



MARKETING
INSIDER
GROUP

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO CONTENT MARKETING

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WHAT IS CONTENT MARKETING?

Content marketing, when you peel away all the layers of techniques, trends, and possibilities, is a business opportunity. At its core, it's a tool businesses can use for growth.

Unlike other methods, there is something special that makes content marketing stand out as the golden boy of modern marketing. It's sustainable.

When done well – with a strategy behind it and relevancy within each piece – it offers the benefit of exponential growth, building brand awareness and trust, winning over prospects and convincing leads, and endearing your customers, helping to build a loyal base of brand advocates.

Once you get your content marketing strategy going, it's that positive snowball effect in action. Your brand presence gets bigger and more impactful. It becomes easier to achieve your marketing goals with future

content because you already have a foundation in place – a vast content library of written, visual, and experiential content, all designed to resonate with your target buyers.

This is in contrast to traditional marketing. Advertising, even with today's sophisticated digital ads, can create overexposure. Audiences become saturated with brand promotion that offers no genuine value to the people you're trying to build customer relationships with.

As I said a few years ago, [content is](#), "the vehicle that can deliver us from the throes of the 'death by SPAM' illness that still persists in many marketing organizations."

It's the solution to the dwindling impact of traditional marketing techniques. Take advantage of this business opportunity and you have a lot to gain.

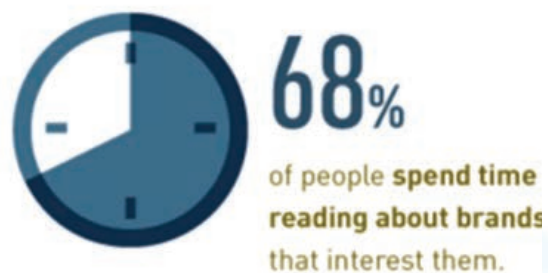
The Business Advantage of Good Content Marketing

So, what exactly does a business have to gain from throwing their weight behind content marketing?

- **Increase in website traffic.** Content Marketing leaders see **7.8 times higher** year-over-year growth in unique site traffic.
- **More leads.** Content marketing garners **3 times as many leads** as paid search for every dollar spent.
- **Thought leadership.** Brands who offer relevant, useful content are

viewed as thought leaders in their industry, which helps to build brand trust and authority.

- **Higher conversion rates.** Organizations who use content marketing see **6 times higher conversion rates**.
- **Leaner budget.** According to Demand Metric, it costs **62 percent less** to launch and maintain a content marketing campaign than any other type of campaign.
- **More attention on your brand.** 20 percent of the time users are on the internet, they're consuming content.



All of these advantages lead up to more sales, an increase in revenue, and more sustainable business growth. But, in order to get a competitive advantage from content marketing, you [need to have a strategy](#). It's not just about pouring buckets of content out, on and offline. It's about using a holistic approach, using different content channels to support one another and maintaining a meaningful brand story throughout.

Take [Demandbase for example](#). They managed \$1 million in new business, not from tons

and tons of content, but from a logical content bundle that included a white paper, infographic, webinar, live presentation and Slideshare. Logalis is another money-winning example.

The business combined emails, a dedicated microsite and an e-book to launch a content marketing campaign aimed at building thought leadership. The result? Close to \$8 million in new leads closed by their sales team.

What Content Marketing Isn't

It's important when using content marketing to understand what content marketing is, versus what it isn't.

What it is.

It's an opportunity for growth through offering quality content that offers value to target buyers. It requires a clearly defined audience and an ongoing analysis of how effective content is at reaching this audience.

It isn't is more 'stuff.'

Where a lot of brands go wrong with content is they fail to get the strategy part, unleashing content campaigns without the direction of where it should take the business to and an understanding for who the content is for.

Without strategy, you may end up with a promotional video, for example, that looks a lot more like a promo ad for your business than content. A promo video, as high-quality as the video production may be, isn't a piece of useful video content designed to resonate with a target group at a specific stage of the buyer's journey, and that is connected to the other content within your strategy.

Content marketing isn't just a business blog.

Content goes far beyond blog posts. It also goes far beyond the digital world. Content is information, but it can be delivered through myriad channels (video, graphics, live events, apps, social media posts, emails). What differentiates this information as content is that it is designed for a specific audience, for a specific purpose.

It's not meaningless.

Think about it. What problem does your Facebook ad solve? How has your company's last AdWords campaign made a positive difference for your customers? Content is supposed to solve a problem. It's this genuine intent to help your customers that offers the authenticity that consumers are so attracted to. Take this one step further, from providing value to your buyer to providing value to society, and you've landed on the future of content marketing – [purpose driven brands](#).

It's not rented space.

Where content stands out is that a brand owns the distribution channels – the website, the in-person events, the social media profiles, the e-book series. Advertising, on the other hand, is rented space – you have to constantly purchase a media channel in order to market.

How the Experts Define Content Marketing

Joe Pulizzi's [Content Marketing Institute](#) defines content marketing as:

"Content marketing is a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience – and ultimately, to drive profitable customer action."

[Neil Patel](#) takes this definition a little deeper:

"[It's] a long-term strategy that focuses on building a strong relationship with your target audience by giving them high-quality content that is very relevant to them on a consistent basis."

And one of my favorites, from [Rebecca Lieb](#) at Conglomotron:

"It isn't advertising. It isn't push marketing, in which messages are sprayed out at groups

of consumers. Rather, it's a pull strategy – it's the marketing of attraction. It's being there when consumers need you and seek you out with relevant, educational, helpful, compelling, engaging, and sometimes entertaining information."

And from yours truly:

It boils down to "delivering the content your audience is seeking in all the places they are searching for it."

So, if you can weave together the endless list of possible content choices and channels, with the strategy that speaks to your audience in the voice of your brand, you know exactly what content marketing is and how to make it grow your business.



WHY CONTENT MARKETING IS IMPORTANT?

Content marketing is important, not just because it works for building trust, generating leads, and cultivating customer loyalty, but because it has become the new normal from the consumer side. It is, in itself, helping to evolve what customers expect from the brands they interact with.

Neglecting it is way more risky than investing in it.

What travel, food, or fashion brand can exist today without a vibrant Instagram page, videos, and a few influencer campaigns?

Software companies have become tech teachers with how-to videos and e-books. Even the financial industry has come up with apps, online knowledge centers, and other tools to help both individuals and business customers better meet their financial goals and to do it with a level of transparency and convenience that was unheard of 15 years ago.

Great content, especially the dynamic, [well thought out strategies](#), are showing consumers they deserve more.

Content Marketing is Too Valuable for Both Consumers and Brands to Ever Go Away

The number one reason that content marketing is important is that your customers appreciate it. Content marketing generates **3 times as many leads** as outbound marketing, drives six times higher conversion rates, and has the potential for a 7.8-fold boost in web traffic.

The reality is, content marketing has fostered the customer-centric reality we're now operating in. From well-researched white papers to podcast series listeners can't live without, content is changing the relationship between the brand and consumer.

