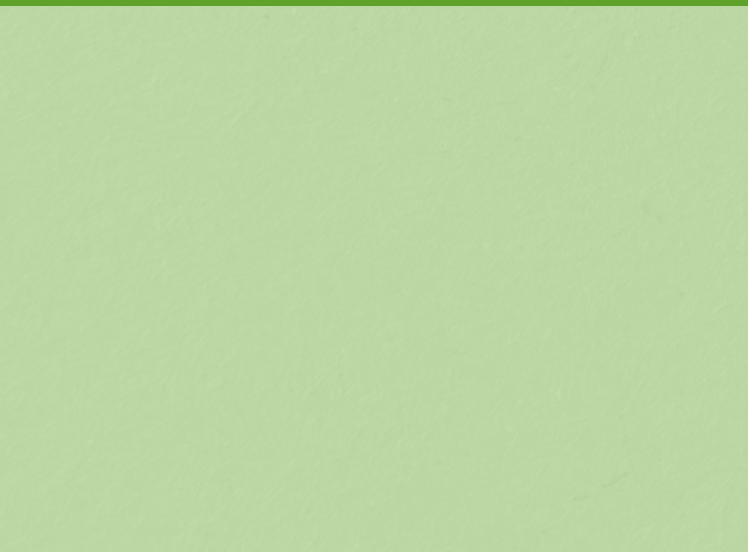
Tell us about a brand that has impressed you with its content strategy and execution

I think I have to mention Red Bull – because right at the start, Red Bull Stratos was a real inspiration as to what content could achieve. Personally though, I'm increasingly focused on B2B content – and I'm very impressed with what IT companies like IBM have managed to achieve. They've gone from being quite technical and boring to producing inspirational content that shows the difference their products can make to people's lives – and to the world. We're now seeing key brands in the finance sector following their lead.





6 The Big Rock: Your Stepping-Stone to Content Marketing Success



It's easy to get overwhelmed at the thought of developing content that keeps prospects engaged and interested down that (sometimes lengthy) path to purchase. That's where a Big Rock comes into play.

Keep things simple

Start with a single piece of content that can power your demand-gen engine for months on end. We call this a Big Rock—it's your stake in the ground and helps set you apart from the competition. The Big Rock is a piece of content that shows you truly own a topic or conversation.

This is a substantial content asset (think 15, 20, 30 or more pages). Move from thinking like a publisher to actually publishing like one by putting out a "book" on your topic.



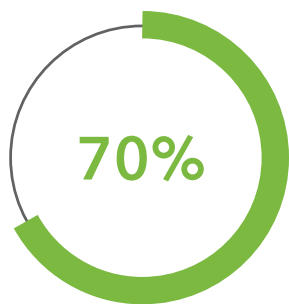
Before we go deeper, consider this startling finding: according to **SiriusDecisions**, up to **70%** of content created by B2B marketing teams goes unused.¹³ That's a disturbing statistic that every serious content marketer needs to get serious about changing. The first step is to ask whether or not to create a content asset.

- Can you back up your decision with data?
- Is the content going to solve a problem or answer a pressing question for your prospects?
- Can you infuse a thought-leadership angle into this content by offering a fresh perspective on a hot topic or on a status-quo approach to business?
- Can you reap SEO value by creating this content?

If you can answer “yes” to one or more of these, then you plan to produce content with a purpose instead of what Jesse Noyes of Kahuna (formerly Kapost) calls **“random acts of content.”** In other words, you can confidently move forward knowing you’ll be publishing a relevant piece of content—your Big Rock, if you will—that will serve you and your audience well, both now and in the future.

You fill a Big Rock with all the wisdom and insights you have to share on the topic, leaving you with a hefty piece of content that makes it clear you know what you’re talking about. Then you promote it left and right using all the tools at your disposal (think PR, sponsored content, native advertisements, to name a few) to milk this piece of content for all it’s worth.

Done right, your Big Rock can be the engine behind months of leads.



of content created by B2B marketing teams goes unused

The Big Rock is your ticket to creating more relevant content.

It's your chance to publish the end-all-be-all on an issue or topic that matters a lot to your target audience.

13: <https://www.siriusdecisions.com/Blog/2013/May/Summit-2013-Highlights-Inciting-a-BtoB-Content-Revolution.aspx>



Now for some sources of inspiration...

Answer the Number-One Question on your prospects' minds

Using a combination of keyword research, insights from your colleagues, and a survey tool, you can generate a number of potential topics and questions to make the theme of your Big Rock. Find the one topic that allows you to own the conversation, the one that will likely drive quality traffic to your site. Then write the book on that topic. Here at LinkedIn, we wanted to answer the burning question, "How do I successfully use LinkedIn for marketing?" That was the inspiration for **The Sophisticated Marketer's Guide to LinkedIn**.

Pull from the blog

If you publish a blog, you very likely have a Big Rock waiting in the wings. Identify five or more blog posts that follow a theme and stitch them together into a Big Rock. Sequence your blog posts as chapters, write an intro and conclusion, throw in a case study or two along with some influencer interviews and quotes, design the cover, and voila!—you've produced a Big Rock. We rounded up posts from our Hybrid Marketer blog series to put out an eBook called **The New Era of the Hybrid Marketer**, a 55-page "own-the-conversation" piece on multi-dimensional marketing in the B2B world.

Flip the content funnel

Want to get even more mileage from your existing content? Look no further than your case studies. While these are traditionally bottom-of-funnel content, they can be served up earlier in the funnel when positioned and packaged the right way. Pick an overarching theme, choose five relevant case studies and bundle them together into **Success Stories**. This is a quick and easy way to flip bottom-funnel content on its head.



Remember: For all the nitty-gritty details on how to create distribute and promote your Big Rock, look no further than "**Creating Your First Big Rock: A Step by Step Guide for Marquee Content**."



Alex Cheeseman on Content Curation

Head of International Strategy at NewsCred

In your eyes, what is the biggest difference between content marketing five years ago and content marketing today?

The fundamental principles of content marketing haven't changed all that much. People tend to forget that it's been a marketing strategy for over 100 years. What's changed is that technology has pushed content to centre stage, and focused marketers on building relationships with value-based marketing rather than push-based marketing. At the same time, the techniques for bringing content to life and distributing it are changing. We're seeing increased use of video to tell longer form stories. We're seeing brands looking at different distribution channels for getting in front of the right person at the right time, and we're seeing the growing importance of native and programmatic.

If you are tasked with hiring a content marketer, what's the number 1 attribute you look for?

The most important attribute is the ability to drive organisational change. Increasingly, content marketing is marketing. Everybody's doing it, and lots of people are busily creating content in siloes in a way that's

ultimately ineffective and inefficient. The number 1 job for someone coming into a content marketer role is therefore to build an effective structure, leverage what different teams are doing, and implement a marketing programme with content at its core, that everyone can buy into. You'll need people to understand what the overall brand objectives are, and how that feeds into the content for different areas.

Tell us about a brand that's impressed you with its content strategy and execution

I think there's a really clear winner here: Lego. This is a company that saw its patent expire in 1989, which threatened to take away its competitive advantage. Lego responded by leveraging content – and doing so with some of the best executions that anyone has ever seen. Now we've got theme parks, brand partnerships with Marvel, DC and Star Wars, all of them with their own microsites rich in content. Then they layered it all up and took it to the next level with the Lego movie. In my mind, the ultimate test of content is whether someone would pay to read or watch it. Millions of people paid to go and watch that film. It's a phenomenal, value-adding extension of a brand through content.

What are the top metrics for measuring the impact of content marketing on a business?

It depends on your overall business objectives, but I'd argue that you should be looking for metrics in five categories: awareness, perception, some form of action, advocacy and loyalty. You'd then assign metrics in each of these areas based on your specific requirements. For awareness, for example, it could be unique visitors, engagement rates or time on site. Repeat visits can also be a strong metric.

For me though, the most important measure of content isn't actually a metric; it's more a way of setting the right standard. I like to ask: would someone be prepared to pay for that piece of content? The problem people in your audience have isn't lack of content, it's mediocre content – and so that is a really good litmus test to have.



Alex Cheeseman on Content Curation

Head of International Strategy at NewsCred

How important is curation to content marketing? How can brands use it to supplement their content strategies?

The important thing is to be clear about what objectives you need your content curation to achieve. We've seen it making really valuable contributions in a few different areas. When clients are starting out with content, it helps to validate which types they should be investing in, by establishing if those types of content resonate with your audiences. When you're coming up with a lot of different ideas, it can provide a way to execute in areas that you maybe don't have enough budget to create original content for. Finally, it can be an important way of continuing to test and try new things - which is an important part of any content marketing programme.

Tell us about a brand that does an excellent job of incorporating curation within its content strategy?

They're a client of ours, but I have to pick CapGemini with its Content Loop site. This provides a great experience for an audience of IT and business decision-makers, and it does so by mixing owned content with licensed content from the likes of Fast Company, The Next Web, Lifehacker, and Forbes. It leverages content curation superbly to establish itself as a destination for thought-leadership and this ensures CapGemini is front-of-mind when it's time for someone to take an investment decision. Content Loop has generated 1.8 million shares, and results in CapGemini adding 3,000 new LinkedIn followers each week.



7 Thought Leadership: 3 Types and 3 Companies Doing it Well





When it comes to B2B content marketing, thought leadership falls into three major categories:

- Product thought leadership: how-to's, best practices, and strategy about how a product (or service) can transform a business
- Industry thought leadership: a fresh point of view on news, trends and the future of the market, offering ideas for new ways to achieve success
- Organisational thought leadership: leading with company culture, talent development, and other internal advantages

Be strategic about producing content: use thought leadership to satisfy your audience's information needs and position your organisation to stand out in the crowded marketplace.

While you need to develop and publish different types of content, thought leadership plays an important role in your content marketing strategy. As Laura Ramos of Forrester Research said, "Business buyers don't buy your product; they buy into your approach to solving their problems."

At its core, thought leadership is about sharing insights and ideas—and a unique point of view—that provoke new ways of thinking, spark discussions and debates, and trigger action. And this is critical for setting your company apart and inspiring your audience to follow and pay attention to your brand. After all, in an age when buyers are overwhelmed by the deluge of irrelevant content, thought leadership content stands out as truly valuable.

Consider how one company took this approach to make a big and lasting impression with its audience. We're talking about the Gold Medal Flour Company and how it created an iconic character in Betty Crocker.

In 1921, the company ran a contest for its customers: Complete a jigsaw puzzle,

mail it in, and receive a pincushion shaped like a sack of flour. Gold Medal received thousands of responses.

Unexpectedly, many of the responses were accompanied by cooking questions from struggling homemakers.

Believing its audience would better relate to a woman giving cooking advice, the all-male management team at the parent company Washburn Crosby created Betty Crocker. This character then served as the inspiration for the company's "Big Rocks." As platforms for Betty Crocker, Washburn Crosby created a cooking show on the radio that drew a million listeners each week, along with a cookbook—both of which were world firsts and paved the way for decades of industry dominance.

