Content Marketing

The Internet Marketing Academy

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Preface

I think that we've all heard somewhere or sometime that "content is king"

The internet is ran on content and now marketers and business owners are waking up to the fact that distributing quality content is great for lead generation and for brand building. This text book will take a look at the key factors that you need to take into consideration when designing and implementing content marketing campaigns.

Sean McPheat, a serial entrepreneur and internet marketing authority is the author of this publication. Sean owns many successful online businesses ranging from an International Training business through to dozens of mini sites selling different products and services online. Sean is the founder of the Internet Marketing Academy which aims to improve the standards of internet marketing around the globe. Sean has been featured on CNN, BBC, ITV, on numerous radio stations and has contributed to many newspapers. He's been featured in over 250 different publications.

Sean is a high in demand consultant and speaker on topics related to internet marketing and making money online and estimates show that he has created over £20,000,000 of leads and £6,000,000 of sales all through the internet. That does not include all of the millions that he has helped his clients to make!

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Please visit our website http://www.internetmarketingacademy.com/ to download some of the very internet marketing cheat sheets that Sean has used to build his online empire.

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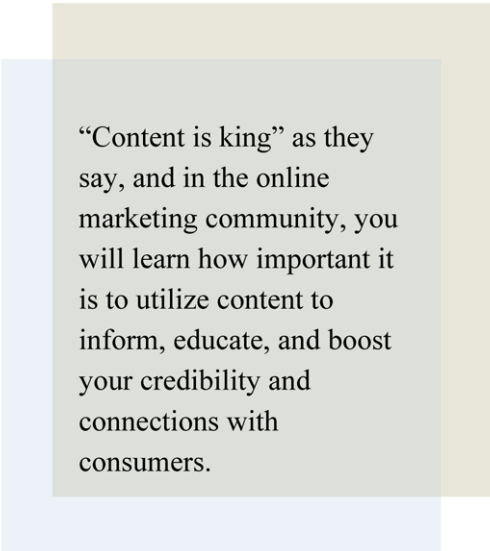
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1 Introduction to Content Marketing

In an increasingly online world, marketers have turned to different genres on the Internet to keep current customers and bring in new ones. Not only is it a good strategy, it is necessary for a business to stay alive and keep the competitive edge. Whether a company uses a website, social media, blogs, or email, it is essential that it uses all of these tools and exploits them for all the benefits that they offer.

> "Content is king" as they say, and in the online marketing community, you will learn how important it is to utilize content to inform, educate, and boost your credibility and connections with consumers.

What aspect do these tools share in common that is imperative for a successful Internet marketing strategy? Yes, you can find them all online, but there is one other thing that they all share in common. The answer might not be obvious at first, but we guarantee that even if you don't know, chances are, you already engage in it if you already have an Internet marketing strategy.

The answer is "content," and in the online marketing community, they say that "Content is king." Though content is not a new concept, it is far more important these days than ever before in the marketing community. The reason, as you may already know, is because of the Internet. Exactly how that has come to be will be discussed further, as well as a larger number marketing tactics that involve content.

In this ebook, we will discuss Content Marketing. We will delve into the importance of content and what you can do with it to make a good Internet marketing strategy into an even better marketing strategy. First, we will put the concept of Content Marketing into a much clearer context to highlight why it is important.

1.1   Old vs. New Rules of Marketing

> You need to be familiar with the "new rules" of marketing if you are going to develop an effective Content Marketing plan.

Before addressing specific steps towards Content Marketing, let's look at how marketing has changed in regards to the "digital age." Due to the fact that so much of a company's presence is now dependent on multiple streams of media, the way that marketing activities are implemented has changed. You need to be familiar with the "new rules" of marketing if you are going to develop an effective marketing plan.

1.1.1 Old Rules

The old paradigm of marketing was focused on delivering a one-way message from the organization to the potential customer. The idea was that the more creative the message and marketing campaign, the more likely the customer would be to respond by purchasing the product or service. Other characteristics of the old marketing rules include:

- Advertising was key
- Advertisements were meant to appeal to the general public
- Advertising campaigns ran for a specific period of time
- Awards were pursued for advertising campaigns
- Audience may have felt interrupted by advertising messages
- Public Relations (PR) was a separate function from advertising

PR had its own set of rules that companies would follow. The main goal of the public relations department was to generate a press release that would grab the attention of members of the press and then use that attention to show that the audience was getting the message. Some other aspects of the old public relations format:

- All effort was focused on getting the message out to the public
- The press release was the most important tool
- The PR department was at the mercy of the press for success
- Successful PR required creative 'spin'

1.1.2   New Rules

Since the advent of the Internet, information is everywhere and available to everyone. Instead of getting the attention of the press in order to be successful, marketing and public relations now require that a company get the attention of the individuals surfing the Internet. The most successful marketing and PR campaigns are the ones that get the organization 'found' on the Internet. Some of the new rules include:
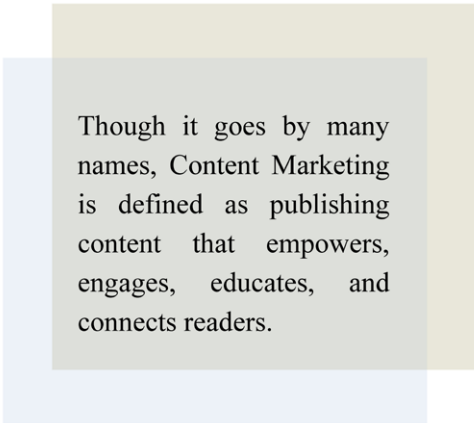
- People are well informed and expect the truth rather than 'spin'
- Interruptions won't be well tolerated in the age of DVRs and email filters for SPAM
- People demand value for their time and money and will use the Internet to get it
- Marketing and PR are designed to appeal to niche audiences
- Marketing and PR employ multiple techniques to reach those audiences
- Content stays online permanently so there is no end to a campaign

Marketing and PR can now also take advantage of the new tools available. Media is no longer limited to just articles, direct mail, TV, radio, newspapers, telephone, and press releases – it is multifaceted and requires multiple methods of approaching the customer in order to be effective. The new marketing paradigm requires that the company deliver quality content via a number of the tools available today such as:

- Web sites and pages
- Blogs
- Social media sites
- Articles in directories
- Videos and video blogs
- Podcasts

With all of these tools available, companies have to be able to adapt their marketing and PR tactics in order to reach their customers in the ways that they are now available to be reached. You have to be where the customers are if you want them to hear the message or messages that you are trying to deliver. How you will do so is what you will determine with your Content Marketing strategy.

1.2   Defining Content Marketing

> Though it goes by many names, Content Marketing is defined as publishing content that empowers, engages, educates, and connects readers.

From the new rules of marketing, we have a well founded basis for why content is so important nowadays. With this in mind, we can start to discuss what exactly content marketing is.

Content marketing also goes by other names, including custom publishing, custom media, customer media, customer publishing, member media, private media, branded content, corporate media, corporate publishing, corporate journalism and branded media. And these are only a few of the many names. We will, of course, stick only to the term content marketing.

Simply put, content marketing is a way of publishing content on the Internet that empowers, engages, educates, and connects readers. In a marketing context, your readers are your consumers, always the crutch of any marketing strategy. In addition to what it does for your consumers, content marketing also makes you as a business more visible and sellable.

Now, a simple definition of content marketing does not give content marketing its due credit. There are a few tenants to content marketing that more clearly define the concept and explore it much further. They are known as the Five Pillars of Content Marketing, and they define content marketing as:

- *Editorial Based* – Otherwise known as long-form, it is content that tells both a relevant and valuable story. The point of editorial content is to be informative, educational, and/or entertaining.
- *Marketing-backed* – Businesses have marketing and sales objectives that they seek to accomplish, and this is no different when it comes to content. Businesses online have an underlying goal with the content they publish.
- *Behavior Driven* – Content seeks to maintain or alter a reader's/consumer's behavior. Having relevant and valuable content accomplishes this.
- *Multi-Platform* – This means that content comes in a variety of media, including print, digital, audio, video, events, etc. It can, but does not necessarily have to be, connected across all platforms.
- *Targeted* – Like all good marketing, knowing your audience is key to having a successful strategy. Know your audience down to the particulars.

Earlier, we mentioned that even if a marketer is now aware of the term "content marketing," chances are, she is already engaged in it. However, being aware of your published content is one thing while utilizing a strategy wisely is an entirely different story. Content marketing is not simply making a blog and making up new content. There are many tools to use from the toolbox, and using just one will not keep this marketing machine running. Therefore, it is crucial to use several different Internet tools to create an effective content marketing strategy.

1.3   Who Uses and Publishes Content
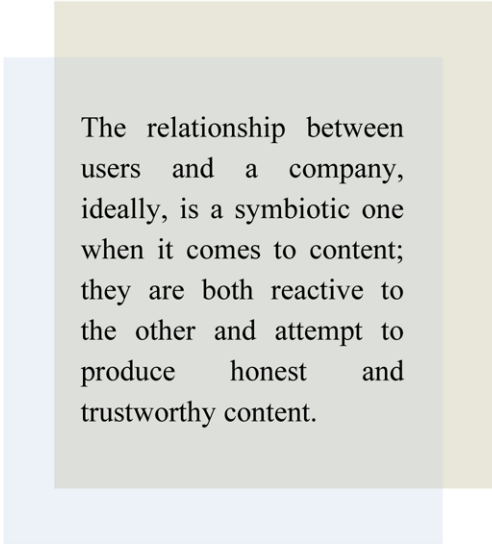
So we now have a general idea about what content is good for online, but when you create content, where exactly are you going to put all of this content? If you already have an Internet marketing strategy in place, you may already have several Internet tools at your disposal such as a website, social media, and blogs, among others.

