

The DNA Behind the **World's Most Successful Content**

Exploring the elements that drive
reach, authority and ROI
for your industry



The Science of Successful Content

There's a lot of received wisdom out there about the characteristics that drive success for content: from subject matter to the style of headlines to the number of words in a post. A lot of this received wisdom assumes that the tips and tricks that work for one piece of content can be rolled out across any other piece of content and have the same effect. We've been encouraged to think that there are rules and principles that always apply to all sectors, all objectives and all industries. However, that's a big assumption to make.

Is there really a single, failsafe formula for content success?

Formulae Seekerum



FIG. 1

SCIENCE

We wanted to find out – and so we worked with Buzzsumo to carry out the most in-depth analysis yet of content marketing effectiveness on social media. We wanted to replace the hearsay, myths and guesswork that can often shape content marketing tactics with robust science. To do this, we used:

Data from

+400,000

Posts on all major social media networks, over the past **12 months**.

Our study looks at the **40,000 most shared posts for 10 different industries**, analysing their success in driving organic reach and engagement, but also the extent to which they establish influence and authority. We categorised and compared the different approaches that these posts took to the elements that define any piece of content: topic, headline, type, format and length. And we analysed the success of these different approaches for each of the 10 industries.

The results of this landmark study are resoundingly clear. There is no single formula for content marketing success. Instead there are different formulas for each industry. Success comes through understanding the relevant formula for your target audience, selecting the right combination of triggers for engagement, authority and sharing.

This report is the most comprehensive strategic resource yet available for finding that formula – and planning and creating effective content. It shows how adjusting the way that you combine the different content elements can make a dramatic contribution to content marketing ROI.

We're proud to have put it together – and we hope you find it as useful a resource as we do.

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What Does Content Success Look Like on Social?

Broadly speaking, the content that's shared on social media can contribute to business and marketing objectives in two ways. It can create immediate impact, interest and excitement that drives short-term reach and engagement; it can also establish enduring authority and influence that will keep drawing relevant people to a business and its content over a longer period of time. In this study, we use the metrics of shares and backlinks to capture these two different forms of content marketing success.

Socialis Avem



FIG. 2 BLUE BIRD

Content shares: a 'vanity metric' that matters

Shares are often given a hard time as a marketing metric. They're in most people's list of 'vanity metrics', which are said to have little value because they don't relate to core business objectives and aren't actionable enough. However, the criticism of shares misses their value as an important indicator of engagement levels – particularly for B2B content marketing.

The fact that your content gets shared doesn't automatically mean that it's delivering ROI – or contributing to your business's bottom line. However, it strongly suggests that it is generating awareness and engagement, and that it's seen as relevant. Looked at from the other way around, it's difficult to see how content can effectively deliver against your

objectives if nobody is seeing fit to share it. Sharing, along with links and paid promotion, is one of the main ways that content is amplified.

Shares are arguably an even more relevant metric for B2B content marketers, because we are often paying to distribute our content to a well-defined target audience, who are relevant to our business objectives. When you're paying to put content in front of a few thousand very relevant people and several hundred of those people share that content with their networks, that's active engagement from a significant portion of your target audience.

Shares also increase the reach of content, of course, and the impact of this shouldn't be

underestimated. At LinkedIn we found that just over 4,000 shares of content by employees could add over 10 million in reach. That's a pretty impressive multiplier.

For these reasons, we make no apologies for using shares as a metric of success in this study. Just relying on shares though, would miss other important elements in a content marketing strategy. That's why our study looks at another metric as well.