B2B content marketing falls into three major categories:

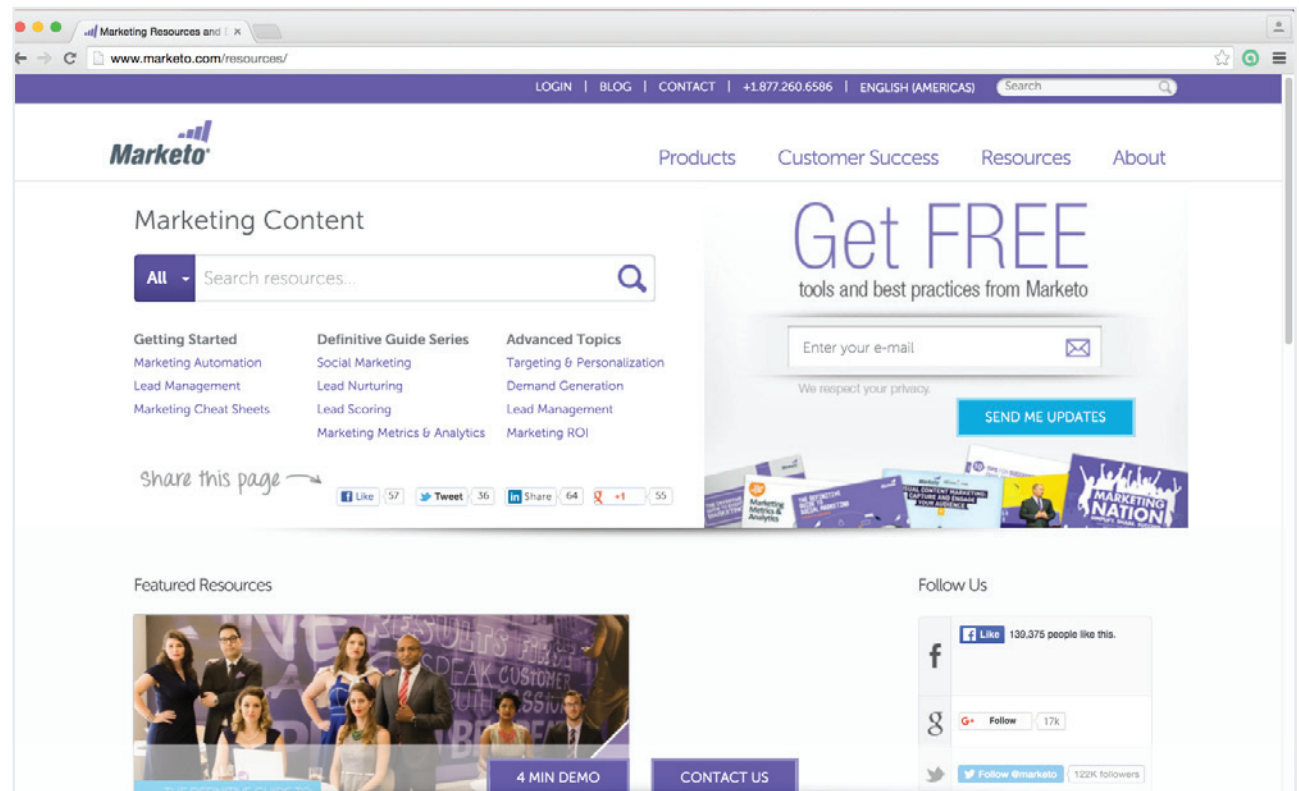
- Product
- Industry
- Organisational

Here are examples of each.



Leading With Products

Marketo—a leading marketing automation solution provider—creates content that illustrates how its product transforms the way marketers work and turns marketing from a cost center into a revenue driver through a concept it calls “engagement marketing.” The company shares lots of best practices and how-to’s, often in the form of its comprehensive Definitive Guides that help convey its ownership of a range of marketing-centered topics. Marketo even uses its Company Page on LinkedIn to underscore its thought leadership. With a page banner that reads, “Welcome to the era of engagement marketing,” the company highlights how it helps marketers connect with their customers on a strategic level.





Steering Industry Discussions

Symantec has positioned itself as a thought leader in the software security space by establishing itself as an authority on all things security. To that end, it shares Company Page updates that spark conversations about industry trends and events. In the process, the company has gained over 232,000 followers (as of December 2015).

Symantec
Computer Software
10,001+ employees

Home Careers

Symantec Corporation (NASDAQ: SYMC) is the global leader in cybersecurity. Operating one of the world's largest cyber intelligence networks, we see more threats, and protect more customers from the next generation of attacks. We help companies, governments and individuals secure their most important data wherever it lives. Headquartered in Mountain View, Calif., Symantec has operations in 39 countries and employees 11,000 world wide.

Specialties
Encryption, Antivirus and Malware protection, eDiscovery, Identity Protection and Authentication, Information Protection, Cyber Security Services, Threat Protection

Website
<http://www.symantec.com>

Industry
Computer Software

Type
Public Company

Symantec There are five phases to incidence response. Is your organized prepared in the case of a cyberattack? <https://lnkd.in/eW4WHnD>

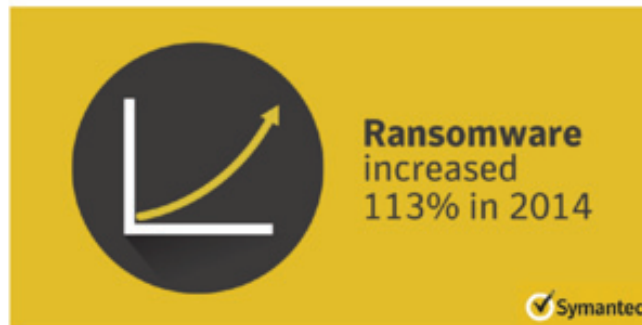


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Jacob Herrmann, Henri (Hank) Chase, PE +30

Add a comment...

Symantec Ransomware attacks grew 113% in 2014. Learn how organizations are using cyber insurance to mitigate damages caused by ransomware: <https://lnkd.in/etF55vi>





Establishing a Winning Culture

It may surprise you to see something about an organisation's culture in an eBook about content marketing. But when thought leadership and culture are in sync, a company's content gains wings.

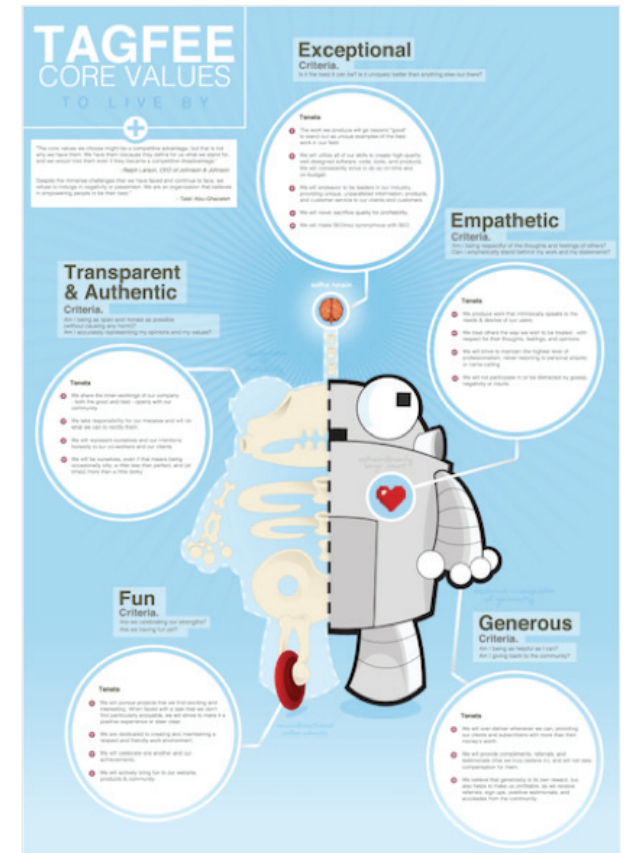
Let's break it down: a successful organisation starts with a great company culture, which is the sum of its values, vision and guidelines. These define the business and the organisation's vision and uniqueness. And these are the same elements that should be mirrored in the company's thought leadership. Here's an example of how this plays out.

For nearly a decade, Moz—one of the most recognised tech brands—has lived by a set of core values collectively referred to as TAGFEE.

The company's founder, Rand Fishkin, embodies these principles. Consider Rand's **Whiteboard Friday sessions**, which consistently provide the search marketing community with strategies, tactics, and tools for improving their digital marketing strategies. In these sessions,

Rand comes across as transparent, authentic, generous, fun, empathetic and exceptional (i.e., TAGFEE). And because he largely serves as the face of the company, through his adherence to these guiding principles, he has helped establish a company culture that serves to draw in a base of loyal and adoring customers.

When it comes to excelling at thought leadership, take cues from the playbooks of these three companies that are doing it right! And see how more top companies create and foster their culture on the **SlideShare #culturecode campaign site**.



”

Tell us about a brand that has impressed you with its content strategy and execution.

Of course I'm a big fan of LinkedIn Marketing Solutions' content, but I'm biased.

I've been impressed with Google's "Think with Google" and content marketing program. They do a great job of creating really useful content in multiple formats, tools, and resources. They're also continuously updating the effectiveness and aesthetic of their content, which shows they're paying attention. I also think HootSuite, BuzzSumo, and Buffer do a great job.



Lee Odden on a hybrid of PR, event marketing and SEO

CEO at TopRank Marketing

If you were starting a content marketing program from scratch, where would you begin?

All marketing starts with the customer. Understanding what buyers need is essential for architecting a content marketing program that is relevant, meaningful, and effective at driving new business.

The most successful content marketing is a cycle of content informed by customer insight that when implemented provides even more data for further insight and further content marketing performance optimisation.

In your eyes, what is the biggest difference between content marketing five years ago and content marketing today?

Five years ago content marketing for many companies was simply about creating more content.

As the practice of content marketing has matured, more marketers are creating higher quality content that not only provides self-directed buyers with answers to the questions that lead them

through the sales process, but also content experiences.

Visual content, more creative storytelling, and interactive content contribute to experiences that inform and create an emotional connection with buyers. Brands are still creating more content, but it's held to a higher standard by customers.

If you are tasked with hiring a content marketer, what is the #1 attribute you are looking for?

Genuine passion for creating content and marketing.

I recently polled the team at TopRank Marketing on what it takes to succeed at the agency. The most frequently used attribute shared was passion. Without genuine interest in the content process and all that goes with content marketing, it is very difficult to produce the quantity of quality necessary to succeed.



Lee Odden on a hybrid of PR, event marketing and SEO

CEO at TopRank Marketing

You are known as a jack of all trades. As marketing leaders look to expand upon their content, social, PR, SEO, event, and influencer marketing strategies in the years ahead, how can they tie it all together to ensure the whole is greater than the sum of the parts?

I am? :) Sophisticated marketing starts with a solid strategy and to create a smart plan for achieving marketing goals, it's essential to capture insights from customers. When marketers understand customer preferences for content discovery, consumption, and engagement, a more effective strategy and tactical mix can be created.

Where do you see influencer marketing in 5 years? How about next year?

Much of influencer marketing is about advocacy and more B2B marketers will look at influencers as partners. Everyone is influential about something and because of ubiquitous connectivity and the ability to publish anywhere, anytime, people are more empowered than ever to grow their networks.

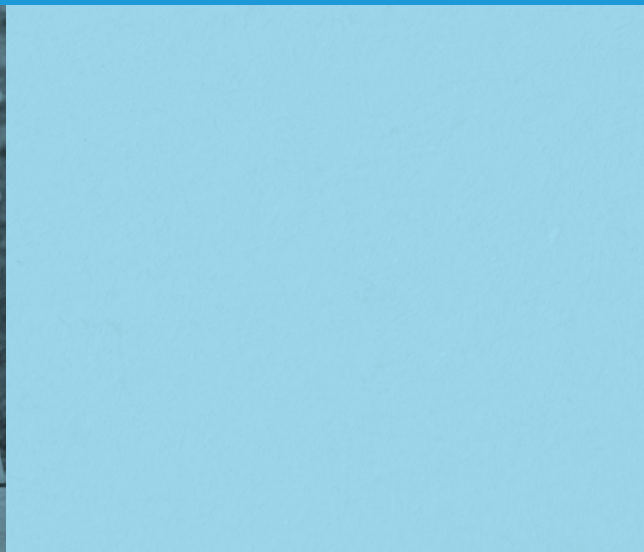
In the future I see a democratisation of content creation through content relationships with famous influencers (brand individuals) and niche influencers alike. There's upside to content co-creation for both brands and contributors. The influencers get exposure to the brand community and the brand gets exposure to better quality content shared with an entirely new audience.

I think content platforms and planning tools will integrate better with influencer marketing tools to leverage influencer insights in the content marketing process. From topic ideation to quote sourcing to measuring the performance of influencer content sharing, an integrated solution will provide brands with an effective means to increase content quantity, quality and reach.





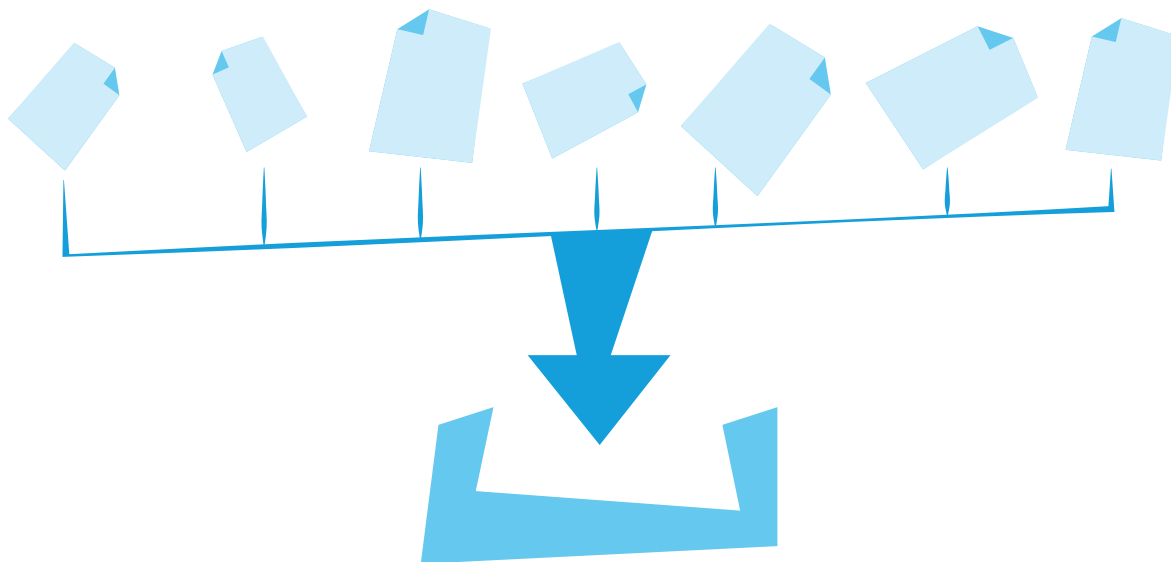
Carving up the Turkey



A Big Rock does more than help you lay claim to a topic—it's the jumping off point for more relevant content.