One unique thing about content marketing is that your content is not necessarily going to be made entirely by you. Online, consumers are much more vocal, and content about a product or service is also vastly more visible than the pre-Internet era. What this means is that content on your product or service might be advertised by others through channels like reviews, tweets, or blogs.

Of course, this can be a double-edged sword for any online business. If your product or service is sub-par or does not meet the expectations of consumers, word about your product/service and the business will be severely hurt. When it comes down to it, there are two entities that create your content. They are:

- The Users
- The Company

1.3.1 User Content

> The relationship between users and a company, ideally, is a symbiotic one when it comes to content; they are both reactive to the other and attempt to produce honest and trustworthy content.

Users have changed the game in marketing, especially on the Internet. Users trust other users with valuable information, more so than the business that sells the product/service. The benefits of having users create content about your products/ services is that it costs nothing and it keeps your business in check by receiving feedback. If the content is positive, you know you are moving in the right direction. If the content is negative, you can take the information into consideration and implement needed change the best you can.

1.3.2 Company Content

Of course, the company also publishes content on a variety of online media. The difference, however, is that users are going to be more skeptical of your content. The reason for this is probably dates back to the old rules of marketing, when a "spin" was put on advertised goods. To this day, consumers feel as if they might still be getting that spin, and in some cases, they do get that. That is why taking customer feedback into consideration is essential to consumer relationships. If the content you publish substantiates what your product does (or how well it does it), you will eventually be more trustworthy, and your content will eventually become far more valuable.

1.4   Where Content Marketing Is

Content marketing has always existed, even before the Internet became an important medium for marketing. The difference, of course, is that a user's voice is far more audible than it ever has been. Of course, no matter who creates the content, both entities will post them in virtually the same areas of the online community. They will post reviews, comments, statuses, etc. in places like:

- Social Media
- Websites
- Product Review Boards
- Message Boards
- Blogs
- Email
- Video Presentations
- Slideshows
- Podcasts
- Online Groups
- Articles
- Testimonials

Additionally, content is also published in offline outlets (mostly by businesses), such as press releases, business cards, live events, and many others. The list could go on and on. The reason both entities post in the same online spot is because businesses need to be where the users are. Businesses also utilize the most popular genres of Internet tools, so you are likely to see content from both user and company on the same website, message board, or blog.

1.5   The Benefits of Content Marketing

We have already defined content marketing and even fleshed out the concept with some of the tenants that it is composed of. Content can also come not only from your company, but from outside users as well. Before we conclude this first chapter, we shall go over some more of the benefits of using content marketing and clear the air about any seeming disadvantages. We will also leave you with some other tips to keep in mind while reading.

When it comes to content marketing,

- **<u>Old content can be repurposed</u>** – What this means is that content from other media can be rewritten or even incorporated into new media, especially online. This is especially useful if your business is just starting to get into the online community. If being overworked was a fear, than you should no longer have anything to be afraid of. Additionally, this means that you do not have to spend much time creating new content. As long as the old content is relevant to the online tool, it is still valuable.
- **<u>Content exists online and offline</u>** – Even with commerce shifting heavily to the online medium, you should never forget to create content to be used both online and offline. Additionally, your entire marketing strategy should not be limited to the Internet, and should include offline media.
- **<u>Reach out to potential customers</u>** – Your website is the main location of all your content. It is also where many of your sales will take place and where actions will be performed. Unfortunately, users are not always going to come directly to your site, for a variety of reasons. One of the biggest reasons, though, is that potential consumers simply are not aware that your business exists. That is why a strong emphasis is put on utilizing multiple Internet tools. Using these in the first place is a good start. Making relevant, valuable content to put within those tools is the second, and most important step.
- **<u>Inbound traffic is a must</u>** – Like we said in the earlier point, the website is where many of your sales and actions will take place. Providing customers with a variety of Internet tools to direct them to your site will help get them to your home base.
- **<u>Provide ease of access between Internet tools</u>** – One person may like Twitter, and another may prefer reading blogs off of Wordpress. Whatever the case may be, having multiple Internet tools is also beneficial because you are able to please a wider variety of customers. The difference may seem subtle, but it does have an impact on potential customers if you have one Internet tool but not another.
- **<u>Provide consistency between tools</u>** – Going off of the previous point, it is a good idea to make sure you have consistent updates and content across the spectrum of Internet tools. Since you are pleasing more people with more Internet tools, you need to keep all of your customers on the same page by bringing all of them the same updates at the same time.
- **<u>Know your audience</u>** – While this may seem obvious, many companies fail in not understanding the needs of their users. Being out of sync with users will drive customers away, while knowing what they want and executing it will keep customers coming. That is what targeting, as discussed earlier in this chapter, is all about.

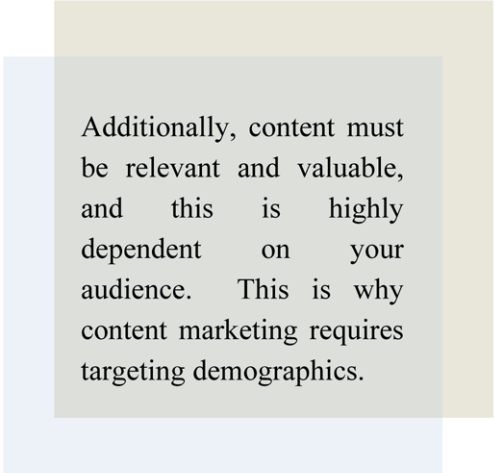# 2 Content Marketing Strategy Development – How to Prepare and What to Use

When it comes to content marketing on the Internet, you don't have to look too far to find the right tools and software to get your message out. The great thing about content is that it can come in many different media, and it can be published through a number of tools online.

Even if the term "content marketing" is new to your vocabulary, there is a great chance that you have already produced some. Even if it is not online content, it can be repurposed for use on the Internet. In this chapter, we will discuss the different ways you can publish your content. Most of the media and tools we will discuss are online, but there are also other ways you can publish and distribute information offline.

2.1 What Does Content Do?

From the smallest blurbs on a user forum to a Youtube channel full of a company's videos on their products or services, content exists. Whatever form the content takes shape as, the content has a message to convey to a reader or viewer and does at least one of the following things:

- Educates
- Informs
- Connects
- Entertains
- Creates Trustworthiness

Additionally, content must be relevant and valuable, and this is highly dependent on your audience. This is why content marketing requires targeting demographics.

Content exists to convince the consumer that whatever the business is selling to them is worth his time and/or their money. Your content should do one of these things for it to be effective. Otherwise, it is useless and does little more than exist on web space.

Accomplishing one of these qualities also lets your potential customer know that the competition is not as good as you are. Educating him on the benefits of buying your product and informing him what your product does builds an informal and impersonal relationship, but it is still important to create trust. No trust means no sales.

Content also provides connection between different media. On your blog or social media profile, you might provide a link to your website or allow the customer to contact you by providing an email address. Having a following on Twitter lets you, as a business, provide access to other media that is relevant to your business. This interconnectivity makes the relationship between customer and business more involved, and this can also build trust.

Finally, content can entertain. Simply put, not all consumers have the time to educate themselves, regardless of the amount of informational and educational material you publish. The Internet is highly visual, so making entertaining content entices a portion of potential customers. However, keep in mind that entertainment can take on different tones and should be appropriate to the type of business you have.

2.2   Preparing for a Content Marketing Strategy

With the previous section in mind, we can now begin to discuss how to develop a content marketing strategy.
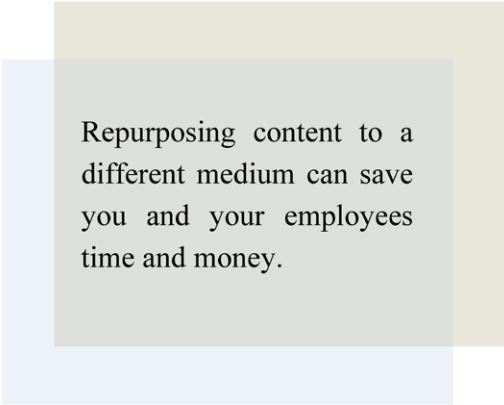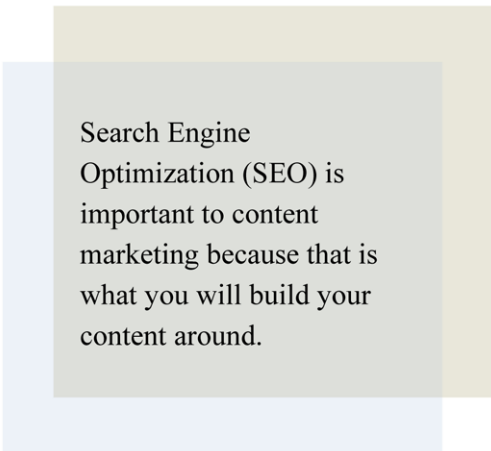
> Repurposing content to a different medium can save you and your employees time and money.

