



THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO

Engaging Content Marketing



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Introduction: Beginning your content marketing journey

What content marketing is and why it matters

Content marketing is the process of creating valuable, relevant content to attract, acquire, and engage your audience. Content takes many forms, but according to the Content Marketing Institute, it only qualifies as content marketing if it aims to drive profitable customer action.

An effective content marketing strategy helps your brand stand out in a noisy marketplace, attracts customers' attention, and fuels engagement. It also creates a consistent experience for your audience across every stage of their journey—from awareness to purchase to advocacy.

The benefits of content marketing

Why content marketing is so important for business:

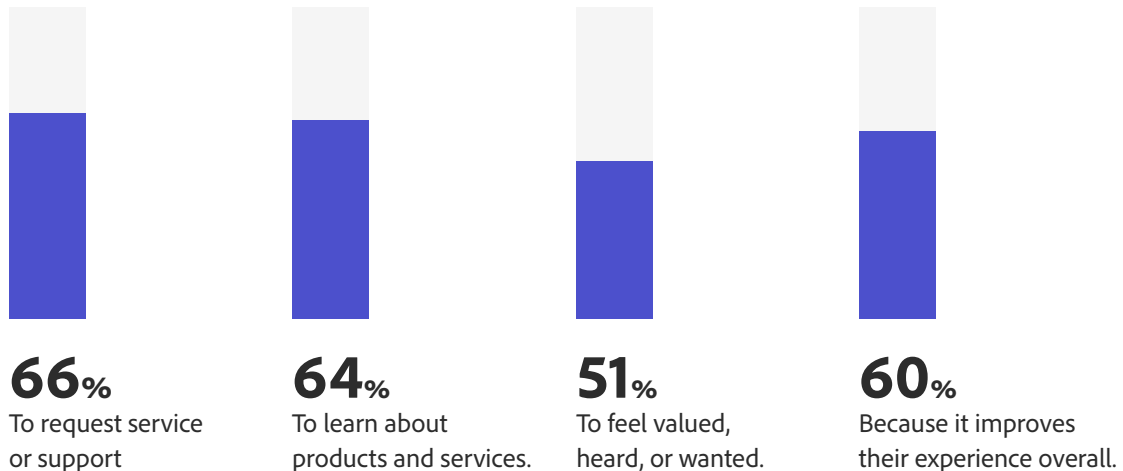
1. It helps build awareness for your brand by putting potential customers into contact with content you've produced.
2. As a powerful way to deliver value to your existing customers, content acts as a helpful, educational resource that positions your business as a source of expertise.
3. With content, you can reach more buyers and customers at lower costs—and measure your success at every touchpoint.

Top tips for creating irresistible content:

1. Start by creating buyer personas so you can better understand and respond to your audience's real-world wants and needs.
2. Map your content directly to customer buying stages to move them seamlessly through their journey.
3. Tell a story with a continuous narrative that evolves with each piece of content you publish.
4. Make sure your content is the right fit for each channel you're using—whether it's your website, an email, social media, or elsewhere.
5. Give each piece of content a clear purpose and call-to-action for your audience to follow.
6. Determine the metrics you'll use to measure the effectiveness of your content ahead of time.
7. Strike a balance between efficiency and quality when spending the time to create your content.

The content marketing opportunity

Why B2B consumers engage with online content:



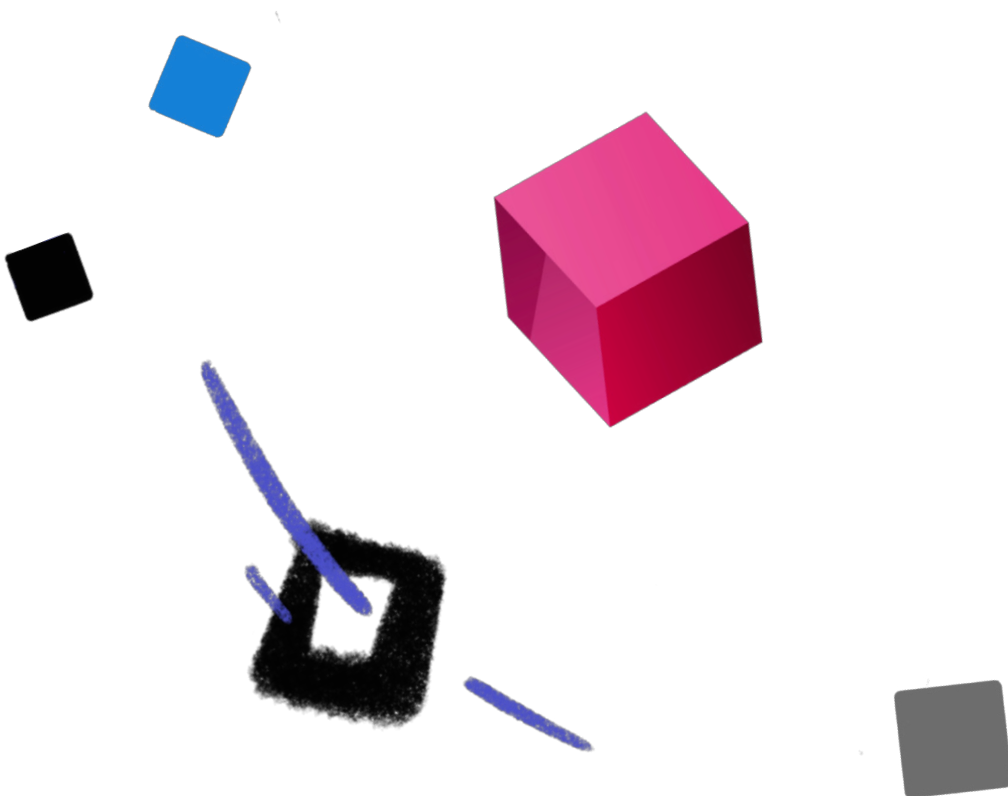
Educate first, sell second

Create content that's meant to help your customers, not sell to them. When you freely give your audience something so valuable that they'd be willing to pay for it, you build trust—which, ultimately, is your most powerful tool to acquire and retain customers.

In the early stages of the customer journey, helpful content that educates prospects on the subjects they're searching for is critical to a successful content marketing strategy. You're building a relationship that will grow and deepen as prospects begin to see your brand as a trusted resource.

Once you establish that bond, it's time to include sales messages.

In this guide, you'll learn about the five stages of content creation: planning, creation, design, publishing, and measurement. These five stages are foundational to any successful content marketing program. They'll elevate your content marketing—from strategy to tactical execution and everything in between.



Mapping out buying personas and buying stages

The planning stage

Creating content is an investment. Before you flip the “on” switch, make sure you have a clear blueprint in place. In this section, you’ll map out your buyer personas and buying stages, consider the types of content you need, define your brand voice, and brainstorm some rock-solid ideas.

Understanding buyer personas

Buyer personas help you define your audience, including their challenges, questions, and the kind of content they like to consume. Buying stages tell you what each piece of content should accomplish throughout the customer journey.

As you brainstorm new content, start by identifying the assets you already have for each persona, and then think about how to fill any gaps. You should also meet with your demand generation team to review any data they may have about what content performs best for your organization.

Next, think about your buying stages. Maybe you have an awesome piece of content for engaging early-stage buyers, but what about a piece that moves them along after that? Ideally, you’ll have content that maps to each persona at every stage of the customer journey.

