

Marketers know that creating unique content is a proven way to get the attention of customers. Creating high value material in an engaging and natural manner can drive organic traffic, increase sales, and improve brand image and perception.

However, doing this successfully over time requires careful and methodical planning. This is where a content marketing strategy comes into play. In this article, we'll explore how a successful content marketing strategy is created, and look at the ways you can begin to create one for your own business.

# What Is a Content Marketing Strategy?

[Content marketing](#) is the process of creating and publishing content that is intended to provide value to a target customer segment. The content is typically free and is intended to get customers engaged with the brand, with the goal of eventually selling them on a product or service.

Now, a content marketing strategy is the set of plans and initiatives that a business makes in preparation for its content marketing initiatives. This includes defining the type of content, how it is to be distributed, who its audience is, and so on. By taking these steps, businesses can ensure that their content marketing is consistent and aligns with their broader business goals and objectives.

# The Importance of a Content Marketing Strategy

Content marketing is a valuable marketing tool, but it requires careful planning to get right. Putting in place a well thought out strategy ahead of time will provide several important benefits:

Ensure consistency in your message. Defining the core themes of the marketing content upfront ensures that the published material stays in line with your business intentions and avoids any inconsistencies that could confuse customers.

Understand the target customer segment. Deciding on content themes and positioning also helps to define who the customer is and how they should be marketed to. This should make the marketing more effective and brings customers back for more content over time.

Produce predictable content releases. With content type and marketing channels planned ahead of time, content releases can be scheduled on a predictable ongoing basis, which will both help customers know when to look for new material and also help a business allocate resources most effectively.

Track and measure success. Planning the strategy allows for defining KPIs that help measure success of the campaigns. By doing so, businesses can understand what is working overtime and make iterative adjustments to the plan in places that could use improvements.

# Important Considerations for Your Strategy

Before implementing a content marketing strategy, it's important to analyze the state of your business and take the following considerations into account:

1. What type of content should you produce? There are many forms of content types available to marketers—blogs, videos, infographics, long form articles, etc. to name a few. You should consider which is best suited to the material you're planning on producing and consider your target customer preferences.
2. Who is the target customer segment? The content should be produced with a specific type of customer in mind. This will ensure that the customer can relate to it and keeps the material focused.
3. What channels will you use to publish the content? Similar to “type of content,” figuring out where and how you publish the material will affect how customers engage with it and how it functions over time. For example, a third-party hosted video may drive more initial traffic, while a self-hosted blog may result in better long-term SEO.
4. How frequently will you publish content? Whether you publish weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly, having a regular cadence ensures that you don't fall behind and allows customers to regularly anticipate new releases.
5. What is the ultimate goal of the marketing initiatives? As content marketing is by definition a form of marketing, you need to know what you're trying to get customers to do in response to the campaigns. Simply providing content that customers like is not enough — [call to actions](#) and other response-based messaging will have an important impact on what customers do after they consume the content and explore your brand.

# Components of a Content Marketing Strategy

With these considerations in mind, you can now begin to implement a content marketing strategy. Some major components of this include:

**Business plan.** The goals and objectives of a business will help to guide all aspects of how a content strategy is developed, and therefore should be clearly understood going into the planning process.

**KPIs.** With the business plan defined, [KPIs](#) should be then established to help track and measure marketing success over time relative to the business goals and objectives. These can also be used to test changes to the strategies over time.

**Buyer personas.** Establishing [buyer personas](#) will guide the process of determining who the target customer segment is for the marketing content, so that the narrative can be focused on those specific types of customers and increase engagement.

**Brand story.** Once the target customer segment is defined, establish a common theme across the content that conveys a relatable story for your brand to connect with the customer.

**Timing.** The cadence at which the material is produced should be set upfront so that customers know when to come back to find new material. This also helps the marketing team clearly understands their deadlines and requirements.

## Types of Content Marketing

Finally, after you have worked through the different factors of planning your content marketing strategy, you'll need to decide what distribution channels you publish the material through. Some options include:

**Blogs.** A blog post is text content posted on a website, often in a more informal tone than a traditional article or report. This form of self-publishing can be valuable for [search engine optimization](#) (SEO), as search engines start to drive organic traffic to the brand's own website based on the success of its blog posts.