Fama Crescit

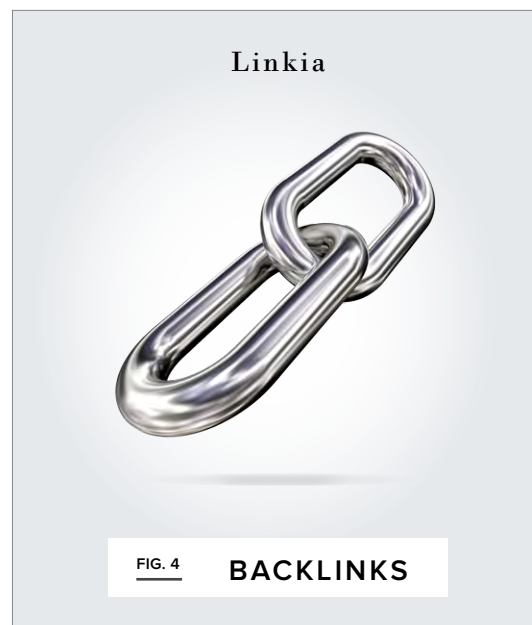


FIG. 3 VANITY

Backlinks: *the key to content authority and SEO*

Backlinks, links to a post from other web pages, are a clear signal of the authority that it's establishing on a subject. They are also a direct contributor to organic search rankings. Backlinks are therefore another important metric for content success.

They provide a clear indication that content is succeeding in establishing thought-leadership and setting the agenda – and they enable content to make a direct contribution to relevant brand awareness and reach through ranking highly for relevant search terms.



Why different content objectives need different content formulas

One of the key findings in our analysis of the most shared blog posts is that **there is no significant correlation between shares and backlinks**. The most shared content that we studied wasn't more likely to be linked to – and content that was shared less often could still make a valuable contribution through being reference-able, and regularly linked to. We also found that the characteristics of content that is shared can be subtly but significantly different from the characteristics of content that is linked to.

This finding aligns with previous studies on shares and backlinks – and it's a very significant finding for content marketers. It proves that they need to think strategically about how a particular piece of content will contribute to their objectives – and then optimise their approach around that contribution. Is your goal driving immediate buzz, excitement and interest (as measured by shares) or establishing longer-term authority (as measured by backlinks)? Content can and does achieve both – but one doesn't necessarily follow from the other. When planning a piece of content it's important to build your formula around which contribution it will make – and when planning a content calendar, it's often important to include both forms of content in the mix.

This finding also shows the importance of tracking both shares and backlinks, if you are to get a more meaningful view of how your content is performing. A blog post with only an average number of shares might well be doing a vital job for your business in propelling you up the search rankings through the links it has acquired.

The Five Key Elements of the Content Formula

Any piece of content has five different elements – **and its approach to these different elements will determine its success**. These are the variables in the content formula. The right approach depends on knowing which variables matter most for your audience – and which approach to them is likely to deliver the type of engagement that you need.

The five elements of the Content Formula are:

Topic

The subject matter of the post, from celebrities to company news, trends, research breakthroughs and future developments.

Headline

With more content than ever competing for audiences' attention, headline styles have a huge impact on engagement and effectiveness.

Format

Posts can leverage different content formats to deliver views and information, and communicate value: from stories to list posts, quizzes, eBook guides, case studies, infographics, video and more.

Type

Different types of post can take alternative approaches to the same core topic. For example, posts about Artificial Intelligence (AI) could range from news stories about applications of AI, research pieces on levels of adoption, opinion pieces about AI's impact or 'how to' posts on how to apply AI in different industries.

Magicae Formulae



FIG. 5

KEYS

Length

Blog posts can vary hugely in length – from in-depth posts of over 2,000 words to short, focused and more snackable pieces of less than 1,000. We analysed the impact of length on engagement and influence, and compared the effectiveness of long-form and shorter content.

In the following chapters, we will explore how each of these elements can impact on content effectiveness for different industries.

How the Content Formula Changes

Our research clearly shows that marketers need a sector-specific approach to their content strategy. This is because the Content Formula can change from industry to industry, in two important respects:

The relative importance of the variables changes

When we analysed the common characteristics of top-performing posts on Marketing, we found that choice of format and the type of content had the most consistent impact on the number of shares. On the other hand, for a Technology audience, there is no obvious correlation between the format of a post and how shared it is. For Technology content, the choice of topic is hugely more influential.