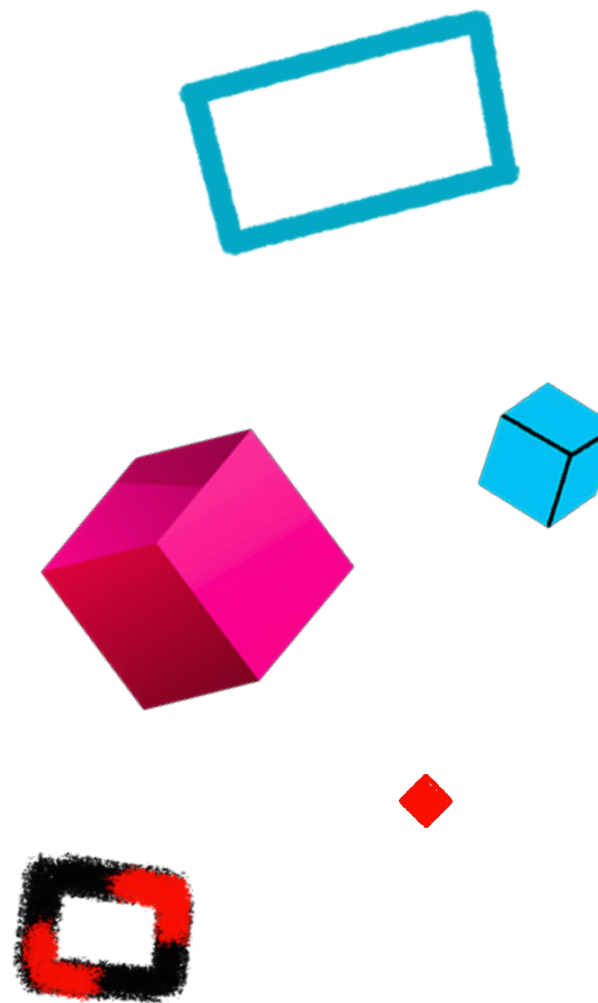
Buyer personas, defined

Buyer personas are written descriptions of your typical customers. In the process of researching and creating these personas, you’ll learn who your buyers are—and how best to market to them. Your buyer personas will uncover the top concerns, preferences, and goals of your audience, which will help you create engaging content.

Developing buyer personas

Developing buyer personas requires some initial investment, but it pays off throughout the customer lifecycle—not only for content creation, but across all your marketing efforts. The more you understand and humanize your customers, the more relevant your marketing will be.

If your business serves several different types of customers, you’ll want to develop multiple buyer personas. Somewhere between four and six personas is ideal—although you might create fewer for a simpler audience.



Conducting interviews and research

To discover your personas, start by conducting interviews with current customers, potential buyers, and members of your sales and customer service teams—you'll start to see what types of people are in your audience so you can start grouping them into personas. You can also send out surveys and do your own research. Focus on the following topics as you create each persona:

- **Background:** Gather basic details about your persona, like age, gender, and location.
- **Job details:** Decide what your persona's job title is and how experienced they are.
- **Goals:** Imagine what personal and professional goals your persona is working towards.
- **Challenges:** Learn what your persona's pain points, frustrations, and blockers are.
- **Preferred content medium:** Figure out what type of content (text, video, image, etc.) your persona prefers.
- **Sources:** Think about where your persona goes to gather trusted information.
- **Quotes:** Bring your persona to life with actual quotes gathered during interviews.
- **Objections:** Anticipate any opposition your persona might have during the sales process.
- **Role in the purchase process:** Take note of your persona's influence in making purchases.
- **Marketing message:** Determine the messaging that will speak most clearly to this persona.