Certain prospects are going to consume quite a few of your content assets as they research their purchase options. According to **IDG Enterprise**, buyers download an average of seven informational assets during the purchase process. It's also no surprise that the **2015 TechTarget Media Consumption Report** shows that, the higher the price of the solution being considered, the more assets buyers consume on the path to purchase. In fact, **SiriusDecisions** found that **75%** of B2B buyers rely more on content to research and make B2B purchasing decisions than they did a year ago.

Instead of creating content for content's sake, create content that helps your prospective customers. Your Big Rock is the perfect starting point. Once you've created a Big Rock, your job is to get it in front of your audience. Remember, not everyone will download your Big Rock...some people may prefer to read a short blog post or glance over an infographic. Others may prefer to scroll through a SlideShare. Still others may want to tune in for a webcast that walks them through all your insights. Your job is to get it to them in the format they prefer, in the channels where they spend time.



of B2B buyers rely more on content to research and make B2B purchasing decisions than they did a year ago



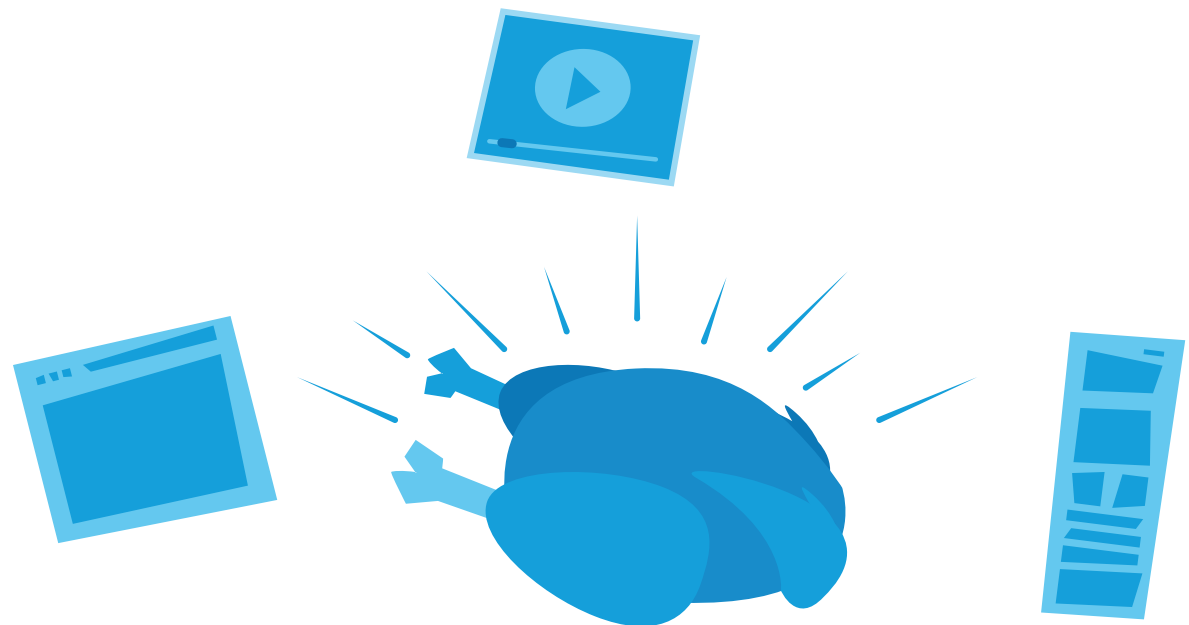
Think about how you can break apart your Big Rock into smaller assets—everything from stand-alone blog posts and Q&As to attention-grabbing infographics and SlideShares.

By lifting these “slices” directly from the Big Rock, you can quickly churn out content with minimal effort.

Fortunately, your Big Rock is perfect for chunking into smaller, derivative content assets. Call this repurposing your content or “carving up the turkey”. Whatever you call it, it’s about getting the most bang for your content buck and making sure all your sage advice and expertise finds its way into prospective customers’ hands.

A good content marketer can reimagine a single Big Rock in many different formats. The bigger the rock, the more ways to slice and dice it into content derivatives. And the broader the topic of your Big Rock, the longer the shelf life for the Big Rock and all those turkey slices.

Next work out the details for the campaigns and initiatives that will feature all this content across all channels where your prospects will encounter it. And don’t forget—with your Big Rock and all those content slices, you can quickly populate the resource section of your website. More importantly, all those ungated slices are going to point back to your Big Rock. And if your Big Rock is gated, you can collect lead information in exchange for the download.





Rebecca Allen on audiences

GM, UK & Europe at Contently

If you were starting a content marketing programme from scratch, where would you begin?

Don't try to produce too much content straight away. Focus instead on setting out how you will define success, and establish who has internal ownership for the content marketing strategy. This could be the marketing director, a specific content marketing manager or someone in PR or social media, but whoever it is you want them to have a documented strategy from the start that they can refer back to and test and optimise against. You are also going to need someone with editorial skills, and this could well be a freelance editor working with your internal team. With these foundations in place you can get started. I would aim at producing one or two blog posts a week to begin with, with additional social media activity built around them.

In your eyes, what is the biggest difference between content marketing five years ago and content marketing today?

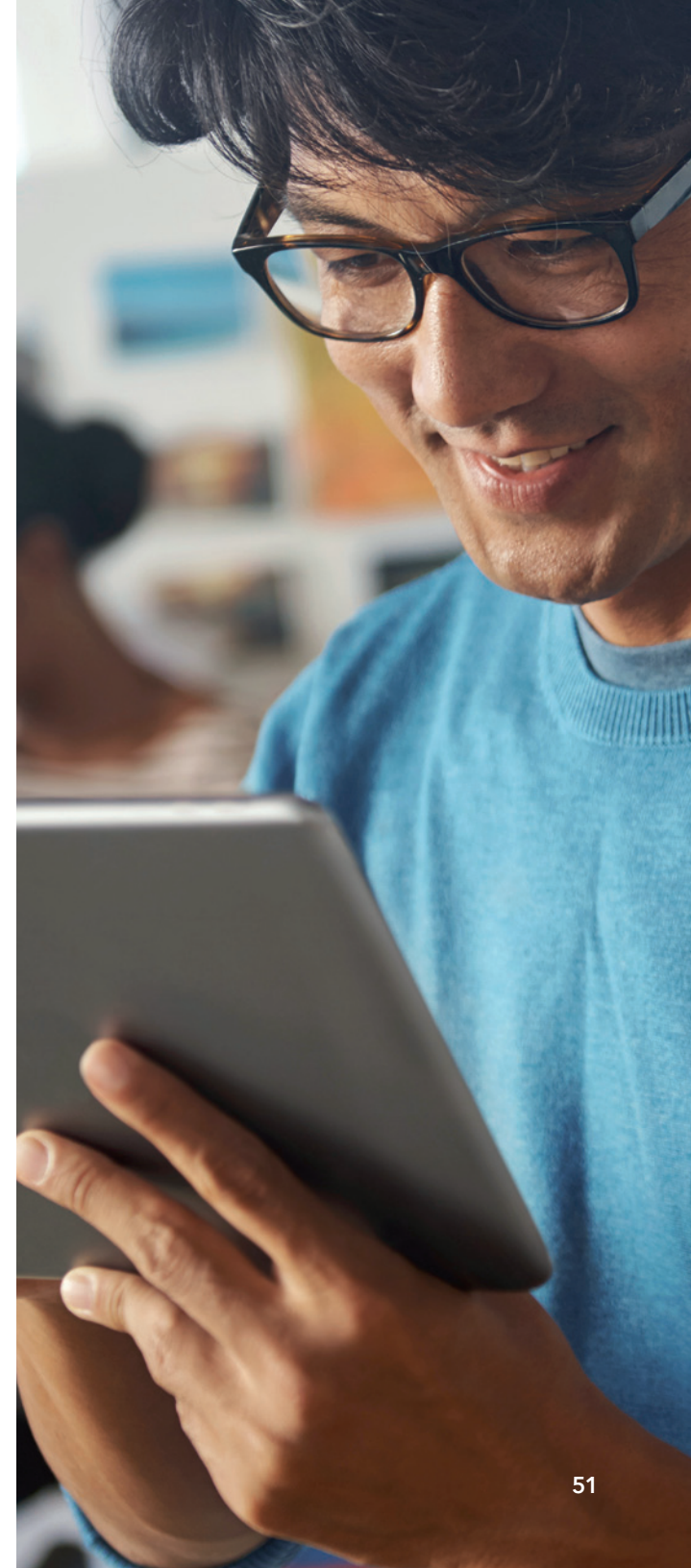
It's matured significantly in the last five years. We're seeing investment increasing in both B2C and B2B, and the industry has

moved on from answering 'Why should we be doing content marketing?' to 'How can we get it right?'

The biggest two developments are the growing focus on measurement and the growing focus on distribution. Content marketers are increasingly aware that they can't create content in isolation, without incorporating distribution as part of the strategy. And they're ready to move beyond vanity metrics to find ways to demonstrate clear ROI. It's a huge shift and a complex challenge. Content should run through every stage of the customer journey and therefore we need to look at a wide range of metrics to measure it.

If you are tasked with hiring a content marketer, what's the number 1 attribute you look for?

Number 1 would be storytelling skills. That's why people with editorial backgrounds are so good at content marketing. You need other marketing skills like demand generation in the mix as well, but you need to start with someone who knows how to write and tell a story.





Rebecca Allen on audiences

GM, UK & Europe at Contently

Tell us about a brand that's impressed you with its content strategy and execution

I have to be honest and admit that they're a client, but I love what Marriott International are doing. They launched a global content studio in 2014, and now see themselves as a media owner. They produce a personalised online travel magazine. They make really nice short films. They're even experimenting with Virtual Reality. All of this began with getting the right team in place with storytellers at its core. They brought in people from Disney, CBS and Variety, and made content central to their whole culture.

How do you approach understanding the audience for content marketing?

We start by analysing a client's particular content category. We look at how people are engaging with publishers and competing brands in that content space, and that provides a lot of insight to plug into their strategy. Are the audience engaging with short or long-form articles on a particular subject? Does video content work well? Do Infographics? From here you can start to build a picture.

How do you balance the needs and interests of the audience with the key messages that a client needs to communicate?

It's very much a funnel model. You have to start with figuring out what the audience wants and building engagement at the top of that funnel, then moving on to align that with the concept of the business or brand, and then talking more specifically about products and services. The thing about a funnel though, is that you need to keep filling it from the top. You have to emphasise building engagement and long-term trust by addressing the audience's interests first and foremost, and it's important to remember this when it comes to establishing the ROI of your content marketing efforts.



9 Publishing on LinkedIn



The Facts About LinkedIn Publishing

- **Nearly 2 million unique writers publish more than 130,000 posts a week**
- **About 45% of readers are in the upper ranks of their industries: managers, VPs, and CEOs, for example**
- **Top content-demanding industries are tech, financial services, and higher education**

It's one thing to develop content—it's another to get it seen by your target audience. The professional publishing platform on LinkedIn offers a prime opportunity to post your company's original content and showcase your expertise.

As the world's go-to content publishing platform for marketers, LinkedIn is a powerful resource. Through LinkedIn, marketers like you can directly engage professional members with relevant content and experiences. Think of it as "publishing with a purpose."