The Top-performing

40,000

Marketing Posts of the Year
Received an Average of

377 Shares with a median of 127¹

However, post formats and types that were focused on practical tips and advice far out-performed this:

TYPE OF POST	NUM. OF SHARES
'How To' posts	1,501
Posts with Tips in the title	1,759
Guides	1,403
Top Ten lists	1,208
Research-focused posts	1,706
Infographics	1,133

¹The Median is the value that separates the top half of a set of data from the bottom half. If you arranged all of the data values in a line, it would be the number in the middle. For large data sets, Median is often a more meaningful indicator of the average value than the more commonly used Mean. This is because it prevents the average being skewed by exceptionally large or small values.

Mutationem Constant



FIG. 6

BUTTERFLY

The Top-performing

40,000Technology Posts of the Year
Received and average of

259 Shares

However, in this case, the average number of shares varied very little between different formats:

TYPE OF POST	NUM. OF SHARES
How To posts	275
Posts with Tips in the title	295
Guides	390
Infographics	184

On the other hand, choice of topic has a huge influence on levels of sharing amongst Technology audiences.

Posts about specific businesses or technologies significantly outperform the average, as do posts on future trends in general:

TYPE OF POST	NUM. OF SHARES
Uber	1,656
Virtual Reality	1,265
Microsoft	626
Future	563
Trends	413

Veritas Specula



FIG. 7

VR

Some formats that resonate with one industry can fall very flat with another

As we have seen, list posts are one of the top performing content formats for Marketing audiences. They also strong performers in the Travel and Financial Services sectors. However, list posts perform below average when it comes to Technology, and they leave Legal and Health audiences cold. A format that attracts some audiences by offering accessible and actionable content leaves other audiences with the impression that content lacks depth, detail and currency.

Where to Find Hot Topics

Content planning starts with the process of choosing a subject to engage and intrigue your audience – and deliver the type of engagement that your marketing strategy needs. A huge proportion of the content planning process involves trying to pin down the right topics – and our research offers some vital clues as to where to look.

Hot topics, by their very nature, change over time. However, it's interesting that particular audiences tend to gravitate consistently towards particular types of subjects. We find, for example, that **Financial Services** content tends to outperform the average when it's linked to strong, recognisable personalities (**Donald Trump but also Elon Musk, Ginni Rometty of IBM, Travis Kalanick of Uber or George Soros**). 'By contrast when we look at marketing content it is articles about tactics rather than individuals than outperform the average. Instead, these tend to focus on channels and tactics, or on the wellbeing of marketers themselves. Marketing does have its celebrities – but those celebrities tend to be platforms rather than people. LinkedIn, Google and Facebook are the topics that heat up engagement levels.

For Technology, analysis of trends and future-facing predictions mix with company announcements as the most shared and most linked-to posts – however, not all companies are equal where hot topics are concerned. Posts with Uber and Microsoft in the title significantly outperform the average on shares (shared an average of 1,656 and 626 times respectively). Technologies of the moment have a similar impact: posts with virtual reality in the headline achieved an average of 1,265 shares, with 460 shares on average for posts about Artificial Intelligence (AI).

In Travel, destinations of the moment have a big presence amongst top-performing posts (London and India appear to be the destination equivalents of share-driving celebrities), but so too do posts promising intriguing stories. In both Healthcare and Higher Education, breakthrough innovations are the most consistently performing hot topics.



These are not definitive lists. It's certainly not the case that every successful Financial Services post must feature a personality, or that delivering content about Uber and AI is the only valid approach to the Technology space. However, it certainly makes sense for marketers planning a content calendar for these sectors to try and find a role in the mix for such content. And when content is relevant to these hot topics, it makes sense to signal this as strongly as possible.