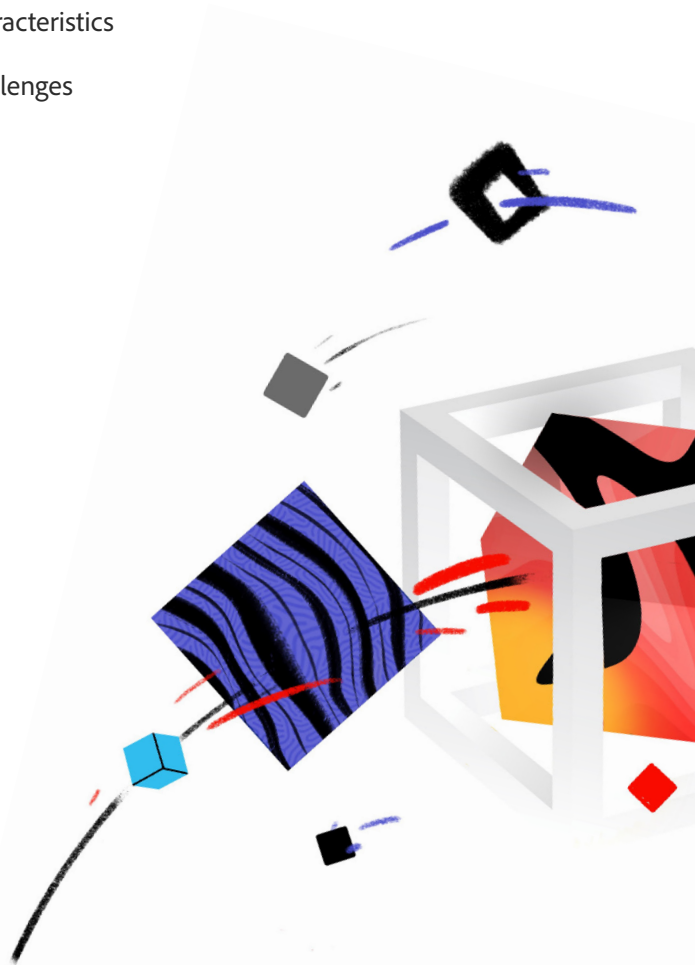
Telling your persona's story

Once you've gathered all the information, it's time to turn that data into a story. Buying personas may be fictional, but the more realistic you can make them, the more effective they'll be. It may seem like a creative writing assignment, but remember that your audience isn't made of data sets—it's made of actual people.

We recommend adding a first name and photo to each persona. This will help them come alive for your marketing team. Next, take the information you've gathered and weave it into a narrative. This should be a story you can tell your entire company about the people you market to, so make it memorable and human—and include plenty of detail.

Be sure to include the following information about your personas:

- Responsibilities
- Routines
- Characteristics
- Challenges



Let's say your company sells software that helps businesses manage their social media marketing. Here's an example of a narrative you might create for your buyer persona:



Emily

Social Media Marketing Manager

Emily is responsible for the following:

- Creating and managing her company's social media profile
- Working collaboratively with her events, content, PR, and demand generation teams
- Maintaining the consistency of her company's brand voice and tone

In a typical week, Emily reviews her social media calendar to ensure that her company's Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn updates are accurate, well written, and scheduled to post at the correct times. She communicates and sets priorities with her internal design team and reviews metrics with an external social analytics vendor. On a quarterly and annual basis, she works closely with her marketing team to brainstorm and develop new social campaigns, including promotions and content. During large events, she live-tweets key sessions and speakers. Emily is organized, creative, and detail oriented. She's a risk-taker who pays attention to trends.

Emily's biggest challenge is finding the right combination of social media marketing activities to continually engage and build her audience. She believes that a total of 1,000 engaged followers is better than 100,000 checked-out followers, so she's always aiming to start conversations with her audience, rather than just promoting her company. But figuring out what kind of content her audience likes to engage with on social is difficult. She also struggles to demonstrate the return on investment (ROI) of her social campaigns.

Defining your buying stages

Once you've completed your personas, it's time to map out their buying journey. A buying journey maps a buyer's decision-making process during a purchase and will help you determine what content you need at every buying stage.

Buyers prefer different kinds of content depending on the stage of their buyer's journey. By mapping your buying stages, you'll better understand the process prospects go through when considering your product or service. Target your content to a specific persona at their current sales stage. To ensure your content is automatically delivered, tag your content with the relevant persona and the appropriate stage defined in your content management system (CMS).

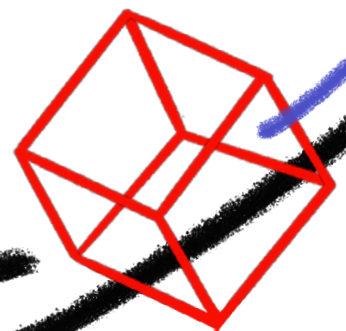
Tagging is useful to assess whether you have content for each stage for all your personas. Then, you can do a gap analysis to determine what new content you need to create.

A typical buyer's journey with a long consideration cycle is divided into three parts:

Early-stage: Buyers in this stage could potentially become customers, but probably aren't in the market for your product—yet. These buyers are looking for educational, entertaining content, and your job is to present that content while building awareness and trust.

Mid-stage: In this stage, your buyers are aware of your brand and are more actively researching your products. You can start to present more product-specific content, aimed at keeping your potential customers engaged as they research.

