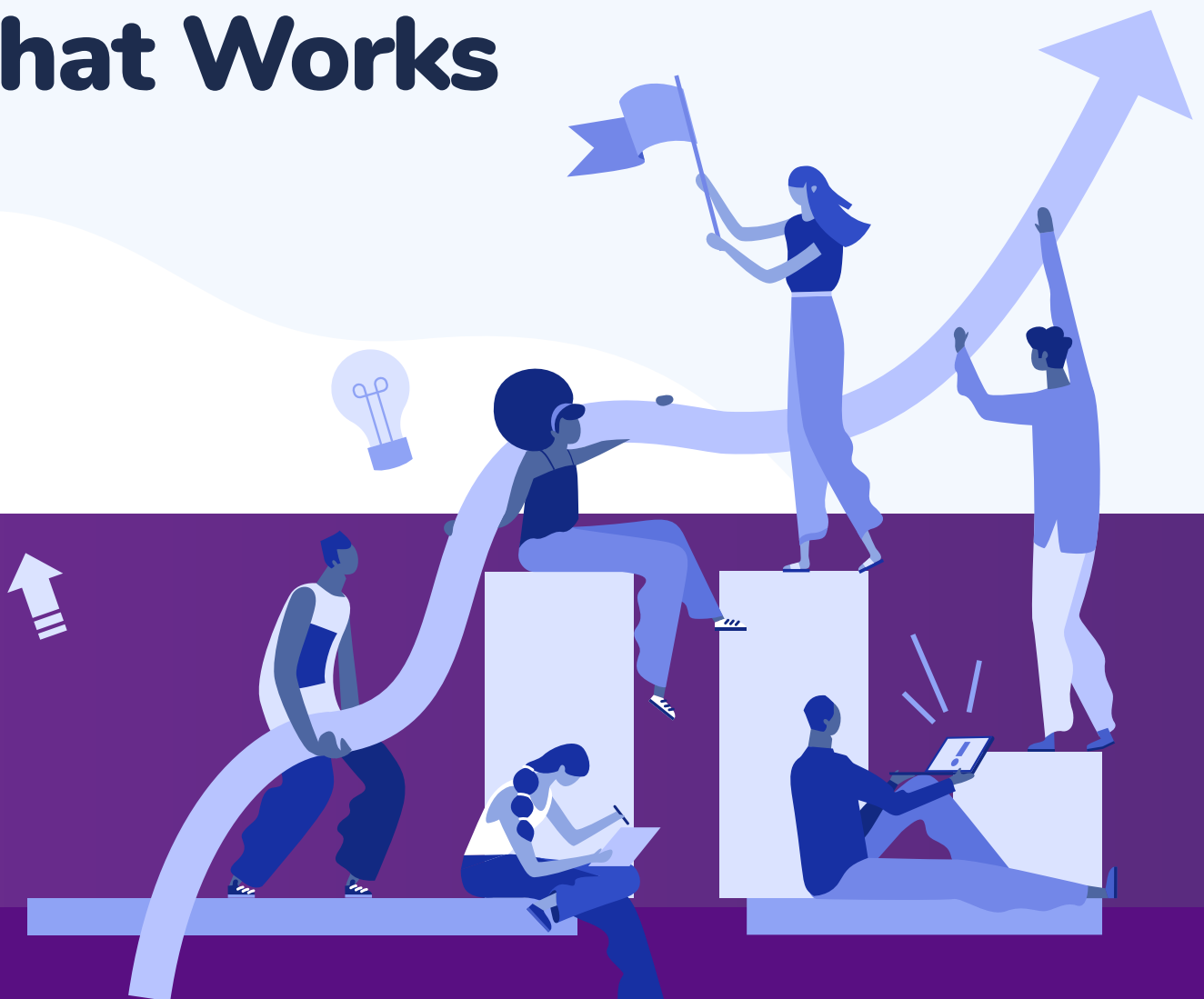




# The Ultimate Guide On How To Build A Content Marketing Strategy That Works





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# The Ultimate Guide On How To Build A Content Marketing Strategy That Works

A whopping 91% of B2B businesses used content marketing to reach their customers last year, and for good reason. When done right, content marketing can be a real game-changer, pulling in new prospects and helping turn them into customers.