Examples of content topic hotspots:

FINANCIAL SERVICES – STAYING PERSONAL

IBM's First Female CEO on Why Bob Dylan Is Talking to a Computer

Elon Musk and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good \$779 Million Day

Crops Rot While Trump-Led Immigration Backlash Idles Farm Work

MARKETING – CHANNELS, TACTICS AND WELLBEING

8 Old School SEO Practices That Are No Longer Effective

50 Best Social Media Tools From 50 Most Influential Marketers Online

YouTube to stop 30-second unskippable ads

Being tired isn't a badge of honor

TRAVEL – HOT DESTINATIONS AND INTRIGUING STORIES:

Lonely Planet names Colombia 2nd best country to visit in 2017

Destination Of The Month: Armenia - The Land Of Resilience Welcomes You

How a Champagne-Laden Steamship Ended Up in a Kansas Cornfield

A Dearly Departed Istanbul Cat Gets a Commemorative Statue

Miracoulus Machina



FIG. 9

COMPUTER

Veni, Vidi, Vinci



FIG. 10

MEDAL

Liquid risus



FIG. 11

CHAMPAGNE

| Choosing the Right Content Type

Once you have chosen your subject, the next key stage in the Content Formula is choosing an approach that will add value for your audience. Is your industry looking for breaking news? Definitive research? Provocative opinions? Practical guidance? Aligning your treatment of a topic with the needs that motivate your readers is a vital element in content planning.

Those needs are varied and diverse. Different needs come to the fore in

different industries, and for different reasons. This shapes the types of content that are most effective at driving shares – and the types of content that are most effective at building authority through backlinks. Authoritative answers to very specific questions might not always drive high sharing numbers, for example, but they feature prominently amongst the articles that are linked to most often. Here are some examples of the most effective posts across four different sectors:

Marketing

Practical guides and how-to posts have a big role in driving sharing, particularly when they are concerned with SEO or new social media channels and tactics. However, **strong opinion pieces are also likely to drive shares higher.** These might take a provocative approach to different marketing strategies, or address industry issues like the work-life balance or gender equality:

Interestingly, when it comes to driving backlinks, different types of content take on a more prominent role. News stories and future-facing pieces take over somewhat from provocative opinion and how-to content. Here are three examples of posts that gained a high number of backlinks:

- *[Within months, Google to divide its index, giving mobile users better & fresher content](#)*
- *[Google launches new effort to flag upsetting or offensive content in search](#)*
- *[Five Content Marketing Trends to Watch in 2017](#)*

Technology

News and trends-related pieces are most likely to appear among the most-shared posts, and their impact is likely to be increased when they are able to reference credible sources of research.

There's also a noticeable role for posts offering practical advice that is tied to new developments.

When we look at the posts generating the highest number of backlinks, we find a very similar mix of content, but with more focus on authoritative news articles, looking at specific launches and developments:

- *AdultFriendFinder network hack exposes 412 million accounts*
- *Gartner Says Worldwide Sales of Smartphones Grew 7 Percent in the Fourth Quarter of 2016*
- *Microsoft's coming Windows 10 Cloud release may have nothing to do with the cloud*
- *Apple iCloud ransom demands: The facts you need to know*

Higher Education

Higher education content is most likely to drive shares when it reflects the current news agenda or a relevant piece of new research, with strong opinions often presented alongside the facts:

When it comes to the most effective content for driving links, we see a subtle shift away from provocative opinions, with greater emphasis on research and academic analysis:

- *Stanford researchers find students have trouble judging the credibility of information online*
- *Artificial intelligence used to identify skin cancer*
- *Astronomy prof, student predict explosion that will change the night sky*

Health

News of medical breakthroughs and new techniques set the Health sector agenda in terms of sharing.

However, the human stories behind diseases and treatments also have a significant presence amongst the most shared posts:

The content most frequently linked to tends to have a slightly more practical tone – advice on disease prevention or managing pain, for example, as well as patients’ most frequently asked questions:

- *How Cardiac Rehabilitation Reduces Your Risk of Repeat Heart Health Issues*
- *Using Fat to Help Wounds Heal Without Scars*
- *Our Patients’ Top Five Frequently Asked Questions*

What's the Optimum Length for Content?

You've selected your topic and type of content. However, you and your content team will be well aware that there are many different ways to approach it. Should you aim for something deep and definitive, exploring every nook and cranny of the issue? Or would that just be a waste of your time and a test of your audience's patience? Do people really want to invest more than a few minutes in reading what you have to say?