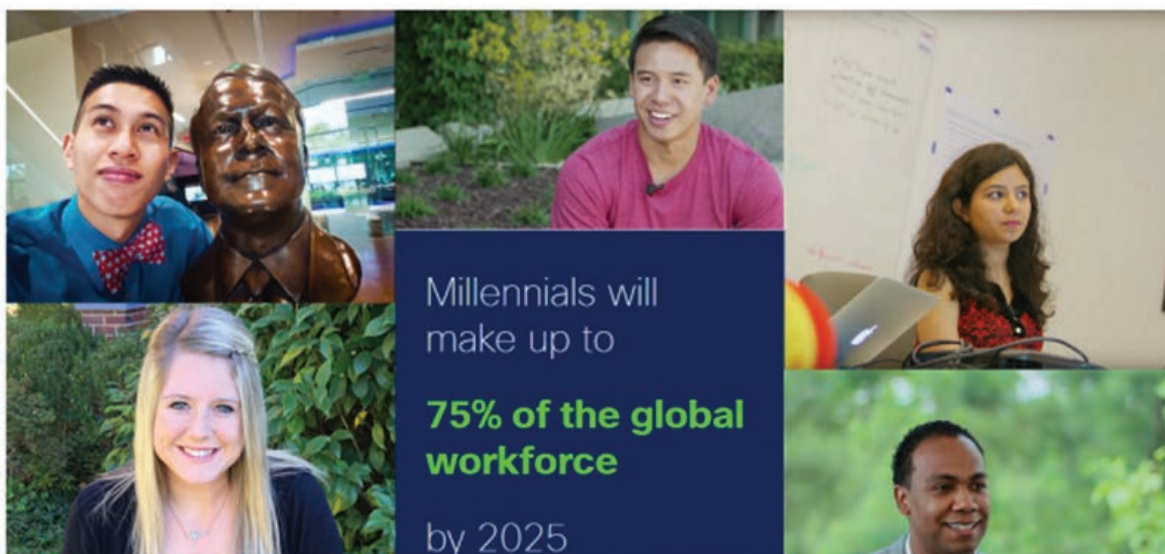
Take, for example, Cisco's content hub, [The Network](#).

It has everything anyone interested in or who works in the tech industry could be interested in:

- A monthly online magazine, FOCUS
- Live@Cisco Facebook videos
- Blog posts on tech news
- Biographies of Cisco's leadership team

They even have an innovative portal for marketing the company's best asset, its employees. Meet Our Millennials serves the triple purpose of empowering employees, attracting new talent, and humanizing the brand for consumers.

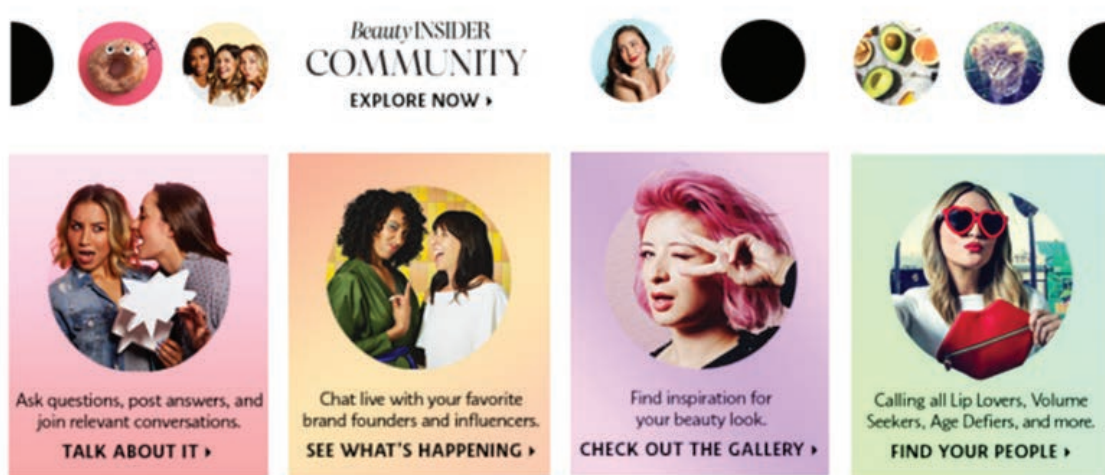
Meet our Millennials



Cisco has been pushing content for years. Under the leadership of CMO Karen Walker, Cisco brought on [200 content marketers](#) back in 2015 and they haven't looked back. In the B2C sector, content marketing is just as important. Look at brands like Nike, which has become way more than a company.

Nike has become a way of life that has inspired generations.

Or Sephora, who have mastered brand community with their content, inviting their audience into an engaging, educational, empowering environment.



Through offering value and meaning, and through giving people an entire ecosystem to tap into for information, guidance, and human connection, content marketing has formed a bridge that consumers want to walk across in order to connect with the brands they like.

There's no going back.

Content marketing started as the alternative to the ad age. Something of a much-needed respite from the over-saturation of magazine ads, promo posters, television commercials, and digital advertising – by 2014, the average person saw [5,000 ads in one day!](#)

But today, almost all marketers use content marketing – [91 percent of B2B marketers](#) and 86 percent of B2C.

And (no surprises here), consumers like it.

Brands who neglect the importance of content marketing today will have to play catch up tomorrow. On the other hand, those who have a content marketing strategy in place are already on the next level – honing their content with better customer data, better technology, and a better developed network, either in-house or outsourced, of content producers.

Through Content Marketing We Learn About Who We Are Marketing To

Another reason content marketing is so important is, it is the secret to understanding our customers. The data we're seeing as people move along the customer journey – engagement rates on social media posts, which videos people watch, which e-books people download, the blog posts they read all the way through and then share with their networks – this is incredibly powerful information for marketers.

By tracking which content is the most successful, we're learning more about our consumers. This gives brands who are heavily in-

vested in content marketing – and who are adept at making sense out of their marketing automation tools and CRM – a huge advantage. With the insights gained, it's possible to:

- Create better buyer persona
- Develop more accurate buyer segments
- Improve personalization – which I truly believe is the foundation of a better customer experience. Hawkeye, a platform that focuses on analyzing content data, calls it content intelligence.



It's taking all the data you get from your content analysis to make a better strategy, and then rinse, cycle, and repeat so you are always improving what you offer, and boosting the impact of your content marketing.

Without the constant influx of data that is specifically related to your brand and your buyers (because it comes from your content marketing strategy), you're missing the philosopher's stone of modern marketing – the knowledge of what resonates with your buyers, right now – the how, who, why, where, and when.

Your Competitors Are Already Using It

And the final reason content marketing is ridiculously important for marketers today – chances are, your competitors are already using it.

If your target audience is already enjoying personalized email messaging and already know they can go to your competitor's site to look up the information they need when they have a question – you're in trouble.

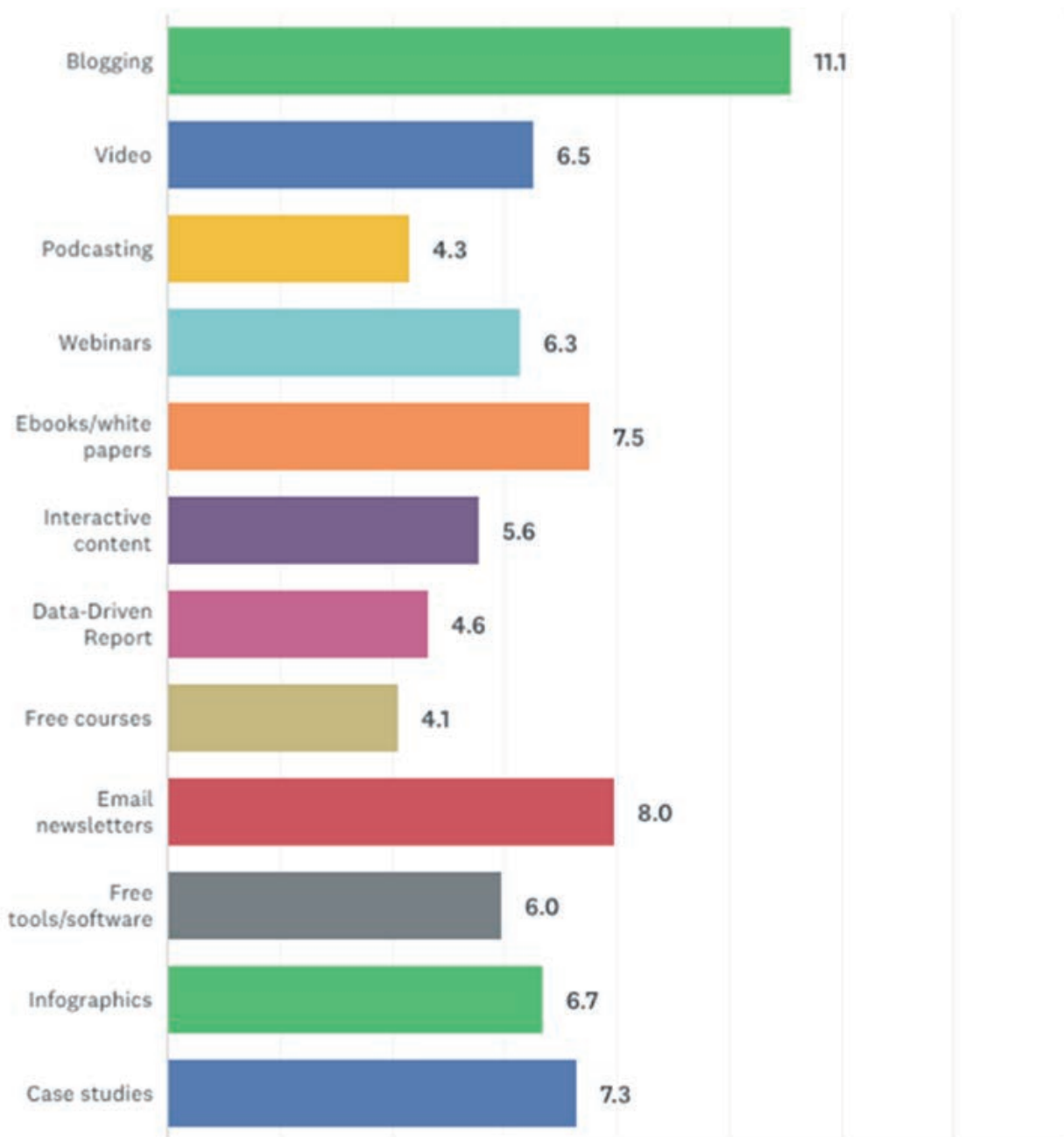
Here's the thing. One of the reasons content marketing is so powerful is that it can be used to establish your brand as a trusted authority in your industry. Which means, it takes time to get your content marketing strategy to make an impact because it takes time to establish a trusted presence.

