

Content Marketing Strategies

You don't *have* to pay
for good advertising

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“**Content marketing** is an umbrella term encompassing all marketing formats that involve the creation or sharing of content for the purpose of engaging current and potential consumer bases.” Well, that’s what Wikipedia says, anyway. And who are we to argue?

In reality, content marketing is a pretty broad strategy, but it is also one of the best ways to attract and capture leads, nurture them, convert them, and continue to deliver and satisfy after the sale. Translation: Content marketing (if done correctly) takes care of a big portion of your marketing automation plan.

According to the Content Marketing Institute (CMI), small business marketers use content marketing for many reasons. **The top four reasons listed are:**

- Brand awareness (74%)
- Lead generation (68%)
- Customer retention/loyalty (67%)
- Customer recruitment (60%)

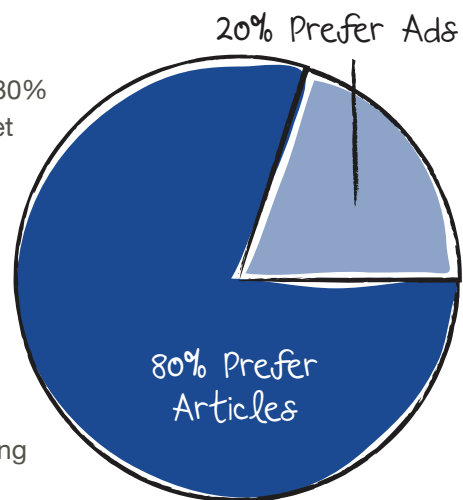
Content marketing is a comprehensive solution that will help your business grow. Here’s why (and how).

The Benefits of Content Marketing

A Different Type of Marketing

According to a Roper Public Affairs study, 80% of business decision-makers prefer to get information from the companies they buy products or services from in a series of articles rather than an advertisement. Wow. Eighty percent is pretty substantial.

Obviously, there is a need for content marketing. It works. Not to say that advertising doesn’t work ... any Madison Avenue firm will tell you that it’s the only way to go. But maybe content marketing is pushed aside a little too quickly.



Content marketing is a new way of interacting with prospects and customers, and it proves that you don’t need a Super Bowl commercial or a freeway billboard to build your brand (but if you have access to the funds to get on TV on Super Bowl Sunday, by all means, go right ahead).

Why is content marketing such a big draw? Why would 80% of prospective customers say that they prefer to learn about your product or service via content rather than ads?

No More Interruptions

Interruptions are no good. By definition, they throw us out of rhythm. You've probably seen the child who stands next to her mother, tapping her on the knee, repeating her name while she's on the phone. "Mom, Mom, Mom, Mom." Enough!

Too many times, marketers feel the need to interrupt the lives of their prospects with an important message. But eventually, you turn into that annoying child who gets sent to his room. Interruption marketing isn't the most efficient way to get your message across.

Content marketing allows the prospects to come to you. They come because they are seeking meaningful information, an answer to one or more of their problems. And if you're there, waiting with the answers, you'll get your message across. Without interruptions.

Solve a Problem, Not Pitch a Sale

The "content" of our content marketing also has a lot to do with its success. Maybe everything, actually. Not only should our content be available when our prospects come looking, it should also be delivered as promised. If our content is full of thinly (or thickly) veiled sales pitches, we'll quickly lose credibility.

Our expertise can (and should) stand alone. We need to educate and inform with no strings attached (other than maybe asking for an email address for follow-up). If our content is relevant and useful, the prospects who consume it will come to us when they're ready to become customers.

Prospects Who Look Forward to Your Messages

As you distribute meaningful content, the kind that prospects come looking for, you'll have a captive audience. They won't be annoyed with incessant ads or in-your-face sales pitches. They'll happily open what you send them because you've proven that you'll send them only material that's important. Over time, that could include a special offer or an invitation to buy. But for now, it means not trying to oversell and not loading your content with a lot of meaningless fluff.

Be straight, be to the point and be relevant. That's how you'll make sure that your prospects look forward to your messages. And your open rates will start to look a lot better.



Expand Your Reach

Content marketing allows you to offer a little something for everyone. Because each prospect is different, it isn't a bad idea to offer various ways for them to consume the content. Methods of content delivery can be as vast as your imagination. **Here are some of the ways you can deliver your content to the world:**



- **Videos.** Videos can include your delivering a personal message, a video tutorial, a recorded webinar, a humorous sketch or any other content that would look good in motion.
- **Blog Articles.** Blog articles are a great way to keep your content in front of prospects. Try tying current events or even pop culture into your chosen subject to keep things fresh.
- **Reports.** Reports add instant credibility and are a great way to continually distribute important content. For a quick and easy way to create a report, try repurposing old blog posts into a comprehensive article.
- **Podcasts.** Podcasts are a unique way to get your message across. Many prospects love podcasts because they can work on other things while they listen—a great idea for busy consumers.
- **Byline Articles.** You are the expert ... prove it by writing an article for a trade publication or local newspaper. Write an article (could be as easy as repurposing a report or blog post) to meet the specs of the desired publication. Work on a query letter and pitch your article to the editor. You'll get a byline and some free exposure to a large audience.
- **Newsletters.** This one is super easy. Instead of filling your newsletter with coupons and offers (which are good in moderation), send out meaningful tips and tricks that will expand your readership and keep them coming back. Then, those tastefully placed coupons will reach more satisfied prospects who already trust you.
- **Membership Sites.** You can publish a wide variety of content on a membership site. This is a great way to continually educate current customers in addition to providing nurturing materials for prospects. You can even use your membership site as a way to bring in additional cash through upsells or "exclusive" content.
- **Tweets and Facebook Posts.** Nobody said content had to be long. In fact, 140 characters is plenty of space to deliver relevant information that is easily digestible. Links to your own materials or other articles/videos you find helpful also build your network of content. Whether you produced it or not, you'll get credit for sharing it.

Create an Editorial Calendar

An editorial calendar will help you organize your content creation and distribution. See a sample editorial calendar below. This one is for a blog, but can be modified to include other types of content. The key is to repurpose content to fit a variety of delivery mechanisms. Here's a simple blog planning calendar to get you started.

Post Date	Author	Title	Keywords	Category	Call to Action

Conclusion

There are a lot of big wins to be had with paid advertising, no doubt about it. But there are even bigger wins (and a bigger ROI) to be had with content marketing. You have content... you wouldn't be in business without it. It's time to put that content out into the world and watch the leads come rolling in. These leads are the ones you want, the ones who are looking for a solution. It's a win-win situation.

So go create (repurpose) some content for your marketing. Ready, set, go!