Of all the issues involved in content marketing, nothing divides opinion quite so much as how long the content should be. It's a debate that has swayed this way and that.

A few years ago, the received wisdom was that online copy should be no longer than 650 words – and that anything more would try the patience of an action-oriented, forward-leaning, digital media audience. Our research finds conclusively that this is not the case – in fact, the opposite is true. Both the average number of shares that posts receive and the average number of links to them, increase with the length of the content.

Optimum brevis



FIG. 27

METER

Different sectors, different sweet spots for content length

For Technology posts the sweet spot for content length comes in at between 1,000 and 2,000 words.

Technology Posts length is between

1,000-2,000 words

Get Shared an average of 485 with a median of 180

Technology Posts length is less than

1,000 words

Get Shared an average of 348 with a median of 165

There's a similar story when it comes to the number of links that a post attracts – only this time the benefits keep increasing with content length. Posts of less than 1,000 words are linked to 10 times on average. This jumps to 13 for posts over 1,000 words, and then leaps to 26 for those over 2,000 words.

An even stronger correlation emerges for Marketing. Average shares leap up from 234 (median 55) for posts under 1,000 words to 850 (median 429) for those over 1,000. That's a huge difference – but it's only the start. Posts above 2,000 words get average shares of 1,519 (median 1,072).

Just as with Technology, the same story is repeated when it comes to the authority of posts as indicated through backlinks. Here the averages rise from 5 for posts of less than 1,000 words to 20 for those over 1,000 and 37 for those over 2,000.

Comparison of average shares for posts of different lengths:

Post Length	Technology Average Shares	Technology Median Shares	Marketing Average Shares	Marketing Median Shares
Posts less than 1000 words	348	165 (38,300 articles)	234	55 (36,718 articles)
Posts over 1000 less than 2000 words	485	180 (4,898 articles)	850	429 (6,032 articles)
Posts over 2000 words	485	194 (763 articles)	1519	1072 (1184 articles)

Comparison of average backlinks for posts of different lengths:

Post Length	Technology Average Links	Technology Median Links	Marketing Average Links	Marketing Median Links
Posts less than 1000 words	10	1 (38,300 articles)	5	2 (36,718 articles)
Posts over 1000 less than 2000 words	13	2 (4,898 articles)	20	8 (6,032 articles)
Posts over 2000 words	26	3 (763 articles)	37	22 (1184 articles)

The limits of snackable content

Plenty of content marketers have convinced themselves that, since human beings now have an attention span less than that of goldfish (a complete myth by the way – there’s no scientific evidence for this whatsoever), they have to keep dumbing down content, making it ever-more digestible and snackable.

Our study proves that this is a mistake. In-depth copy has greater authority – and greater influence. It drives significantly higher sharing, which itself indicates higher engagement levels, and it has a hugely positive impact on content’s authority and ranking by search engines.

This doesn’t necessarily mean that content only has value to a marketing strategy when it’s over 1,000 words long. **Of the 80,000 most shared posts from the Marketing and Technology sectors, 80% have fewer than 1,000 words.**

These posts wouldn’t be in our study if they didn’t drive engagement – and their shorter form particularly suits content types such as news and opinion. However, they are not the most influential and authoritative posts in their category. That position is usually occupied by content that is prepared to go deeper.

There is no denying that longer form content is an indispensable part of content marketing strategies. If the objective is to build authority and set the agenda around a particular subject, then marketers need to find a role for it in their editorial calendar.

Our study also suggests that marketers should be cautious about cutting down copy when they have a lot to say. Social media audiences are quite prepared to give their attention and their respect to content that demands more of their time.

Piscolabis



FIG. 28

SNACKS

Brevis Vigilia



FIG. 29

GOLDFISH MYTH

Cuttare



FIG. 30

CUTTING DOWN

Could Branded Content be More Innovative with Formats?

Content on social media can use a wide variety of different formats. However, the evidence suggests that content marketers might be making less use of these formats than they could do.