If your competitors are already sitting on huge online blog libraries, vibrant social media profiles, and are known for their knockout video tutorials and annual marketing events, you've got some catching up to do.

Content marketing is essential to everyone from global organizations with dozens (or hundreds) of content marketers, producers, and analysts on their team, to small companies focusing on their local business. It's not just important. It's critical.

Where should you start?

Here's a look at the types of content experienced marketers are planning to focus on in 2018:



Start with the resources you have. [Create a strategy](#) and commit to a high level of quality and a focused brand message. And then, keep growing your content strategy as you learn more about your customers, engage with them, and build the bridge between your brand and the people your business exists for.



HOW TO GAIN BUY-IN FOR CONTENT MARKETING?

You know how powerful content marketing is for brand awareness, lead nurturing, and building lasting relationships with your customers. So do the [91 percent of B2B marketers](#) who are using content marketing today.

But, chances are, your organization's executive team isn't as excited about your

content marketing efforts as you are. While content marketing budgets have been blossoming in recent years – the industry is expected to reach \$300 billion by 2019 – in-house marketing professionals still struggle to get the support they need.

According to MarketingMag.com, content marketing will be a **\$300 billion** industry by 2019 – this means it will **more than double** in under four years.



It's not just about securing the budget and resources you need. Just as important are factors like:

- Internal cooperation across departments
- Room to experiment and make mistakes without fear of your content marketing budget getting slashed

- The [engagement of the company's internal experts](#) – bringing employees into your content marketing strategy is a rising trend in content you don't want to get left behind on

So, how can you get the internal buy-in for content marketing?

Start With A Strategy

To convince your customers they will benefit from your product or service, what's always your first step?

You have to educate your buyers about the value of what you are selling with a smart content strategy. Take this same approach when selling content marketing to your organization's decision and budget makers. Educate them on the importance of content marketing – with content.

So, get in the shoes of your audience just like

you would when you create your buyer persona.

- What are the pain points, hesitations, and goals of your organization's executive team?
- What information – relevant statistics, industry examples, in-house content analytics – do they need to see to understand the value of your content marketing?
- What channels will resonate the most, for example, what presentation format

will work? How can you quickly update upper management on the worth of your content with [ROI analytics](#) on an ongoing basis to keep them motivated?

- When are they going to be the most open to paying attention?

The secret to gaining buy-in for content marketing is to demonstrate its worth with a

solid strategy rather than a pile of stats and examples that aren't really connected.

Think through how all the information you present builds your case and works together to make your point.

Here's what you may want to include in your strategy.

Show The Potential Of Content With Examples

Don't expect every member of your organization's leadership team to fully understand just how intense and dynamic content marketing can be, or even how it works.

There are still people who assume content marketing starts and ends with blog articles and social media, which makes it difficult to be inspired by your content marketing efforts or to be motivated enough to up your budget or encourage employee engagement company-wide.

So, take them on the content journey:

1. Demonstrate the different types of content.

When C-suite sees the full range, from thought-provoking blog posts that establish your brand as an industry thought leader to experiential campaigns that can change the perception of the brand in the minds' of consumers, they're more likely to be interested in offering support.

You can use industry examples of some of the best interactive videos, brand communities, user-generated social media campaigns, white papers, live events, and other types of content you already use or plan on using. To be more illustrative, have plans ready to show what you already do with various types of content as well.

2. Put it all together.

The best content marketing threads together all the moving parts with cohesive messaging, consistency, and a holistic strategy. Each piece builds up, supports, or furthers the rest, creating in sum, a content marketing machine.

When convincing C-suite, explain how all your content works together as part of an overall strategy. Give them an [example of a brilliant strategy](#) in your industry. Also, map out the one you have ready so they walk away with a clear idea of how sophisticated and effective your content marketing can be.

Then Give Them The Data To Back-up Your Examples

When you are vying for at least 40 percent of the overall marketing budget – which the Content Marketing Institute's research reveals is the baseline for successful B2B

marketing – you'll need to offer some solid numbers to verify all the potential you just demonstrated.



This means sharing [key industry statistics](#) to show how effective content marketing is at achieving marketing goals at each stage of the buyer's journey:

Increasing website traffic and generating leads – companies that blog at least 15 times per month get 5 times more website traffic than companies that don't. Companies with an active blog generate 97% more leads on their site than businesses who don't have a blog.

Boosting conversions and sales – Conversion rates are 105 percent higher for consumers who interact with ratings and product reviews. Leads who receive email marketing

messages spend 83 percent more when making purchases.

Building customer relationships – 70 percent of consumers prefer getting to know a company with articles instead of ads. 78 percent of consumers believe brands with custom content are interested in building relationships with them.

You also want to clearly demonstrate the historical ROI of your own content marketing. What are your organization's marketing priorities this year? Focus on these goals when using [your metrics](#) to show how effective your content marketing has been.

Make Technology A Part Of The Conversation

Tools that make once budget-prohibitive tasks like video production and personalization possible have really evolved the scope of what content marketers can do today. It's definitely worth including the power of technology in the content you present to upper management.

[Marketing automation](#). Interactive user interfaces. Cost-effective tools to help with

content creation, from high-quality live video streaming to e-book creation and infographics.

What tools are you using now? How have they allowed you to reduce costs and do way, way more? How can investing in new technology empower your content marketing strategy even more?

Blow Them Away

Let's be honest. Content marketing is pretty magnificent. When you look at how much this field of marketing has evolved and how much it has changed relationships between brands and buyers, and now, between employee, company, and customers with the thrust towards employee activation, the argument for content marketing goes much deeper than how effective it is, or how much it's worth to a company.

It's the way your brand comes alive to customers. Your organization's content market-

ing strategy defines your brand to your audience.

So, to get C-suite to support your strategy and goals, make sure they know that by supporting content marketing, they're deciding the role your brand plays in the future of your niche. Hero, teacher, helper, guide – or generic business. It's content that makes the difference.



HOW TO CREATE AN EFFECTIVE CONTENT MARKETING STRATEGY

Build a plan. Create your content. Publish, measure, refine, repeat.

