



# LEAD FLOW THAT HELPS YOU GROW



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## INTRODUCTION

Content marketing and the practice of developing a content marketing strategy have become a focus for marketers around the globe, but the pressure to produce quality, business-driving content is most keenly felt by marketers in the B2B space, where content has a direct and immediate impact on lead flow. Content—from white papers to social media posts and mentions—remains the power behind strategies and campaigns to reach, embrace, excite and educate buyers and specifiers. This has ramped up production to record highs as the Content Marketing Institute revealed that 70 percent of B2B marketers say they are creating more content than they did one year ago.<sup>1</sup>

Budgets are also on the rise. According to the Custom Content Council, B2B marketers invest an estimated \$16.6 billion annually on digital content publishing for the specific purpose of acquiring business leads and influencing customers and prospects. The Content Marketing Institute revealed that B2B marketers spend an average of 28 percent of their total marketing budgets on content marketing, and 55 percent of marketers anticipated this figure would rise through the course of the year. As for why content is created, 84 percent say their organizational goal for content marketing is brand awareness, with 83 percent pointing to lead generation, 69 percent looking to impact customer retention, and 52 percent hoping to influence upselling and cross-selling opportunities.

There is also a colder, less optimistic side to the content marketing journey—one of waste, lost opportunity and squandered resources. It has been estimated that some 50–60 percent of B2B content that has been created is actually never used.<sup>2</sup> Not only is the content never used, but some studies suggest that even if the content is leveraged, the leads being generated don't amount to any new net business, as one report cites that 79 percent of marketing leads never convert into sales.<sup>3</sup> This waste translates into big budget losses: According to Marketo, lost sales productivity and wasted marketing budget at the hands of ignored, poor-quality or poorly managed leads cost companies at least \$1 trillion each year.

B2B consumers have a clear view of what content influences their buying journey. In a report published by the CMO Council entitled “The Content Connection to Vendor Selection,” buyers pointed to three key factors that drive their need to seek insight and decision-making support from content:

- To learn about new market developments and industry best practices (62 percent)
- To discover new solutions addressing specific processes or functional needs (60 percent)
- To address a project or program being undertaken by the company (52 percent)

Buyers also have a very clear message for content marketing professionals: Objectivity, thought leadership and neutrality trump all else. While buyers are turning to digital channels to consume and source content, 68 percent of senior B2B buyers said their content journey starts on search engines and portals whereas only 40 percent go directly to a vendor website to access content. And the content that is most often sought out is from the industry—not the vendor. More than half of marketers (52 percent) revealed that they seek out comprehensive industry or category surveys and studies compared to the 44 percent who most value technical details about products and solutions.

Most interestingly, especially in light of the Content Marketing Institute's data that suggests content marketing is more concerned with acquisition than with retention and upsell, is that the majority of senior B2B buying executives (86 percent) indicate that content plays a critical role in add-on buying decisions or

<sup>1</sup>Source: Content Marketing Institute: [http://contentmarketinginstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/2015\\_B2B\\_Research.pdf](http://contentmarketinginstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/2015_B2B_Research.pdf)

<sup>2</sup>Source: Content Marketing Institute

<sup>3</sup>Source: Hubspot



supplemental purchases following their initial contact with a brand. Only 12 percent of buyers will initiate a new content search when looking to identify complementary solutions, yet 92 percent of respondents admitted that they actively seek out third-party content as part of their journey to maintain an existing vendor relationship and affirm their previous investments with that company.

The greater concern in light of this massive content marketing investment is whether or not goals are truly being met. Is content actually impacting business opportunity, lead flow and engagement? This concern tops the list of “what keeps marketers up at night”...more specifically, marketers are keeping watch on how their marketing campaigns and strategies are aligning with the business needs of their sales counterparts. In the CMO Council's own “State of Marketing 2014” study, 46 percent of the 600-plus marketing decision makers surveyed revealed that their greatest accomplishment in the past year was the realignment of marketing to better support sales and improve selling cycles. Nearly one in three marketers admits that maintaining a high-quality sales pipeline is one of their top senior management mandates for the coming year, and half say that lead generation and qualification is the area of business need that will receive the most resources.

But despite the improvements in processes, goals and intentions to optimize lead generation and yield, only one in four marketers believes they have made strides in implementing demand-generation systems to better target, acquire, qualify and convert business.

To further explore this key issue of Content ROI specific to lead flow and opportunity optimization, the CMO Council, in partnership with NetLine Corporation, set out to best understand how marketers are leveraging content to activate and generate high-quality leads. Is content marketing still a wild frontier of experimentation and individual content exploration? Or has a more strategic lens been applied, utilizing personalization and targeting strategies to create more relevant content for the exact markets, industries and executives that a brand wishes to influence?

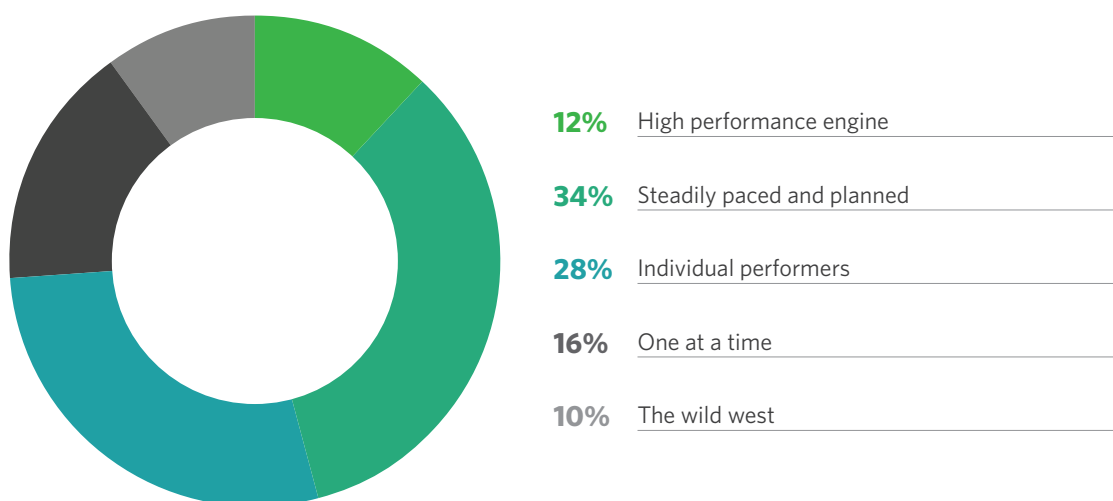
The goal of this study is to better understand the issues and challenges marketers face when working to deliver timely, relevant and robust content that reaches the right audiences. To drill into this area of study, the CMO Council invited senior marketing leaders to share their insights and best practices to enrich the thinking around content performance, syndication and demand-generation strategies. An online survey was completed by 213 senior marketing leaders (primarily located in North America), with 46 percent representing brands earning more than \$1 billion in annual revenue. Insights from the survey were also combined with those pulled from six qualitative interviews with marketing executives.



## KEY FINDINGS

Content is no longer the “wild west” of marketing as only 10 percent of marketers say they have no strategy in place across the organization. But in an age when content is arguably king, marketers have yet to turn their content development and syndication strategies into high-performance, lead-generating machines, either, as only 12 percent say they create content with specific customers, targets, markets or industries in mind. The majority (34 percent) have adopted a more comfortable, steadily paced plan, where content schedules are mapped, content distribution campaigns are developed, and syndication campaigns are deployed. More than one in every four respondents admits, however, that their strategies rely a bit more on individual producers as content is developed and distributed based on the individual needs of a specific department or stakeholder.

### CONTENT MARKETING STRATEGIES



But this steady and often limiting path is not one that is leading to improved yield or performance. In fact, only 2 percent of marketers believe their current demand generation strategies are highly effective. So what is impeding optimized lead flow?

One culprit could be a fundamental disconnect between content development strategies and what the intended results of demand-generating campaigns should be (namely, high-quality leads). First, let's tackle the very definition of a high-quality lead, which—according to the marketers surveyed—is currently defined as a:

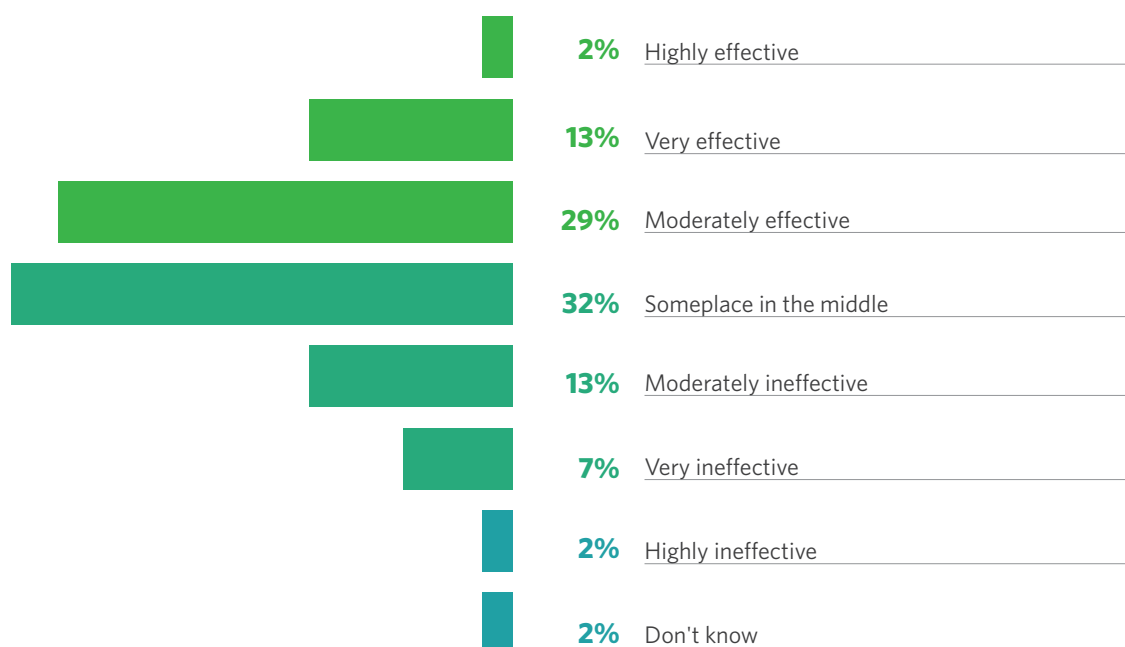
- Detailed request for contact initiated by the prospect, including specific details around what products, services or solutions the prospect is interested in (43 percent)
- Prospect that is immediately positioned to purchase (36 percent)
- Contact that has been previously vetted by an inside sales, tele-sales or outside third party (32 percent)
- Relevant contact within a targeted industry, market or geography (31 percent)



What is immediately clear from this definition of a high-quality lead is that an ongoing, sustained and intentional relationship is required to generate the level of depth, engagement and intent that is required. These are not names collected through the mass distribution of a white paper created for a mass audience. In fact, only 20 percent of marketers believe that a high-quality lead is defined as a contact that is complete and accurate with only email and phone details.