However, when these 91% were asked to rate their content marketing success, the picture appeared a little less rosy: 74% of them believed they were only **minimally** or **moderately** successful.

Ouch.



It seems like a lot of companies out there are trying, but not succeeding, with content marketing.

*If so many companies execute content marketing, yet a big proportion of them feel they are not getting it right... what is going wrong?*

Chances are, the answer is pretty simple: these businesses are missing a trick by **not having a solid content marketing strategy**.

In this guide we'll help you get to grips with **what a content marketing strategy actually is**. We'll then clarify **why every company should have one**, how it should be used, and who it **will actually help on a daily basis**.

Finally, we'll walk you through the process of creating a content marketing strategy to turbo-charge your marketing efforts, making sure your content is working hard to bring you quality leads day after day.





# Understanding Content Marketing Strategy

## First Up, What Exactly Is A Content Marketing Strategy?

Your **content marketing strategy** is, quite simply, a plan that outlines:

- The content you will create;
- How you'll create it;
- Where and when you'll publish it;
- Who you'll target with it and, crucially;
- What goals you have for it.





But more than just a practical plan, a content marketing strategy helps your whole team understand exactly **why** you are investing in content marketing.

It's important to understand that by '**content marketing**', we mean the development and publishing of informative, educational and entertaining material to attract, engage and ultimately convert prospects into clients.

**Content marketing is therefore a long process** that requires detailed research, planning,, content creation and resource allocation.

It you aren't clear internally on what content marketing plan is, you'll end up with a scattergun approach — one which at best is a waste of budget, and at worst actually dissuades prospects from trusting you.







# Who Is A Content Marketing Strategy For?

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**Your content marketing strategy is a resource for everyone on your team.**

It's definitely not something that you, as a marketing manager or business owner, keep locked away for yourself. It is a dynamic and living tool that everyone has visibility and ownership over.

From sales, to customer support, and everything in between, content will play an ongoing role in helping each member of your team to do a great job.

That's why it's so important that they can clearly see what content will be created and when; how your prospects are being reached and whether you're on track to deliver results.

**What's more, don't forget that your team are also a great source of content ideas!**

Your sales and customer support team are usually your front line eyes and ears, so be sure to bring them into your planning process. Employees who feel their voices are heard are 4.6 times more empowered to deliver their best work, so tap them up for inspiration — and act on it!





# How Does A Content Marketing Strategy Work?

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**Your content marketing strategy works by aligning your company's business goals with your content efforts over a specific time period.**

Here's a rough outline of the process:

- Your business will set out its budget for the quarter or year, including revenue targets.
- Your revenue targets will translate to new lead generation and/or customer retention targets.
- From past performance, you will know that targets for new leads will require a certain level of traffic or engagement with your site.
- Traffic and engagement metrics will then drive the volume, rate and type of content you decide to create.
- Finally, all this needs to back to a strategic vision. This is where your content marketing strategy comes into play, by being a clear source of truth on how the content you invest in will help to meet your overarching company's business goals.



# Creating Your Content Marketing Strategy

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Now let's get down to the process of making a content marketing strategy for your business.

When you first start thinking about content marketing, it's natural to want to jump straight into the cool ideas you have for posts, ebooks or webinars — but hold your horses!

The very first thing you need to define, **is what you want to achieve.**

Do you want to boost **lead generation, increase engagement** with your audience, or get more of your audience over the line and **making a purchase**?





Or do you need to do something else entirely?