Seems straightforward enough. But this is the bare bones of content marketing. [It's creating a plan, not a strategy](#) and it's missing out on the impact potential of a goal-focused, personalized, purposeful approach to your brand's content.

It's one thing to have an appealing, educational lineup of blog posts, video content, infographics, white papers, and social media content. It's a whole other science to make

all these pieces come together and take on a life of their own, manifesting a walking, breathing force that is able to impact your marketing goals and drive business growth in the long term.

Once you get going with content marketing and finding your stride, you'll want to up the sophistication level of your strategy to get more of an impact. Use these principles, the 3 P's of effective content marketing, to evolve your strategy from 'well, it exists but why haven't we boosted our revenue yet?' to 'wow, what's next?'

Priorities

In order to reach the right target at the right time with the right content, you need to identify what's driving your content marketing strategy by identifying the why behind your strategy.

Define your strategy's driving force, focusing on one or two priorities. Sure, every business wants their content marketing to increase website traffic, generate quality leads, boost brand awareness, improve customer loyalty, and every other marketing goal in the book. The inevitable mindset with this 'all of the above' approach is to create great content and then achieve a little bit of everything as a result. You may get some of your KPI's to hit their targets, but the real and sustainable impact isn't there.

With effective content marketing, it's the priority goals that drive the strategy. The "plan first, results later" approach gets turned inside out. You need the desired results – the most important why or why's of your content marketing strategy – for fuel, inspiration, and direction. They drive the strategy.

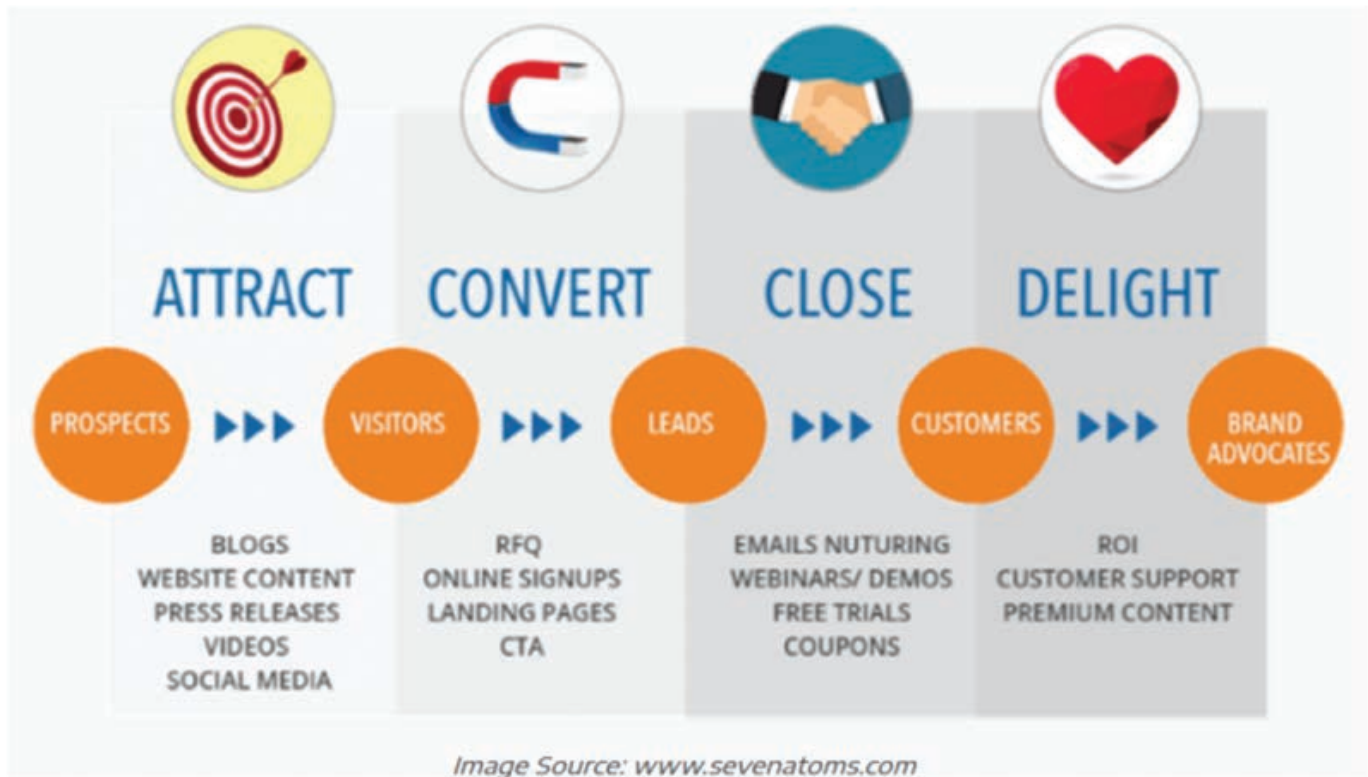
This is how you get that magnificent self-perpetuating achievement you see with brands like Dropbox, Blue Apron, and Zendesk.

So, what should you focus on?

Don't look for the priorities that will yield the most impressive content marketing ROI numbers, but rather the ones that are aligned with business goals. Of course, all points along the buyer's journey matter all the time, but you need to hone in on which one is the most critical right now based on business needs. Where is your organization struggling? For example:

- New service or other change you want customers to know about? Generate web traffic and fire up your social media platforms.
- A growth plateau? Then focus on getting better quality leads.
- Limited market reach? Then look to brand awareness and thought leadership.
- Plagued by low engagement numbers? How is your content working to improve the customer experience?
- Not getting repeat business or is your brand advocacy limited to an army of one? Your strategy should focus on customer loyalty and retention.

Here's the thing. When you laser focus on one part of the buyer's journey, you aren't neglecting the rest. What you're doing is laying the groundwork for the other priorities.



Then, when you come around to the beginning of the funnel again or when you tailor your strategy to focus on one stage to the next, you're already set up to create an even more effective strategy because your organization has more content marketing experience and (hopefully) resources.

- Better quality content production
- More sophisticated use of technology
- Better informed metrics

And, more confidence – and organizational support – to push boundaries and be a content marketing innovator in your industry

Personalization

In 2015, [Gartner predicted](#) that companies heavily invested in personalization would outsell their competitors who lack personalization by 20 percent. Today's content marketers need to be thinking personalization when developing their strategy. Personalized email offers, content sequencing, product suggestions, landing pages, and other types of personalized content are what customers expect today.

With the help of the right marketing automation platforms, marketers are using machine learning and predictive analytics to tailor content for both individuals and buyer segments, which creates a better experience.

Let's face it, customers are more likely to walk away and write your brand off in their minds if they are exposed to one or two pieces of content that aren't relevant to them. With so much content out there today, only what really matters to them will get any attention. In one Marketing Insider Group and OneSpot survey, [45 percent of consumers](#) said they won't spend time with a brand that's not relevant to their interests. 42 percent are less interested in a brand's products or services if the brand's content isn't personally relevant.

Write personalization into your content marketing strategy. This means looking at your [marketing technology](#) to make sure you are capable of offering better personalized content. It also means getting personal and taking the time to understand customer needs through both customer data and old school feedback.

[Ann Handley](#), Chief Content Officer at Marketing Profs shares a great example of a small business that's mastered content simply by asking their customers questions and creating content specifically for his audience.

She says, "Yale Appliance redeployed almost all of its marketing budget away from advertising. His [Steve Sheinkopf] content strategy has been extremely effective, and he's done it by simply answering his audience's questions ... The reason why he's killing it is he looks at his data, he figures out what his audience needs, and he creates content that meets his audience's needs."

Purpose

And the final P for effective content marketing – purpose. Why does your brand exist?

I talked about this concept years ago, sharing Simon Sinek's amazing Ted Talk on [how important the purpose is](#) of your business to your customers, something a lot of brands overlook.

You need to get this higher purpose across in your content.