This presents a conflict between a content development strategy that is largely uniform and devoid of specification of industry, target or prospect and the organization's definition of a lead that requires specific, personalized and intentional engagement through content and insights to encourage prospects to advance and identify their needs and requirements. As a result, we are seeing an overall malaise specific to effectiveness and impact.

### EFFECTIVENESS OF DEMAND GENERATION STRATEGIES



Only 2 percent of respondents feel they have a highly effective demand generation strategy that delivers high-quality leads. Most (31 percent) feel their strategy is someplace in the middle—effective at times and ineffective at others. Another 29 percent believe their strategies are moderately effective—hardly high praise.

There was a time when marketing could blame a lack of collaboration and partnership with sales for their lack of performance. In previous CMO Council research, only 20 percent of sales and marketing leaders felt that partnership and collaboration existed between the two functions. The lack of a common definition of a lead was most often to blame for friction over lead quality. Yet today, 29 percent of marketers say that sales has input on targets and lead requirements, even though they are not as involved in the development of the demand generation strategy, while 21 percent believe sales and marketing are completely aligned and developing strategies in total partnership and collaboration. These numbers show that the relationship between marketing and sales is improving and likely isn't the real issue when it comes to what is holding back effective content strategies.



So perhaps the challenge is in the channel, or at least the content that is being distributed through a multitude of engagement avenues to reach that high-quality prospect. The top pieces of content that organizations are developing and leveraging for lead-generation initiatives include:

- Product brochures (84 percent)
- Slide presentations (79 percent)
- White papers (78 percent)
- Videos (76 percent)
- Corporate brochures (70 percent)
- Infographics (65 percent)
- Webcasts (64 percent)

When asked to then rate content based on the quality of great leads that are produced, some interesting variations appeared between what is most created and what is most effective. The majority of content pieces deliver leads that are just okay. For example, 50 percent of marketers feel that leads generated by product brochures fall into this average category. But when it comes to delivering great leads, content pieces typically associated with thought leadership (i.e., non-sales-related content) rise to the top.

Most Created	Delivers <u>Great</u> Leads
Product brochures (84 percent)	White papers (24 percent)
Slide presentations (79 percent)	Videos (22 Percent)
White papers (78 percent)	Analyst reports (22 percent)
Videos (76 percent)	Webcasts (22 percent)
Corporate brochures (70 percent)	Slide presentations (15 percent)
Infographics (65 percent)	eBook (13 percent)
Webcasts (64 percent)	Infographics (12 percent)

And while this shift is noticeable, what is most readily revealed by marketers is the extent to which they simply do not know how content is faring specific to lead generation. Despite 24 percent of marketers indicating that white papers can generate great leads for the organization, some 25 percent say they don't know; 49 percent don't know how analyst reports fare, and 57 percent are unable to rate the impact of an eBook distribution. What is clear is that product and corporate brochures more often produce poor leads than great ones as 15 percent of marketers point to lackluster results while only 9 percent get great leads from product brochures, and 5 percent get great leads from corporate brochures.

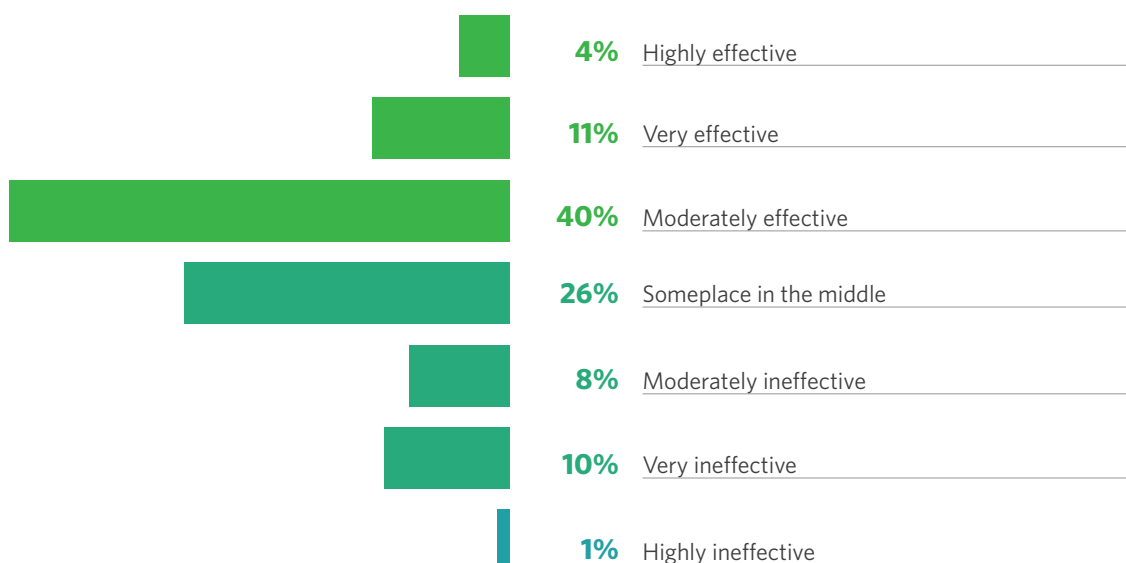
Also challenging the ability to maximize lead flow are the very channels through which this content is being distributed and syndicated. Marketers are relying heavily on owned channels like corporate websites, email to known databases and social media promotions. For the most part, these channels are delivering moderate results—when it comes to email promotions to existing prospect and customer databases, 23 percent say these yield great results, 54 percent say results are okay, and 15 percent say results are poor.



Marketers also seem reluctant to venture beyond their owned or paid channels to leverage third-party content syndication partners (38 percent currently don't use), email promotions to purchased third-party lists (40 percent do not currently use), and magazine publishing partners (47 percent do not currently use).

Overall and across all channels, marketers are not blown away by the effectiveness of the channels being used to generate high-quality leads. Only 4 percent say their current channels are highly effective at delivering quality leads that quickly turn into opportunities. Nearly 40 percent feel these channels are actually only moderately effective—delivering decent lead flow, but in need of improvement in quality and quantity.

#### DISTRIBUTION CHANNEL PERFORMANCE



In recent CMO Council studies about content ROI and impact, B2B buyer-specifiers agreed that thought leadership-based content (i.e., industry surveys, analyst reviews, expert-originated content with supporting facts and research, and content published by third-party sources) most impacted their advancement and acceleration through the buying journey.

So how are marketers advancing thought leadership content across various formats in an effort to better reach and engage these content-savvy buyers? Again, marketers find themselves in the middle: 36 percent admit that their efforts to generate thought leadership—creating various formats of content to be distributed to reach the maximum number of buyers, customers and prospects—are largely dependent on the teams generating and distributing the content in question. Only 11 percent feel the organization is highly effective, developing purpose-built content that keeps audience and business goals in mind when outlining content, format and distribution. Some 29 percent believe they are moderately effective, keeping the audience in mind but not paying as much attention to format and delivery channel optimization.

The stark reality is that as leading marketers have traversed the path from random acts of marketing to a more holistic and intentional customer experience and journey, content has been one of the last pieces to





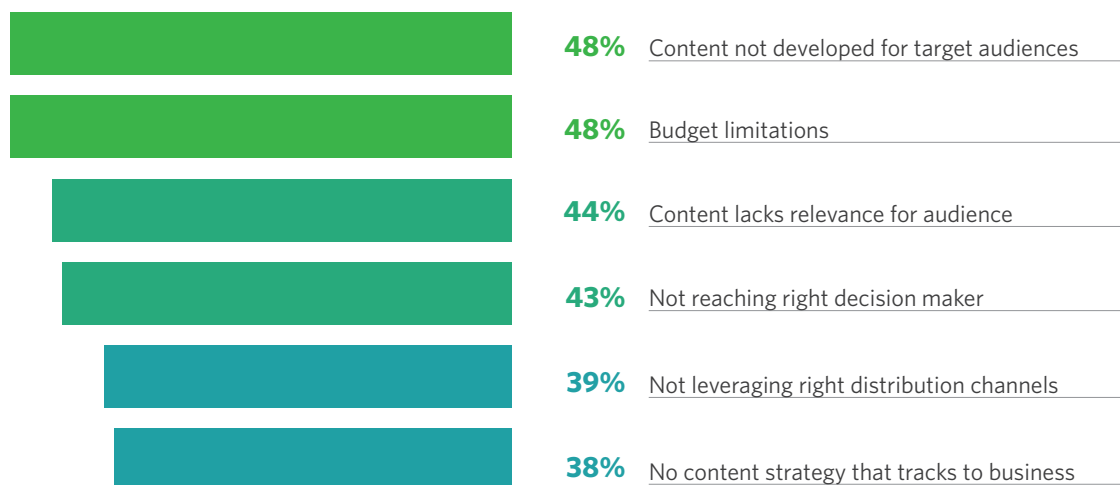
be fully enveloped into a concrete development and distribution strategy. As noted earlier, while marketers can celebrate that the era of content development occurring in a haphazard and random manner has been left behind, they have yet to fully harness content into a high-performance strategy in which it is purpose-built for maximum lead generation. Distribution strategies have advanced to a slightly more sophisticated and intentional place, but there is still considerable room for improvement.

According to 37 percent of marketers, content syndication and distribution strategies include a blend of engagement across owned, earned and paid channels, including third-party partners such as publishers, content syndication providers and media agency partners. However, a large number of respondents—more than a quarter—admit that they do not have any strategy for content syndication and that they distribute content on a largely ad hoc basis. An additional 35 percent syndicate content through known channels (i.e., existing prospects, customers, corporate-controlled assets like web and social channels, partner networks, VARs and resellers), literally keeping content distribution and syndication within a closed circle of contacts with a slim chance for content to reach new prospects, likely diminishing the opportunity to embrace new lead flow.

These disconnects across the content development, distribution and syndication lifecycle elevate the need for a more intentional approach that considers both the path through the customer experience and the sources and centers of knowledge that customers turn to as part of their decision making. Without this understanding, optimizing what marketers have defined as a high-quality lead (one where the prospect has shared their needs and requirements along with a thirst to buy) becomes a near-Herculean task.

While marketing leaders understand that their strategies (or lack thereof) are not where they need to be, other forces and factors are floating to the surface as the greatest roadblocks to success. At the top of the list is the understanding that current content strategies do not tailor content for specific audiences (48 percent), and marketers are also struggling with a lack of budget to create content that will make an impact (48 percent).

#### TOP 5 FACTORS DERAILING LEAD FLOW SUCCESS





Also derailing the ability to generate high-quality leads is a concern that content is not actually reaching the right decision makers (43 percent) and that content lacks relevance for a specific audience (44 percent). Regardless of the specifics of the statement, all of these answers point to a singular conclusion: Marketing has failed to place the intended audience at the center of the content development and distribution strategy, instead utilizing in a one-size-fits-all approach and distributing content through a random spray to owned and controllable environments.

Just as marketers are struggling with connecting acquisition strategies to an ongoing content development and distribution strategy, retention is similarly challenged. While 49 percent of respondents feel they are developing and distributing content to continue or nurture engagements, only one in four is actually developing specific content designed for lead nurturing. Some 24 percent admit that they simply use the same content that is distributed for initial lead generation for the purposes of lead nurturing. One-third of respondents have taken a step toward a more intentional, content-driven lead nurturing program, but even that group admits that it depends on the lead and the content.