Late-stage: Late-stage buyers are close to making a purchase. Late-stage content should speak directly to your offering and highlight product differentiators. Think demos, feature comparisons, and third-party reports.



Here's another example of a buyer's journey, which includes a different set of stages:

Discovery: Buyers in this stage are potential customers, but need to know more about your product or service before they make a decision. They're looking to you to help educate and entertain them so they can build trust with your brand.

Engagement: This stage of the buyer's journey is about earning trust by delivering a memorable customer experience, and then continuing your awareness-building activities to promote additional products or services.

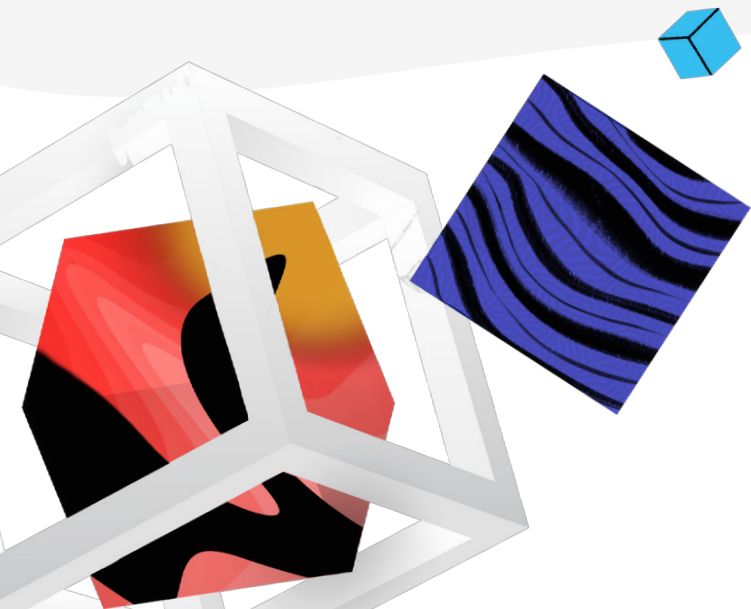
Consideration: Here, buyers need to learn about your products or services and how they compare to competitive offerings.

Advocacy: Buyers in the advocacy stage are well versed with your offerings and messages and have already made a purchase. Find creative ways to engage your advocates—like insider programs or gamification—and use their enthusiasm to build awareness and attract new interested customers.

“ We review different content formats across the different steps of the sales funnel, using our own content matrix tool. So, we have blog posts and infographics at the top of the funnel, then free planning templates to encourage leads, and explainer (animated videos) embedded into benefits pages at the bottom of the funnel.

Dave Chaffey,

Co-Founder, Smart Insights



To map your own buying journeys, create a spreadsheet with a separate tab for each buying stage, and fill in the following items:

Buying Phase				
Actions & Questions	Buyer Action	Buyer Doing Y/N		Questions Buyer Asks
Key Buyer Actions	Event occurs		Event 1	
			Event 2	
			Event 3	
	Problem surfaces		Problem 1	
			Problem 2	
			Problem 3	
	Consequences of problem identified			
	Consider alternatives for solving the problem			
	Phase exit criteria			

The buyer's journey doesn't simply end with a purchase. As your marketing program matures beyond nurturing leads, a comprehensive content marketing strategy will also focus on interactions that happen after purchase.

To make the most of a buyer's lifetime value, you'll need content that engages your audience once they become customers. This means developing content for three additional stages:

1. **New customer:** Activate your newest customers with content that guides them through set-up processes, answers common questions, and welcomes them to your community. Think FAQs, guides, and cheat sheets.
2. **Ongoing customer:** As your customers become comfortable with your products, create content that helps them become successful, such as best-practice webinars, helpful blog posts, and detailed guides. It's also time to create cross-sell and upsell opportunities with content that highlights your entire suite of products.
3. **Loyal customer:** These are your advocates. They're deeply invested in your brand. Focus on rewarding them for their loyalty, making it easy for them to promote your brand, and helping them attract new customers.