- What purpose does your business have – how is it impacting society?

- What are the values of your brand?
- How can your products and services make your customers' lives better?
- How does your vision differentiate your business from your competitors?
- And – where is it headed? What role will your business play in the future of society?

Here's an excellent video of Steve Jobs talking about brand purpose for Apple.



He says, "But even a great brand needs investments in caring if it's going to retain its relevance and vitality." He goes on to explain how the way to do that isn't to tell people your mission statement or your brand vision, but rather to evoke awareness of who you are through your content. Like Nike, "They honor great athletes and they honor great athletics. That's who they are."

What is the core, the archetypical belief that drives your brand? It's there if you don't know it already. You may have to dig deep for it, do a little organizational soul-searching. But, that's what your customers will not just be motivated to connect with, but will desire to be a part of. And that's really effective content marketing.



HOW TO BUILD A KILLER CONTENT MARKETING TEAM

Those spellbinding content marketing strategies – the ones that have catapulted startups into industry dominance and made decades-old brands more relevant than ever – they are not the product of a single creative genius.

Nope. It's not a brilliant content creator or a flash of wisdom few of us can ever hope to attain.

It's a hard-working, experienced content marketing team. A group of experts, each who excel in their area of content market-

ing and, at the same time, who understand how the whole puzzle comes together.

That's how you get what [Jolie Miller](#), content strategy and acquisitions leader at LinkedIn, calls great content. The stuff that “has the power to change people's lives for a second or for days or forever.”

So, who should be in the starting lineup for your killer content marketing team? Here's what you should look for when putting together your brand's dream team.

The Content Marketing Editor (Storyteller + Strategist)

When it comes to pulling off a revenue-boosting content marketing strategy, you'll need an editor with experience and acumen in both refining content and in content creation. They have to be better at content creation than your copywriters, illustrators, and video producers in order to know how to improve what your creators are making.

Ideally, they'll have copywriting experience and will have at least worked with other types of professional content creators. This will have helped them develop an eye and understanding for what premium content entails.

A content editor is also tasked with making sure content is high-quality and strategic. So, they'll need to balance an eye for detail and an ability to see the overall picture, ensuring each piece of content is playing its part correctly within the whole.

Think of your content editor as a conductor in an orchestra. You may have a stage filled with skilled musicians. But the conductor is the one who brings out the magic in each of them. Good editors know how to do this with all of your content, ensuring each piece fits within the orchestra with the right tone of voice and staying true to the brand story. While also conveying the right message.

With a strong content marketing editor, your organization's content will be:

- Consistent – in style and tone
- Top quality – this includes in the eyes of customers and search engines
- Strategic – your editor will work with the rest of your content marketing team to make sure each piece supports and is supported by the rest to create a seamless experience for customers

The Content Marketing Manager (Business Strategist + Visionary)

Your content marketing manager is the one who brings your content strategy down to earth, from brilliant creation to relevant, effective revenue driver. They know how to translate content into growth.

This is the person who's in charge of aligning the strategy with business goals and keeping everyone on task with reaching your des-

ignated key performance indicators. And, they know how to do it within a budget.

Here's the thing. There are as many content opportunities as there are stars in the sky. Influencer campaigns on LinkedIn or Instagram. Live events that invite customers into your brand's community. Customer profile videos. Educational blog series.



Deciding which content is the most appropriate for the brand, based on business objectives and budget, falls on the shoulders of the content marketing manager. They can look ahead and see how plugging all the different types of content, style choices, campaigns, and other factors into the equation will yield a solid ROI.

This individual knows the strengths and weaknesses of each channel and works closely with your content analytics head to ensure your strategy is pulling its weight and is knocking your content marketing goals out of the park.

Use this detailed look at the job description and job requirements for your content marketing manager hire to help you find someone with the right background.

The Content Distribution Manager (Channel Master + Workflow Organizer)

Today, the way to effectively resonate with your target buyers is to get the right content to the right target, through the right channel, at the right time. Which is a nice way of saying a lot of thought, research, data, and calculation goes into every single distribution maneuver.

Easier said than done.

Don't panic. This is your content distribution manager's bread and butter. They are the ones who will:

- Manage the content calendar
- Have the content ideas set up or create them themselves
- Ensure the content creators are getting everything done on schedule

Your distribution manager will also be managing the controls – your marketing automation software, content management software, and any internal workflow tools your organization uses.

Content Analytics & Optimization (Data Scientist & SEO Wizard)

Here's your content marketing team's data guru. The greater the background they have in data science, not just SEO, the better.

Your analytics expert will keep track of what content is performing well and what's falling short. This is the individual that makes sure all the other people in your team aren't working in the dark because they have accurate, in-depth data analysis to offer-up those must-have ROI and content performance insights.

Ideally, they'll also be able to help your

team get more out of your marketing software. Your brand will benefit from someone who knows how to use AI to get your team to the level where you are using predictive and [prescriptive analytics](#) to inform your marketing decisions.

They'll also be in charge of staying up-to-date with SEO trends and making sure your content is as search-engine friendly as possible. Technical SEO is still the backbone of your content marketing – unless you don't want anyone to see it.

Tap Into An Endless Sea of Content Contributors

And, the final essential for your content marketing team – your [advocate army](#). Your target buyers are some of your most powerful content creators. As are your own [internal experts](#). These people have their own social media networks. But, more importantly, they aren't your brand.

Only about [22 percent of brands are trusted by consumers](#). But 83 percent of consumers trust their peers over a brand's messaging. Your customers and your engaged employees offer something your branded content can't ever pull-off, no matter how well-intentioned. Authenticity.

You can bring on the most experienced and skilled team of content managers, editors, analysts, SEO experts, and creators. But your content marketing strategy won't have much mojo if you don't have a plan for motivating and inviting your brand advocates to be a part of your team as well.

Pull all these elements together – your internal content marketing management team, content creators, and brand advocates – and your organization is on its way to the type of content marketing that has made this industry the [\\$300 billion dollar industry](#) that it is today.



HOW TO DEFINE & MEASURE THE ROI OF CONTENT MARKETING

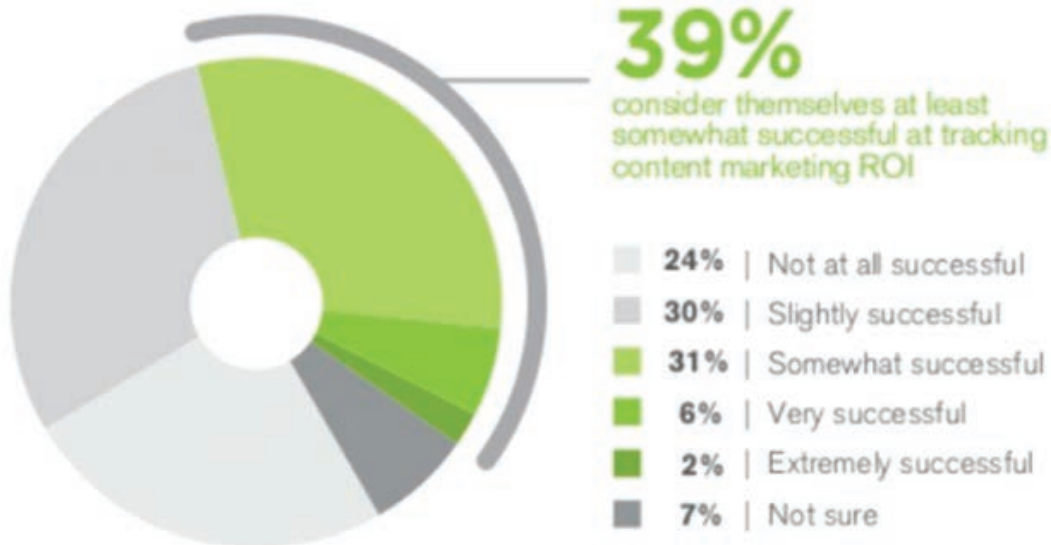
There are two huge pitfalls when it comes to establishing how your organization will define and measure the ROI of your content marketing.