When it comes to measuring success, marketers have amassed a list of metrics to gauge acquisition success, specifically looking at download and registration numbers (75 percent), inbound inquiries for information (60 percent), lead quality (57 percent), and social sharing and likes (53 percent) as ways to track end-to-end content marketing performance success. However, direct points of customer voice input are largely being ignored as only 27 percent include comments and feedback into the mix, and lead scores to place real metrics based on lead definition are only being tracked by 36 percent of respondents. Interestingly, only 20 percent consider upsell and cross-sell activity as a metric compared to 59 percent who track revenue and sales increases. This is likely more tied to lead generation and a view of content marketing as an acquisition function and not a nurturing and retention strategy.

## CONCLUSION

Call it a lead, opportunity or prospect...no matter the term, there is still some distance to travel until content marketing strategies—from development through distribution and syndication—are adept at delivering high-quality leads to the organization. One adjustment to mindset that marketing teams must make is that one piece of content has only one option for lead generation: mass distribution to any and all channels and contacts. Without a systematic approach where content is truly personalized and made relevant to a specific audience, buyer or even level of buying executive, little can actually be changed.

Marketing must apply the same rigor and approach to content that has already been applied to other areas of the customer experience journey, re-centering strategies around the specific needs and expectations of the customer and delivering engagements and moments that help advance customers along a journey that they have now mapped and defined. Gone are the days of hoping a content distribution campaign can push a buyer faster down a linear sales funnel journey. In a digital age when buyers will actively decide to stop a sales journey in order to take the time to research third-party and editorial sources, more attention must be paid to where and how content distribution occurs.

In order to increase high-quality leads, marketers must look beyond the comfort of their owned and tightly controlled paid advertising channels. There is an opportunity to bring content to the resources and channels that the buyer most values, but the content must also be highly relevant so that it will actually reach the right target.



Perhaps the best action plan forward can be taken from the marketers who indicate they have high-performance content engines:

- Forty-six (46) percent say their demand generation strategies are very or highly effective (compared to 15 percent of the total audience)
- Thirty-eight (38) percent are total partners with their sales and business development counterparts (compared to 21 percent of the total audience).
- Content is also highly effective, according to 42 percent (as compared to 11 percent of the total audience), with audience and business goals being taken into consideration when outlining content and the format in which the content is delivered so each piece of content is purpose-built for maximum return.
- Fifty-two (52) percent believe their current channels of content distribution and syndication are very or highly effective.
- Fifty (50) percent distribute content to existing databases, social and PR channels but also leverage outside channels like publishing partners and content syndication resources (compared to 37 percent of the total audience).
- Fifty (50) percent are developing content specifically for lead nurturing (compared to 25 percent of the total audience).

Regardless of industry type, whether B2B or B2C, relevance is the primary currency that is expected by all customers. Content must reach the buyer in a relevant channel and in the most relevant format. Content, from development to distribution, must be intentional and purpose-built in order to actually deliver leads that impact the business. The first step will be to look outside of the walls of corporate-owned websites, social channels and even grand PR pitches. Marketers can make the active decision to syndicate into valued channels where buyers have already turned to research and consume. The greatest challenge will be delivering content that is best suited for that channel and audience to eliminate random acts of marketing and maximize intentional lead flow.



## LEADERSHIP INTERVIEWS



**MIKE PARADISO**

*Vice President, Content  
and Messaging*  
CA Technologies



**RUDY CHANG**

*Vice President, Content  
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**KATIE FABISZAK**

*Vice President of Marketing*  
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**KARIN MCNAIR**

*Director of Global  
Marketing Programs*  
OpenText



**ANONYMOUS**

*Platform Solutions  
Group Executive*  
SAP



**LAURIE BORGAN**

*Director of Global Digital  
Marketing*  
Thermo Fisher Scientific

**MIKE PARADISO**

Vice President, Content and Messaging  
CA Technologies



*As marketing embraces new technologies and channels that provide new opportunities but add to an increasingly complex marketing landscape, CA Technologies' Vice President of Content and Messaging Mike Paradiso brings it back to basics with a renewed focus on the customer and a critical eye on the true role of metrics in content marketing.*

Paradiso has high marks for CA Technologies' content marketing performance as it relates to the caliber and incidence of lead flow thanks to the company's understanding of how customers access and research content.

"We understand that content development must align with the buying cycle," he says. "We have a true content research and content cycle based around the buyer's journey, and we know where the content fits in that journey."

CA Technologies has built its content marketing and demand generation strategy with the customer's needs, challenges and pain points in mind. He also strives to understand how CA Technologies' customers or prospects view and research information during the purchase cycle so the company can build content around those parts of the customer journey. He places priority on understanding which pieces of content have already been accessed and consumed by customers or prospects to develop better targeted content for those groups, thus adding value to the later stages of the customer journey.

"Everything is put through a content flow system," he says. "For example, we use a platform to help us understand where customers are in their buyer journey, how they're leveraging content and how we can nurture them to move further along in the journey."

These strategies are formalized across CA Technologies' content marketing processes. This cohesion helps Paradiso and his team to develop content around their understanding of the buyer's journey and customers' points of view.

"Understanding customer challenges and issues has been essential to our content development," he says. "We always ask whether we have the right mix within the buyer's journey to ensure we're reaching the needs of the buyers throughout the process. We make our content accessible both externally and internally so that it can be used across different mediums and at various points within the marketing process."

CA Technologies develops content using different creators who have expertise in various pertinent subjects, which has proven to be a strength for CA Technologies as it covers all of the bases of its content needs and ensures that any overlapping content can bring in new perspectives and new purposes.

"We have a lot of different content developers throughout the company," Paradiso says. "We have thought leadership content, product content, educational content and brand content, and we have a fairly integrated and formalized process based on the understanding of where each team fits into that journey and what kind of content the groups will be responsible for."

The content groups also work with sales and business development entities within CA Technologies to improve lead flow and quality.



"Our whole process was designed to nurture a flow that's going to convert marketing qualified leads to sales qualified leads," Paradiso says. "Those leads will be turned over to sales for their input, and then sales has the opportunity to accept or reject any qualified leads that marketing sends. They have input on how we're developing content, how we understand our customers' needs, what kind of assets are applicable for sales and what they want to take to our customers. They're involved in the nurturing process and the development of marketing materials that we send out to customers and prospects."

CA Technologies strategically distributes marketing content internally through a portal that provides instant access to content when teams need it and allows teams to interact and determine where that content lives or what content needs to be created. Externally, the company pushes engagement through its website, social media, video and a microsite hub that provides insights around CA Technologies' leadership position in the economy.

Paradiso uses a creative agency to develop content marketing assets and programs, and he says they maintain an open flow of communication with third-party partners to optimize their partnerships and produce the best content possible.

When it comes to optimizing content strategies for peak lead flow, Paradiso offers some advice for fellow marketers.

"We need to get past the concept that more is better," he says. "You don't always need to create something new every time. You can take one asset, re-purpose it for other mediums and use different points of view. Just make sure you're using the same basis for that content and that it is rooted in the needs of your customers."

**RUDY CHANG**

Vice President, Content Strategy and Systems  
IBM



*As Bill Gates once said, "Content is king." While that sentiment will likely outlive technology as we know it, the core concept of content marketing doesn't always work in today's models. IBM Vice President of Content Strategy and Systems Rudy Chang shares his company's take on content marketing and analytics as ideas of content reuse and meta-data—two potentially disruptive ideas that could solve some of marketing's toughest content issues.*

Chang sees the need for IBM to embrace a cohesive content marketing strategy that follows the customer journey from early discovery through advocacy. He says that IBM's content efforts have been primarily focused on the early stage of the customer journey, and there is a need to deliver diversified content experiences that engage users at every opportunity with IBM.

Chang says it's important to consider that buying decisions are often made in groups, especially in the B2B space. He uses this idea to mold content for personalization and improved context—not only to boost sales, but to also engage customers in the post-market environment with product solutions and service advocacy.

"There's definitely no single person who makes a purchasing decision," he says. "It tends to be done among colleagues. We need to do a better job of rounding out the diversity of content across the buyer's entire journey."

He's also exploring the customer journey from the viewpoint of the path of progression—a two-dimensional approach to understanding what customers want and how the entire package appears to them. Chang views it as content development in the context of the journey's progression coupled with the people who are actually on the journey.

"As content marketers, we need to understand buyer behavior and attitudes so that we can craft the appropriate messaging and value proposition that resonate with those audiences," he says. "It's about being much more specific around the role and the buying behaviors of that role, as well as understanding who we're trying to market to. Consider, for example, a chief data officer. Not all chief data officers or chief marketing officers are alike. Some may have personal beliefs that we need to understand. Some may have corporate guiding principles around how they select vendors. Are they a best-of-breed buyer, or are they an early adopter? Do they just go after a low-cost provider, or do they look for the overall value?"

Chang strives to understand the different attributes of his marketing targets beyond what simple metrics can illustrate. He sees the context of content as a powerful tool that can educate someone in need just as easily as another piece of content could sell to an already experienced and knowledgeable target.

"I see it as a two-dimensional matrix," he says. "One is understanding time, and two is understanding who—with much more clarity than we've had in the past."

Because content serves various functional aspects of marketing operations, it can be developed by anyone in any role at IBM. But even as IBM's content marketing ecosystem allows for a more holistic approach, well-defined standards govern content-building practices.



"Whatever we do in content—whether it's the toolsets, repositories, workflow or content management systems—we want people to espouse certain ways to drive structure and intelligence," he says. "With regard to structure, we want to drive the reusability of content, so it is broken down into its basic elements and separated from presentation format. It can be reused over many different use cases, whether it's in print, a PDF/seller enablement kit, on IBM.com or in a mobile app."

Repurposing marketing content is also a major strength that has proven to provide value for IBM.

"Availability of content performance through KPIs allows us to achieve scale and realization of business value very quickly," he says. "That's another big initiative that we're emphasizing."

Chang says when he joined IBM in January, he saw problems in the content marketing process that included fragmented planning and a lack of focus on the intended audience for the content. Currently, he's building a process with the goal of optimizing the data gathered from all of their content efforts and providing a more streamlined and robust base for content marketing.

"A lot of the data from a typical marketing campaign lives in spreadsheets and Word documents, or it ends up in an agency brief and gets scattered," he says. "By the time you actually build your content, it loses a lot of the context around who and what it was for. We're planning a structured workflow so a lot of that meta-data will get captured and essentially be attributed to the output so that we have a closed-loop process from planning to execution."

While digital channels are essential to IBM's marketing plan, Chang still relies on offline sources for content distribution. He says IBM works with partners to produce and promote content. However, the company is working to understand how different types of content yield specific leads and the effectiveness of different types of content along the customer journey.

"We're working to determine—from the early stage to the late stage—exactly what types of assets or offers best drive the progression of the customer journey," he says.