Take a look back at preexisting material that the business already has. This could be anything big or small, and any kind of medium. The point of doing this, though, is to ease the workload you and your employees have to fill. You might be surprised at how much material you already have.

Also think about what form the material takes shapes as. Is it a newsletter or, perhaps, a flyer? Things like this can be repurposed for online use. The content does not necessarily have to change, but the form certainly must change.

Consider, too, referential material that you already have. Is it still feasible and does it still answer the types of questions that your customers ask? FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) are a good referential material to have, especially on your website. Look over this and any similar material and think about whether or not customers would still use them.

Of course, figuring out your content marketing strategy also involves your customers. Knowing your customer's needs and values is essential to developing content that they will become engaged with. That is what targeting demographics is all about. What one age group likes is not necessarily what another age group will be pleased with. Create your material in the correct form and style.

> Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is important to content marketing because that is what you will build your content around.

Though we will go into more detail in a later chapter, it is important to note one final, important preparation to creating engaging content. Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is important to content marketing because that is what you will build your content around. Customers search in particular ways, and knowing how they search is crucial to having a successful strategy.

For this reason, tools such as Google Keyword are good for finding out what your customers are searching for. They help you build your own content and also help you compete with other companies in a similar business. On this point, it is also a good idea to see the content of others and what kinds of keywords they use. Be cautious, though, and do not simply copy what others have done. Being original will help you stand out from the crowd.

2.3   Media Tools Available

When you get started on creating your content marketing strategy, focus first on what content you and your employees can create as an organization. As we mentioned earlier, repurposing old material is also beneficial.

One useful thing to do is to create a spreadsheet indicating new and existing material that it can be converted into. Some of the forms that your content can take the form of include:

- Website
- Blogs
- Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.)
- Articles
- E-Books
- User Guides/Technical Manuscripts
- Reference Materials
- Press Releases
- Product Descriptions
- White Papers
- Tutorials/Demonstrations
- FAQs
- Podcasts
- Videos
- Music
- Printable Items
- Downloadable software
- Commercials
- Calendar
- Coupons/Deals
- Online Store
- Help Desk

> The type of media tools you use is entirely dependent on the kind of demographics you want to appeal to as well as existing customers. Never forget about the consumer.

It is quite a long list, but one that is not without beneficial use. It also may seem like quite a bit of work, but the returns can be big. Remember, the same content can be molded into any of these kinds of media, as long as they are appropriate to that medium.

One of the benefits of having the same content through multiple channels is that it reinforces the same idea to potential consumers. Seeing the same information across different media tools gives the appearance that if there is more than one source saying it, it must be true. Additionally, having the same content across a spectrum of media ensures that your message is getting across to different kinds of people.

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Of course, some media tools must take priority over others, depending on the type of business your company is and what products/services it sells. This is another good reason to look at how other similar companies go about marketing. What works for one type of business may not necessarily work for the business you are in.
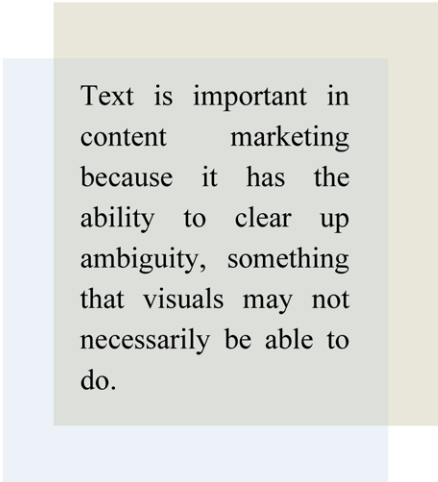
2.4   Forms Used in Media Tools

Content is perceived by users with one or more of their senses. On the Internet, visuals take precedent over other forms, but content marketers still need words to convey a message. And it is not just words but, rather, written/typed words. As part of your content marketing strategy, you should decide whether or not content should be presented in one of the following formats:

- Text (Typed/Written)
- Visual
- Audio

We have talked so far about the different kinds of media tools you can use to present information. This list breaks content down into much more broad terms, and from there, you can really decide what media tool is most appropriate for your content.

Let's take a closer look at each. Keep in mind, too, that content does not necessarily have to come in one form. That is to say, you can present typed words and video together, for example.

2.4.1   Text (Written/Typed Content)

> Text is important in content marketing because it has the ability to clear up ambiguity, something that visuals may not necessarily be able to do.
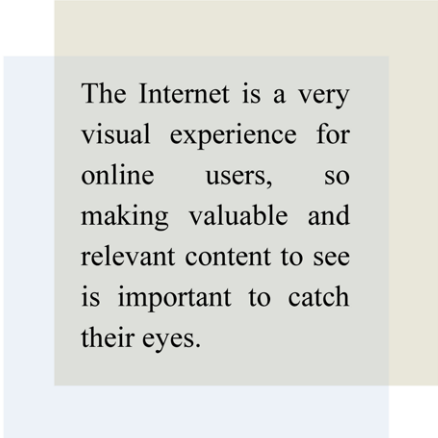
Take a look at customer reviews or product descriptions. Words are an important form of content because they can deliver the clearest message out there. Think about this in terms of other forms of content. Looking at a picture of a person or an object is different than reading a description about the same thing. Where a visual can physically show you something, words convey what cannot be easily shown. Words can be objective and allow us to take away ambiguity.

In content marketing, this is an important element to bringing customers valuable and relevant information. Though Internet users view the online world visually, consumers expect the truth. It is your job to give them information that is not completely subjective.

The great thing about typed content is that you can put it just about anywhere on the Internet. From your company's website and blog to article directories, words are extremely versatile. Tweets and status updates may only be just a few words long, but being up-to-date is what makes it powerful. Your business might put out a newsletter (printed or digital) that is written with news and product information. Typed and written material can even be handed out for free in the form of ebooks or pdf. downloads.

Of course, written material is not exclusive online as we know. Offline materials such as advertisements, business cards, and flyers can make an impact. Remember that part of a marketing strategy means including multiple media tools.

2.4.2 Visual Content

> The Internet is a very visual experience for online users, so making valuable and relevant content to see is important to catch their eyes.

We have mentioned before that going on the Internet is a highly visual experience for the user. Visual content lets users use their favorite sense because it lets them intake information without having to take more time to read. Time is one of the reasons why the visual experience is so important when trying to gain potential customers. You want to make sure that what you publish is important, valuable, and relevant information to them.

There are certainly many avenues you can take to present something visually. Some of these include:

- Video
- Photo
- Slide Show
- Live Presentation (Offline)

The great thing about using visual content is that you can try to convey an abstract idea without saying a thing. After all, they say that a picture is worth a thousand words. But is there anything that visuals do that words cannot?

This question can yield many answers, but what is clear is that visual content can create an aesthetic feel, unlike words which, are dry and static. Imagine looking at a picture of a child who is smiling. What feelings would come about if you looked at such a picture? Now imagine a typed description of the girl smiling. Would it bring about the same feelings as looking at a picture? Visuals have the ability to appeal to our emotions, but they can also be informational. Think of a tutorial on how to fix something.

Of course, visuals come in a variety of media as well. Sites like Youtube offer a storage place for videos while Flickr offers a space for pictures. Additionally, live presentations are also another visual experience that creates a unique feeling that, if converted into any other medium, might not have the same impact. Live presentations can give consumers a sense of camaraderie and an engagement that you cannot get from a simple document.

2.4.3 Audio

Audio seldom exists without being in conjunction with another form of content, but it is, nonetheless, still an important form.

Last, content can be appropriated into an audio form. By itself, content that consists only of audio is not as popular as visuals or the word. But think about this: when you are watching a video, you almost always have sound in the background. At a live presentation, someone has to speak. If content was silent, users would most certainly take notice and not be pleased. Audio is one of those forms of content that we don't necessarily think about because it is such a common quality that works in synchronization with other forms of content.

Of course, that is not to say that content cannot exist alone in the form of audio. Here are some examples of audio that a company could use:

- _Podcasts_ – Depending on the business, podcasts can range in genres from pure entertainment to informational guides and how-to's. Some sites might record reviews by experts on a certain product/service, or they could simply be pure entertainment for the audience. Different companies call for different needs for their audience.
- _Music_ – When you listen to a radio advertisement, you might sometimes hear a catchy jingle to remember the company by. Music is an effective audio tool because it can evoke emotions and provide entertainment. Other companies might offer free music downloads by artists as a kind of teaser to other music. This practice is effective and leads to more sales in downloads.
- _Radio_ – Just as you might hear music on the radio, advertisements on the radio also have the spoken word. Since the advertisement only has a little time, they make use of this time by being quick and witty, creating memorable taglines for listeners to remember.
- _Recorded Speech_ – Let's say that your company's president just made a speech at a live event. Some people might like to hear this speech if they were not able to go, especially if the event was held in one geographic location. Ways to allow people to hear this audio include streaming and downloading an mp3. You can also post it as a podcast.
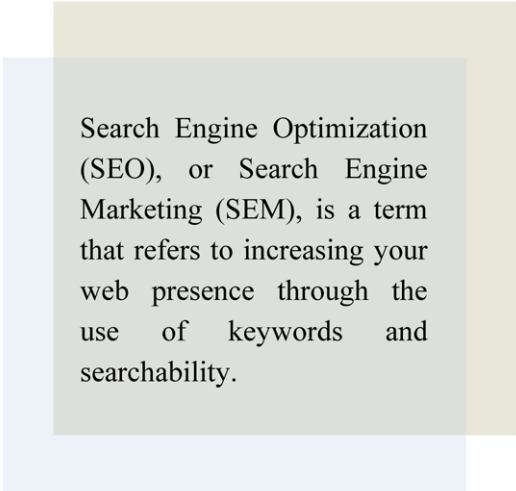
2.5   A Final Word on Content

Publishing content is much like giving a speech when you want to appeal to the crowd. Do you want to appeal to your audience using facts, emotions, or credibility? Content is rhetoric, and all content falls into one of three appeals:

1. Logos (facts)
2. Pathos (emotion)
3. Ethos (credibility)

Keep these in mind as you decide what forms and media tools you use to publish your content. As always, one may be more appropriate over the other, and sometimes you will use more than one.