- One, getting lost in the numbers, focusing on too many key performance indicators and making it hard to get a clear picture of the impact your content is making.
- Or, two, focusing on the wrong indicators to measure ROI for your business.

A lot of marketers struggle with ROI tracking. According to a B2B Content Marketing Report published by the Technology Marketing Community on LinkedIn, [38 percent of marketers](#) cite measuring content effectiveness as one of their greatest challenges.

Only 8 percent consider themselves very or extremely successful at tracking ROI.

Content marketing ROI proves to be difficult to measure. Only 39 percent consider themselves at least somewhat successful at tracking ROI.



However, being in that 8 percent offers a powerful advantage. When you can successfully define and measure content marketing ROI you are armed with the information you need to keep improving your content marketing strategy so it's always working.

Here's the tricky part – there are a lot of moving pieces involved in a great strategy. A lot of these factors change over time, putting your content marketing in a constant

state of evolution. Customer preferences. SEO best practice. [New technology](#). Video trends.

In order to optimize your content marketing strategy and maintain enviable performance levels, you'll need continual feedback and analysis of your content. But more than that, you'll need clarity from your numbers.

Define the Purpose of Your ROI

Before identifying your top priorities and defining your metrics, you need to look at the purpose behind the work.

Why are you measuring content marketing ROI?

The answer to this question is often the root of a misguided tracking strategy. If you are defining your ROI metrics solely to demonstrate results and to justify your organization's content marketing budget, you may get a confusing picture when you try to look at your analysis to determine what's working, what's not, and how you can make your content marketing strategy better.

When there is a lot of pressure on content marketing managers to demonstrate value, there's the risk of honing in on vanity metrics. Take web traffic as an example. In the same survey mentioned earlier, of 600 B2B respondents, 63 percent measure web traffic to gauge content marketing success. Only 26 percent look at subscriber growth and 21 percent look at revenue. Web traffic is a useful number to look at if you are

trying to build your audience. It can also be an impressive figure to show off to budget decision makers.

But if you aren't looking at how many of those website visitors are converting into leads or customers, your web traffic numbers create a very blurry picture. You know people are visiting but you don't know if your content is compelling enough to motivate action so you don't know if or how it needs to change.

Yes, there's pressure on content marketers to prove the resources invested in case studies, videos, blog posts, infographics, social posts and other pieces of your content puzzle are well spent. But you don't want to miss out on the opportunity to uncover those hidden gems that will paint a crystal clear picture of what your content marketing is doing.

When you are using your metrics to inform your strategy more than your budget, you're going to get the insights you need to keep making it better.

Simplify the Value of Content Marketing for “Outsiders”

Instead of measuring content just to justify it, you can use cost tracking to make the value of your content marketing black and white to C-suite with one simple analysis. Then, you can spend more of your ROI bandwidth on metrics that matter.

Keep track of how much each piece of content you product costs. If you're outsourcing, you may have straightforward expenses for some of your content. Don't forget to also include the time spent by your team editing, managing, and promoting the content.

If you don't have the resources for this type of heavy cost analysis, you can audit some of your content. For example, what are your total content costs in a month or what's the average for three months? Then, you can look at your costs and revenue to determine your content marketing ROI.

Once you have this baseline, compare it to your organization's marketing ROI for targeted advertising. This can be a helpful comparison to gain support from executive management so you can go back and focus on measuring content performance.

Be Strategic About Defining Your Metrics

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Be Strategic About Defining Your Metrics

There are dozens of performance indicators you can look at to track your content ROI.

KPIS BY CATEGORY

Marketing	Email	SEO	Pay-per-click	Social Media	Website
Cost per acquisition	Open rate	Sales	Cost per click	Amplification rate	Website traffic
Market share	Conversion rate	Leads	Click-through rate	Applause rate	Unique visitors
Brand equity	Opt-out rate	Conversion rate	Ad position	Followers and fans (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest)	New vs. returning visitors
Cost per lead	Conversion rate	Visits	Conversions	Conversion rate	Time on site
Conversion rate	Subscribers	Time on site	Conversion rate	Landing page conversion rate	Average time on page
Click-through rate	Churn rate	Time on page	Cost per conversion	Return on engagement (ROE)	Bounce rate
Page views	Click-through rate	Landing pages	Cost per sale (CPS)	Post reach	Exit rate
Bounce rate	Delivery rate	Keyword rankings	Return on ad spend (ROAS)	Klout score	Page views
Share of voice (SOV)		Page views	Wasted spend		Page views per visit
Online share of voice (OSOVS)		Bounce rate	Impressions		Traffic sources
		Indexed pages	Quality score		Geographic trends
		Increase in non-branded search traffic	Total spend		Mobile visitors
		Increase in branded search traffic			Desktop visitors
		Referring websites (backlinks)			Visits per channel
		Domain authority			
		Page authority			



Performance metrics will reveal what you need to know, as long as you tie them to your business goals. Which means you aren't going to focus on the same metrics all the time. As your business goals and, therefore, your content marketing priorities change, so will the numbers you use to gauge performance. The trick is to make sure your defined metrics are always telling your content's story.

- For example, if you are trying to build your audience, sure, look at web traffic. You also want to know your brand's share of the conversation and social media sharing, bounce rate and time on site. This will give you a better idea of engagement and how much your content is king in your industry.
- If your business needs better-qualified leads and conversions, your content strategy will probably focus on creating case studies, white papers, e-books, and other content that motivates people to subscribe to your newsletter. This is where you'll look at both your conversion numbers for your content as well as customer retention numbers. How long are the leads you work so hard to nurture with your content staying as customers?
- For customer loyalty, the focus will be on retention as well as monitoring customer feedback. How much of a response are you getting and what is the qualitative response to your content? What percentage of people respond favorably to your social posts, blog posts, white papers, videos, events or other types of content?

Set Your Benchmarks

Once you have your current priorities set and you know what metric data to focus on, you can create your performance benchmarks. What does content marketing success look like for your organization? Being able to measure against your benchmarks makes it easier to see if your content is helping to reach goals or if it needs work.

Then, when you calculate the ROI of your content by looking at your costs vs. revenue (or a given value for an action if you can't tie a metric directly to revenue), you can see where things are working and where you need to make changes to either the content or a part of your strategy.

This is why tracking your ROI with the intent of informing your content is so important. When you can see where one content channel is experiencing higher than normal conversion numbers, where another seems to lead to an apparent dead end landing page, what types of your content are making up the bulk of your industry presence, and every other pearl of wisdom you dictate your data to tell you—you have a wealth of information to constantly refine your strategy.

And, never-ending refinement is what brilliant, business-boosting content strategies are made from.



WHERE TO BUILD YOUR CONTENT HUB

One way to make your content marketing more effective and to make your best content more accessible is to build a content hub. Your hub acts as your content's online repository. It's a sort of branded resource center or command central for your thought leadership.

With a hub, not only can your audience delve deeper into your online content library because your top blogs, videos, case studies and more are clearly organized on one page or microsite, but you also have more control over how you want to guide your brand's voice in the industry conversation.

For example, you can create a broader context for each piece of content, which gives all your content more meaning. That thought-provoking blog post on the latest

industry research offers a whole other level of value when placed next to a how-to video that shows your customers how to apply these new research insights.

It's the central location where your whole content marketing strategy comes together in one neat, attractive, thoughtfully put together place, which exists....well that's the challenge. The where of your content hub is a big deal.

Should it be part of your website? Or should it be a standalone entity?

Getting the 'where' part right will dictate how easily your audience can find your content hub. It also dictates the impression your hub makes.

The Pros of Building Your Content On Your Website

There are major advantages to creating a content hub on your website. It's like doing a home extension project versus building a separate ADU on your property. It's easier, more streamlined and it's connected to your products or services.

SEO

This advantage works both ways. The dynamic appeal of your hub's media mix will boost your website's SEO. At the same time, you won't have to start from the ground up to generate traffic and optimize a separate site for your content hub because your website's users can stay on your site to explore the hub.