“ Successful content marketers hit all stages of the buyer journey— from start to finish. Most brands are seriously over-weighted in the bottom of the funnel. And they miss huge opportunities to meet new customers at the point of need.

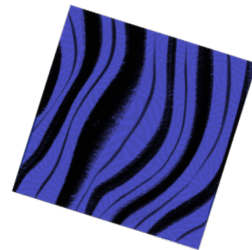
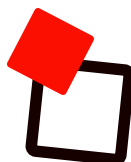
Michael Brenner,
CEO, Marketing Insider Group

Developing your brand voice

It's important to present a consistent experience across channels, which means you need to define your brand voice.

Whether you're creating content for your blog, website, or social media, the style in which you write will become the voice of your brand. You might adopt a more playful tone on Twitter and a more professional one in a whitepaper. No matter what your brand voice is, consistency is key. The voice you use will also depend on the persona you're targeting.

Once you've defined your voice, aim for consistency across your entire company— allowing for some variety for each persona.



Stephanie Schwab of Social Media Explorer divides brand voice into four categories: character/persona, tone, language, and purpose. Here's an example of attributes for each category.

Character/Persona	Tone	Language	Purpose
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Friendly	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Personal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complex	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engage
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Warm	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Humble	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Savvy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Educate
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inspiring	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clinical	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Insider	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inform
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Playful	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Honest	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Serious	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enable
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Authoritative	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Direct	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Simple	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Entertain
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Professional	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Scientific	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jargon-filled	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Delight
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fun	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sell
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Whimsical	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Amplify

“ For new brands who need to define their voice, my advice is to pick three base notes. No more. This is your personality. It doesn't change. Then stir in 'accent' flavors to match the context.

Doug Kessler,

Director and Co-Founder, Velocity Partners

Types of content

A critical part of planning is defining the type of content that serves your objectives best. Content marketing comes in many forms, and the forms you choose depends on many factors—audience preferences, industry standards, bandwidth, and budget.

Here's an overview of the types of content you might consider:

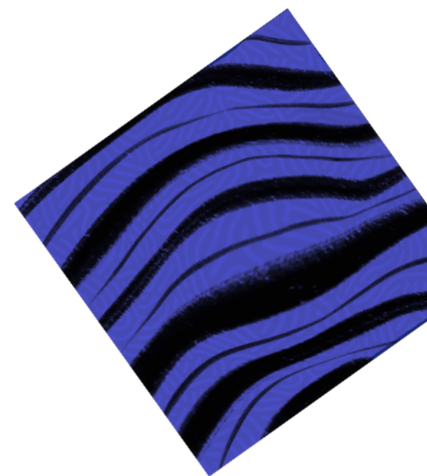
Video: Showcase your brand, demonstrate instructions, answer questions, provide customer reviews, and entertain your audience. Videos are a compelling way to engage customers while creating deep connections. While professional videos can be time-consuming and costly if you don't have an in-house video team, there are plenty of creative ways you can produce on-brand, on-budget videos.

Infographics: Present information using images and text to simplify complex ideas that your audience cares about. Infographics can add visual interest to dense material—and they are great for attracting backlinks. If you don't have an in-house design team, consider contracting an agency or a designer to create an “evergreen” infographic that you can use year after year.

Worksheets and templates: Provide your audience with an interactive, helpful tool that adds value to their experience of your brand. These are some of the most popular content types because they are so effective at engaging customers. While professionally designed worksheets and templates look great, many times you can design this type of content yourself.

Case Studies: Share compelling stories from your current customers. Because potential customers will likely read case studies, it's important to make them reflect well on your brand. Try focusing on the value, outcome, and results rather than you tools, products, or services. It's worth it — a well-written case study can be the deciding factor in a customer's decision to go with your product or service instead of your competitor's.

Whitepapers and reports: Give your audience important educational information on the topics they care about. Consider working with a third-party research agency or purchasing the rights to an existing report if you don't have your own research to draw from.