3 Search Engine Optimization in Content Marketing

So far, we have discussed what content marketing is and what tools and media are available on the Internet. Before we discuss these media forms further, we shall discuss what technique marketers use to get people to find their content.
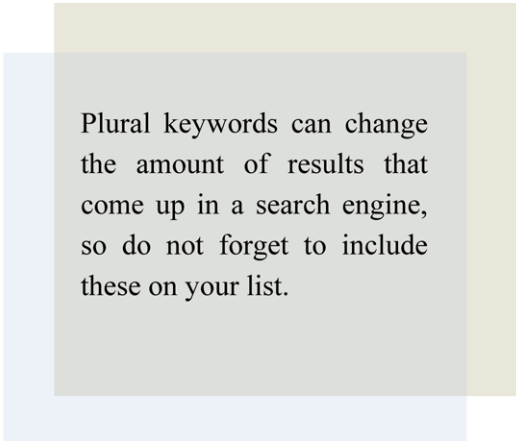
> Search Engine Optimization (SEO), or Search Engine Marketing (SEM), is a term that refers to increasing your web presence through the use of keywords and searchability.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO), or Search Engine Marketing (SEM), are two often interchangeable terms that refer to increasing your presence through the use of keywords and searchability. While SEM refers to all searches performed on the Internet (paid and organic), SEO refers only to organic search listings. For this ebook, we will only use the term SEO when referring to this technique.

Every company can utilize this technique, but each of them are very unique in the way they approach it, depending on the type of business they are in. SEO is also a highly preferred technique in Internet marketing as well as, more importantly, content marketing. Since SEO is all about figuring out the most effective ways for people to find you through search, it is essential to practice in order to create valuable and effective content.

3.1 Basics of SEO

> Plural keywords can change the amount of results that come up in a search engine, so do not forget to include these on your list.

As we mentioned earlier, SEO is a preferred technique in content marketing because of how cost effective it is. It is also preferred because it can really boost your web presence and costs virtually nothing to perform. Unlike paid advertising, content and searchability is optimized to its greatest potential, whether that content is found on your website, blog, social media profiles, or even articles you have written elsewhere.

The most basic components to SEO are the keyword and keyword phrases. These are the backbone to SEO, and understanding them is crucial to successful SEO. For the sake of simplicity, we will refer to both keywords and keyword phrases simply as "keywords."

There are two steps to performing SEO, and they are:

1. Determining Your Keywords
2. Placing Your Keywords

We will discuss these further in upcoming sections, but first, we will talk about what keywords are.

3.2   What are Keywords?

So what are keywords, anyway? What do they do? As we mentioned earlier, SEO attempts to increase the visibility of a company on the web. Keywords are what make that happen. Keywords are search terms that a user might type in to a search engine to find some kind of content. More specifically, they are the most commonly used words or phrases searched for when someone is looking for information on or about a product/service/topic (note the word *key* in the word keyword).
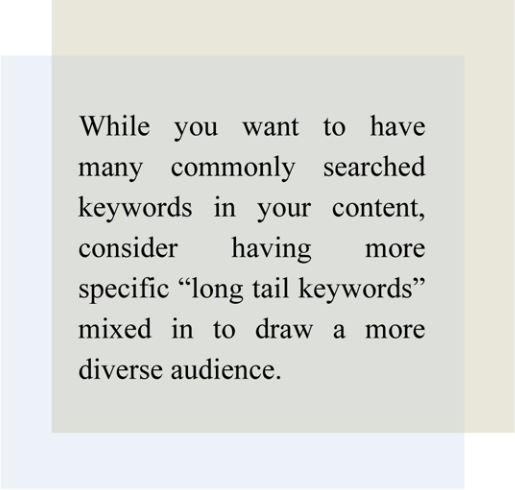
Let's say, for example, you sell mp3 downloads (consisting mostly of music). Your most common keywords might include:

- Music
- Music Downloads
- Music Mp3
- Search Music
- Free Music Downloads
- Free Mp3
- Online Music
- Music CD
- New Music
- Music Listen

While you want to have many commonly searched keywords in your content, consider having more specific "long tail keywords" mixed in to draw a more diverse audience.
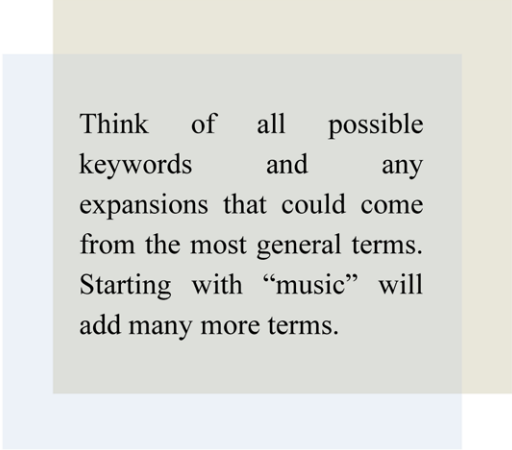
The important thing to consider about keywords is that, the more likely a user is to use that keyword, the more important it is to use it in your content. Using it in your content will increase the chance that your content, no matter what medium it is presented through, will show up in an organic search. Keep in mind, however, that others will use the same strategy and you will have to compete for certain keywords.

You may also want to consider thinking about "long tail keywords." This refers to keywords that are more specific than the above example of "music." A long tail keyword under the category of "music" might be the phrase "free alternative rock music downloads." Because of their specificity, they are much less likely to be used in a search. However, they are also less likely to be used by competitors, so it is a good idea to include these phrases naturally into your content. Ideally, there should be a mix of long tail keywords and normal keywords.

3.3   Determining Keywords

Of course, one of the first steps to performing proper SEO is to determine your organization's most likely batch of keywords that users find you through. One of the most common ways to uncover your organizations best keywords is to use SEO tools such as Google Adword.

But first, sit down with a team and some pens and paper. Think about what people look for if they were to find your product/service and what keywords they might use to find it. Write every possible keyword down. Remember that the keywords must be relevant to your organization and the product/service that it provides.

> Think of all possible keywords and any expansions that could come from the most general terms. Starting with "music" will add many more terms.

Try to start with very general keywords. In the case of an organization that sells mp3 downloads, such keywords might include "music," "mp3," and "download." From these broad, general keywords, expand upon them by adding in modifiers. Make the keywords into phrases and make them longer. Descriptors also narrow down certain products. Make sure to pluralize as many nouns as you can, as well. Expanding your keywords in this way will help you come up with less obvious keywords that you may not have thought of otherwise.

With a list at hand, the next step to take is to use resources that generate keywords specific to the type of organization and product/service you provide. There are many different resources to use, and here are some of the most common ones:

- Google Adword
- Micro Niche Finder
- Wordtracker
- Wordstream Keyword Analyzer

This is not an exhaustive list, and while there are many keyword generating resources out there, they all operate by the same means. Type in a basic keyword, and the tool will generate keywords related to it, either directly or indirectly. It is useful because it can provide you with keywords you may not have thought of before. In addition, it can also provide you with information about the keywords, including:

- The rate of competition for showing up in the results when someone searches with that keyword
- The number of global monthly searches that are made using that keyword
- The number of local monthly searches for that keyword

Since you have a budget to keep in mind, remember that different keyword generating resources might have fees attached to them. Free services are cost effective, but paid services might come with more benefits such as the information described above.

3.4   Placing Keywords

Now that we have discussed how to determine your keywords, it is time to determine how to place them. You will place keywords in the text of your content, but there are also other places you can place your keywords.

3.4.1   Placing Keywords in Content

Since this ebook focuses mostly on content marketing, we will first discuss how to place keywords in the content of your web pages. For the sake of simplicity, when we refer to content in this section, we refer to any kind of content that consists of text on a webpage. The following list is what we refer to when placing keywords in your content. It includes, but is not limited to, your organization's:

- Website
- Social Media Profiles
- Written Articles in Article Directories
- Blog
- Video Site Profile
- Picture Sharing Site Profile
- Forum Comments
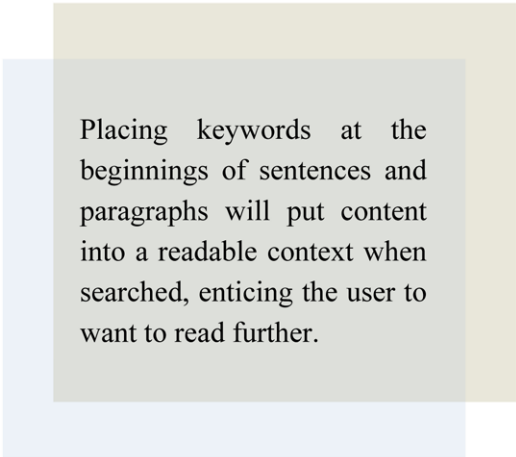
These Internet tools and media will have bodies of text in which you can place keywords. The most important piece of advice to know when placing keywords is that it has to sound natural. There should not be an uneven tone or oddly placed words. This will turn off the potential customer from wanting to take action on one of these web spots.