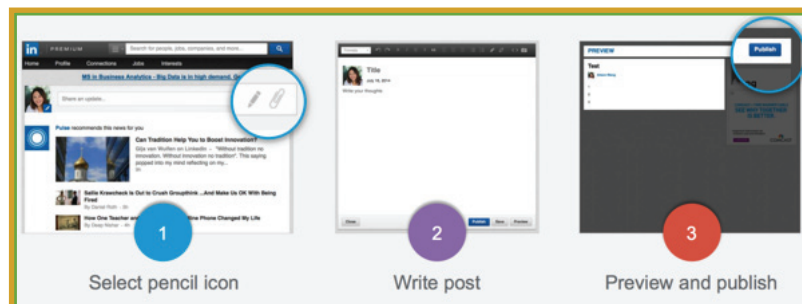
By using LinkedIn to build relationships with the world's professionals, you can reach your goals at every step of the buying cycle:

- Generate awareness
- Establish thought leadership
- Drive targeted website traffic
- Generate leads and pipeline
- Create advocacy

That's because you will boost the impact of your content when you publish it in a professional context. And you'll amplify that impact through the social sharing that happens naturally on LinkedIn.



Publishing on LinkedIn: how it works



You can publish both short-form and long-form content on LinkedIn.

Short-form content such as articles, images and stats helps you gain followers, while long-form content helps spread your ideas. You simply use the intuitive blogging tool embedded into the LinkedIn platform to publish new and previously published content on LinkedIn.



Three Reasons to Publish Long-Form Content on LinkedIn

1. The content you publish is attached to and becomes a part of your LinkedIn profile and positions you as an expert and thought leader.
2. You can create an always-on strategy with your C-level team, subject matter experts and employees by delivering your message with credibility and authenticity.
3. Your posts have the potential to be featured on LinkedIn Pulse and recommended to a much broader group of members.

Articles posted with the tool are searchable by keyword in LinkedIn's post search box. Plus, posts that are viewed enough times can get picked up by Pulse, the news app and content brand for LinkedIn. And when that happens, you can quickly grow views, comments and shares.

Want more hints on how to crush it on LinkedIn as a writer?
Follow these proven practices:

Write often and publish when it's timely.

Use a current event or news in your area of subject matter expertise as an opportunity to share your insights and perspectives.

Write what you know.

What tricks do you employ every day to make your work life easier? What failures have helped turn you into a success? What inspired you to do what you do? Use the details from your life to help others be better in theirs.

Use links to drive site traffic.

Link images and keywords back to your company blog or Big Rocks for increased traffic and referral traffic back to your site.

Beware of listicles.

While fine for raw clicks, we have found they don't encourage engagement.

Clear beats clever in a headline.

Use puns and jokes sparingly since a misinterpretation or misunderstanding might keep someone from reading your post at all. Send 5-10 headlines to friends and colleagues and ask them, "Which headline would you click on, assuming you didn't know the author of the post?".

Share!

After publishing a post, share on LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter, and let your friends, colleagues, and employees know so they can amplify the reach. You can also tweet your post via LinkedIn Pulse.

Join the Writing on LinkedIn Group and tap into the reimagined LinkedIn Pulse app. Get ahead with inspiration on something sharp to talk about every day.

The ROI of Publishing on LinkedIn

And don't just take our word for reasons to publish on LinkedIn. Here are just two of the many businesses that have freely shared the impact of doing so.

Symantec boosts engagement and visibility

One of Symantec's core objectives is to become the world's authority on Information Protection Security with IT decision makers. As a result, Symantec saw an opportunity to have their executives and Subject Matter Experts publish on LinkedIn. Recognising a need to extend beyond their network to reach their desired audience, Symantec also sponsored several posts to drive relevancy. The results? It saw a **73%** engagement rate with its brand on LinkedIn, and moved from #3 to #1 as the most relevant voice with IT decision makers.

"Publishing on LinkedIn was a pivotal moment in showcasing not only our company re-branding efforts, but our thought leadership as the information protection authority."

—Eric Stieg, Enterprise Social Strategy, Symantec

Applico raises brand awareness

As a small consultancy competing in a market with much larger players, Applico needed to drive awareness in the marketplace by sharing their narrative. Also having just gone through an organisational re-brand, they saw original content creation as a means of re-positioning their value prop. The company's approach was to identify seven externally facing SMEs who posted a total of 15 posts over two months. This increased total engagements with the Applico brand on LinkedIn by 29x, leading to Applico becoming the most relevant voice on LinkedIn among eight other competitors.

”

Cultivate a Culture of Content











"Publishing on LinkedIn is helping us close deals. We've had several potential clients tell us that one of our posts on LinkedIn has changed the way they think about their own business and made them want to work with Applico."

—Alex Moazed, CEO, Applico Inc.

Impressed with these results? Pin up this handy table so you always know how to kill it with content on LinkedIn!

LINKEDIN CONTENT MARKETING TACTICAL PLAN

Here's Your Printable Plan for Killing it with Content Marketing on LinkedIn

OPPORTUNITIES	WHAT TO SHARE	OBJECTIVES	KEY METRICS	ACTION ITEMS
  <p>LinkedIn Company & Showcase Pages</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whitepapers • eBooks • Case Studies • Industry Articles • Helpful How-To Content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brand Awareness • Lead Generation • Thought Leadership • Event Registration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Page Followers • Post Clicks • Engagement • Inquiries & Leads • Event Registrants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post 3-4x a Day • Engage With Followers Via Post Comments • Change Cover Image Every 6 months
  <p>LinkedIn SlideShare</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Company Videos & Presentations • Infographics • Webcast Decks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead Generation • Brand Awareness • Thought Leadership • SEO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Views • Leads & Inquiries • Linkbacks & Embeds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upload New Content Weekly • Highlight Decks on Profile Page • Group Content into Playlists • Add Lead Forms
  <p>Publishing on LinkedIn</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional Expertise & Experiences • Industry Trends • Lessons Learned 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thought Leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post Views (& Demographics of Your Readers) • Post Likes, Comments & Shares • Profile Views 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish Whenever You Feel Passionate • Recommended: Bi-Weekly or Once a Month
  <p>LinkedIn Sponsored Content & Direct Sponsored Content</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Company News • Blog Content • Industry News & Research • Case Studies • Webcasts • Eye-Catching Visuals & Statistics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead Generation • Brand Awareness • Thought Leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement Rate • Impressions • Inquiries or Leads • Company or Showcase Page Followers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Run 2-4 Sponsored Content/Week • Run For 3 Weeks, Then Test & Iterate • Select Compelling Visuals • Share Links To Lead Forms & Add URL Tracking Code
  <p>LinkedIn Groups</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid Self-Promotion • Use as a Catalyst for Thought Leadership & Community • Spark Conversations About Industry Trends & Challenges • Ask Questions to Crowdsource Sentiment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thought Leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of Group Members • Number of Discussions • Quality of Conversions • Number of Profile Views • Number of New Connections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a Group for Your Company • Ask for Opinions & Provide Insights • Monitor Submissions Daily • Highlight Top Contributors • Promote Group on Social Media



Craig Rosenberg on marketing and sales alignment

Co-Founder and Chief Analyst at TOPO Inc.

If you were starting a content marketing program from scratch, where would you begin?

Content is one of the first things you do when you start a company. My favorite quote on content marketing of all time is from Jon Miller, CEO and Co-Founder at Engagio, previously co-founder at Marketo: "We wrote our first blog post before we wrote our first line of code." But even before that, if you are starting a company from scratch, I think we can all agree that knowing your audience comes first. Knowing who they are, what they care about, and why they buy is step one of any marketing program.

If you're in the B2B space, rather than starting with buyer personas, I recommend starting at the company level to build your ideal customer profile (ICP) - who is the ideal company, THEN who is the ideal buyer. This allows you to get hyper-specific to make sure your message resonates with the right customers. Otherwise you're trying to sell to everyone. After you've created your ideal customer profile, drill down into the types of people within those companies you need to talk to.

In your eyes, what is the biggest difference between content marketing five years ago and content marketing today?

Five years ago the message was, "go create lots of content consistently." Today, I would argue that it's not about creating a cadence if you have to sacrifice quality to achieve it. This doesn't mean we need to move away from bite-sized chunks. It means we were wrong about the quantity game. B2B consumers want deep, rich content that helps them do their job better.

The lens we use to view results is also different. For example, it's okay to produce something really cool and not put a reg form in front of it and measure the number of leads. Actually, it's almost better to let the content run free. It's not just the top brands hosting webcasts, shooting video and publishing eBooks. These are the table stakes. Everyone is. To stand out, create that amazing piece of long-form, quality content and let it run free. Accessibility and convenience can be an advantage. For example, a CIO is NOT going to fill out a reg form—let them get to it. Your brand equity will increase as a result.

”

If you are tasked with hiring a content marketer, what is the #1 attribute you are looking for?

This may sound surprising but I would say: "The ability to find or create a story anywhere, anytime." I like ex-editors because they are always seeking the bigger narrative.



Craig Rosenberg on marketing and sales alignment

Co-Founder and Chief Analyst at TOPO Inc.

Tell us about a brand that has impressed you with its content strategy and execution.

Airbnb. I am not sure whether they would actually call it a content strategy as much as their web strategy but their blog content reminds me of those travel magazines that inspire you to travel. And it is delivered with elegant design. I am also intrigued by how their actual product is the content. An amazing treehouse in Costa Rica is both their product and content. Very intriguing.

You recently said that the key characteristic of high-growth companies is the ability to truly understand business data and process.

The one thing I have noticed about the best-run, high-growth companies has been that they understand how everything in the revenue chain (marketing to close) works to affect the other. They identify smart

milestones across these processes, track them, and then optimise them. Content IS part of this plan. Now remember, the key is "smart milestones"—so what is the content strategy intended to do? For example, it's ok to say that the goal of your blog post is to track the number of visits. It's ok because smart companies have built a machine that helps move people to the next step. For example, Hubspot wants you to read their blog post and then sign up for more content and from there sign up to learn more about the product and so on and so on.

Now let me contradict everything I just said. I am starting to get excited about ungated content that you just let fly on the internet. Whitepapers with no registration form, long form blog content... I am seeing companies "let it" fly, which is un-trackable. But guess what, it's hugely valuable. I have walked into

sales meetings and the prospect has my long form post on their computer. I walk in with instant credibility. Content did that. Un-trackable content did that, and I think it may be worth a ton more than a download.

What commonalities are you seeing among companies that have achieved an effective relationship between marketing and sales?

The key is "effective relationship". Marketing and sales will always have friction and that friction can be good if there is a leader who can channel friction into positive activity. If not, it devolves into a fractured relationship that can't be repaired.

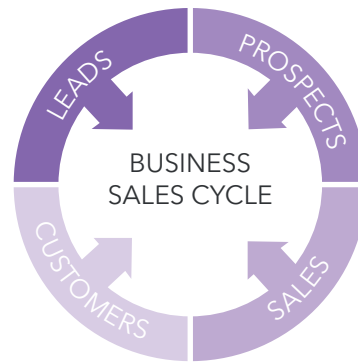
The relationship can be managed by collectively agreeing on milestones and using the milestones to determine the health of the business. For example, instead of saying the leads are "bad", have a definition to quantitatively define a "good" lead. That helps eliminate fighting.



10 Use LinkedIn to Deliver a Meaningful Content Experience



To succeed with content marketing, you have to reach and engage the right audience at every stage of the buying cycle.



Without a doubt, your website should serve as a repository for all the content you publish. But your company's online presence is limited in its reach.

LinkedIn offers a unique platform for sharing content with the world's largest professional network on the Internet: more than **400 million** members in over **200 countries**.

You unleash the real power of publishing on LinkedIn by combining subject matter expertise, Company and Showcase Pages, employee amplification, and Sponsored Content for an always-on thought leadership engine (more on this later).

Let's say your CEO publishes a thought leadership article on LinkedIn. You then publish it on your Company Page or Showcase Page—or both—and ask your employees to share with their networks. You can further extend the reach of the post using targeted Sponsored Content and Direct Sponsored Content.

When you apply proven SEO principles to your LinkedIn Company Page, you can see amazing results:

a well-optimised Company Page can show up on page 1 of the search results.¹³

Build a following with your LinkedIn Company Page

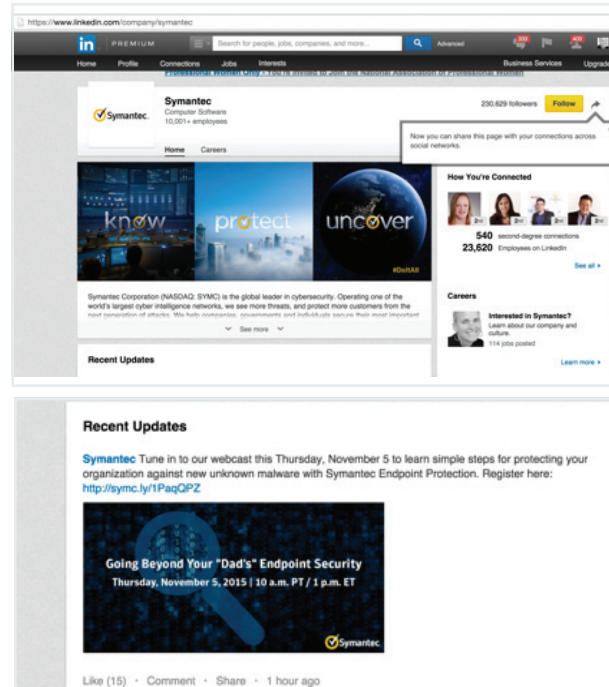
No wonder companies promote their content through more than 7.2 million Company Pages. By sharing relevant information and useful insights, they spark vibrant discussions and engage prospective buyers. Your Company Page is an ideal central repository for your content. Think of it as the Mothership—the source from which all your content goodness emanates. It's often one of the first pages that LinkedIn members visit when looking to learn about a company, making it the perfect place to feature your latest and greatest white papers, eBooks, and how-to content.