No matter what you're trying to achieve with your content marketing, your goals need to be S.M.A.R.T, meaning:

**Specific** - Relating to a defined business area or target.

**Measurable** - Backed up with data that clearly shows success or failure.

**Achievable** - Within the realms of possibility for your business.

**Relevant** - To your overall business ambitions.

**Timely** - Relating to a period with a beginning and an end.

Let's work through an example of making a S.M.A.R.T. goal for your content marketing strategy:

Within the quarter, we will increase unqualified sales leads by 50% by increasing our blog publishing rate from 2 to 3 times per week.

When it comes to defining a content marketing strategy, your goal should always be measurable.



For example, ‘we will increase brand awareness’ is not S.M.A.R.T. This goal has nothing we can measure.

And on this point, avoid mistaking ‘vanity metrics’, such as Facebook likes, as goals in themselves.

Sure, it’s super encouraging to see a spike in social media engagement — this can be a great motivator for yourself and the team. But how does it help you achieve your S.M.A.R.T. goal? Your social reach only helps if it has a knock on impact that helps your business grow.



## Know Your Audience

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With your S.M.A.R.T. goals defined, you now need to focus on **who you are targeting.**

To do so, you'll need to develop 'buyer personas' for your company.

A 'buyer persona' is the profile of your ideal customer, based in the reality of who your existing customers are, and some educated speculation on what traits they have.

*Buyer personas are neither fictional or factual. They should be **based in reality** whilst not being a specific person in the world you can point to.*

Crucially, drawing up a buyer persona helps you **develop empathy** for your customers.

If you create your content with their needs and problems as the focus, you are inherently more likely to produce the right kind of material that they require. On the other hand, if you fail to correctly envisage your buyer persona, you are likely to create inward looking or self-referential material that doesn't function well to attract potential leads.

You are likely to **require several personas** that represent approximate categories, and that's a good thing.



If you only have one buyer persona, it's likely to be too broad and will not help you to focus in on your users' needs. Conversely, if you have too many personas, you will find your efforts are not broad enough to have a commercially sized appeal.

### **Aim for 3-5 well developed buyer personas.**

Your buyer personas will be both **demographic and psychographic** in detail. Demographics are those observable attributes, such as age, race, gender, education, lifestage or socio-economic background.

Psychographic elements are those such as belief systems, interests or attitudes — things you can't measure or quantify.

You will naturally develop different strategies of content marketing, depending on these details, as they will determine the type of content and where it is published.

To create your buyer personas, give them a name, a profile picture, and begin to create their profile with as much detail as you can. *Who are they, what are they like, and why are they reading your content?*

If you're struggling, describe real customers you have come in contact and think about the shared attributes they have.





## Assess Your Existing Resources

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Unless you are a very early stage start-up, there will likely already be a wealth of guides, sales presentations, blog posts and/or videos that live across various different folders and files, departments and online spaces.

You will need to do some digging to catalogue them all and figure out what you can repurpose.

An audit of your content will help you do two things:

1. **Avoid 'reinventing the wheel'** and reproducing content that you already have available.
2. **Understand where your gaps and opportunities are.**





During this audit, you should take the time to catalogue all of your content according to the function it plays in the buyer's journey. An ebook, webinar or blog post shouldn't be considered 'nice things to do for our customers', but should be understood as having a role to play in either **attracting them** to you, **building trust** with you, or **encouraging a purchase**.

**Content marketing strategy** is precisely about working with content in this way so that all of your efforts are focused on developing real business opportunities and growth.

## Be Clear On Your Brand Story

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So far we have looked at your content marketing strategy with mainly technical, objective elements as the focus.

Now we want you to start look *inwards*, into your business' heart and soul, and think about why it is that your company exists, which will guide you as to why and how you are telling that story via your content.

What is it about your business that **makes you unique?** What are the **principles** you hold, or what is it about the world you **want to change?** Whose lives do you want to improve, or what problem do **want to solve?**



This is about you understanding **why you are different** from your competitors, and why that should **matter for your customers**. To get a company-wide understanding, hold an informal meeting with your team members to understand everyone's reasons for coming into work. *It may just stimulate some views and ideas that you hadn't thought of before!*

Developing your brand story is an integral part of your content marketing strategy, because it defines the what ideas and messages you want to share in your content. It builds your tone of voice, your character, and it helps your customers connect with your business on a deeper level than the purely transactional.