Lower resource commitment

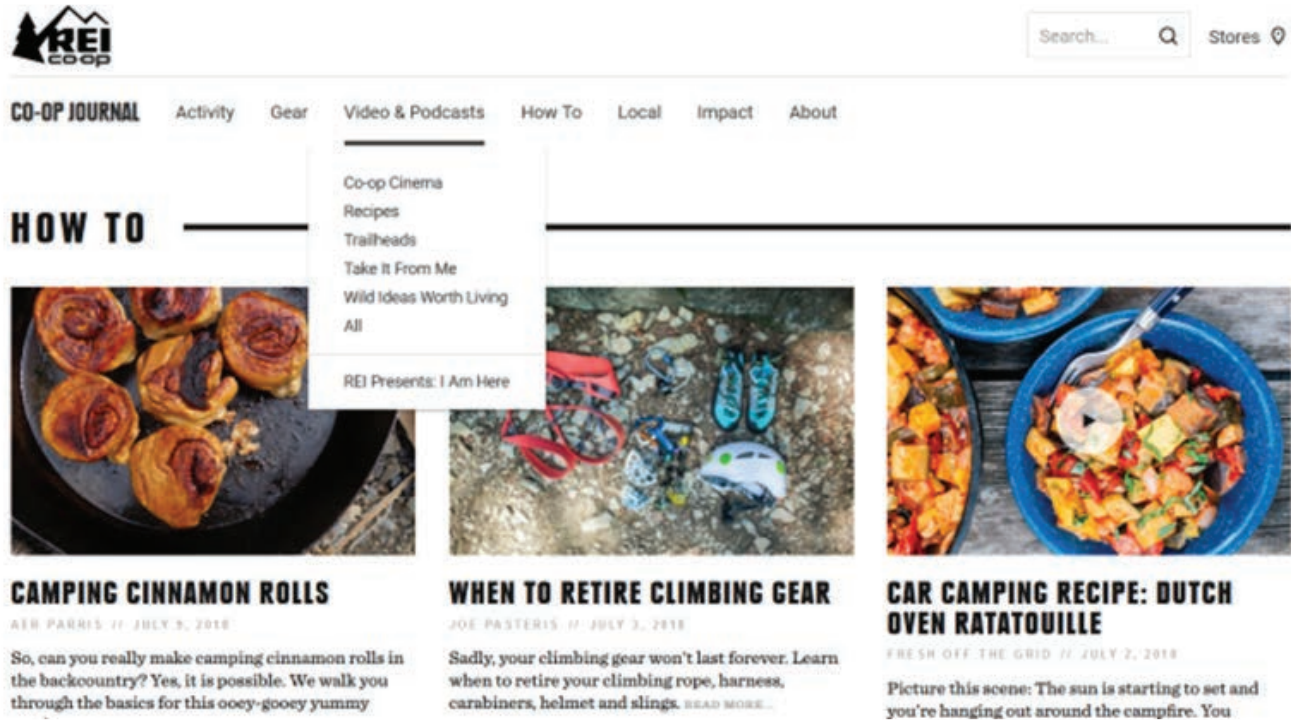
With limited resources, it's a lot easier to build upon the website you already have than to create a standalone hub, promote it, optimize it, and make it into its own worthwhile online hot spot for your audience. This makes building onsite appealing to smaller businesses who don't have the resources to create and cultivate a separate online entity.

Streamlined analytics

Your content hub will give you a lot of analytics as it tracks the way users interact with your hub's content. When it's an extension of your corporate website, this data can be streamlined with your other website data, giving you a clearer picture of your audience instead of having to differentiate between the two different sources of content data – and possibly, different buyer segments (unless that's exactly what you are going for).

On-site hubs elevate the overall website, making it a greater source of value for your buyers and a more attractive destination. With smaller companies or if your hub is clearly aligned with the ideas, value propositions, and has the same SEO and target market you're appealing to (and learning about through analytics), building your hub as just one more destination on your website makes a lot of sense.

[REI's content hub](#) is an excellent example of a successful onsite hub.



When visitors click on the tab for REI's CO-OP Journal, they stumble into a sea of well-organized content. The hub is user-friendly as it's divided into multiple topics and subtopics – activities, gear, how-to's, and local content. REI clearly positions themselves with their hub as an ultimate source of outdoor enthusiasts and adventurers. But it also uses the space to connect visitors with branded content that really drives home the REI story, which

they may not have originally sought out, like their content surrounding sustainability and social responsibility and REI's unique series – Take It From Me and Wild Ideas Worth Living.

REI's content hub has enough complexity to deserve a microsite. But why take your audience to a different site when your products are a click away from inspiring content?

The Pros of Building A Standalone Content Hub

As practical as building your content hub on your site is, there are situations where it makes more sense to create a standalone content hub.

When your big company is also slow to adapt

Depending on your organizational structure, keeping your hub separate may be a smarter strategy. For example, in larger companies where there is a lot of red tape to make anything happen to the website, it may be wiser to let the content marketing team work at its pace to build an unfettered content hub.

When your hub itself is too big

One of the reasons to build a hub for your content in the first place is to improve the customer experience. Hub visitors can quickly access the information they want and can see, at a glance, related content they may be interested in. If your hub is loaded with different types of content, combined with different landing pages to pick up subscribers, event registrants, webinar sign-ups, podcast followers, and more, then your hub may need a home of its own. This allows you to create a better user experience and to

better control the way visitors interact with your content.

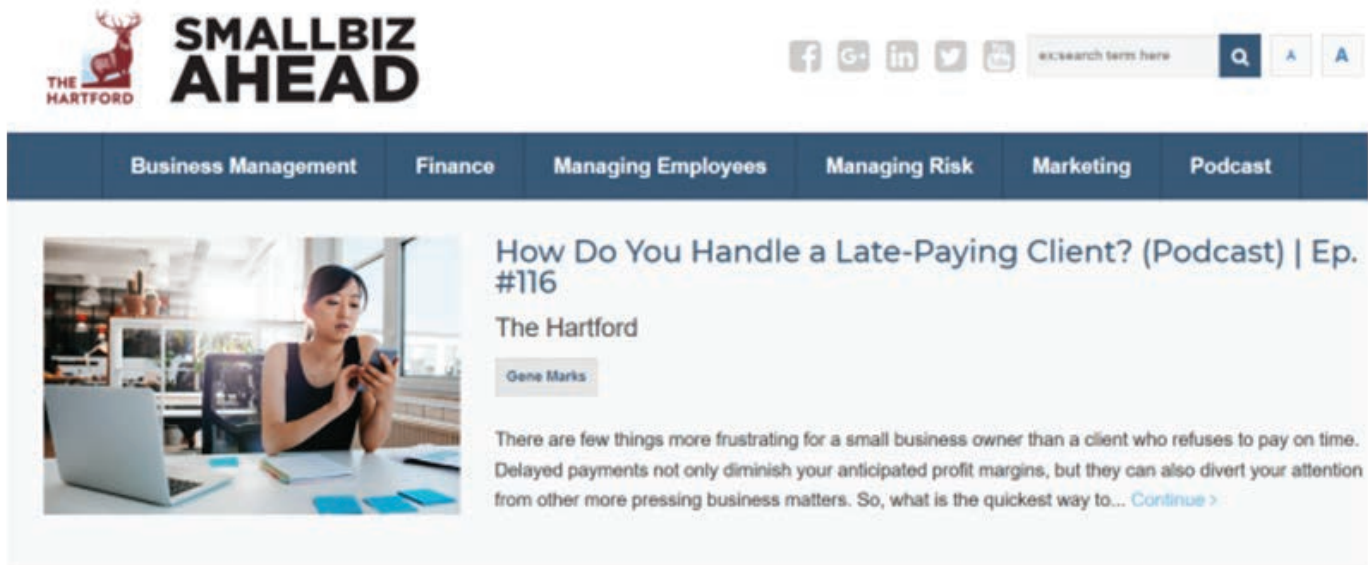
To differentiate sales and content

When your content hub is all about establishing industry authority, it can be smart to make a standalone hub. This allows you to keep the sales pitch a mile away from the thought leadership articles, content created by your employees, curated content, and other content that is focused more on the message than the actual company.