Here are a few examples of companies doing this well

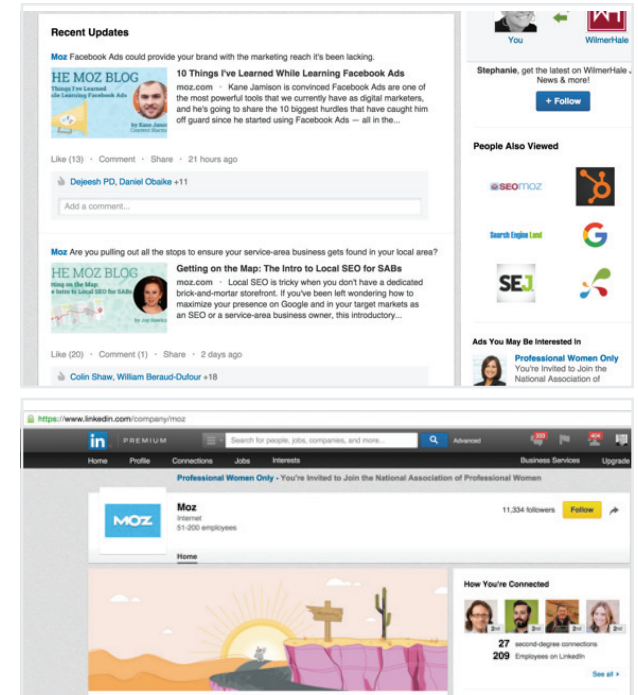
Hootsuite posts helpful content—such as A Guide to Social Video—to answer its audience's burning questions.



Symantec uses its Company Page to build creative stories and inspire conversations with customers.



Moz publishes blog posts designed to teach its prospective buyers.

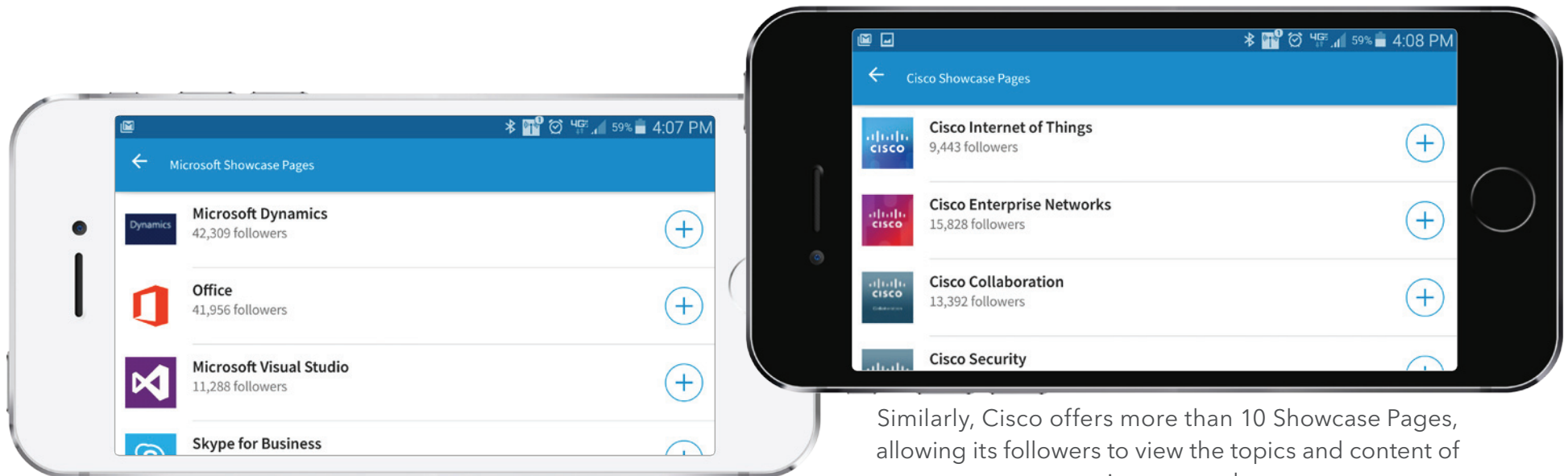


At the same time, you can point people to other relevant content by curating articles from industry news, trends and content from LinkedIn Influencers. By doing so, you show that your perspective isn't trapped within the four walls of your company and that your ultimate goal is to educate anyone interested in the topic. In other words, it's a way to demonstrate that you're a credible source of expert guidance and focused on being part of a bigger conversation and helping others.

Go Deeper With LinkedIn Showcase Pages

Combine the reach of your Company Page with the ability to get more granular using Showcase Pages and you've got a powerful one-two punch.

Showcase Pages allow you to serve content to distinct audiences based on their interest in a specific brand, business unit, or initiative, offering a terrific opportunity to directly engage the right people in the right context. In other words, serve broad content on your Company Page and get more segmented through a Showcase Page.



Microsoft maintains over 20 Showcase Pages, each designed to appeal to—and serve relevant content to—a certain segment of its audience.

Similarly, Cisco offers more than 10 Showcase Pages, allowing its followers to view the topics and content of most interest to them.



Rand Fishkin on SEO

Wizard of Moz at Moz

If you were starting a content marketing program from scratch, where would you begin?

I'd work hard on getting to know my audience, studying my competition, and formulating a strategy around what would resonate before I ever took to the content creation itself. But, from that point, everything would be experimentation and evolution based on what I learn. Every audience and every platform are different. I suspect that, depending on how unique the new audience I was going after was from my current audience (of mostly marketers and tech folks), it might take me some serious time to get good at finding a sweet spot.

In your eyes, what is the biggest difference between content marketing five years ago and content marketing today?

A lot has changed, but I think, more than anything else, the last five years have reduced loyalty and attention to almost unrecognisable levels. No one subscribes to just a few feeds or just a few accounts on social media. No one's messages have a shot at reaching 60 or 70% of their audience—even the audience that's opted in and said "I want to see what you're sharing." All of the social

networks have substantially reduced reach. Email deliverability and open rates continue to shrink. RSS readers are barely alive anymore. Earning your audience's attention five years ago was relatively easy (or at least, much easier) if they'd already connected themselves to you. Today, that advantage is gone—a subscriber doesn't mean what it used to, and I doubt it ever will again.

Every new message you want to send will have to pierce the cacophony of noise that overwhelms us in the digital age.

If you are tasked with hiring a content marketer, what is the #1 attribute you are looking for?

Empathy. Great marketers have immense empathy for their audience. They can put themselves in their shoes, live their lives, feel what they feel, go where they go, and respond how they'd respond. That empathy comes out in content that resonates with your audience.

”

Tell us about a brand that has impressed you with its content strategy and execution.

I was very impressed by Airbnb's foray into **neighborhood guides**. It's brilliant in that it doesn't try to compete head-on with traditional travel content, but does serve Airbnb's unique audience and unique value in a great way.



Rand Fishkin on SEO

Wizard of Moz at Moz

In your opinion, what is the baseline of SEO skills content marketers should have?

I think a content marketer actually needs more SEO skills than marketers in nearly any other position (with the obvious exception of SEO specialists themselves). That means understanding keyword research and how to do keyword targeting, how search engines generally rank pages, some of the technical aspects of SEO around indexation and crawling and how content on the same domain can boost that site's authority and ranking potential, etc. Given that content marketing isn't just about producing content, but about earning traffic to it as well, SEO should be a cornerstone of any content marketer's repertoire.

What current SEO opportunities will content marketers be glad they acted upon two years from now?

1. Better content > more content. This is one that's tough because A) many teams and managers and clients still want a certain number of pieces rather

than aiming for fewer pieces of higher quality and B) quantity is how content marketers get their reps in—it's how we practice our art and get better at it. The reason this matters so much is that engines are starting to learn which domains people prefer to put those domains in front of them more and more. If you fall behind this curve, and a substantive portion of your content doesn't interest, excite, or engage visitors, you could quickly find yourself in a negative spiral of a feedback loop that lowers your aggregate rankings long term.

2. Schema and rich snippets. This one's obvious because it not only drives up click-through rates today, but is likely to have more and more influence and opportunity over time. If you get good at it now, you can expect a string of returns.
3. Link outreach and link-earning content. Many of us keep hearing how link building is dead, and it's something I've said myself. But the need for links is not

dead, and it doesn't even appear that links are getting less correlated with high rankings. So links are still something we need, but classic, old-school, manipulative and low-quality link building is diminished if not gone. Thus, we need to produce content that naturally earns links and content that's likely to earn links once we do the right kinds of outreach. Then we need to do that outreach!

The best part is that if you get good at link earning and link outreach now, you'll rank and earn visibility and those links will compound and earn you more and more rankings over time.



11

Let's Get Visual



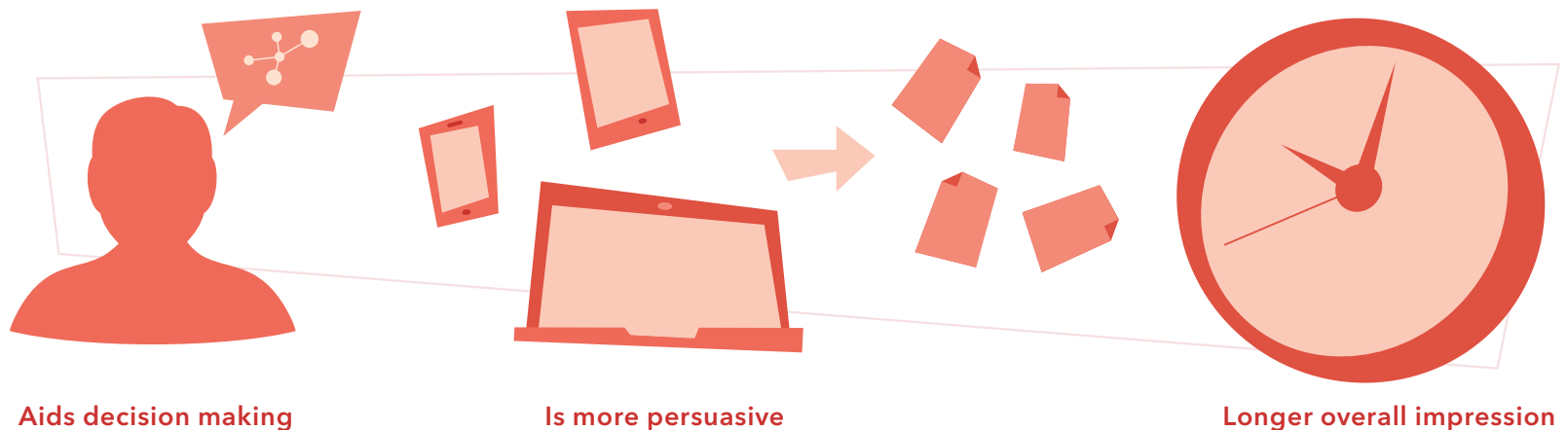
It's not smart to rely solely on written copy to reach your prospects and customers—the visual is the new headline.

Here's why every smart content marketer needs to find the right mix of words and visuals.

- Every human is a visual thinker: **75%** of the neurons in our brains process visual information.
- Articles containing images see **94%** more views than articles without.
- Visuals are processed **60,000 times** faster than text, and graphics create specific emotions that can be tied to the brand.
- **40%** of people will respond better (and faster) to visual information than with plain text.
- Posts with videos attract **3 times** more inbound links than text-only posts.
- **44%** of followers are more likely to engage with brands if they post pictures.
- Posts with images are also liked **twice as often** as text-only updates. In other words, content without a visual element will only reach half of the potential audience—and generate less than half of the potential engagement.

Simply put, if you don't tap into your audience's visual side, then you are missing huge opportunities to connect. Visual language aids decision-making, is more persuasive and leaves a longer impression than simple text.

In fact, it's vital to include a visual element in every content asset and campaign. Doing so differentiates your content from all the copy-heavy content out there. Plus, it makes it much easier for your audience to get a snapshot of your main points—and easier for you to draw them into the bigger conversation.