## Which Type of Content Should You Produce?

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Once you have established your goals, your audience and you understand your existing content assets, you will want to figure out the **type of content** you're going to focus on creating in the future.

**If one of your primary objectives is to increase organic traffic,** *you have to blog!*

Yes, you need a landing page and website copy that cohesively positions you as the right partner for your prospects' needs. But a blog bolsters this great work, giving you a space to create longer form content demonstrating your thought leadership and increasing visitors' on-page time.

Your blog should always be optimised to meet your goals, which means ensuring you have clear **calls to action** to grow newsletter sign ups or to direct traffic to a sales page.

Other content forms you might want to consider, depending on your core objectives are. For the purposes of this guide, we'll be focusing on *written content*:

**Longform Content**, which take a much deeper dive into a particular subject or business area that you can confidently write between 5,000 to 15,000 words on. These often take the form of 'Ultimate Guides' and break down large topics into step-by-step processes.



**Case Studies**, which will reflect your business knowledge and allow you to establish thought leadership in a given field. Be mindful not to just report results; your reader wants to hear the emotional ups and downs along the way, and be able to see themselves in the story too. Case studies are excellent ways of encouraging people who are quite far through the funnel to make a final purchase decision.

**White Papers**, which are in-depth, highly detailed, (often data-driven) analyses of an issue or topic. They represent your company's philosophy or approach. Because white papers are designed to be the decisive word on a topic, they need to be thoroughly researched and therefore take a lot of time and effort to create. However, when executed well, they can be a super powerful way to establish thought leadership.

**Ebooks**, which are great lead magnets, that can be offered easily to prospects in exchange for contact information. Always ensure your ebook solve a genuine problem or answers a specific question.

**Infographics**, which offer a quickly digestible and shareable form of content. Depending on the subject matter, infographics can often help the reader to visualise information, flows or processes. They are highly shareable, so a great way to drive engagement and brand awareness.





## Decide On Your Channels

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Okay so now you know what you want to achieve, who you are targeting, which types of content are most relevant to you and your audience... but where will you focus your efforts?

Which of the many content channels holds the most potential for your business?

To decide, your team should **assess existing data where possible** — this stops subjective decision making or biases from creeping in.

Use Google Analytics to understand which platforms are already driving page visits to your site, garnering shares and engagement, and giving you organic reach.





Consider using tools such as [BuzzSumo](#) or [UberSuggest](#) to get data on how your audience is engaging with various types of content across different channels.

If you're only at the very start of your content production journey, you may not have much of your own data to go off — but don't despair!

Take a look at your competitors: where are they posting content? How well does that seem to be working for them in terms of engagement? Remember: measures such as LinkedIn reads and likes are largely 'vanity metrics', so don't go placing all your eggs in the same basket as your competitors just yet. Ensure you are being strategic with your channel choices — *fish where the fish are*. If your buyer personas represent an audience on Twitter, but less so on Facebook, then don't waste resources designing an expensive lead magnet for a Facebook campaign.

Remember, it's much better to focus on one or two channels, *and really do them well*, than to spread your resources over too many platforms and weaken the content you have time and money to produce.



## Build A Calendar

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The main elements of your content marketing strategy are now coming together, as you have your goals, content types, channels and story established.

The next step in the process is to schedule *when and where* you will be creating and publishing your content.

There are many different online tools that you can use in order to build an effective calendar, depending on your budget and requirements. [Monday.com](#), [Trello](#), [Evernote](#) and [Sprout Social](#) offer different tools that can help you plan, coordinate team members, create shared creative spaces or even post your content automatically for you at the optimal moment.