**KATIE FABISZAK**

Vice President of Marketing  
Informatica–Data as a Service



*Informatica provides data integration software that enables business and IT leaders to fully leverage their information assets—from devices and mobile to social and big data—based on premise in the cloud and across social networks. In order to optimize lead flow, Vice President of Marketing for Informatica–Data as a Service Katie Fabiszak integrates content marketing strategies and creates internal partnerships between sales and marketing to maintain open lines of communication. Here Fabiszak shares her strategies, tactics and words of advice about what she considers most important when it comes to content marketing activities.*

When most people think about content, they think about content for external audiences. However, the success of a content marketing strategy is also dependent on ensuring that internal audiences are involved. This requires a strong relationship between the sales and marketing teams.

“The success of content marketing is not just dependent on marketing alone,” Fabiszak says. “It’s certainly about externalizing and packaging great content and promoting it to relevant audiences through reputable outlets and communities. However, internally, we have to make sure that the sales team is fully enabled on that content.”

Fabiszak’s integrated marketing plan joins internal sales, marketing and product forces to develop and contextualize content for better marketing results. Sales and marketing work together to create content development strategies and goals, and weekly meetings keep Fabiszak’s team on the same page for key concepts, such as lead flow and quality, as well as best practices on content creation and promotion.

“We conduct interviews with sales team members to better understand the conversations they are having with prospects and customers so that marketing can rank the trending topics to ensure we develop relevant content that is applicable to each audience profile,” she says. “I think that too often, we as marketers neglect to create complete alignment between sales and marketing, which is absolutely critical in order to yield the greatest results on content performance.”

In order to achieve a superior level of content performance, Fabiszak also says it is important to start with a clearly defined content strategy.

“It’s important to develop different content strategies up front, depending on what your ultimate goals are,” she says. “First, start with the end in mind. You have to follow the path from leads and opportunities to actual bookings and revenue created. My team works with metrics associated with every content piece we create and every dollar we spend, including how many leads we bring in the door and how many ultimate opportunities it yields. Certain content is created with the goal of generating net new contacts and ensuring that we have the right target audience in our database. Other content is created with the goal of nurturing contacts along the path to converting into pipeline.”

She also cautions against the common mistake among marketing organizations who try to produce everything internally. This strategy causes organizations to lose out on knowledge from third-party experts and partners, which can be useful for lead flow and nurturing.

When it comes to tracking leads, Informatica’s Data as a Service marketing team has a strategy in place for lead handling based on where the leads originate. Leads derived from content syndication—such as a white



paper download on a community site—would be considered top of funnel and would potentially move straight into a lead nurture flow whereas leads derived from a pricing or free trial request on the website would be delivered directly to the sales team for immediate action and follow up. This again demonstrates the importance of a close relationship between sales and marketing and the need to ensure that the teams are in agreement on lead quality definitions and lead handling processes.

“From a content perspective, we have to figure out how to get content leads into the flow so that we can maximize the impact on sales and conduct the right follow-up effort compared to all the other lead channels that are coming in the door,” she says. “It’s not just about the topic and the way the content is represented—it’s also about the channel. All of these different areas are intersecting, and we must figure out what yields the best results downstream and tailor our efforts around that.”

Informatica has a sophisticated content optimization strategy, and it takes all of these concepts into account. A centralized content governance practice ensures that each piece of content is leveraged and optimized in the best way possible.

“When a piece of content is produced, it’s assigned a unique number, where it’s catalogued into a library so it can be leveraged across multiple promotional platforms within our marketing automation system,” she says. “We can use it for a global email marketing program, publish it on the website, syndicate it externally through a promotional advertising program, publish it on social platforms, use it in pay-per-click advertising campaigns, etc. It also integrates into a sophisticated internal segmentation process for lead nurture flows.”

Fabiszak says that there will always be room for improvement, particularly when it comes to performance metrics.

“We definitely need to improve our complete understanding of how our content is performing,” she says. “We have some basic measurements in place—including measuring content downloads, registration numbers, the quality of the leads and contacts, and shares and likes from social engagement—but this is one area where we are always looking to improve.”

Fabiszak’s tips for great content marketing demonstrate how important it is to the whole organization, not just marketing, and how it should be a central part of every marketing plan.

“There are two key ways to think about leveraging content throughout the lead to revenue cycle—using content to drive the acquisition of new leads and leveraging content in a lead nurturing program to continuously engage with prospects and customers over time,” she says. “If we think about content as a component of overall lead flow activity relative to other things that we do, it is pervasive,” she says. “Content is integrated into everything we do.”

**KARIN MCNAIR**

Director of Global Marketing Programs  
OpenText

**OPENTEXT™**

*As Canada's largest software company, OpenText helps businesses manage content through a suite of products. The company is making its mark as a content management solutions leader by expanding into new markets. OpenText's Director of Global Marketing Programs, Karin McNair, leads a team of internal and external marketing specialists to drive the company's growth.*

A company that deals with content management for businesses should have its own internal content strategy down to a science. For McNair and her team, the pieces are in place, but everything is still coming together for the dynamic software company.

McNair doesn't place specific metrics on OpenText's content marketing performance, but she sees key strengths in the company's ability to repurpose its content depending on the target audience, buyer persona and the medium being used.

"We're experimenting with several different things," she says. "We do a lot of A/B testing. We have a shared resource to assist with content development. Some are very long-term sales—up to a year and a half—and others may be six months. There's a completely different approach to these two types of sales when it comes to getting leads."

McNair admits that the company struggles with tracking and measuring end-to-end content marketing performance due to some internal snags.

"We have a few issues with our marketing operations and being able to get some kind of reporting that will show us trends," she says. "We have a dashboard for looking at the pipeline, but recently we had several changes in marketing operations, so we have not been able to get those reports in a timely manner, which is really critical so that we can act as opposed to reacting."

OpenText maximizes lead flow with properly targeted messaging. They look at the buyer's journey and can distinguish whether someone is a decision-maker or an influencer. They can then map out who is getting specific information and when. They also segment their content based on whether someone is a decision maker or an influencer, which is important because most decision makers aren't looking at OpenText's website or watching the pieces that are in the company's syndication queue.

"The influencers are the people that are gathering all of the information," she says. "They don't have the final decision, but they're on the team. Most everything is done from a team approach, but that means we have to slice and dice the message and determine where we put our funds accordingly."

McNair holds meetings with sales, product management and business development groups within the company on a regular basis to get a clearer view of the big picture. It helps her get to the root of important questions around consumer behavior and allows other groups to maximize their efforts through collaboration.

"It's important to continually go back to them and check on what worked, what didn't work and why," she says. "We also determine if we're going to do something again or if it was an anomaly. We have to assess whether the assumptions made as the decision maker or the influencer were incorrect."



OpenText manages most of its own marketing content, from creation to distribution and promotion. Some successes for the company include the utilization of a platform for demand generation and pay-per-click services like Google AdWords for inbound marketing.

"We've tried a lot of different vertical content syndicators and advertisers, and we'll do some testing with them to see if we get the kinds of responses and contacts we're really looking for," she says. "Currently, we're reworking the entire website, revamping all of the content and repositioning all of the products."

McNair's team does a lot of work in sales and partner enablement—two areas that McNair deems critical.

"I think a lot of people don't use their partners enough, so the channel strategy is extremely important," she says. "You have to look at the strategy holistically. I have a checklist of all of the different mediums with what has worked and what hasn't, and I'm continually looking for new ideas. Also, being collaborative is incredibly important. I don't know anyone in marketing who's successful without a great partnership with sales. It is a team effort, and the more informed everyone is, the better job you can do."

When it comes to content distribution, the organization often uses free content or employs third parties to write white papers, but there is no set of rules that govern the company's content distribution methods.

"There's a lot of trial and error," she says. "Investing in thought leadership pieces, investing in time with analysts, investing in producing white papers that really speak to what's going on for companies that are innovators, and referencing programs and case studies have really worked best for us."

McNair's basic policy on content marketing is to aim to inform the consumer, especially in B2B marketing.

"It's on us as marketers to be as informative as we can possibly be," she says. "When you work in B2B, it's one thing to be creative, but you are really trying to give people information that will allow them to make an informed buying decision."

**ANONYMOUS**

Platform Solutions Group Executive  
SAP



According to a marketing executive who oversaw Platform Solutions Group efforts at SAP, content is handled by various geographically disparate business groups, with very little content that covers the full company portfolio. While content marketing initiatives typically perform very well, he reveals that lead flow is often hampered by the lack of a real-time, commercially viable marketing automation system across the organization. As a result, dynamic personalization for each lead is often limited, which creates some deficiencies within the organization's content strategy.

Content marketing efforts are handled by the selling audience for direct, SI and VAR channels. Direct content marketing incorporates a mix of both virtual and in-person touchpoints while VAR channels focus on product/technology content, and SI channels customize content and selling guides based on geography and vertical markets. Content is then packaged, promoted and distributed based on the sales channel.

"For the direct channel, both the website and a series of product communities are created," he says. "For the SI and telco channels, the company has different content stores with relevant content messaging updates. And for the VAR community, there is a dedicated marketing overlay community organization that posts content and creates campaigns based on changing quarterly revenue goals."

When it comes to meeting the goals of content marketing efforts, he says both sales and business development teams have shared their goals for content, which include lead flow composition but don't typically include the demand generation lifecycle. The requirements for these teams are usually set around content marketing, industry positioning and competitive differentiation.

"Lead flow is best influenced by content marketing when it involves multi-step engagement," he says. "It should include several dynamic and automatically applied engagement hooks—such as a white paper, ROI calculator, case study or demonstration—so that we can continue to nurture leads generated from these items."

Content performance tends to be measured on a campaign basis and is reported in terms of marketing-generated opportunities and rolling 6/12-month pipelines. He says that one deficiency in the content strategy results from the campaign serving as the measurement vehicle rather than the content itself.

"Campaigns reflect only a specific moment in time," he says. "Content that is created specific to a successful campaign would help to create additional campaigns across the Platform Solutions Group. This is a deficiency that is not currently being addressed holistically across the organization."

Through his industry experience, this executive has learned a few lessons that he would share with fellow marketers regarding how to optimize and automate content marketing strategies for better lead flow.

"First, take some risks and avoid pursuing a certain type of program just because it has delivered results in the past; this may require you to push back against sales, business development and executive teams when you feel a content request doesn't make sense," he says. "The second is to take a teaching approach with your internal audiences around content marketing. Describe these programs in the context of the company's stated goals, growth plans and competitive best practices. And rather than taking a different approach just because a competitor has done it, propose a mix of content programs that address the top three sales needs and top channel needs. Work with your internal customers, and only spend marketing capital when you all agree that it will result in measurable ROI today and in the next quarter or two."

**LAURIE BORGEN**

Director of Global Digital Marketing  
Thermo Fisher Scientific

**ThermoFisher**  
SCIENTIFIC

*When it came to outlining the digital marketing strategy for Thermo Fisher Scientific, Director of Global Digital Marketing Laurie Borgen applied the scientific method directly to their efforts. Through experimentation with new channels and methods of customer engagement that focus on the qualitative value of leads, Thermo Fisher has re-established its command of the biotechnology market.*

Digital marketing has its own set of demands and challenges, and Thermo Fisher is working through a new and improved marketing plan developed by Borgen. Although it is still a work in progress, the strategy promotes a commitment to content marketing and moves away from conventional methods for product launches and marketing strategies.