Best Practices for Imagery

Skip the stock photos

While it's true that visual content can better engage your audience, it's also true that the wrong imagery can alienate the people you are trying to engage. In a world in which people are craving authenticity, give it to them in the form of real-life photos. Just make sure you aren't compromising on quality—a blurry, low-resolution image does not impress.

Choose images wisely

If you're a sophisticated content marketer, you develop and refer to buyer personas as you create your content. Use this understanding of your target audience to select images that will resonate.

Compliment your copy

Use images that relate to your topic. Go a step further and use images that add value by helping readers better understand and digest your written information.

Never go image-less

Alright, it may not always be possible or practical to include an image in every content piece. But it may be worth your while to do so. **A study by Blog Pros** found that the 100 highest-ranking blogs included at least one image for every 350 words.

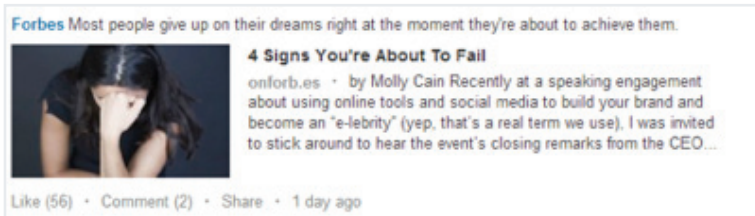
Be mobile-friendly

It goes without saying that a growing number of business professionals consume content on their mobile phones. So make sure your images render well on these devices.

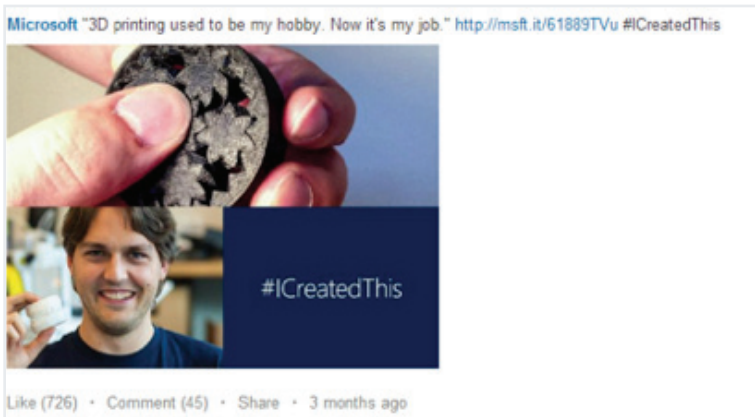


Learn From the Best

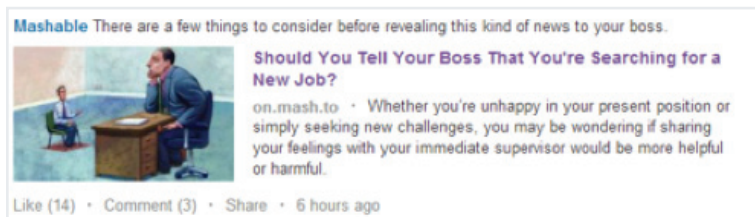
Here are three examples of how top brands are using visuals on LinkedIn.



1. **Forbes** ranks as one of the most influential global brands on LinkedIn, and it's clear why: most posts it publishes contain a relevant visual element. In many cases, these visuals are intended to convey an emotion, like an image of a frustrated employee. In this case, the content convinced more than 50 members to comment and like the post just within LinkedIn.



2. **Microsoft**, another influential global brand on LinkedIn, creates visual elements using content from its employees. The #ICreatedThis campaign highlights the work of Microsoft team members in various departments, and introduces them to the audience through visual content.

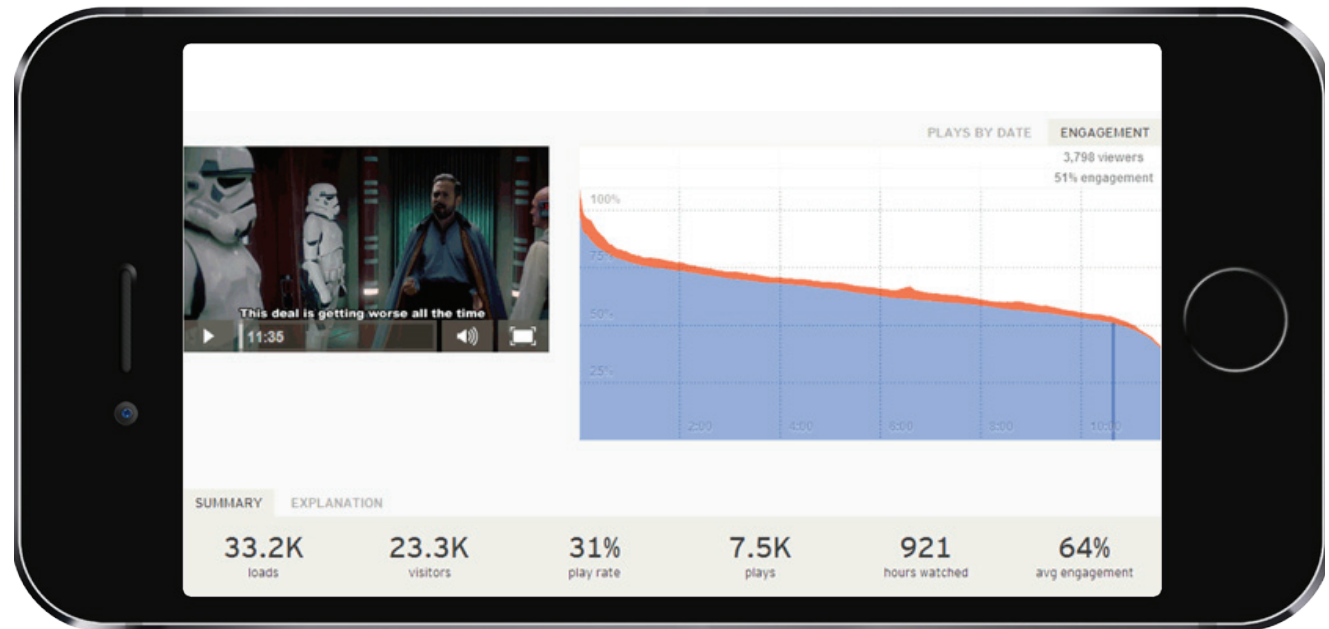


3. **Mashable** is yet another influential global brand on LinkedIn, partly because it uses illustrations and image composites to supplement its written words. Much like the Forbes posts, these visuals convey emotions and ones that might not be immediately understood by just reading the copy.

Don't Underestimate the Power of Video

In chapter 7, we referenced Rand Fishkin of Moz and his Whiteboard Fridays, which are video blog posts featuring Rand on an SEO-related topic.

According to Rand, “the practice of filming 40+ videos each year and the familiarity it created among those who saw it with Moz and with me built something inexplicably powerful. I think video, and Whiteboard Fridays specifically, is a huge part of what created the brand of ‘Rand as thought leader’ (ugh, that’s an awkward sentence for me to write—please don’t take this to mean I have any kind of ego or high opinion of this. Like I said, it was accidentally successful, not some genius strategy).”



Don't Forget Emails and Landing Pages

Remember, the mechanisms you use to deliver and promote your content are content in their own rights. Your emails and landing pages can also generate better results if you dress them up with compelling images. And since your emails and landing pages need to work in tandem, make sure there's synergy between the images you use in each.

A few practical tips:

- Use JPEGs or GIFs in email to ensure the highest likelihood of images displaying properly in any email client.
- Develop your emails so they look good even with the images turned off since some email clients do not automatically display images.
- Test your emails and landing pages to see how they appear on mobile devices.



How to Get Started

Before you start panicking, do not think you now need to create a bunch of visual content from scratch.

Start by simply adding images to your LinkedIn posts (you'll stand to increase comments by 98% in the process).

Next, reimagine your existing content in more visual formats. Can you create an infographic or SlideShare deck from a white paper?

Speaking of SlideShare...consider it a must-have for your content marketing strategy. SlideShare is not just a place to post your slide presentations—it's a social channel where you can establish your brand as a thought leader and authority around topics and keywords.

You can even create a company page on Slideshare and connect it to your

Company Page on LinkedIn. That means any presentations you post on SlideShare will appear as a LinkedIn update. Just remember: Shoot for 10-30 slides and an average of 19 images.

While at Marketo, Jason Miller—Global Content Marketing Leader at LinkedIn Marketing Solutions—and his team converted a white paper into a self-guided visual journey and posted it to SlideShare. While the white paper had generated 18,000 views, the same content packaged differently on SlideShare drove 350,000 views in six months.



Here are other free or low-cost tools worth your while:

Canva: Create a variety of content type while collaborating with others.

PicMonkey: Edit photos directly within a web browser.

Pixlr Editor: Take advantage of simple to advanced features for editing and sharing photos.

Haiku Deck (which integrates with SlideShare):

Easily create presentation decks.

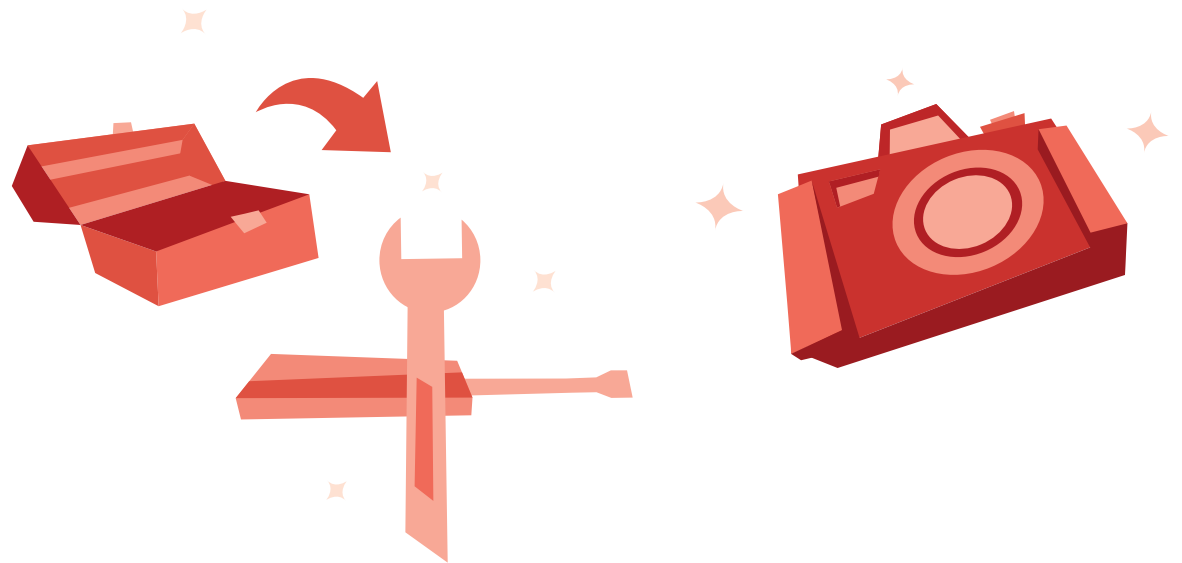
And image databases you may find useful:

Creative Commons

Pixabay

PhotoPin

DotSpin



12

Expand the Reach of Your Content





What could your native advertising look like?

- > A Sponsored Content on LinkedIn
- > A lead form that pops up on a SlideShare slide
- > A video that someone can view before reading an article

If you develop content but no one sees it, what's the point? Don't just post your content and hope prospective buyers stumble upon it—promote your content to make sure they find it.

As a marketer, you know content and promotion go hand in hand. So you'll want to take advantage of a new form of promotion that is quickly gaining steam when it comes to engaging digitally savvy prospects who spend time online: native advertising. The biggest appeal of native advertising may be its unobtrusive nature—it appears in the content stream that your prospects are already consuming. In other words, it's focused on attracting attention by providing content in the context of the user's experience. And

effective native ads amplify your reach: **according to research** from IPG media Lab and Sharethrough, native ads are much more likely to be shared than a banner ad.

In 2014, **over \$4.6 billion was spent** on social media advertising and 35% of that was for native ads. By 2017, **it's predicted** that nearly \$11 billion will be spent on social media advertising—and native ads will account for 58% of that. Simply put, you need to work native advertising into your marketing strategy.

LinkedIn Sponsored Content

Sponsored Content are native to the browsing experience. Because they appear directly in the LinkedIn member's feed—whether on their desktops, tablets, or smartphones—they do not interrupt the stream of content. You can target your Sponsored Content using criteria such as location, company size, industry, job function, and seniority. That means you reach the right people at the right time with the most relevant content. Plus, Sponsored Content appear alongside the high-quality content that members are already consuming—including news analysis and thought leadership—leading to a positive association with your brand.