As part of our study, we compared the most shared posts on different industries with the most shared posts from established internet publishers such as BuzzFeed and PopSugar. One of the clearest differences to emerge was the range of different formats used. Internet publishers' most successful content often includes video, image-led posts and quizzes. These formats are far less widely represented amongst the top-performing posts for B2B content in different industries.

Do different formats suit different objectives?

One reason for this might be that these formats are specifically suited to driving shares – but not necessarily to establishing authority and attracting links. The average number of backlinks for these posts was exceptionally low. During Q2 2016, for example, **50% of the most-shared posts from Internet Publishers attracted only one link or fewer.** The content that did generate links tended to follow more conventional formats in terms of news and opinion posts.

Info-Papyrus



FIG. 31 ANCIENT INFOGRAPHIC

How list posts and infographics perform across sectors

Besides news stories and guides, the formats that sector-specific content is most likely to leverage are **list posts and infographics**. These are very effective at driving shares in some sectors – but seem to be counter-productive for other audiences.

List posts and Infographics are amongst the top performers for marketing-related content, where they are a natural fit with the 'how-to' and practical guide content types that drive most shares. List posts also perform strongly for travel content, where they are seen as reference-able, broad reaching particularly effective at driving backlinks.

On the other hand, list posts are a rarity amongst the most-shared posts for Health and Legal Services, where the format seems to detract from content's credibility and authority.

In Technology, lists of 10 only performed in line with the average, whereas lists of five actually performed below average. This is a pattern reflected across other sectors as well: in both Marketing and Higher Education, lists of 10 significantly outperformed lists of five.

The Essential Elements of a Great Headline: a Data-Driven View

David Ogilvy famously wrote that when an advertiser had created the headline for their campaign, “*you had spent 80 cents out of your dollar.*” For content marketers, headlines are arguably an even more significant investment. Competing for attention in rapidly moving social media feeds requires headlines that can engage instantly on both a conscious and more instinctive level. They must stand out while also pushing familiar buttons; communicate the purpose and value of an article clearly, yet do so in a way that feels fresh and original.

Many of the most effective headlines achieve this through the use of particularly resonant power phrases that audiences respond to almost automatically. Combining these phrases with clear signals of the topic and type of content on offer can drive strong engagement and sharing.

To find the headline styles that help to drive the strongest engagement amongst B2B audiences, we examined the **three-word phrases that drove the most shares on LinkedIn over the past 10 months**:

Phrase	Average Shares	Number of articles in sample
<i>Is the new</i>	1936	120
<i>The year of</i>	1338	65
<i>In the workplace</i>	1234	166
<i>The future of</i>	1092	721
<i>Why you should</i>	1076	226
<i>How to</i>	1008	3822
<i>The power of</i>	977	352
<i>5 ways to</i>	821	172
<i>Can learn from</i>	811	166

We also looked for specific, **individual power words** that correlate with the highest number of shares for B2B content:

Word	Average Shares	Number of articles in sample
<i>Leader</i>	1383	2678
<i>Success</i>	1192	1921
<i>Secret</i>	1146	2250
<i>10</i>	1137	2250
<i>Trends</i>	846	714
<i>Future</i>	819	1813

This shows how the most effective B2B headlines derive their power from coded phrases that signal to the reader what type of content experience they can expect. The most popular headline phrases align with some of the most popular B2B content types. We can see a clear emphasis on practical advice, trends and predictions for the future, as well as the importance of list posts to several sectors. It's significant that several of these phrases are also designed to show that a post is authoritative and worth referencing or sharing. ‘*Can learn from*’, ‘*The power of*’ and ‘*Why you should*’ all fall into this category.

Individual power words reinforce these phrases through an additional promise of value. We have seen how lists of 10 increase a sense of authority and reference-ability in several sectors. Words like *'Leader'* and *'Success'* appeal on an aspirational level, while *'Secret'* indicates the power of exclusivity in driving intrigue and interest.