But there is such a thing as being too organised with your content calendar — you might want to only plan your calendar only **one month in advance**, so that you remain relevant to both trending topics and your business developments.

You should also plan your content with the timing of the year in mind. Many times of year hold specific relevance or have a focus such as religious holidays, large sporting events, or times of national remembrance.





## Allocate Resources & Produce Your Content

Whilst you are drawing up your calendar, you should always consider **how much time and investment you have to put towards your content marketing plan.**

To do so, take each specific piece of content in your upcoming plan and estimate a timeframe for production and how much it'll cost to produce

Also included at this stage is **assigning tasks** to team members to ensure they are aware in good time of what they need to produce or contribute to.

If you know you're going to need to **outsource your content creation** then get quotes for how much this will cost, and start that process. Often you can drastically boost the outputs of your content machine by outsourcing it to a team of affordable experts.



## The Final Step Is Analysis

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When your content is written and live, it's time to start distributing it across the channels that you established in your content marketing strategy.

*Your work, however, is not yet done!*

**Analysing performance is the last step in your content marketing strategy**, but it's arguably one of the most important.

If you don't analyse the data, you'll never understand what is performing well and what is failing to hit the spot, and you'll never learn how or where you need to improve.

Make sure you go back to your calendar and post results data on views, shares and engagement a week after each piece has been posted.

Update the numbers again further down the line if a piece of evergreen content continues to keep bringing in viewers.

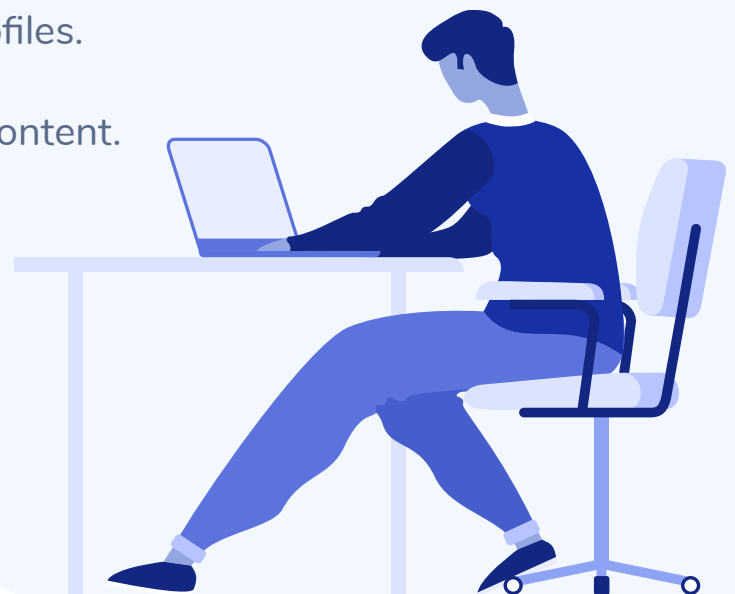
Of course, the most important part of analysis, is to ensure you're meeting your business objectives with your content marketing strategy. The different strategies of content marketing that you have chosen will inevitably need to be tweaked, optimised and adapted to meet your business and your audience needs.

The important thing is to learn what works and continue to make improvements.

# It's Time To Start Building A Content Marketing Strategy That Works!

You should now have a clear understanding of what you're going to do, step-by-step, to create a content marketing strategy for your business that works. I want you to go away and label a file on your computer 'Content Marketing Strategy' and within that folder you will have the following files:

1. A word document containing your S.M.A.R.T. goals.
2. Your buyer persona profiles.
3. A log of your existing content.



4. A document that evaluates channel distribution.
5. A short plan of the type of content you will create, and why.
6. Your company story.
7. Your content calendar, with space to input performance analytics.
8. Space for the content pieces you create.

And that's all there is to it. A clear, actionable content marketing strategy is within reach.

Shall we do this?





**Contact us for a no-obligation chat about  
how you can scale your business with content  
marketing in 2020**

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