One technique that is considered very bad practice is to bundle up multiple keywords at the bottom of a web page that get the most hits. When users read this, they might be confused or displeased at the random nature of the words, and you will lose credibility.

Instead, place keywords at the front of your bodies of text. Be sure that they sound natural and vary their frequency at even intervals. Use a variety of keywords and make sure to use a mix of normal keywords and "long tail keywords." Another good practice is to place keywords at the beginnings of sentences and paragraphs. When search engines display a body of text, they give a small preview of the text for the user. If the keywords are placed correctly, they will see the beginning of a sentence or paragraph. This will be just enough to see, but short enough to be a teaser. It will entice the reader to take action and visit your website or profile. In contrast, if a keyword appears in the middle of a sentence, the preview might not make sense unless put into its normal context. But seeing only the middle of a sentence may not entice a reader to further research.

> Placing keywords at the beginnings of sentences and paragraphs will put content into a readable context when searched, enticing the user to want to read further.

3.4.2 Placing Keywords Elsewhere

Placing keywords in the content of your own websites, as well as other places that host your content, is the first important step to getting people to take action and buy your product/service. However, you can also increase the amount of incoming traffic whenever you advertise through others, and when you place keywords in places that are not part of the content of your web page (we will explain what we mean by this in this section). Some other ways of making SEO work are:

- Advertising on Other Websites
- Through Affiliate Programs
- On non-content locations of a web page

The first two list items are not necessarily searchable items, but they still involve creating content that entices users to

take action. Participating in these types of advertising strategies still involves marketing through the content you create. The third list item, however, is more searchable, making it more likely to end up in a search engine's listings. Let's look more specifically at each of these.

- *Advertising on Other Websites* – When you advertise on another organization's website, you might advertise by buying a space on one of their pages. With this space, you can place banner ads. Banner ads can vary in size and location on a web page, and users can click on it to take them to the website of the advertiser. There are two ways to go about this type of advertising. You can simply pay to have the ad up by paying a flat fee. The other way is Pay-Per-Click advertising, in which you pay to have your ad displayed in search engines. You pay for each click, and if the keyword is competitive, each click might cost more. In either of these situations, you want to use proper keywords that will attract people to your site to take action. Fully optimize which keywords work best and implement them into the advertised space that you pay for.

- *Affiliate Programs* – Affiliate programs are similar to paying for ad space on a web page. However, there are differences between the two, such as the ability to use forms on another organization's web site. Affiliate programs operate by allowing you to advertise your organization on another person's website. The difference, however, is that you pay the host of your ads based on how well the ad performs. There is no initial fee, and the pay is all dependant on the performance of the advertisement. Keep in mind, though, the affiliate marketing is not for every organization. You want to make sure that you can keep up payments and actually be able to pay commission to the hosting website. If you do participate in an affiliate program, be sure to use commonly use keywords that a person might search for. The content you use in an affiliate program does not necessarily show up in search engines, but if the right audience goes to the hosting website, you can gain more people by using the right keywords.

- *Non-content Locations on Web Pages* – When we refer to "non-content" locations, we talk about the content that is not visible within the window of a web browser. Rather, these locations refer to things like the title of a web page, its URL, or tags in pictures, among other. Let's look at each one further.

- <u>Title</u> – The title of a web page is an important place to put a keyword. Placing keywords here increases the chance of a search finding this page.

- <u><Meta> Tags</u> – In the design of your website, you will use HTML and many different kinds of tags. These help build your website, and they execute particular commands to properly display the site. You can place keywords in <META> tags to increase search results.

- <u>URL</u> – Placing keywords in the URL of specific pages of your websites will garner higher listings on search engines. Try to use them more on top pages of your website and less on pages that fall lower on the hierarchy of pages.

- <u><ALT> Tags</u> – These kinds of tags are descriptors for images that appear in a browser. This tag will appear if an image does not successfully load, but you can also place keywords within the tag that can be searched.

- <u>Links</u> – You might link to your other Internet media on your website, or even to another organization's page. You can use keywords here instead of simply the link to attract more search results.

4 Website and Profiles

Now that we have discussed Search Engine Optimization (SEO), we can begin to discuss the places on the Internet where you can post your content. With proper SEO technique in mind, we can produce valuable, relevant content that will make your organization searchable and credible.

Websites and social media profiles are often the first place that users will see your content.

If you are running a proper Internet marketing strategy, then you already have a website up and running. To that end, you should also have some social media profiles set up with some of the biggest contenders, such as Facebook or Twitter. Making a name for yourself and getting information to as many potential customers as possible means presenting content. Content must be presented through as many channels as possible, but for now, we will discuss the channels that you own or have a sort of profile in. This will include your website, social media, and blogs, among others.

In this chapter, you will learn how to make content through these channels.

4.1   Your Website

Your website is the center of all your Internet marketing activity. It is where your customers can get all the relevant information about you and your product/service, and it is also where sales are made. Having an effective content strategy means knowing how to display information and change it when necessary. You must also know so basic design principles to make effective content.

4.1.1   Design and Content

One of the basic principles of creating a website is to have end goals in mind. What kind of functions do you want to have? What information do you want to post? Are there sign-up forms available? What color scheme do you want?

The content on your website is crucial because it should be the most well-informed content about your organization and product/service. But first, you will want to decide on some basic information. Already, though, you can optimize this information by using proper SEO techniques.

- *Creating a Domain Name* – There are a few things to keep in mind when coming up with a domain name. Though deciding on the domain name will only happen once, it is still important to come up with a good name that will be searchable and get you noticed.
- *Match Domain Name with URL* – The domain name is not always the same as the URL. Do not worry if this sounds confusing. Most of the time, this does not factor in to how users see your page. Domain names are names that website owners register with a host, and what the site itself is called. The URL is what a user types into an Internet browser's address bar to get to a site. However, you should match these two to make it easier for users to search for your website. It will also make it simpler so that you and the users do not have to know two different names to the organization. Make sure, too, that the name you choose is searchable based on the keywords you come up with. In addition to deciding a domain name, make sure the URL is clear and precise.
- *Name Length* – Length in the domain name and URL is important. If either of the names are too long, it will confuse users and they will not be able to remember it. You should have something memorable so customers can easily type in the URL into the address bar from anywhere without consulting from somewhere else.

- *Organization Name* – This seems like a pretty straightforward choice when deciding on a domain name or URL. But in fact, it might prove to be more complicated. For example, is your organization name difficult to spell or pronounce? Are there any other organizations with the same or similar name? Take these into consideration because, again, you want both the domain name and URL to be memorable to users, and you do not want to have your website shut down if it copies a website with the same names or URL. Consider, too, putting the product/service name in the domain name or URL, especially if the product/service is unique. This is not only a good SEO technique, but it will ensure a unique domain name and URL.
- *Top Level Domain* – Otherwise known as TLD, this is the ending of a domain name and URL. Common TLDs include .com, .org, and .gov. If you are worried about other organizations competing with you and having a similar name, consider purchasing more than one TLD. It will prevent others from getting them, but it will also let more customers have access to your site.
- **Page Design** – Whether you are designing your home page or sub pages, you will want to make pages that have keyword rich content as well as good aesthetic design with multimedia.
- *Keywords* – If you have large bodies of text on any of your pages, you will want to sprinkle some of your most notable keywords. On your homepage, try to place more general keywords in the content. For specific pages, place more specific keywords. You should also place keywords within the tags of the page's HTML, such as <META> and <ALT> tags.
- *Multimedia* – Using multiple forms of content is a good practice because it provides several different ways of viewing the same content. Imagine a web page with only blocks of text. This is not necessarily exciting, and if you want to generate sales, you should make the website engaging for the customer. Media should work together on a page and clarify/elaborate on each other. If you have pictures of your team, providing text clarifies who the people are in the picture. If you have a product description, pictures clarify what the user is reading about.
- **Connectivity** – Providing connectivity between you and your other profiles allows users to explore other channels that your organization runs through. You can also provide connectivity to other similar organization by linking their websites and profiles as well. You help each other out this way. If you provide links, though, make sure to practice SEO by placing keywords within the links.

4.1.2 Static and Dynamic Information

Content on a website is either static or dynamic. Some information will never change and wkll always remain the same, such as your organization's contact information. Dynamic information, however, is subject to change, sometimes by the hour.

Determine which information fits this bill. Dynamic information can be anything from news, updates, calendar events, and product pricing. The design of the website should also allow someone to be able to change this information whenever it is necessary. You may consider hiring someone to complete this task.