Within a minute or two of publishing your Sponsored Content, you'll see continually updated impression and engagement metrics. As a result, you can track how well your posts hit the mark and instantly fine-tune your strategy.

Here's a tip for boosting engagement: sponsor two to four updates at any time to maximise your reach to your target audience, and run each campaign at least three weeks. Then proactively optimise or retire the updates that aren't delivering the results you hoped to achieve. And give serious consideration to your calls to action (CTAs). Clear CTAs—ones that tell people exactly what they'll get and what they'll learn when they click—will drive more clicks and conversions to gated content.



LinkedIn Sponsored Content Are a Powerful Way to:

Raise awareness and shape perception. Send Sponsored Content to your target audience to rapidly increase awareness and shape the perception of your brand, products, and services.

Drive quality leads. Generate quality leads by sharing insights that professionals seek. Watch that content spread via the peer sharing that occurs naturally on LinkedIn.

Build relationships with the world's professionals. Publish your content with Sponsored Content to create value and establish trust that sparks ongoing conversations and deeper customer relationships.



LinkedIn Direct Sponsored Content: Test, Personalise and Control

While it's smart to develop content with buyer personas in mind, it's even smarter to test the response to your content to figure out which assets to prioritise and which to relegate to the back burner. On LinkedIn, you can use Direct Sponsored Content to personalise and test content in the newsfeed without first creating posts on your LinkedIn Company Page. In fact, because content doesn't have to start on the Company Page, different

business units can try content specific for their audience with the Company Page administrator's approval. And because you can send personalised messages to specific audiences, you can test and retest a variety of content in real time until you get it right. In other words, you can conduct A/B tests across audience segments and optimise content for specific audiences.



We did just that when promoting The Sophisticated Marketer's Guide to LinkedIn. As you can see in the images below, we aimed different Direct Sponsored Content at different parts of our target audience. And because we tailored the messages to resonate with each distinct audience, we saw great results.

Website management platform **Pantheon** lowered lead acquisition costs and increased conversion rates using Direct Sponsored Content. The company wanted to reach Drupal and WordPress developers with decision-making authority, and was able to narrow down to that audience using the advanced filtering capabilities of LinkedIn. It then ran a triple campaign featuring three streams of Direct Sponsored Content: one for Drupal developers, one for WordPress developers, and one for agencies.

Test and optimise your reach to the right audience with the right message

Xerox Look Mom, no hand! In 7 years, your car may be driving you to work. <http://xerox.biz/1q6AZ0c>

5 Ways That Self-Driving Cars Will Change Everything – Yes, Every...

xerox.biz - "The concept of "distracted driving" will likely disappear when there is no reason to pay attention to where you are going until the vehicle notifies you that "DING, you have arrived at your destination."

Xerox Self-driving cars will change everything. Yes, everything. <http://xerox.biz/1q6AZ0c>

5 Ways That Self-Driving Cars Will Change Everything – Yes, Every...

xerox.biz - Self-driving cars will change our roles, our jobs, and our markets.

66% higher CTR

Personalise your message and offers to your target audience to boost your performance

On [Entrepreneur](http://entrepreneur.com), what is the biggest misconception you've heard about starting your own business? <http://for.us/1nkdjN>

9 Misconceptions About Starting Your Own Business

Zuora Hey San Francisco, is your company driving? <http://bit.ly/1p0C2k>

9 Keys to Building a Successful Subscription Business

bit.ly - 51% of businesses say they're shifting the way they price and deliver their products or services to customers. The shift to a

Ohio University Online [Healthcare Individual] Take the next step toward Online MHA with Ohio University. Ranked in the top 2% of American Public Universities. Learn more at: <http://ohio.edu/1AAGDZ>

Online Master of Health Administration

healthcareindividuals - The Ohio University MHA program offers you the opportunity to combine your health care knowledge with sound business practices, opening up the possibility of new avenues in health care administration for you. 100% online with no residency required.

Set up a test of different updates to reach different audiences.

Example: B2B Marketing company XYZ has recently launched a new piece of research and is publishing updates to LinkedIn to drive marketers to download it.

Big Rock Content

Sponsored Content 1: Targeted to CMOs

These insights can help you drive transformational change to your business. [\[link to white paper landing page with tracking tag 1\]](#)

Sponsored Content 2: Targeted to Marketing Directors

Need to demonstrate the ROI of your marketing efforts? These insights can help. [\[link to white paper landing page with tracking tag 2\]](#)

Sponsored Content 3: Targeted to Social Media Managers

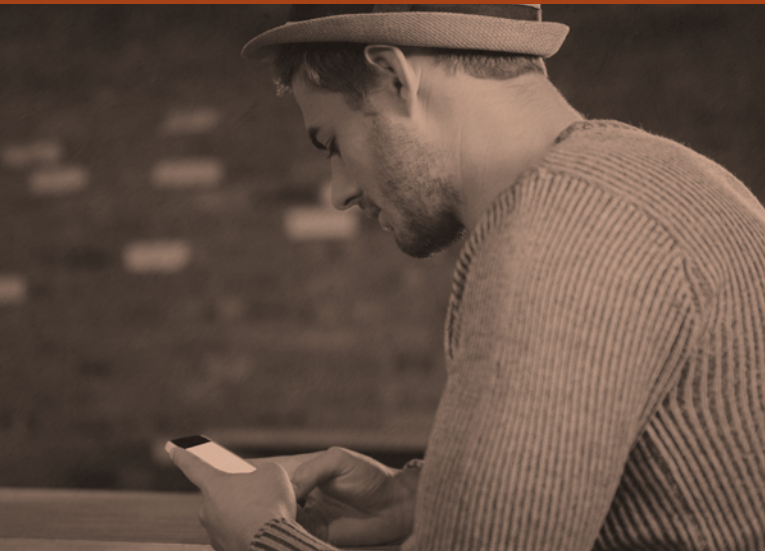
Social media managers: Get the insights you need to drive the engagement you want. [\[link to white paper landing page with tracking tag 3\]](#)

In addition to keeping the cost-per-new-name low, Pantheon enjoyed higher-than-average click-through rates, with few wasted impressions. "Across the board, we've seen a higher click-through rate from LinkedIn, and a higher conversion rate from our landing pages. The right people are seeing, clicking on, and converting from our ads."

—Emily Winslow, Pantheon's Online Marketing Manager.

13

Activate Employees for Content Sharing and Amplification



If the goal is to make sure your content goes far and wide, then it's common sense to tap into your employees.

By encouraging your employees to share your content, you can significantly increase content reach. And if your sales reps are connected to the right decision makers, you'll get more of your content into more of the right hands.

At the same time, harness your employees' subject matter expertise to further establish thought leadership. A smart approach is to identify a handful of subject matter experts who commit to posting long-form content 1-3x per month. You can augment this with third-party content you curate. All employees—not just those who author the content—should share these internally authored posts with their wider networks. By coordinating your social media and content marketing strategy across business lines, you can support your organisation's overall narrative—i.e., the conversation you want to own—with employee contributions as the foundation.

To make all this as easy as possible, you can use **Elevate**, a LinkedIn product that helps your employees be social and helps you measure the impact on hiring, marketing, and sales. With Elevate, you can keep your employees supplied with a steady stream of quality content to share across LinkedIn and Twitter. And you'll see how their sharing activity directly impacts your business, including traffic to your site, leads to your sales team, followers to your Company Page, and new hires.



Ready to harness the power of your employees? Here's an easy formula for making the most of your in-house expertise.

1

Select Content Coordinator

Help curate and revise content that will support your narrative while coordinating social media strategies across business lines.

Example: Social media manager, Third-party content partner

2

Identify 5+ Authors

Empower content-creating thought leaders at your organisation to drive a relevant conversation with your core audience. Use these voices to elevate their own reputation as well as that of the organisation.

Example: Sr. Director of Product Marketing, CIO

3

Publish Posts and Cross-Promote

Publish 1-3x/month. Publish more frequently to build an audience more quickly.

Cross-promote posts through both author and company social channels to ensure relevancy and maximise reach

4

Employee Sharing and Amplification

Encourage re-sharing among employees to curate message across their networks.

Leverage LinkedIn Sponsored Content to amplify brand among target audience

5

Feedback and Iterate

Use instant feedback from author's profile (Shares, Likes, and Comments) and Company Page analytics to track performance.

Use these insights to iterate your approach and understand what content resonates best with your audience

Guide Your Employees Toward Editorial Excellence

Give your employees a few basic principles to employ and their content will yield better results:

Use images wisely

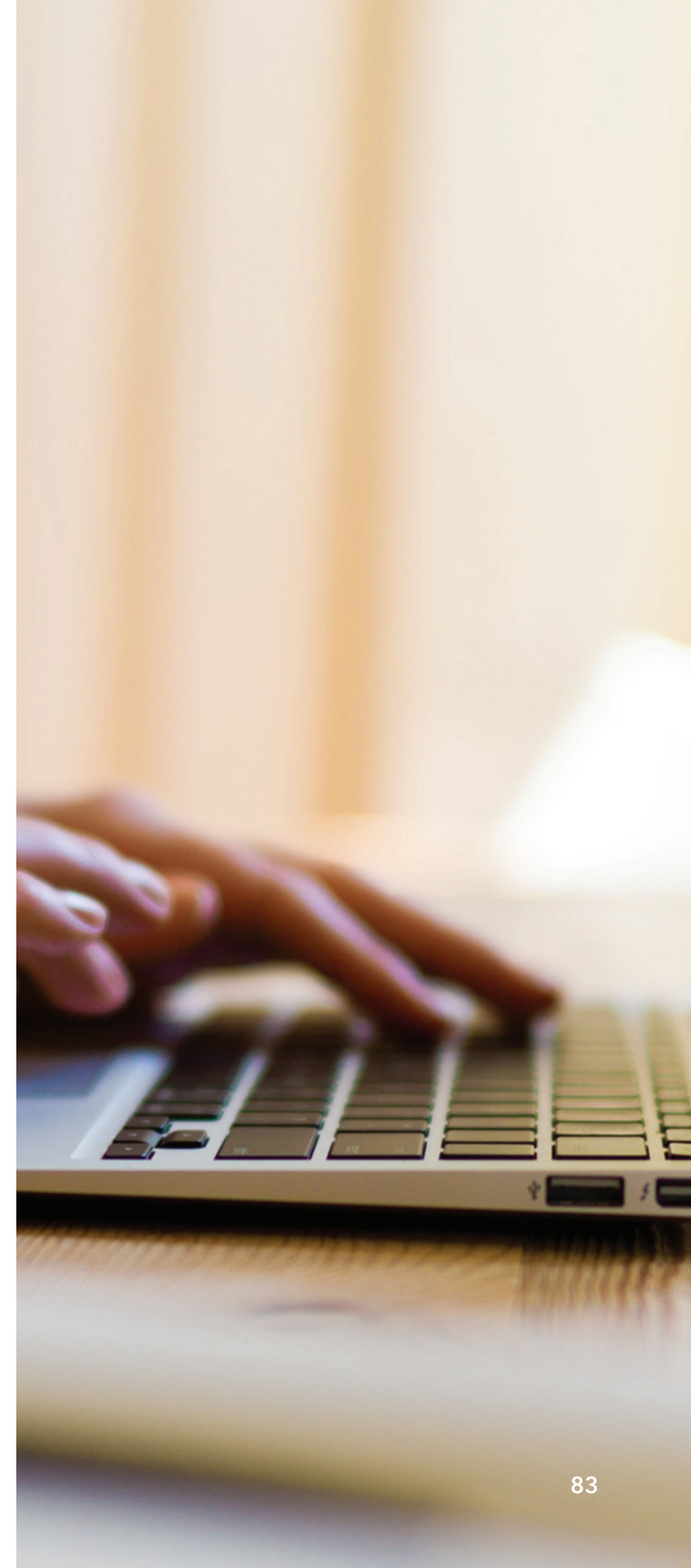
People are more likely to click on posts containing images; a good rule of thumb is to place a strong image at the top of the post. **Here's how to find rights-approved images.**

Reel them in with your headline

While compelling headlines are a must, choose clarity over cleverness: remember, the post has to deliver on the promise of the headline. **Here's good guidance on picking headlines.**

Be authentic. To cultivate trust with readers, be authentic by:

.....