Currently, Borgen says Thermo Fisher's content marketing performance needs improvement, but the company has taken steps in the right direction.

"Thermo Fisher's scientific niche and audience tend to be skeptical," she says. "We haven't participated in content marketing the way that we should or could, but we're changing that."

Content marketing is fairly new to Thermo Fisher's demand-generation strategy. Borgen says the current plan has only been in place for a year, and prior to the overhaul, the company's content was mostly provided in PDFs, on their website and through in-person events for product launches and other marketing initiatives.

"Just this year, we did our first virtual product launch," she says. "Never before have we not launched a product at a trade show, so this was a big step for us."

Thermo Fisher also heavily relied on webinars as their top lead-generation vehicle. While this is still a key marketing method for the company, Borgen saw a problem with how the company placed more emphasis on leads based on volume rather than quality.

"This provided the opportunity to introduce content marketing to the organization, which is what I now do," she says. "We added the first layer of digital marketing on top of the trade show/webinar/PDF model that the organization had deployed for several years. We introduced paid organic search as well as display advertising, which we hadn't done before, either. All of this advertising, aside from print, was done independently with individual publishers—one ad banner on this website, one ad banner on that publication's website, etc. It literally had never been done through a network or display network before."

These changes turned marketing efforts from lead "grab" to lead refinement, and Borgen says the company has found a much higher value in content marketing. Their sales team is also finding a greater action rate because the leads are higher quality.

The addition of new marketing channels has also helped Thermo Fisher's lead refinement. Borgen says these new digital marketing tactics deliver significantly greater diversification in lead sourcing as her team introduces new types of content in the market. That, coupled with social marketing syndication and marketing automation systems for lead nurturing, drives the majority of Thermo Fisher's visibility in the market.



"We have a very high focus on building up market visibility within each of our target vertical audiences," she says. "We're not at the beginning—this is definitely a more mature process for us."

As the company's marketing plan evolves to become more customer-centric, it is sometimes met with skepticism. It's not surprising to see a biotechnology company react to change with a healthy dose of doubt given the scientific expertise of the organization, but Borgen is confident that once they see the results of these changes, they will be very supportive.

"When you think about Thermo Fisher marketing employees, they have a lot of PhD scientists who are experts in their fields," she says. "They feel strongly that they know what customers want. It's been an interesting paradigm shift to see them realize how our audiences really want to consume our messaging. Maybe it's a little different than what they think. It has been an absolutely revolutionizing change in how we market. With time, I'm confident that the organization will better understand the funnel of how content marketing really helps drive leads and qualified traffic through the funnel."

Borgen has field-tested advice for anyone in digital marketing, regardless of the length of time or size of the program in operation: Pay attention to scale. In addition, she says it's okay to make some mistakes while learning.

"If you don't test and learn or if you scale too quickly, you are going to lose momentum by saturating your market," she says. "To modern marketers, these are very obvious things, but to very traditional enterprises that have been doing marketing the same way for 25 to 30 years, these are very innovative concepts. It always takes time to adjust to change, but the results will speak for themselves."



## EXECUTIVE PERSPECTIVE FROM NETLINE

By Robert Alvin, CEO and Chairman, NetLine Corporation



After more than 20 years of experience in the lead generation and content syndication business, NetLine has continued to find innovative ways to stay on top of marketers' needs by looking for insights and trends that meet, if not exceed, how to continue providing top-quality services. We continuously look to our audience of more than 100 million business professionals to help us best understand and measure the effectiveness of thousands of pieces of content. This study confirms and helps to solve the issues that plague our clients as they seek to execute sound lead generation/content syndication campaigns. There is no doubt—as the interviews and survey findings in this study have confirmed—that the successful lead generation programs we have been fortunate enough to help manage for our clients boil down to having mastered the following:

- **Developing focused content for the right audience and the right channel.** The more the content speaks to your target audience, the greater the level of response will be. Companies who modify and adapt a single piece of content to target specific demographic segments (such as company size, verticals, geography, job title, etc.) do far better than those who utilize the same content, regardless of target. While this requires additional work, it clearly achieves superior results. Content is only as good as how you manage to expose it to your audience. Once you've established relevant, audience-influenced content, ensuring you distribute it through the appropriate communication channels will either make or break your campaign.
- **Generating content that actually nurtures.** Content that nurtures holds more weight than the words and structure of the piece itself. Its significance even goes beyond the moment a lead is collected. Your ability to repurpose content throughout the lead nurture process helps define the success of your content strategy. Generating content that goes beyond addressing what your prospects want to read during their research process entails acknowledging and understanding their needs during the various stages of their buying cycle. And let's not forget that not every buyer is at the same phase of purchasing when they research. If you create content that addresses these phases, you'll find yourself in a powerful and advantageous position as you determine your content strategy.
- **Aligning sales and marketing.** Nothing speaks louder than misalignment within an organization when the content generated by marketing is not leveraged, appreciated or understood by sales. As this study poignantly describes, 22 percent of marketers believe sales teams are a roadblock and rarely contribute to valuable content marketing. This may not seem like a noteworthy percentage, but its significance is huge. It is no wonder that we ourselves have seen—more often than not—our marketing clients operate in their own silos in order to not disrupt the content creation engine. As much as we know how much dysfunction having “too many cooks in the kitchen” can generate, it's quintessential that marketing and sales teams find a happy medium. This is where establishing a SLA between both departments can help save a lot of time and energy from playing the blame game when reviewing demand generation performance.

We ultimately, however, can't discount the unique position that the sales organization has within a given business when it comes to their intimate conversations with prospects. Marketing can benefit from their findings in order to refine an ever-evolving content strategy to continuously benefit their audience.





Just the same, sales benefits from understanding how to better position the relevance of their solutions to prospects based on industry trends. Organizations can't afford not to have this level of partnership be at the forefront of a content marketing strategy—much of its success depends on the consensus.

Building a well-thought-out content marketing strategy stretches beyond the walls of generating fancy words, figures and pretty pictures. It expands into different types of mediums—blog posts, social mentions, whitepapers, videos, infographics, case studies and so on—that respectively communicate a company's value in the industry. Heavy consideration of the audience and understanding their buying cycles and needs while collaborating with sales cohorts will make the difference between creating content that just attracts leads versus content that actually helps an organization grow.



## AFFILIATE PARTNERS



### PR NEWSWIRE

PR Newswire is the premier global provider of multimedia platforms that enable marketers, corporate communicators, sustainability officers, public affairs and investor relations officers to leverage content to engage with all of their key audiences. Having pioneered the commercial news distribution industry 60 years ago, PR Newswire provides end-to-end solutions to produce, optimize and target content—from rich media to online video and multimedia—and then distribute content and measure results across traditional, digital, mobile and social channels. Combining the world's largest multi-channel, multi-cultural content distribution and optimization network with comprehensive workflow tools and platforms, PR Newswire enables the world's enterprises to engage opportunity everywhere it exists. PR Newswire serves tens of thousands of clients from offices in the Americas, Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Asia-Pacific, and it is a UBM plc company. To learn more, visit [www.prnewswire.com](http://www.prnewswire.com).



### QUALTRICS

For a long time, the only people with access to Qualtrics survey software were our closest friends and a bunch of Scott's MBA students. It was our research clients who pushed us to open up the system and gave us the feedback needed to make it both the easiest to use and most sophisticated research suite on the market. [www.qualtrics.com](http://www.qualtrics.com).



### TRANSCRIBE ME

TranscribeMe is a new kind of voice-to-text transcription company. Based in the San Francisco Bay Area and New Zealand, it provides best-in-class transcription accuracy, turnaround times and rates by using a hybrid model of speech processing technology plus a crowd-sourced human transcriber platform. Industry leaders such as VMware, GigaOm, Cisco, Ipsos and other business and marketing professionals use this service to convert their audio and video content into an easily shareable, searchable and profitable format. With superior confidentiality and accuracy, TranscribeMe's voice-to-text services allow for on-the-go transcription via their mobile app, as well as perfect recall and rapid analysis of critical content, including conference speeches, meeting notes, interviews, sales calls and more. To learn more, visit [www.transcribeme.com/cmocouncil](http://www.transcribeme.com/cmocouncil).



### ABOUT THE CMO COUNCIL

The Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) Council is the only global network of executives specifically dedicated to high-level knowledge exchange, thought leadership and personal relationship building among senior corporate marketing leaders and brand decision-makers across a wide range of global industries. The CMO Council's 9,000-plus members control more than \$400 billion in aggregated annual marketing expenditures and run complex, distributed marketing and sales operations worldwide. In total, the CMO Council and its strategic interest communities include more than 35,000 global executives in more than 110 countries covering multiple industries, segments and markets. Regional chapters and advisory boards are active in the Americas, Europe, Asia-Pacific, Middle East, India and Africa. The council's strategic interest groups include the Coalition to Leverage and Optimize Sales Effectiveness (CLOSE), Mobile Relationship Marketing (MRM) Strategies, LoyaltyLeaders.org, CMOCIOAlign.org, Marketing Supply Chain Institute, Customer Experience Board, Digital Marketing Performance Institute, GeoBranding Center and the Forum to Advance the Mobile Experience (FAME). For more information, visit the CMO Council at [www.cmocouncil.org](http://www.cmocouncil.org).



### ABOUT THE CONTENT ROI CENTER

The CMO Council's Content ROI Center is dedicated to advancing the discipline of content marketing. We are a go-to source of thought leadership, insight and services to help marketers more fully leverage the power of content to drive business opportunities, influence purchasing decisions and grow brand presence.

The Content ROI Center is working with marketing leaders and experts around the world to develop advanced practices, identify best-in-class tools and resources, and create more compelling and strategic thought leadership and creative content campaigns. The center also works to:

- Develop effective strategies for ensuring relevance and engagement
- Tap into the power and potential of peer-driven affinity networks
- Adopt proven tools and approaches for performance and ROI measurement
- Implement advanced syndication, proliferation and nurturing strategies
- Audit, assess and optimize current content marketing practices and assets
- Advance social and SEO optimization
- Address talent, resource and organizational requirements
- Develop new platforms and campaigns that advance content marketing outcomes

For more information, visit [www.contentroicenter.org](http://www.contentroicenter.org).



### ABOUT NETLINE CORPORATION

NetLine Corporation is the world leader in business content syndication aimed at driving buyer engagement, customer lead acquisition and sales pipeline performance. Its Precision Targeting Engine™ and global multi-channel network of more than 15,000 website properties enable B2B marketers to reach a diverse audience of more than 75 million business professionals across 350-plus industry sectors. NetLine's multi-channel content delivery model allows for brand customization, content adaptation and flexible market access through publisher websites, expert blogs, email, search engines, social media networks, e-newsletters and mobile. Founded in 1994, NetLine Corporation is privately held and headquartered in Los Gatos, California, with operations around the globe. For more information, visit [www.netline.com](http://www.netline.com).