4.2   Social Media Profiles
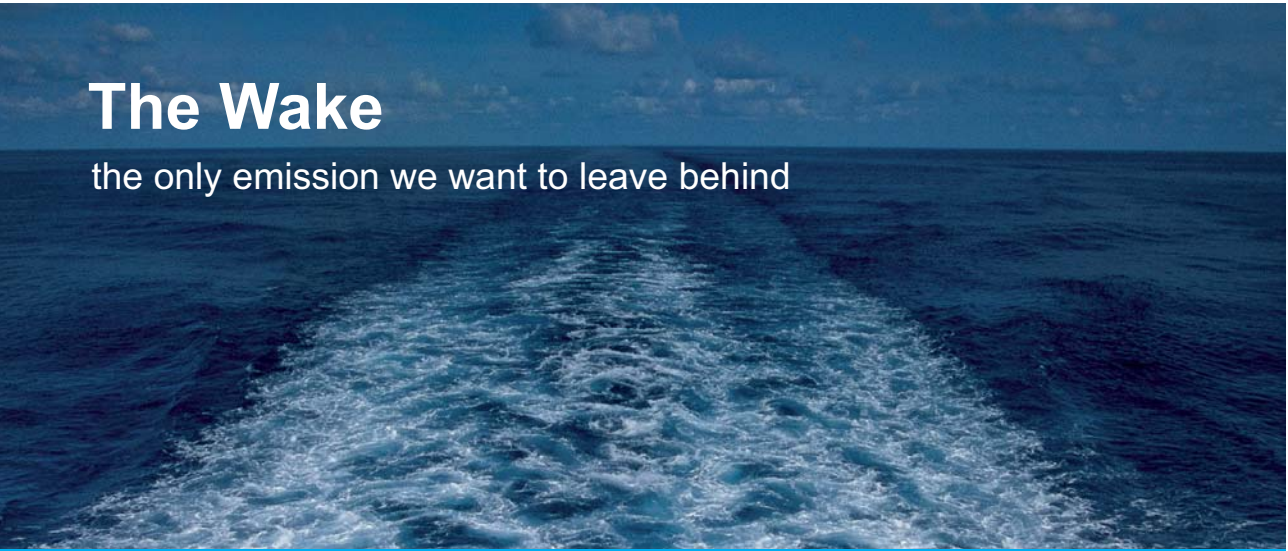
Marketing with social media is a must these days. Simply having a website is not enough to properly market your brand or product. Social media allows connectivity across the web that has not been seen before. Connectivity is the crucial factor when it comes to social media and content. Social media spreads content by people tweeting and liking posts. The phenomenon is a big conglomerate of networks that connect people. Those people also like to share, and with it, you as an organization can do just the same.

4.2.1 Content and Social Media

There are many benefits to using social media as a marketing tool, but one thing stands out as an important aspect when it comes to content marketing. It is called Social Media Optimization (SMO) and refers to all the aspects of connectivity and sharing. When it comes to content, you want your content to reach out across a larger audience, and connecting and sharing will help accomplish this. There are five tenants to SMO, and they are:

- <u>Creating Shareable Content</u> – Linkability is the most important part of creating shareable content. You also want to make content that can be replicated easily to other linked sites or profiles, which can include links or link buttons at the bottom of a page. The content itself, of course, is what will ultimately determine whether or not it is shareable.
- <u>Simplifying Sharing</u> – Extending from the previous point, when you look at the bottom of a page like a blog post, you might see a lot of buttons denoting that you can tweet or digg the page. While this provides linkability, you do not want the user to feel overwhelmed. Simplify the linkability by making sharing painless and effortless.
- <u>Rewarding Engagement</u> – Engaging user conversation is important when you want to create interest in your company or product. This can occur in many different formats, from forums to posting shareable content. Though there many different ways to measure how users engage in conversation, what matters is that it occurs. It creates interest, and you will want to make this interest worth it by rewarding users, such as with more content. Be careful with how much you give, though, and moderate rewarding engagement. You do not want to overwhelm or underwhelm users. Lastly, you will want the engagement to be positive for the long term prospects of your company or product.

Download free eBooks at bookboon.com
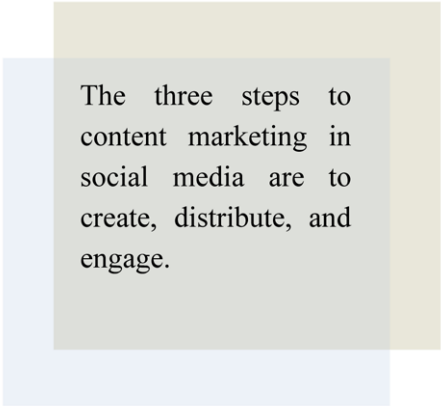
- Proactive Content Sharing – Do not rely on users to share your content. You should also constantly share content with users so that the content is more likely to get shared by them to their friends. Do not forget to share the content across all social media channels and through different media. If you have pictures of new and improved products, be sure to post them for everyone to see. If you have a new video highlighting the pros of your services, post it and make sure everyone can link to it. Your visibility will increase exponentially if you share consistently with people.
- Encouraging Mashup – This is where you can really engage and empower current customers. What is a mashup, anyway? A mashup is when a user takes original content and creates something new from it. He might go on to share it with you or with the world. Either way, sharing this creates visibility for you, but it engages the customer with your organization by giving him a voice and feeling a connection. This will make him into a returning customer, but his sharing will potentially bring in new customers.

The three steps to content marketing in social media are to create, distribute, and engage.

By doing all of these, you are encouraging people to engage in your organization and empowering them by giving them the ability to remix certain content. Most importantly, when you share with people, they share with all of their friends. Your visibility becomes more dominant, and more people see your content.

An organization's responsibility when it comes to content and social media is to create and distribute content, and engage the audience.

As always, your content should always have SEO inspired keywords to make it more searchable within search engines. Build your content around these keywords, especially if your content is as short as a status update or tweet.

4.3   Blogs

Blogs are an especially engaging part of content marketing because content is what makes up a blog. Blogs can range from any kind of genre, including:

- News Updates
- Commentaries

- Reviews
- Opinion Pieces
- Product Announcements

Blogs are also a multimedia platform that can deliver the same content in several different ways. Blogs do not necessarily have to be composed solely of text. You can also include audio or video to complement the text, or simply stand alone.

Of course, no matter what medium you use, you will have to create engaging, valuable, and credible content. Blogs can be shared across the Internet, so if you want your Digg or tweet buttons to be pushed, the content you create must be valuable to the user and relevant to his interests. Making the content into different medium forms also ensures that you appeal to more people, increasing the likelihood that your content will get shared.

4.4 Email Content

Email marketing is another strategy you will have to use to form an effective Internet marketing strategy. Content comes in three different ways with emails:

- Direct Email - Emails are sent to directly to current and potential customers
- Retention Email - Frequent and regular emails are sent to current customers
- Email Placed Ads - Marketing ads are placed within emails sent by others

Emails are the most engaging type of content because they end up in users' most personal space on the web. It is analogous to sending printed mail. Sending emails to a user's email account is like sending printed mail to a user's house. Of course, engaging the user with email is all about creating engaging content. Users are more skeptical of emails, especially if they have not signed up to receive emails from your organization.

Email content includes that which is relevant to the user. If the user has already allowed you to put him on an email list, you have a consensual trust with him already. He expects to have content that is related to his needs or desires, so you must make sure that you deliver it. Not delivering it will lead to SPAM complaints, and this can seriously damage your reputation.
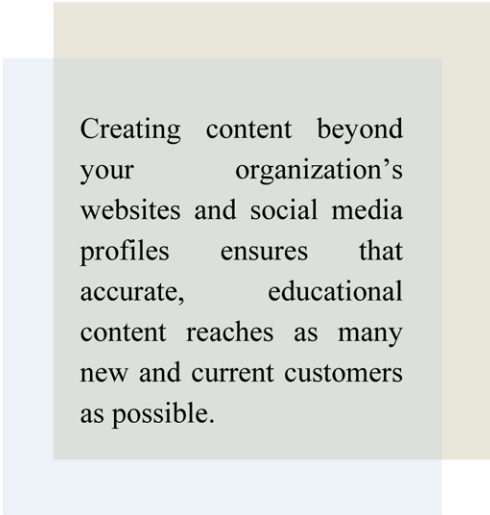
You can also have ads placed within emails to get more visibility out there if you are not signed up to send emails to certain users. Again, the content you show within the ad must be relevant and should focus on keywords from SEO.

5 External Sites

When developing a content marketing strategy, the marketer does not necessarily have to keep to his own organization's website, or even the social media profiles and media tools he has created. If you search throughout the online community, there are a wide variety of websites that distribute information for the sake of informing and educating users. Luckily for you, this is one of many tools you can use to really boost your sales at little to no cost.

In this chapter, we will discuss the ways in which you can publish content on the sites of others. This will be different than the previous chapter, which focused on creating content on your own website or even on your own profiles in social media.

5.1 Benefits of Content Beyond the Organization

Creating content beyond your organization's websites and social media profiles ensures that accurate, educational content reaches as many new and current customers as possible.

When you are creating content, you want to have a way to reach out to the most people you can. You also want to go beyond your boundaries, both online and offline, to get potential customers. In the online world, going beyond your organization's web pages is much easier and costs, at the most, very little to produce.