14 Tap Into Influencers for Content Amplification

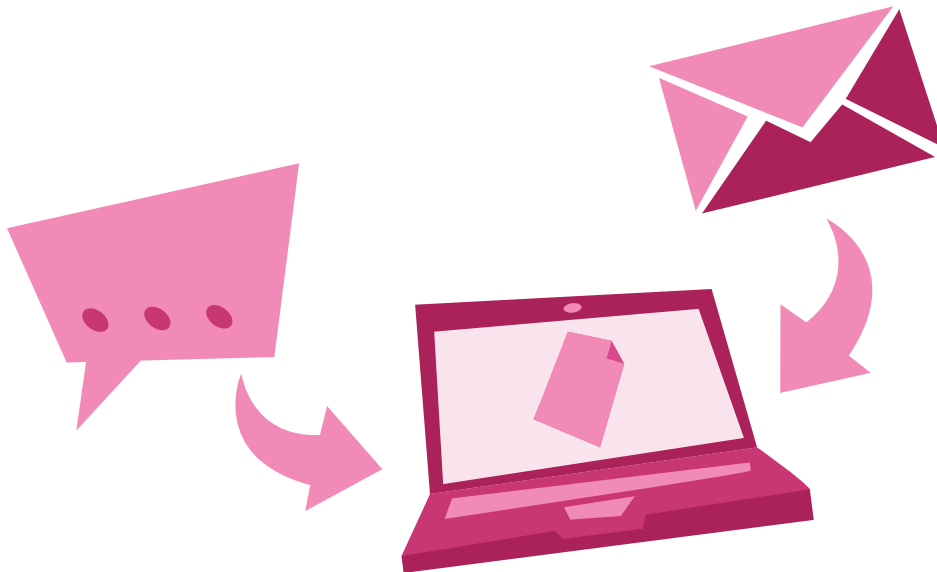


If you subscribe to the content marketer's philosophy that you need to flip your view from outside-in to inside-out...

...then you'll recognise the importance of including influencers in your content marketing strategy.

Aligning with recognised experts boosts your organisation's credibility and helps build your presence on a much larger scale more quickly than you could do on your own. Put another way, including their wisdom in your content adds third-party validation to your content and gets you noticed by these gurus. Better yet, if these

thought leaders like the content you've produced and feel it will resonate with their audiences, they'll share it with their extended networks. In other words, they'll amplify the reach of your content.



How to Identify the Right Influencers

Identify relevant thought leaders by searching **Buzzsumo** on the top influencers in your space or by topic. Click on the Influencers tab and then enter a search term. You can filter by their roles: bloggers, influencers, companies, journalists, and regular people (yes, that is really a category). You can also see what content is performing well, most shared content and what is currently trending. You can even see an analysis of content (such as average shares by social networks and content length), and a list of top authors.

That's not all. You can also **follow an exclusive group of Influencers on LinkedIn**. From C-level executives and entrepreneurs to world leaders and philanthropists, these Influencers contribute unique business insights and spark thought-provoking discussions on a range of issues.

Displayed via Pulse, the LinkedIn Influencers program is a source of truly original content. But more importantly,

it's meant to inspire, inform and make you a better marketer. And you can directly engage with any of these Influencers, either by "Liking" a post or jumping into a conversation about a post. In addition to joining in rich conversations, you will see which Influencers and topics are driving the most interest—perhaps sparking an idea of your own for a post or content asset, or triggering the decision to curate an Influencer's content.



Cultivate a Connection

If you don't have an existing relationship with a recognised expert, start building one by engaging with them. You can do so by sharing their content and commenting on their blog posts. This is how you tap into the power of reciprocity as Robert C. Cialdini established in his touchstone classic—**Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion**—humans feel compelled to give back once they've been on the receiving end.

Invite Them to Participate

When it comes time to develop your content asset, you can either quote from publicly available resources you find online or solicit influencers to participate. Perhaps the first time around, you insert existing quotes or stats in your content and email the expert with the final publication and a note that you featured them in your content. And make it easy for these influencers to share your content—suggest a possible message they can send, highlights from the asset, and even Tweets.

If you or someone in your organisation is connected to recognised thought leaders, reach out and invite them to contribute to your latest content project. Explain the topic, why you think their participation is important, when you plan to publish and how you're hoping they'll pitch in.

Remember: a bit of ego stroking never hurts so be sure to emphasise what you respect about this expert and why you believe your audience will care to hear his or her perspective. If they agree to participate, send 3-5 questions for them to answer. If you are soliciting input from more than one thought leader, keep a few of the interview questions consistent and then throw in one or two that zero in on each influencer's area of expertise. You'll end up with more than one perspective to include in your content, and can easily publish a series of blog posts featuring the thoughts of each contributor.





15

Prove the Value of Your Content Marketing



Once your content marketing engine is humming along, you need to measure the impact.

At the start of this eBook, we emphasised the importance of defining your content marketing goals so you can select the most relevant and fitting metrics to track.

Is your goal to raise brand awareness? Track new page followers. Are you trying to establish thought leadership and engagement? Measure the number of post likes, comments and shares.

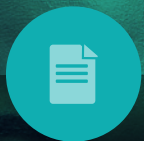
Do you need to generate demand? Pay attention to CTA click-throughs, inquiries and leads.

Remember: it may be easier to measure lower funnel results, but you need the upper funnel to drive tomorrow’s buyers into the lower funnel.

Full Funnel Goals and Tracking Metrics



Goal Reach your audience at scale to build awareness and a positive impression of your brand	Track <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Awareness• Branded search• Brand recall and Lift• Website and referral traffic lift• Page views, pages per visit, and time spent on site lift	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Subscriber/opt-in lift• Engagement (open rate, shares, likes, comments)• Bounce rate decline• Unique visitors lift• Inbound links lift
Goal Nurture prospects until they’re ready to make a purchase	Track <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leads (organic vs. paid)• MQLs/Sales Accepted/ Opportunities (SAO)• Sales Qualified Leads (SQL)• Costs per lead• Qualified lead velocity rate (i.e., growth in qualified leads)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Form fills• Revenue• Returning Visitors• Close rate• Retention rate and/or customer lifetime value and/or upsell/cross-sell



3 Metrics for Sponsored Content Success

**Here are three key metrics
to measure the impact of
LinkedIn Sponsored Content:**

1. Content engagement
2. Leads
3. Cost per lead

Assuming you have defined your goals and relevant metrics, you need to take advantage of the tools that can help you track and measure the results. This helps prove the value to the boss and makes it easier to secure budget going forward. It also helps you pinpoint what is—and is not—working so you can produce more of the former and less of the latter.

You can make use of various paid and free tools to track and gauge the impact of your content both offline and online. When it comes to content you distribute via the LinkedIn platform, we provide a few ways to gain insight into its performance:

Profile Analytics

Track Comments, Shares, and Likes to see who's engaging with your content

How you rank

Track how trafficked your profile is among Connections, Colleagues, and Comparable Members

Audience

See what types of professionals are following you

Content Marketing Score

Gauge your share of voice in the marketplace



See How Your Content Ranks

The most effective content marketers reach their audience in multiple ways across LinkedIn via Groups, company updates, employee posts, Sponsored Content, and influencer posts.

Fortunately, the Content Marketing Score from LinkedIn ties all of this outreach together so you get an integrated view of how your efforts are paying off.

Think of the Content Marketing Score as a gauge that helps your company, product and brand groups understand the impact of their content marketing efforts on LinkedIn. The Content Marketing Score provides this insight by:

- Highlighting the audience(s) consuming your content on LinkedIn
- Quantifying your company's content presence and engagement on LinkedIn

In other words, it tells you if members within your target audience are engaging with your content. And it can show you how you compare to your competitors. You can even see a breakdown of how you're performing across the different areas of LinkedIn—whether by Groups, updates, or posts.





Turn Insights Into Action

While all that information is valuable, it's useless unless you act on it. And the Content Marketing Score makes that possible by recommending how you can adjust your content strategy to achieve the best results possible. Suggestions may include experimenting with new ways to increase your follower base by utilising LinkedIn Sponsored Content, encouraging employees to publish more posts, or focusing on your content relevance.

Simply put, the Content Marketing Score from LinkedIn:

- Analyses who engages with your content
- Compares you to your peers
- Suggests how to improve your score

To receive your custom Content Marketing Score, please contact your LinkedIn account executive or account manager.





16

Conclusion: Not
More Content But More
Relevant Content



With content fueling every aspect of your marketing, it's clear why content marketing has become such a priority. Succeed with content marketing and you effectively enable an integrated, full-funnel marketing strategy. Your challenge now is to deliver relevant content at every turn. The advice and ideas in this eBook should help you do just that and we've gathered them in this handy checklist for easy consultation at any time.

- ☐ **Document** your goals and determine how you will measure the effectiveness of your content marketing
- ☐ **Identify** your ideal customer and develop buyer personas
- ☐ **Decide** what conversation you want to own and pinpoint the topics to cover
- ☐ **Develop** an editorial calendar and map content throughout the funnel
- ☐ **Think** global from the start as you determine what resources you'll need to create, publish and promote your content
- ☐ **Produce** a Big Rock to fuel your social and demand generation, then carve it up into turkey slices
- ☐ **Publish** LinkedIn Company and Showcase pages
- ☐ **Don't forget** visual content
- ☐ **Amplify** your reach with LinkedIn Sponsored Content, A/B testing, influencers and employees
- ☐ **Measure** your results and tweak your content for maximum impact



17

31 Sophisticated Content Marketing Thought Leaders to Follow



31 Sophisticated Content Marketing Thought Leaders to Follow



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31 Sophisticated Content Marketing Thought Leaders to Follow



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31 Sophisticated Content Marketing Thought Leaders to Follow



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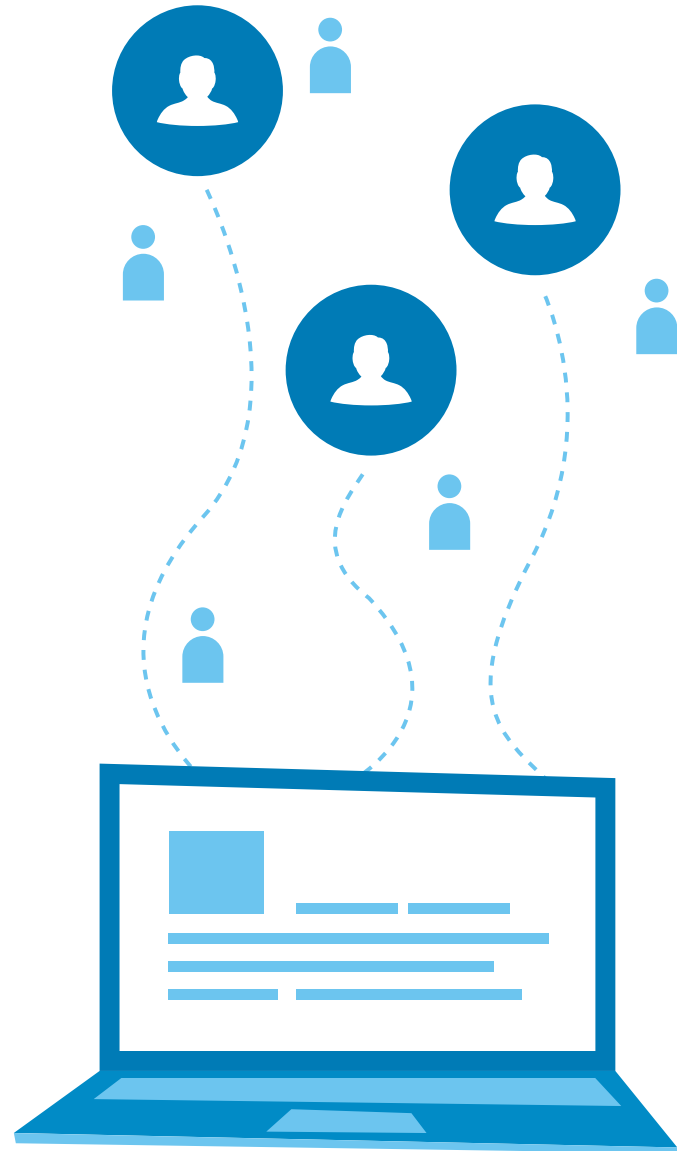
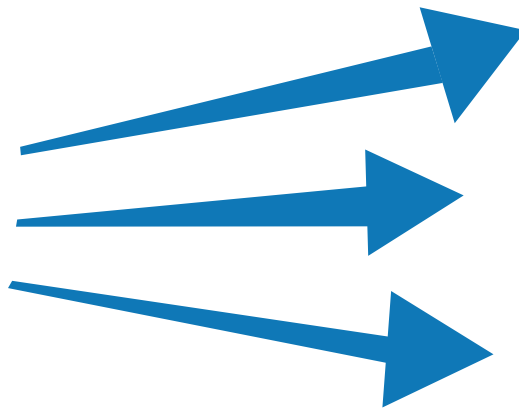
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