# LEAD GENERATION:

STEPS TO TARGET THE  
SELF-DIRECTED BUYER

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the old days, it was marketing's job to blanket prospects with advertising in hopes that they would eventually reach out for your product or service. Today's buyers are different. They've become very good at ignoring messages they didn't solicit. Dubbed the "self-directed buyer," these prospects have a plethora of online information at their fingertips and are accustomed to finding what they want when they want it, on their own terms. As a result, they tend to know a lot about a product or service long before they speak to a sales person. Where are they doing their research? Online, of course. In fact, according to Forrester Research, buyers are anywhere from two-thirds to 90 percent of the way through their buying journey before they even contact a vendor<sup>1</sup>.

Savvy marketers understand that to reach these new customers, they must develop thoughtful, engaging, and helpful content that enables today's prospects to find them. Once they've been discovered by prospects, they must skillfully nurture relationships with them. This approach is known as content—or inbound—marketing, and it's become crucial in today's marketplace. Marketo defines inbound marketing as "the process of helping potential customers find your company—often before they are even looking to make a purchase—and then turning that early awareness into brand preference, and ultimately, into leads and revenue."<sup>1</sup> However, not all content has this effect—only content that reflects thought leadership or helps the prospect in some way. In other words, content that helps you become a trusted advisor to your prospects.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.marketo.com/lead-generation/>

While understanding the value of content is the first step in the process (and often the easiest), getting your content in front of your target prospects is the far more difficult proposition. Organic traffic, paid search, expensive display ads, email, and a host of other methods are used by organizations to get as many people as possible to their website, in hopes that they see and consume the content you've provided. But how to reach the infinitely larger audience of people who don't visit your website? How can you find prospects in need of a solution in your industry—prospects that don't necessarily know or trust you (yet)? This is where content syndication is invaluable. Examples of content syndication include white paper downloads, webinar registrations, free trial registrations, software downloads, case study downloads, and live event registrations. By syndicating your content via a trusted content syndication partner, you give your content the ability to influence an audience far beyond your existing reach.

Content syndication gives marketers an online presence beyond their own channels. It empowers them to build viral awareness and create meaningful customer engagement. A B2B network-based content syndication partner uses sophisticated data analytics to find your target audience online and offer the content they want when they are already searching for similar content. By delivering content at the point of interest, your content and your brand offers immediate value to the target prospect wherever they may be searching for information. Your content syndication partner will then deliver these qualified prospects to you as agreed according to your campaign plan.

A carefully planned lead generation strategy takes all of this into account to help you get the attention of your target audience and build trust. It also helps ensure that your sales team receives only qualified leads that bear fruit. Following are eight areas you need to focus on when using content syndication to generate leads.

70%

Most customers prefer to know a company through their content rather than ads.

## CONSIDER...

1

### Great Content

Whether you choose to syndicate or not, you still need to produce content that is helpful, original, and compelling—content that will help readers make sound decisions based on data. The days of self-promotion are long over. Readers are seeking something new—thought leadership pieces that describe trends rather than product information. Remember, your readers are already researching your industry and products and may know quite a lot already. Aim for a relevant mix of informative and entertaining content that builds a meaningful relationship with your audience and drives sharing. Map content to specific personas and the stages viewers are at in the buying cycle. Include an appropriate call to action telling the reader what you want them to do or think about next. Read “Content Marketing: 11 Steps To Engage, Entertain, and Inform” for more on how to create impactful content.

2

### Great Packaging

Via syndication, your valuable content will appear on thousands of relevant sites where your target audience is browsing for information about your niche. Now that your prospects have discovered you, make sure they take the next step and click on your offering. To ensure this, a compelling graphic, cover, image, or abstract is vital. Once you decide where you’d like your content to appear, you’ll have a better idea of what kind of design would be appropriate. A good content syndication partner has cutting edge tools that enable you or them to quickly integrate your content into their web properties. But it’s up to you to make it look good and capture attention.

3X

...more leads  
are generated  
with content  
per dollar than  
advertising.

43%

...marketers  
aren't reaching  
the right deci-  
sion makers

48%

...marketers  
suffer from  
budget  
limitations to  
create content  
with impact.

1 <http://www.marketo.com/lead-generation/>

Reaching your future customers.

## TRY OUT...

3

### **A Quality B2B Content Syndication Partner**

Once you have a content piece you're happy with and it looks sharp, you need to make sure it gets in front of your prospects where it can do its work. Content syndication moves your content beyond your own site and social media channels to multiple trusted destinations and sources, including peer-driven communities and organizations. However, not all content syndicators are equal. Your job is to choose a one that can connect you to the customers you want. The best content syndicators have a large, multichannel network and partnerships to ensure your message gets in front of your audience just when they are searching for information related to your products or services. A content syndication partner that specializes in the B2B market can run lead generation campaigns across a vast network. One that has been around a while is more likely to have built an extensive and organic network. Ask how much traffic is net-new to ensure you're not reaching the same individuals over and over. Many content syndicators boast a large audience, but every static audience will eventually suffer from 'content fatigue' and will no longer download your content. A dynamic network on the other hand provides a large, ever-changing audience that dramatically increases the lifespan of your content, and the quality of the leads you receive. You'll also want to make sure your syndicator has an established reputation. The best syndicators monitor their network and data for fraud regularly, preferably weekly. Make sure they verify all content details and have filters in place to recognize false information. They should partner closely with you, helping you understand where your target prospects live on the web, what they like, and how to reach them most effectively. Finally, make sure they are fully on board when it comes to providing mobile access to content, as more and more browsers use smart phones and tablets to access B2B content.

4

### **Targeting Capabilities.**

Effective lead generation today requires powerful and nuanced data analytics. As a B2B marketer, you need to tap into online behavioral intelligence to recognize buying patterns and develop a multi-channel program. Sophisticated technology can help you understand where the buyer is in their journey and serve up content that matches their buying stage. Social metrics like engagement, number of comments made, number of times shared, and reach, all help to anticipate needs, making it more likely you will delight this customer. A good syndicator also uses analytics to produce weekly reports on what content has been consumed and what kind of leads your content generated for you. You can also run multiple pieces and compare how different types of content perform. Finally, make sure your syndicator offers the ability to track leads from creation through sales, a vital part of determining ROI. Some vendors even provide information about content types that are working well for other vendors in your industry.



## INVEST IN...

5

### **Accurate Filtering and Targeting.**

When planning and executing your lead generation campaign, make sure your syndicator has advanced filters in place for in-depth audience targeting. Buyer intelligence data helps you find businesses that match the profiles of those already in your sales funnel. You'll want to identify industry, company size, job title or function, and geographic location, to start. Recent studies have shown that decision makers are no longer just at the C-level. More and more employees are taking part in decision-making and sharing content across multiple layers in their companies, and good content tends to trickle up to the top. Therefore, include a variety of job roles and functions. Casting a broader net will help you get the attention you need from the people looking for your product or service. Take a look at the recent research by the CMO Council (in conjunction with NetLine), on how content is consumed and shared within an organization. Read [here](#) for more details on this important attribute of content.

6

### **Reasonable Cost Per Lead.**

Cost Per Lead, or CPL, is the way content syndicators charge you. In this online pricing model, you pay for the contact information (usually an email address) of targeted prospects interested in your product or service. Since the customer voluntarily fills out the sign-up form, they are typically a more qualified lead and more valuable to you. If the visitor does not complete the sign-up form, you're not charged. For example, a content syndicator may place a banner ad for another site on a blog. If a visitor clicks on the advertisement link, they are directed to the advertiser's website, where they will be invited to sign up for a special offer. If the visitor chooses to sign up, the syndicator is paid a certain amount based on the agreed Cost Per Lead. You'll want to be sure to find a content syndicator with a reasonable CPL price. In addition, be sure the syndicator does not resell your leads to other advertisers. CPL prices that seem too good to be true often are – in a recent test performed a single download of content from a vendor led to 6 different companies reaching out to a lead. The chances of success when immediately competing with 5 other competitors for a lead's attention are slim – making sure the lead is unique to your organization will greatly help your chances of success.

**7****Multichannel Delivery.**

Tried and true marketing best practices are more important than ever in today's complex digital marketing environment. Marketing must understand exactly what kind of leads sales wants. Pricing and goals must be figured out ahead of time. Brand positioning and messaging must be carefully determined. What's different in the digital world is that a growing number of digital channels are competing for mindshare. Figure out which channels you want to focus on—web sites, customer communities, social media, online business networks? What about Internet forums? Blogs, podcasts, video portals, mobile devices, email, or web conferences? Use and develop best practices for traditional marketing functions such as strategy, messaging, and platform development. But also think about content origination, distribution, reach, and response. Finally, the best syndicators will qualify and scrub leads and deliver them seamlessly to your sales team in real time. As always, make sure marketing and sales are tightly synched so follow through occurs in a timely fashion after a prospect has expressed interest in your offering. A great resource for information on sales and marketing alignment is Sirius Decisions.

**8****Lead Nurturing**

Not all of your prospects will be ready to buy when they first encounter your content. Your job is to get their attention and get them thinking. Provide something provocative, and then create a nurturing campaign so the lead can have future value. This is where analytics come in as well—a good syndicator will test and optimize their process to ensure they always reach your customers with the right message at the right time whenever they are online so that you can attend to every level of the sales funnel. Make sure the syndicator offers ways to connect with unresponsive leads that may have connected and disappeared in the past. It is possible to gently nurture leads that have opted out of marketing automation programs in a way that is sensitive and authentic. Take a multi-channel approach to carefully increase your brand's awareness.

In the digital world where people are turning to the Internet to research everything and anything before making a decision, content is terrifically important. In fact, 88 percent of business buyers say that online content has played a major to moderate role in vendor selection<sup>3</sup>. But that doesn't mean it's prudent to begin churning the stuff out willy-nilly. Marketers today must carefully consider not only the content itself, but also the distribution channels and the audience. They need to know how potential prospects prefer to consume content. For example, third party research, analyst reports, and trusted editorial coverage is deemed trust-worthy. Only a dismal nine percent feel that vendor content can be trusted. The good news is, there are many exciting and effective ways to reach potential customers in the digital world. Content syndication is one important way to make sure your brand or offering gets in front of the right people at the right time.