Additionally, because the content is multi-faceted and able to be viewed in so many spaces on the web, you can build up credibility simply from the appearance of your company's content. If you are able to get content on a renowned website, you can build even more credibility and trustworthiness simply by being associated with it.

Writing for other websites allows you to create valuable and educational content for potential consumers. If that content stays congruent with content you have published through other media tools, your credibility will be even more prominent.

And finally, having even more content beyond your organization means that a large portion of customers will get the latest information and updates. As you can imagine, making as many of your customers happy as possible will make it more likely that you will keep them around for the long run.

5.2   Common External Sites and Media Tools to Use

There might be a little confusion when we talk about external sites without mentioning social media sites or video and picture sharing services. After all, the site is not yours and you are using it to distribute and publish information.

For the sake of simplicity, we included a list of external sites and services that do not necessarily have organizations sign up and have a profile in the same sense as Facebook, Youtube, or Flickr. Below, you will find a thorough, but not exhaustive, list.

- Article Directories
- Open Source Content Sites
- How-To Sites
- Guest Posting (Including on blogs and websites)
- Guest Speaking (Podcasts, Radio Broadcasts)
- Digital Newsletters/Newspapers/Magazines
- Printed Newsletters/Newspapers/Magazines
- Affiliate Programs

The best thing about these sites is that they are free of charge. There is no need to purchase anything like you would in buying advertisement space, and some sites may even pay for content.

Remember, though, that the real return is in gaining new customers. You should build an awareness of your brand and connect all content to each other. This drives sales and engages customers to become more involved with your organization.
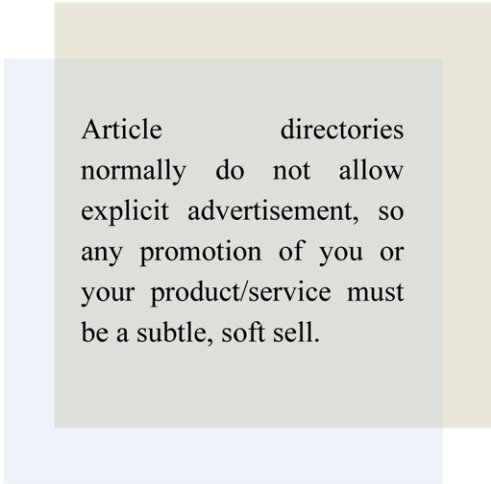
Next, we will take a closer look at some of the sites and tools you can utilize.

5.3   Article Directories

Often not utilized enough, article directories are a beneficial tool to use to build awareness and credibility of your brand. Here is a short list of common article directories you can start to publish in. Note that this is not an exhaustive list. Included are:

- Ezinearticles.com
- Oneminuteu.com
- Squidoo.com
- Amazines.com
- Articlesbase.com
- Authorsden.com
- Scribdb.com
- Suite101.com
- Associatedcontent.com
- 43things.com
- Technorati
- Advogato.org
- Asmallworld.net
- Digg.com
- iSnare
- Ring.com
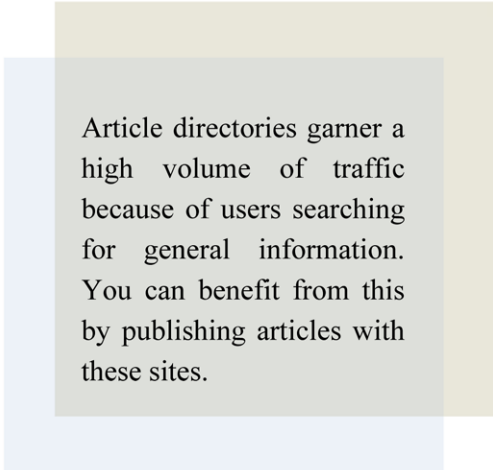
> Article directories normally do not allow explicit advertisement, so any promotion of you or your product/service must be a subtle, soft sell.

There are, of course, many others to consider. Other article directories are specific to certain topics. Wisegeek.com, for example, specializes in only a few fields of study, including computer technology. Others, like howstuffworks.com provide a large source of information from many different fields of study.

The great thing about publishing articles in directories is that you can promote yourself or the type of product/service you provide. Keep in mind, however, that you cannot explicitly advertise your organization on an article directory. You should provide a soft sell that is subtle enough to recognize but not blatantly an advertisement.

5.3.1 Article Directories and Traffic

> Article directories garner a high volume of traffic because of users searching for general information. You can benefit from this by publishing articles with these sites.

Article directories are a convenient tool to use because of the amount of traffic that comes into them. Publishing articles on the Internet is all about providing information for Internet users. Article directories, especially large ones with numerous amounts of information, are seen as more credible to the average online user.

Because of this trust between directory and user, many users go to a directory for information. Most of the time, if a user goes to a directory, they are looking for general information and not for a specific item or service. Most importantly, because so many users look for general information on these sites, the sites get a lot of traffic and, therefore, many more hits when searched on search engines.

This is where you can come in and have an influence over a user's opinion or shopping habit. Since a lot of traffic makes it to these article directories, you should try and become a publisher on those sites to get the same traffic. Make your appearance and establish your presence by doing the following:

- <u>Provide a Bio</u> – Some directories allow you to post a short biography. The biography lets readers know who wrote the article and can give them a preview of your organization. This section also allows you to get users to connect to other media tools, such as social media, an email address, and even your website.
- <u>Post in Multiple Sites</u> – To get your content to as many people as possible, the best thing to practice is to publish your content across all other article directories. As we've mentioned before, the more widespread your content is, the more people will see it, and the more traffic you are likely to gain.

- Use SEO – As you have done with content on your website and social media, sprinkle specific key phrases and words throughout the content of your article. Users are searching for general information, so throwing in general keyword phrases is important (and likely required, depending on the topic and site in which you publish). Mixing in more specific keywords and phrases is beneficial as well. Remember that you are trying to cover a lot of ground with your content, and that different people search for different things and in different ways. You will also have to test out how the keywords are doing with analytics, and the results come down to how well you know your audience as well as to some trial and error.

5.4   Open Source Content Sites

"Open source" is a general term that refers to the practice of providing the source materials of an end product, such as schematics, software, or information.

Open source content sites are websites that provide information completely free of charge. They may be in the style of encyclopedias or catalogs of research. Sites like Wikipedia and Wiktionary provide information for users, which is also created *by* users. Common functions of open source content include open revisions and reuse by other parties. Information on sites like this is protected by Creative Commons licenses, but are still open enough to be available to far more readers.

When you perform a search on a search engine, chances are that you will find a Wikipedia article at the top of the list. Just like article directories, this comes up at the top of the list because users search for general information and a lot of traffic ends up on these types of sites. You can take advantage of this by producing your own content for open source content sites.
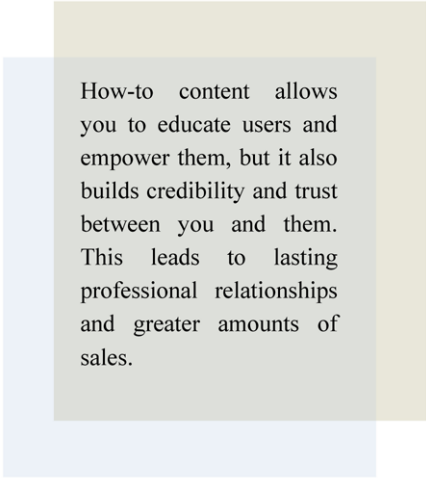
Here are some general guidelines to publishing an entry to open source content sites:

1. Provide information about your company, including its history, mission, and offered products or services.
2. Be as objective as possible, and use proper citation to back up any solid facts that you state. Remember to be neutral and contribute valuable information. Honesty really is a good policy.
3. Stay away from subjective words such as "best," "cutting-edge," or "state of the art." Unless you can prove what you say, do not say it, because open source content sites have the right to delete an entry for improper citation or claims.
4. Use SEO once again to improve how well users are able to find you. Be sure, however, not to use subjective phrasing or keywords.
5. If you use pictures, use only relevant pictures like the organization's logo or pictures that exemplify something commonly seen in that organization. This could include what the inside of a common store looks like, for example.
6. Sign up to receive updates on any changes. Since open source allows *anyone* to edit, you want to make sure that no one posts anything scathing or tries to promote something of theirs on your entry. Actions like this can get your entry deleted.

One of the concerns, however, is that open source content sites are not good sources of information because they are not always peer reviewed and they can be edited by almost anyone. Not to mention, for every good, solid entry on these types of sites, there are bound to be at least ten bad ones.

This should not discourage you from posting open source entries, though. Most readers recognize extravagant claims or blatantly offensive language. It is still ok to be cautious with consistent updates to editorial changes made as well.

5.5   How-To Sites

How-to content allows you to educate users and empower them, but it also builds credibility and trust between you and them. This leads to lasting professional relationships and greater amounts of sales.

How-to sites are similar to article directory sites in that they both provide information about something, whether it is a topic or an object. The difference, of course, is apparent in the name "how-to." How-to sites educate users on how to do something, whether it is a list of steps on how to build something or a list of guidelines to accomplish a task.

How-to content comes in the form of lists, with steps or points that are labeled by number or bullet points. They can be sequential if the information teaches you a process that is linear, or it can be a list of points that do not have to be done in any particular order.

How-to content helps build credibility for your organization because it shows readers how much you know on a particular topic or process. If the reader perceives you as well informed on a particular area of expertise, especially if it is related to your organization's product/service, they are more likely to trust you. The trust, of course, can lead to a higher volume of sales.