To reach a new or specific audience

A separate microsite gives your content marketing the ability to take off in a new and exciting direction because it's somewhat removed from the brand's online corporate base. This also makes it a smart move if you want your hub to cater to a specific buyer segment.

The Hartford Financial Services has a dedicated content hub for targeting small business owners. SmallBiz is packed with helpful articles on topics small business owners and entrepreneurs would be interested in, as well as a SmallBiz podcast.



This how having a separate content resource center makes more sense. It appeals directly to a certain segment, creating a better experience for these viewers. This also

makes it easier to generate leads as the entire hub directs viewers to one primary action – to sign up as a subscriber.

The Content Hub Location Checklist

When deciding where to build your content hub, you can use this checklist summarizing TriComB2B's Chris Eifert's advice to help narrow down what online space makes more sense for your brand and your content marketing strategy.

If your goal is...

- SEO, then using your corporate website is better
- Objectivity and authenticity, then a stand-alone hub is better
- To quickly create a site and you don't have time for website bureaucracy, go

for standalone

- The best user experience, then stand alone is usually better, although a great user experience can work on the corporate website
- Lead generation, then standalone is usually more effective

Add to this list, these factors:

- Limited resources or small market presence, business website wins
- Planning on creating one or more hubs for different segments, opt for stand alone.

Make Your Content Hub Strategic

When you have a solid content marketing strategy, your content hub is what can bring it all together for your audience. It also creates a central platform for sharing the strategy – inviting hub visitors to more than a blog post or a video but the whole pie, all in one, convenient location. It gives you more space to get your brand story clearly across than a single piece of content, and more opportunity to show your buyers just how useful your content – and by extension, your brand – can be in their lives.



HOW MUCH BUDGET DO YOU NEED FOR CONTENT MARKETING?

You know your content marketing strategy will positively impact your marketing goals and business bottom line. But, how much budget do you need to make sure your content marketing is effective enough?

There are two perspectives when it comes to the content marketing budget:

- Invest more and gain more – The more layered, the better supported by technology, and the more skill you have going into your content creation, the greater potential impact.
- Content marketing can be extremely cost-effective so harness that advantage – Part of the power of

content marketing is its ability to deliver cost-effective results. Content marketing [costs 62 percent less than outbound](#) yet generates three times as many leads. It also drives conversion rates that are six times higher than other marketing methods.

Both of these budget perspectives are true. With a large budget, you can invest in better technology to make your strategy more effective. You can keep up with (and reap the rewards of) the big-hitting content marketing tactics like influencer marketing and [experiential marketing](#). But, there's also a lot you can do with a small budget, [even as a tiny startup](#).

When you have the budget to move beyond blogs, social media and explainer videos, you can start moving into creating a multi-dimensional brand 'world' that your audience can not just buy from, but also become a part of. This is where you'll find not just your traffic and lead generation numbers rising but also your loyalty metrics.

Here's the thing. If you start with a large budget but haven't yet mastered the efficient use of your content marketing dollars, you could be losing a chunk of your budget. For B2B marketers, on average, 70 percent of content created never gets used. That's mind-blowing!



of content created by B2B marketing teams goes unused

So, to figure out how much is enough, look at the content marketing budget as an evolving number. Even if you end up with a small budget this year, that doesn't mean you won't be able to increase it by 10 percent, 20 percent, or more in the following year. This gives you the flexibility to have what you

need but also to avoid wasting your budget simply because your organization doesn't yet have enough experience with content marketing, what it can do, and what channels and tactics make the most sense for your brand.

How Much Does Content Marketing Cost?

By 2019, content marketing is expected to be a 300 billion-dollar industry.



According to **MarketingMag.com**, content marketing will be a **\$300 billion** industry by 2019 – this means it will **more than double** in under four years.



More companies are using content marketing (86 percent of B2C organizations and 91 percent of B2B according to the Content Marketing Institute's research). And, most of those who are using it are increasing their budgets each year.

What's the average spend on content marketing? Overall, 26 percent of the total marketing budget is dedicated to content

marketing for the B2B sector. For B2C, it's 22 percent.

But, here's where it gets interesting. The most successful organizations spend closer to 40 percent of their total marketing budget on content strategy. Those with a relatively mature hold on content marketing spend about one-third of their budget on content.



As content marketing maturity grows, organizations tend to spend more of their total marketing budget on content marketing. Those in the:

- Young/first steps phase spend 19%
- Adolescent phase spend 25%
- Sophisticated/mature phase spend 33%.



38% of all respondents expect their content marketing budget to increase in the next 12 months; that figure is nearly the same percentage reported by the most successful and the least successful.

Setting your budget has a lot more to do with how much your organization has already done with content marketing rather than just throwing a quarter or a third of the budget towards content. A lot of this comes down to the nature of a good strategy – you have to get to know what works for your brand and what resonates well with your buyer segments to create a more sophisticated strategy.

The only way to learn this is to start using content marketing, [tracking the ROI](#) of your content, and analyzing what works and what doesn't. Then, you can go back and improve upon your strategy even further, ideally boosting web traffic, lead generation, and revenue growth, and being worthy of a bigger chunk of the marketing budget.

Who's Increasing Their Content Marketing Budget?

Just under half of B2B marketers plan on using the same budget from 2018 to 2019. About 38 percent plan on increasing what they spend, with only three percent expecting to use a smaller budget in the future. This is a trend that has been going on for years, with 2015 being the sixth consecutive year for double-digit growth of the content marketing industry.

Part of this is driven by the ROI – organizations experience a greater return as their strategy

gets more effective. So, they invest more. It's also driven by competition. With only a small fraction of companies not using content marketing, how can you expect to keep up with advertising and other outbound methods? Customers' expectations for high-quality, relevant content are increasing, which means the more developed your strategy is and your use of technology, the easier it will be to ensure your content becomes the cream of the crop, rising to the top of search engines, social feeds, and email inboxes.

How to Build a Content Budget that Makes Sense

What do you need to factor into your content budget?

Who's on your content team?

If you don't already have a content marketing manager, you may want to put this position on your list of budget priorities. 43 percent of organizations have a dedicated manager. You also want to look at what content creators and analysts you'll need and which ones will be outsourced. Strategists, social media managers, copywriters, content editors, video production. The list can get pretty long.

What content marketing tools do you need?

What tools does your organization already have, need to upgrade, or need to start using? From your automation software to content management, collaborative platforms and SEO tools, most content marketing teams use an array of tools. A lot of your technology is priced based on a monthly

subscription or user-based fee. Your technology expense will make up a lot of your fixed costs.

What content is in your strategy?

Being able to create a workable budget is one of the reasons for having a solid content marketing strategy is so important. Only when you have a detailed strategy, including what content is going to be published and where, how it's going to be promoted, and your time-line for how your content strategy will unfold over the next three months, six months, and current year, will you have any idea of how much it is going to cost.

You can estimate the cost of each piece of content, looking at either your outsourcing fees or the cost per hour of your content creators. Detailing the costs of each piece of content, as well as different components (How much does your blog cost a month? Infographics, videos, event marketing?), won't just make budgeting easier. Calculating your ROI will be a lot easier too.

There's No Such Thing as a Static Budget

Even with a detailed analysis of your expected costs and factoring in what percentage of your marketing budget make sense based on your organization's level of content marketing sophistication, you shouldn't expect to stick to your budget. Here's why. To really be successful at content marketing, you have to keep refining your strategy. As you gather more customer data and feed-

back and identify what resonates, you can continually improve upon what you have – which means there will be changes.

To make room for your content strategy to evolve, plan for some flexibility in your budget. This way you'll have enough in your budget for brilliance.



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