Articles. In addition to self-published blogs, businesses can submit articles to third-party media channels. This allows businesses to be seen by the followers of the media companies and utilize their existing distribution.

Videos. Vlogs, tutorials, demonstrations, and other video content allow for an engaging multimedia experience that can be shared and posted on various other channels. Video often has higher engagement than static marketing content.

Social media. Businesses can directly share text content and other media on social channels. For shorter-form content, social channels are valuable because they allow direct embedding of content in customers' social media feeds. This means customers can view content without clicking through to an external website that they may not be familiar with.

Newsletters. A newsletter is a printed or digital report used to distribute regular news updates to its followers. Today, distribution is primarily done through email, a scalable and low cost medium. Because content is sent directly to customers' inboxes, the likelihood of them seeing the content is higher than other channels.

eBooks. In [B2B industries](#) in particular, customers will often want to download material that they can share with colleagues to review. Downloadable eBooks are an efficient way to compress lengthier content. You can also use it as a way to collect data by gating the download in exchange for an email address or other customer contact information.

Podcasts. Podcasts are audio programs that often run in a series and have a consistent theme throughout the episodes. These are now hosted on all sorts of major channels like iTunes and Spotify, and are a common way for people to consume content on the go. This provides a way to get customers to listen to content in situations—such as commuting—where they may not otherwise be viewing or reading other forms of media.

# Tips for Creating Your Content Marketing Strategy

You don't have to reinvent the wheel when developing your content marketing strategy. Here are a few tips and tricks that can help make the process a bit smoother getting started:

# 1. Set Business Goals and Expectations

Working with a business plan has been shown to afford a [30% greater chance of growth](#) in an organization. Building a content marketing strategy is no different. The plans need to provide clear objectives for how the content marketing will impact business requirements.

For example, if a business objective is to drive more traffic to a website, an SEO-optimized blog with well researched keywords related to the industry may be more relevant than other forms of content strategies. Conversely, a business trying to improve their brand image with existing customers may find social media a better platform to drive engagement and discussions with customers.

# 2. Determine Resource Needs and Make Allocations Ahead of Time

Content creation requires real resources. Writing blogs, producing infographics, and editing video all require time, talent, and money. In fact, content marketing is a roughly [\\$300 billion market](#), and businesses on average spend about a quarter of their entire marketing budgets on it!

Since the costs add up, it's essential to plan ahead, define realistic budgets, and make sure that stakeholders understand these allocations so that staffing and procurement can be made within these requirements. This will ensure that costs don't get out of hand and minimize confusion and unexpected budget or staff cuts due to overspending.

# 3. Create a Content Calendar

Most content projects will have multiple parties involved and various steps to completion. Therefore, simply saying that content will be released on some cadence is often insufficient and will likely lead to project delays and backlogs.

A shared content calendar can help keep all parties aligned so that they know when different parts of the projects need to be completed and keep each other updated on the status of these jobs. This should be done early in the planning process so that everyone knows their responsibilities ahead of time and can plan accordingly.

# 4. Constantly Track Results and Iterate

KPIs are only effective if the results are tracked and monitored over time. Any changes should be closely monitored and iterations should be tested to refine this process. Meeting business objectives is an ongoing process.

For example, if a KPI is lead generation produced from some set of content, then marketers should track how both individual pieces are contributing to this and also how the project as a whole is changing over time. A lot of content—blogs in particular—can actually increase in value over time, so it's important to keep an eye on how the KPIs are evolving long-term.

# Delivering Content to Customers Through Marketing Automation

Creating a solid content marketing strategy is key to delivering high-value content to customers in a consistent form on an ongoing basis. However, providing the necessary level of quality at scale requires marketing automation to help track content across channels, schedule and deliver content to customers, and monitor KPIs to understand how campaigns are performing and how they could be improved. Adobe's Marketo Engage solution provides all the tools necessary to implement and scale these systems. [See a personalized demo of Marketo Engage](#) to see how your business can create an effective content marketing strategy and provide valuable content to your customers to keep them coming back.