There are also key phrases that recur consistently amongst widely shared posts for specific sectors. *'Need to know'* is a particularly powerful phrase for Health sector audiences, while *'virtual reality'*, *'artificial intelligence'*, *'Uber'* and *'Microsoft'* occur frequently amongst the most influential Technology posts.

Despite the fact that headlines engage on an emotive and essentially human level, there seems to be a clear distinction between the phrases that drive sharing amongst B2B audiences and B2C audiences.

The complete absence of overlap between these two lists emphasises the importance of tailoring content strategies to B2B audiences, and the risk of content marketers simply adopting popular, viral headline styles. B2B headlines use different and more specific emotive triggers – and are required to send much stronger signals of the type of value they will offer.

Nevertheless, there may well be some value in B2B content marketers experimenting with headline styles that are proven to work in the B2C space – provided they can adapt them to push the right psychological buttons. Phrases such as *'did you know'* and *'X reasons the'* could certainly be adapted to work with the themes and phrases that resonate with B2B audiences. Doing so could provide an opportunity to freshen up headlines and drive greater standout, while still sending the coded signals that B2B audiences need to receive.

Alongside our LinkedIn study, we also analysed 100 million headlines across all social networks, to gain a sense of the **three-word phrases most effective at driving sharing for B2C content:**

THRE-WORD PHRASES	NUM. OF SHARES
will make you	8,961
this is why	4,099
can we guess	3,199
only X in	2,398
the reason is	1,610
are freaking out	1,550
X stunning photos	1,425
tears of joy	1,388
is what happens	1,337
make you cry	1,287
give you goosebumps	1,278
talking about it	1,265
is too cute	1,261
shocked to see	1,257
melt your heart	1,233
X things only	1,227
can't stop laughing	1,142
top X songs	1,092
twitter reacts to	1,062
what happend next	1,060

Tailoratis



FIG. 32 TAILORED CONTENT

Aligning Content Strategy and Amplification Strategy

The final element involved in the science of successful content is the choice of network on which to post and promote that content. We analysed the data from all social networks that provide specific data on the level of sharing, in order to identify the most effective platforms for amplifying different forms of content.

Median shares by network (LinkedIn, Twitter and Pinterest)

Network	LinkedIn	Twitter	Pinterest	Since Facebook does not provide specific sharing data, we were unable to include the network in this comparison, even though Facebook engagement figures are included in our overall data.
Marketing	256	307	2	
Technology	94	19	0	
Health	3	4	0	
Higher Ed	3	10	0	
Travel	0	5	0	
Fin Services	95	88	0	
Ed Mgt	8	7	0	
Legal Services	83	4	0	
Internet Publishers	0	67	2	

This ranking emphasises the importance of LinkedIn in amplifying B2B content, but also shows the value of an integrated social media strategy that enables content sharing across the broadest possible range of networks. Pinterest's role is naturally limited by the fact that so much of the most shared B2B content is written rather than visual. However, as B2B content marketers experiment with a greater range of formats, there is potential value to be found in distribution on this platform as well.

Content marketers get maximum value from the social networks that they use when they tailor the approach of their content to suit the strengths of that network. The fact that LinkedIn supports longer form copy makes it a particularly powerful platform for building content authority, and this is reflected in the types of posts that are often shared.

In Health, for example, LinkedIn content was more likely to focus on research, future trends and company news. In Financial Services, it tended to focus on business news than on political views. In Technology, LinkedIn content had a clear focus around news, trends and practical advice on IT security.

Translating Content Science into a Content Action Plan

The findings in this report provide a clear framework for identifying the Content Formula that can bring success for different industries and different audiences. Here's your 7-step plan for developing and applying that formula:

Draw up a target list of topics, applying your expertise to the relevant hot-button subjects for your industry

1

The types of topics that we have identified for different industries provide a fantastic starting point for planning your content calendar. Consider how your expertise can best add value to these and make sure that you include regular posts touching on them.

Ensure your content mix is delivering against all of your objectives

2

Distinguish between content that will drive shares and content that will build on-going authority through backlinks. Aim to incorporate both types into your content plan.