**If you'd like to learn more about how to improve your lead generation strategy, feel free to send us a note at [b2bleads@netline.com](mailto:b2bleads@netline.com), or you can also reach us at 408.340.2200.**

# CONTENT MARKETING:

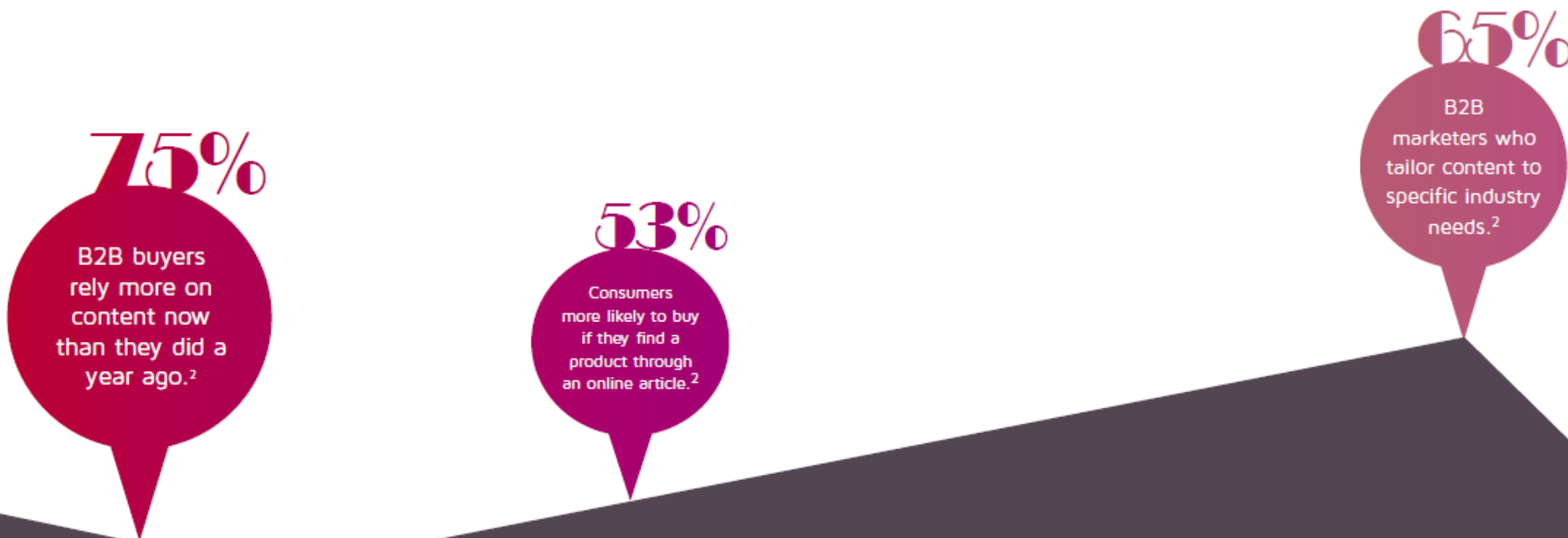
11 STEPS TO ENGAGE,  
ENTERTAIN, AND INFORM.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As a marketing professional, you've heard by now that content is king, and in the ongoing shift to the digital age, this statement has never been truer. Allergic to hard sells and other traditional marketing tactics, today's customers are increasingly turning to digital channels for timely, relevant, and credible information to help them solve a problem or make a decision about a major purchase.

In fact, research from CEB's Marketing Leadership Council shows that potential business customers do not contact suppliers directly until more than half—and in some cases up to 70 percent—of the purchase process is complete. In other words, for nearly two-thirds of the buying cycle, your customers are educating themselves with no input whatsoever from your sales team. They are comparing vendors, reading product reviews, and using their own discernment to make informed purchasing decisions.

It's a paradigm shift in marketing, and it's changing the relationship between businesses and their customers. In this new arena, content marketing is about developing meaningful conversations and relationships with potential customers. If businesses can deliver consistent, valuable information, customers are more likely to reward them with their business and loyalty.



<sup>1</sup> <http://www.executiveboard.com/exbd-resources/content/digital-evolution/pdf/Digital-Evolution-in-B2B-Marketing.pdf>

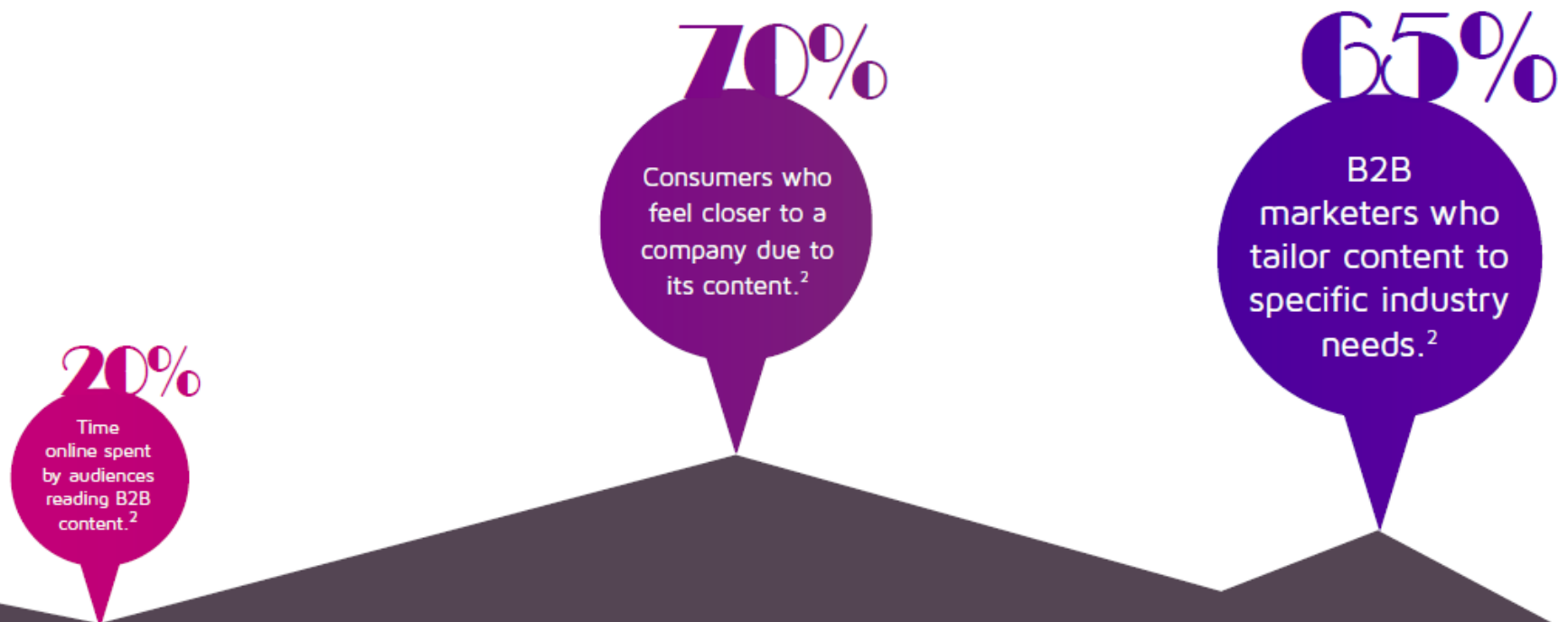
<sup>2</sup> <http://www.dmnews.com>

As a smart marketer, your mandate is to make sure various digital channels are populated with content that educates these potential customers and helps them make a decision. This content can be in the form of video demonstrations and interviews, educational webinars, case studies, white papers, blog posts, and so on. Further, it can be syndicated to related digital contexts as a full article, snippet, link, or thumbnail to ensure more potential customers discover your content.

It's not just any content however that wields this power. To be effective, content must engage, entertain, and inform. Only great content does this, and it comes from the heart. It establishes a direct connection to a reader, via emotion. It offers a story that grabs readers by the lapels and demands their attention.

Great content shows that you understand the customer and their problems and that you want and are able to help them. Freely give away advice and information. If you can address the issues your prospects care most about with a solution or perspective in which your company has real expertise, customers tend to respond positively, becoming loyal supporters, even evangelists.

So, how do you get there? What are the elements of great content? What tactics do successful content marketers employ to achieve this powerful effect? Great content that results in loyal fans can be achieved, if you consistently follow a few rules of thumb.



## START WITH...

1

### **Understanding your customer.**

Envision your ideal customer and think deeply about their problems and challenges. Really put yourself in the reader's spot to understand their position. How do they feel? What do they need? How can you help them now? How can your product or service help them down the road to be more successful, productive, or happy?

2

### **Creating a strategy.**

Create a content marketing strategy that ties directly into your company's overall business strategy. How will your content marketing efforts help you achieve your overall business goals? What is the over-arching story you want to tell? What does your company stand for, and how will your content systematically and consistently convey your values and position? In addition, to a content marketing strategy, craft a content marketing mission statement that takes into account your customers' pain points as well as your desired outcome.

3

### **Maintaining a content editorial calendar.**

A content editorial calendar helps you plan your content for the months ahead, ensuring it reflects your overall business strategy, targets the right audience, and takes into account your contributors, stakeholders, and distribution channels. It can help you coordinate publication with related events and business milestones, provides an opportunity for brainstorming and research, and helps you identify ways to build on or cross-promote existing or future content.

## THEN FOCUS ON...

4

### **Being authentic.**

Great content is original. When you're authentic, you're much more likely to offer a fresh perspective that engages people and arouses their curiosity. Surprise them, touch them, and they'll want to learn more about you. The best way to do this is to believe in your product or service. If you possess an unfailing conviction that you can help the customer, it's easy to demonstrate that you are the expert in your market and can be trusted. Your passion and dedication shine through.

5

### **Telling personal stories.**

Stories are about facing struggles and overcoming challenges. Connect emotionally with your audience using stories about others like them who are struggling with and solving problems. Recount your own experiences or paraphrase those of your customers. By tapping into emotion, good stories build trust and can move people to action. As with any story, make sure you have a beginning, a middle, and an end. Be purposeful, not merely descriptive.

6

### **Writing naturally.**

Be conversational and warm. Write simply. Avoid fancy words and omit anything that is not necessary. Try to tap into readers' emotions. Imagine you're talking to a friend, and write with that kind of ease. Later, you can remove sentences and words that are unnecessary or revise sentences for clarity.

## ENGAGE, ENTERTAIN, AND INFORM BY...

**7**

### **Focusing on one point.**

What is the purpose behind the content you are writing? Are you educating, motivating, or entertaining readers? Determine the key point you want your readers to take away with them after reading your piece. Don't try to do too much. Keep a sharp focus on this objective, and make sure your supporting points all contribute to this one main point.

**8**

### **Using strong headlines.**

Relevant and compelling headlines trigger interest and invite readers in. Many writers write the headline first as an aid to help them structure the rest of the material. Deliver on the promise implied in the headline. Write several possible headlines, and then adjust or combine them to create a winner.

**9**

### **Making your content easy to read.**

Make sure your content is easy to skim. Your reader should be able to glance through the material, understand the main points, and decide whether or not to dig deeper. Use structural elements such as bullets, headings, sub-headings, numbered lists, and bolded call-outs to achieve this.

**10**

### **Including a call to action.**

Everything you write for your customer should have a purpose. What do you ultimately want them to do? Download material? Request a call or demo? Tell them—with short, simple calls to action. Offer links to more information, such as websites, blog posts, articles, or case studies. Deepen the engagement by inviting them to share their thoughts, for example, in a comments section.

**11**

### **Finally, Go the extra mile.**

Don't just be helpful. Be exceedingly so. Start by answering questions about your industry, products, and services, but go further. Give away information and advice. Potential customers sense when you're going the extra mile for them and will reward you with their patronage and loyalty. Once you've gained their appreciation and gratitude, you can deliver your call to action. Chances are, they will listen and respond.

Now that you've crafted compelling content, it's time to make sure that content is working for you as hard as possible through content syndication. By pushing your content out onto related third-party sites, content syndication increases exposure to your brand, boosts traffic to your website, and leverages every possible opportunity to grow your business.