Customers can also feel more empowered by the information you give them, and this can be used to help gain sales. Let's say your organization sells car parts. The content you contribute to how-to sites might include process articles like "How to Change a Tire" or "How to Check Your Oil." You might also publish material that is a general overview of a topic, such as "Choosing the Best Car Battery."

Just like with article directories and open source content sites, you cannot explicitly advertise your organization on the website to which you contribute information. Therefore, it is not a good idea to tell users to buy *your* tires, oil filters, or batteries as a solution to their question. Most users simply need general information, and most of the time, that is all they will leave the website with. However, if you make valuable and compelling content, you might just entice the user to look you up.

Here is a list of some of the most popular "How-to" sites:

- Ehow.com
- Wikihow.com
- Howstuffworks.com
- About.com
- Instructables.com
- Doityourself.com
- Howtodothings.com
- Infobarrel.com
- Expertvillage.com
- Videojug.com
- 5min.com
- Sclipo.com
- Tipstrs.com

If you look up these sites, you will notice that some of them use one or more different kinds of media to publish their content. A site like 5min.com features video tutorials that are no longer than 5 minutes, and some other sites offer text as well as pictures that accompany it. Choose the way you want to present you content wisely. Think about what your audience would expect and value from you.
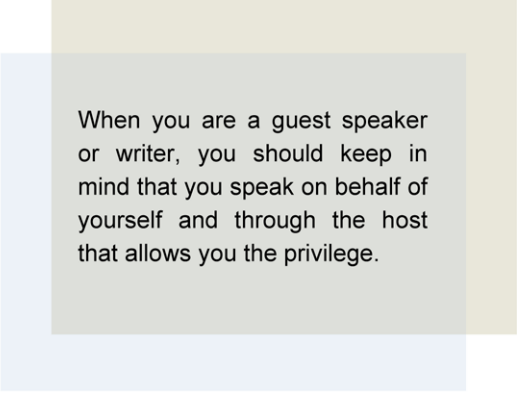
Download free eBooks at bookboon.com

5.6   Guest Posting (On Blogs, Newsletters, etc.)

Throughout your organization's lifetime, you are likely to (and very well should) gain contacts and network with other organizations. The marketing world is competitive, but not everyone you form a professional relationship will be in competition with you. This is especially true if both parties are in different fields. Connectivity can be a good thing, and you and your contacts can make efforts to help each other out in some instances.

> When you are a guest speaker or writer, you should keep in mind that you speak on behalf of yourself and through the host that allows you the privilege.

You already have your own line of media tools to utilize, but why not make an appearance in someone else's web space? This can be a really good factor in forming professional friendships, but it can also help both you and the host in garnering more traffic to each other's web spaces.

Here are some ways that you and a host can work together to publish content to help each other out.

- *Write an Editorial/Article for a Newsletter (Print or Digital)* – Sometimes, editors of newsletters will ask a guest to write an article explaining a topic, or maybe even a product or service. Most of the time, they invite experts to create the content because of how well informed they are. If you find yourself receiving an invite for this genre, take advantage of it and write a compelling, educated article. This helps you out because it gets you and your organization visibility. If the article is well-written and researched, you also build a line of trustworthiness and credibility. This also extends to the host of your article. If your article is received well, the host benefits too, gaining credibility and trustworthiness.
- *Write a Guest Blog/Website Entry* – Blogs are similar to editorials or articles for a newsletter. The difference, though, is that a new newsletter is more of a collection of multiple pieces. In contrast, blogs focus more on one entry whenever it is updated. So when you're invited to make an appearance on a blog, remember that your entry is the main focus and is being watched closely. The same rules for newsletter articles apply. Make sure your entry is well-informed, but also make sure that it is accurate and flows evenly. Also keep in mind that users may have the ability to leave comments and make posts of their own in response to the blog. While the potential of backlash is there, having users comment on your entry is a good way to gauge what the audience wants and values. Take user comments seriously and keep it in mind for future content contribution.

- *Make a Guest Appearance for a Podcast/Radio Broadcast* – Much different from articles and blogs, making an appearance for a medium that is all audio requires spoken language rather than written. Podcasts can be much less intimidating because they can be edited before they are distributed. However, radio broadcasts are live and leave much less room for error. Because of this, it is essential to practice what you want to say and how you say it. Being able to convey a message on the spot is an impressive skill that will attract attention and give you credibility with audiences if you do it right. Remember to speak clearly, know your topic down to the details, and set a tone that is comfortable and engaging.

5.7   Affiliate Programs

The final major category of Internet marketing is affiliate marketing. In affiliate marketing, you get other people to drive traffic to your site in return for a percentage of any sale that is made as a result of that visit to your site. In other words, you allow others to do part of your marketing for you.

So how does this relate to content marketing? One of the reasons that an Internet marketer will take part in affiliate programs is because the affiliate and organization have similar products/services or audiences. Therefore, relevant content is essential to making affiliate program work in regards to content marketing.

Of course, affiliate marketing is not for every organization. To be able to have a successful affiliate marketing program, you should have:

- A high enough profit margin that you can afford a commission for your affiliates
- An attractive product or service that other people will be motivated to promote because (a) you pay a good commission and (b) the product is relatively easy to sell
- You are able to support the demand in your product that affiliates could bring in
- You are able to support the additional customers that affiliates could bring in
- You are able to support the affiliates themselves with training, advertising, and other promotional materials
- You are willing to pay for a service (or software) to help you track your affiliate sales

If you decide to become part of an affiliate program with a particular website, take a look at the website and find out if you both have relevant content to each other. Does your content hold the same kind of values that they convey? Do you both speak to the same audience? Is their potential to gain a new demographic? Also, how credible is the affiliate?

If you decide that you can participate in affiliate marketing, here is a list of affiliate marketplaces, which allow you to manage affiliates for a fee:

- ClickBank.com
- Commissionjunction.com
- PayDotCom
- Affiliate Marketplace
- Click2Sell
- Pay Gear

6 User-Generated Content

Throughout this ebook, we have given a considerable amount of focus on the content that you, as the organization, create. But there is one more factor we must take into consideration when discuss content marketing.

The Users

> Users trust users more than organizations, but their content can actually work to your advantage.

Users are a powerful driving force behind content marketing. Users prefer to count on other users for relevant, valuable content before they count on the organization. Things like product reviews and commentaries that are written by users are much more likely to be read by other users than if you were to put them out. This applies more to potential customers because they are skeptical of an organization they are not familiar with. But with the right strategy, you can benefit from user-generated content, whether it is good or bad.

6.1   Where is User-Generated Content?

User-generated content can show up just about anywhere on the web. Fans of an organization might have a space on the Internet dedicated to writing about their product, or someone might even comment in a forum about an organization's services. Some common places where this type of content occurs include:

- Product Reviews
- Message Boards
- Social Media Outlets
- Contest Submissions
- Online Groups
- Testimonials
- Memes (think Diet Coke and Mentos)

6.2   Creating a Space for User-Generated Content

In some instances, an organization might want to consider creating a space for fans and customers to write up content. This might be in the form of a message board for discussion of the organization and all of its extensions or a place to create reviews for products.

There should be someone to moderate these kinds of spaces, and a few ground rules should be set up to prevent any kinds of personal attacks, solicitations, or inappropriate comments. The most important thing to consider is to make it an open atmosphere for clean debate and discussion. Moderators will be able to keep fighting at bay and also remove content that is inappropriate. If your customer base is deeply invested, however, the space can be self-monitored most of the time and people can often spot outrageous and inflammatory statements.

> Allowing users to have their own space to post on forums or create customer reviews empowers and engages them, and they will have a long term interest in your organization.

6.3   Customer Reviews

Allowing customers to post their own reviews can help your site traffic tremendously. Not only will you let the customers engage in conversation with each other, you will get plenty of feedback on your entire product catalog by having opinions gathered in one spot. Think of having customer reviews similar to surveying your audience.

If your organization sells products, have special pages set up where users can come and post their opinions and reviews. Make the space easy to navigate and simple to post. For each individual product, there should be an easy way to view each one to make it front and center of the conversation. Providing product descriptions and other media, like pictures and video, will also educate your customers. Of course, the bulk of information will come from the users themselves.

6.4   Handling Negative User-Generated Content

Not all content is will be good news for you. Sometimes, you might get products that don't live up to the highest standard, and it will definitely show if users are not satisfied. They will post negative feedback about it, and this can profoundly affect other users.

If the charges against your product are true, be sure to follow up with a fix to it as soon as possible. Even if you cannot get to work on it immediately, assuring customers that the problem will get resolved will calm their concerns. In the end, people will appreciate the recognition and genuine interest in appealing to their needs and desires.

6.5   The Pros and Cons of User-Generated Content

The important thing about user-generated content is that the content is marketed by people are not directly affiliated with you. They are likely everyday users that want to share their thoughts and feelings on certain products/services. It is a low-cost way of having your organization's name recognized and visible for more Internet users to see.

This can also be a downside, though. If your organization, product, or service gets a bad review or posting, it can damage your reputation. There is also the fear that your competition might want to write false or misleading information under the anonymity that the Internet provides. However, if you view this content as feedback to your organization, you can use it to your benefit to improve.

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