Approach your target list of topics through a range of different content types

3

Use this report to help identify the types of content that your industry values most, and aim to approach topics from each of these different angles. This will help to plan a varied editorial calendar that delivers against different objectives.

Match formats to your audience needs – and be ready to experiment

4

Check our findings to discover if there are formats your audience particularly responds to – or which they might dismiss as trivial. Incorporate this into your planning, but have a mind for experimentation too. When it comes to driving shares, the example of Internet Publishers shows that content marketers could do more with formats.



Mix up your length

5

Don't be afraid to deliver long-form content – when you have something original and valuable to say, longer copy provides a clear signal of relevance, authority and value. Shorter posts can still play a role as news and opinion pieces – but don't be afraid to go long when the occasion demands.

Grasp the headline opportunity

6

The headline is your opportunity to sell what your content has to offer clearly and compellingly. Consider using the power phrases and words that most consistently drive shares – and aim to use aspirational terms that appeal on an emotive level. Above all though, make sure that your headline reflects the purpose of your piece. Pieces that set out to answer specific questions often earn greater authority. If you are aiming to drive shares through a provocative opinion, then create a provocative headline to match. And if you are addressing a hot topic for your industry, make sure you feature that topic prominently.

Imperiosus Orator



FIG. 34

AMPLIFIER

Amplify your content on the most relevant social platforms

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The data shows the importance of LinkedIn to driving sharing for B2B content. Play to its strengths with content focused on news, trends and research. Don't be afraid to use LinkedIn to amplify longer-form content that can establish in-depth expertise and authority.

In this Report, we've included several key findings from our exploration of the **Content Formula for different industries**. We'll also be producing tailored guides to content success for each of these industries, which feature in-depth analysis of the most effective topics and types of content for driving sharing and backlinks. Watch out for our full Content Formula series:

The Content Formula for Marketing Services

The Content Formula for Technology

The Content Formula for Financial Services

The Content Formula for Healthcare

The Content Formula for Higher Education

The Content Formula for Education Management

The Content Formula for Legal Services

The Content Formula for Travel



Steve Rayson,
Director at BuzzSumo

Steve leads the content research projects at BuzzSumo. He regularly talks and writes about content engagement using insights from BuzzSumo's data. His research has included an analysis of 1 billion Facebook posts, 100 million headlines and the correlation between links and shares. His current interest is the importance of context and how content that resonates in different industries. Steve is a serial entrepreneur and one of the company's owners.

Buzzsumo

BuzzSumo helps content marketers create better content through research, amplification and monitoring.

1. Content research to understand what content resonates with an audience including:
 - the most shared content
 - trending content today
 - what is working on Facebook
 - competitor top content
 - the content formats gaining most traction.
2. Content amplification including
 - who is sharing and linking to content
 - who are the top influencers and authors for any topic
 - tracking the people that share your content and/or competitors content
3. Sophisticated monitoring including alerts (real time and daily digests) when:
 - new content on a topic is published
 - when your brand is mentioned
 - when competitors publish new content
 - when someone links to your site or competitor sites.



Jason Miller,
*Global Content Marketing
Leader at LinkedIn*

Jason Miller is the global content marketing leader at LinkedIn, a prolific keynote speaker, professor of marketing strategy at the University of California, Berkeley, and the best-selling author of *Welcome to the Funnel: Proven Tactics to Turn Your Social Media and Content Marketing up to 11*. His unique approach to content and social media marketing is born of his 10 years in the music business. His ideas and strategies are both inspiring and proven to work on the frontline, helping overcome some of the biggest challenges that marketers face today.

When he's not plotting the latest SEO trends, innovating new content marketing formats, or tracking the ROI of social, Jason fuels his rock n roll soul as an award-winning concert photographer. His approach to B2B marketing is always passionate, creative, no-nonsense and innovative; helping brands tell their story like they're ready to change the world.

LinkedIn

Today, LinkedIn members number more than 500 million of the 600 million professionals on the planet, representing the largest group anywhere of influential, affluent, and educated people.

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