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THE  
**PAINS**  
**+ GAINS**  
OF CONTENT SYNDICATION

NetLine is the leader in online B2B multi-channel content marketing services, providing targeted branding and high quality lead generation. Visit [www.NetLine.com](http://www.NetLine.com) or call 408.340.2200 for more general information.

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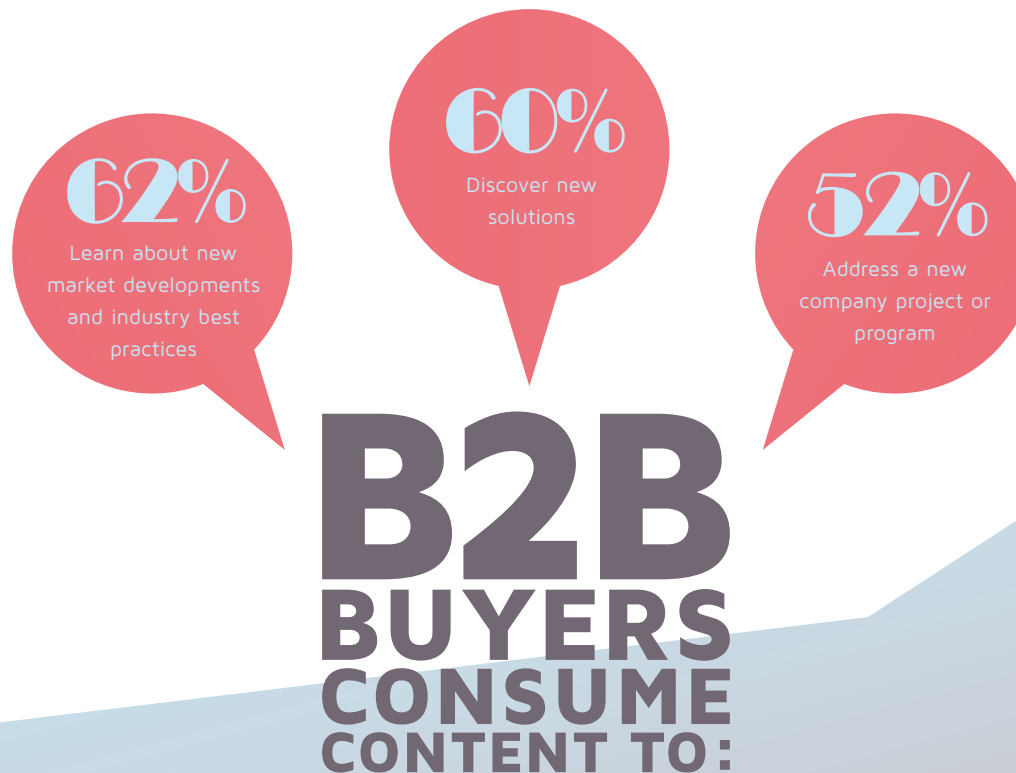


## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

If you're reading this paper, you're probably either already running content syndication programs or considering doing so. This paper addresses some of the pitfalls you may encounter.

Let's start with a brief discussion of what content syndication is. Namely, you create content you wish to use for your marketing and lead generation needs, and then you start figuring out how to get that content in front of your target audience. Your website and email database will help with this, but how do you reach an audience you haven't reached before? This is where content syndication comes in.

You may already be running content syndication programs that have not yet resulted into anything successful. Let's review the common pain points that arise in content syndication campaigns, and then discuss how to resolve them.



# WHAT'S PREVENTING LEAD FLOW SUCCESS?

44%

Content lacks relevance

38%

Lack of content strategy

39%

Leveraging the wrong  
distribution channels

48%

Content isn't developed  
for target audience and  
marketers often meet  
budget limitations

43%

Content isn't reaching the  
right decision makers

Reaching your future customers.

Stats from 2015 CMO Council & NettLine Corp. Study: "Leads Flow That Helps You Grow"

## I'M NOT GETTING ENOUGH NEW LEADS FOR MY SALES TEAM.



### **Pain.**

Leads which are not in your database are commonly referred to as “net-new” leads in the industry. Finding “net-new” prospects means you have to broaden your content reach. While some content syndication services are subscription services with an existing base of readers (narrow reach), others are more broadly focused and therefore syndicate your content on a variety of web properties. It's common for subscription-based content syndication services to offer the same leads to various companies because their readership base stays stagnant.



### **Gain.**

What you're after is an organic, network-based model. Content syndication services that employ this model can typically deliver far more authentic net-new leads to their clients while avoiding audience fatigue.

Beyond the acquisition of true net-new names, organic network-based content syndication partners offer other important benefits. By spreading their reach among hundreds (sometimes thousands) of partner websites, they can contact a far larger audience at the audience's point of interest. In other words, your audience encounters your content through trusted channels when researching and staying on top of changes in their industry.

In addition, a network-based content syndication provider is constantly adding new partners. Thus, their networks keep abreast of consumers' changing interests. This is especially important when it comes to the focused industry audiences you're likely targeting. New communities and thought leaders pop up constantly, and a static database provider has very little chance of reaching those groups or individuals.

**Audience Fatigue** refers to an audience that has been exposed to either a particular piece of content or a brand's content repeatedly to the point that they no longer are interested in downloading the content, potentially resulting in negative perceptions of the content and/or brand.

## I'M NOT REACHING ENOUGH OF THE RIGHT PEOPLE.



### **Pain.**

One of the most common features you'll hear about from every content syndication provider is the scope of their 'reach,' basically how many people they have in their audience (be it via a static database, owned sites, or network-based). Look carefully into the specifics of the reach these companies are touting - and if that reach actually aligns to your lead generation and content syndication needs. For instance, a 10-million person reach sounds impressive, but if 90% of those people are in IT, and all are based in the United States, how will that help you reach the right audience for the new SaaS HR software solution you're expanding to a global market?

Another common issue with assessing the reach of a network, particularly in static databases, is the fact that it is often targeted at a very narrow set of verticals. This can have serious consequences on your campaign's effectiveness. In the example above, we reference the IT focus of an audience. What if your company is offering an HR software solution that would be applicable to literally every industry? Focusing on an IT-dominant audience is not going to have the level of success you're looking for.



### **Gain.**

Be sure to analyze what constitutes those reachable in a content syndication network. Also make sure to understand if the audience is comprised of unique visitors or not? Also assess how often these visitors visit these pages within the network (impressions)? Don't just accept the number as is—analyze the true impact of that 'reach' and assess based on your needs.



### **Pain.**

A common issue within lead generation is that which affects the quality of a lead for a given organization. Because leads are often shared, you're almost guaranteed a slight disadvantage from the get-go no matter how effective your lead generation content syndication campaign. Typically, content syndicators will generate a lead and then sell that lead to four or five different clients, putting you in the position of having to compete with four different companies for that prospect's attention. So, of course this will dramatically lower your chances of qualifying and converting that lead for your business.



### **Gain.**

A good indicator of lead quality is when a content syndication vendor offers you a cost per lead that is drastically lower than the competition. They justify these costs because they are selling the same leads multiple times over, recouping their costs, and exponentially profiting from one single contact. Therefore, make sure to ask your vendors if they sell a lead more than once—they should be able to answer that question right away with no reservations.

## MY SALES ORGANIZATION IS BATTLING COMPETITORS FOR THE LEADS WE DELIVER.

THE LEADS I  
DELIVER AREN'T  
REACHABLE.



**Pain.**

Poor data quality is the leading cause of a successful or unsuccessful lead generation campaigns. It doesn't matter how great your content is, how many people downloaded it, or how targeted your filters are. If the people who download your content input false information and pass your content syndication partner's filters, you're paying for useless data.



**Gain.**

While no data is ever going to be 100% accurate, there are steps you can take to minimize the loss. First of all, inquire as to what steps your content syndication partner has put in place to minimize the delivery of faulty or inaccurate data. Are there algorithms to check the veracity of email addresses, phone numbers, and names?

Your content syndication program will never meet your goals if you're tossing out leads due to data quality issues. Take the necessary steps to ensure the highest level of data quality possible.

I DON'T KNOW HOW  
MY CAMPAIGN IS  
DOING UNTIL THE  
END, AND I DON'T  
KNOW IF THERE  
ARE STEPS I CAN  
TAKE TO IMPROVE  
ITS PERFORMANCE  
UNTIL IT'S OVER.



**Pain.**

While most marketers are quite knowledgeable and adept at content marketing, the fact is that most of us are jacks-of-all-trades and masters of none. Content marketing is but one part of the overall lead generation/demand generation pie that requires a lot of attention and skill. Specifically, measuring the effectiveness of your campaigns can be nearly a full-time job. What's the best way to stay on top of every day campaign performance and ensure that you're regularly optimizing your results?



**Gain.**

By partnering with an organization that specializes in content marketing and lead generation via content syndication, you gain access to their specialized knowledge and resources. If you have extra budget, it is highly recommended to have a dedicated campaign manager monitoring your campaign(s)' efficiency. A campaign manager's sole responsibility should be to suggest improvements to your content and filter adjustments, as well as offer targeting suggestions, and much more. Find a stable, experienced content syndication company that can offer seasoned campaign managers will put your concerns to rest.

MY LEADS DON'T  
GET TO MY SALES  
TEAM FAST ENOUGH



**Pain.**

When you're running a content syndication program, you need to capitalize on the potentially fleeting interest of your prospect. A prospect downloading your content is raising their hand as someone who's interested in you or in what your offering at that moment, but their interest has a time limit. We know that the longer the wait between when a prospect takes action to learn more about you (like downloading a piece of content) and when that prospect is contacted, the lower your sales conversion rate.



**Gain.**

How can you avoid this? With connectors. Data connectors allow for one system to pass on information to the other. A successful content syndication solution should be able to connect lead information to your CRM system directly, in as close to real-time as possible. This will enable your sales team to reach out to a prospect as soon as they download your content. Not every content syndication partner will provide this functionality, but you should insist on it if you're striving to be as successful as possible.

Another option is to quickly nurture your newly generated leads is to establish alerts when new leads are ready to be download. You can then directly communicate to them once you know they're ready to be nurtured.

I WANT TO  
REACH PEOPLE  
ON A VARIETY OF  
CHANNELS, BUT I  
CAN'T MANAGE  
(OR AFFORD) TO  
RUN THAT MANY  
PROGRAMS AT  
ONCE.



**Pain.**

Multichannel delivery is a must in today's marketplace. Put simply, this means that your content is delivered to your target prospects through a variety of channels. A channel could be a website, an email, a LinkedIn group, or a display ad. It's important to insist on multiple channels of delivery because the prospects of today consume and locate content through an ever-growing array of channels. By isolating your program to a single channel (or two), you miss a vast opportunity to reach many new, relevant audiences for your content—and ultimately your business.



**Gain.**

Multichannel delivery need not be prohibitively expensive. Choose a syndicator that automatically offers a large, multichannel network and partnerships. Specifically, make sure they leverage email, multiple websites, webinars, events/conferences, online professional networks, social media, mobile devices, e-newsletters, display advertising, and organizational affiliates to ensure your message gets in front of your audience just when they are searching for information related to your offering.

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