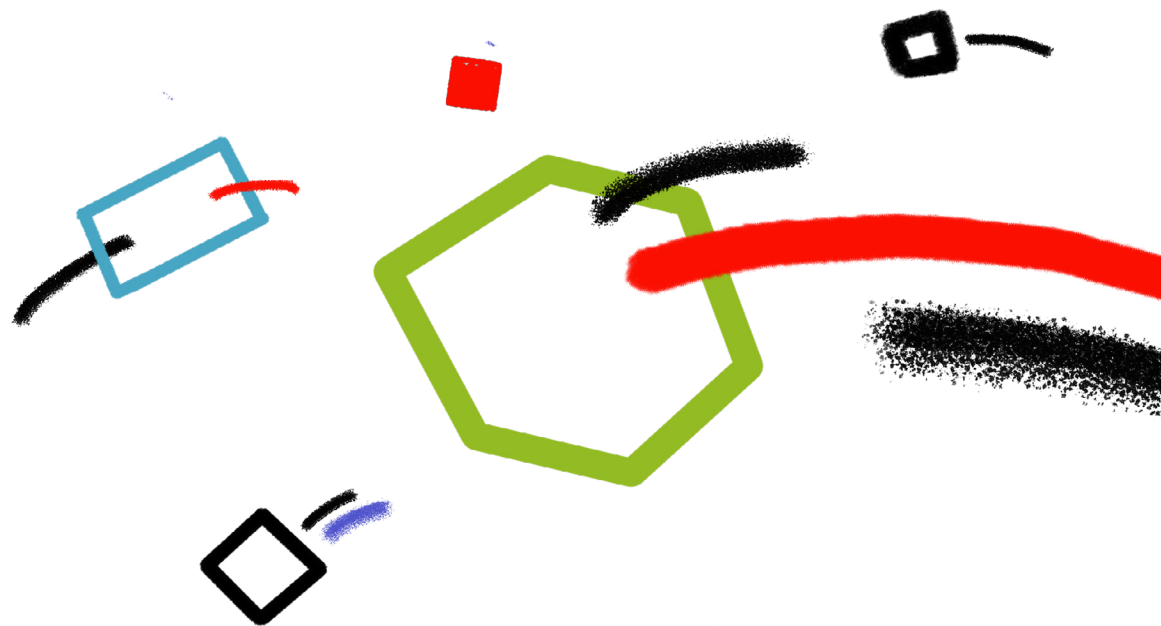


Blog posts: Publish your thought leadership, industry insights, upcoming events, announcements, and more on your company blog. At Adobe, we update our blog three to four times during the work week, but we also turn to our community of marketers, partners, customers, and industry leaders to help us continually feed our content programs.

Slide decks: Present information in a visually compelling way using slide decks, which are a great way to tell a story. Try creating a visually compelling deck with a good balance of text and interesting imagery. Like infographics, it can be worth your while to invest in a well-designed slide deck that you can use for years to come.

Cheat sheets: Give your customers a quick and easy way to learn about a topic with a “cheat sheet.” As short, at-a-glance summaries of a specific topic, cheat sheets are generally no more than a few pages long.

eBooks: Go in-depth on a topic your customers care about in an eBook. Varying widely in length, level of design, and subject matter, eBooks typically follow a narrative from start to finish, have some element of design, and contain educational, informational material. Depending on where, when, and how often you plan on socializing your eBook, it could be worth it to hire a writer and designer — or officially assign the project to your in-house team — to create one for you.



Engage buyers with predictive content

In the past, serving up the right content in the right journey stage was a time-consuming, manual effort. Now, artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning automatically offer relevant content to engage buyers.

Machine learning and predictive analytics can automatically deliver the most relevant content to each person across your web, mobile, and email channels. For example, technologies like Marketo Engage search your website for content to deliver to each persona.

These technologies analyze content consumption and behavioral patterns to learn what type of content works best for each buyer, moving them through their journey faster.

Marketers can use what they learn to optimize existing content and create new content that resonates with customers.

Simplify planning with editorial calendars

An editorial calendar not only allows you to keep track of, coordinate, and share your upcoming content, but it's also a strategic tool that helps your team run cross-channel programs that take your content into account. Keeping an editorial calendar ensures that you're releasing your content at the best possible moment and that your whole team is aligned around the release dates.

Your calendar doesn't need to be complicated. It might be a shared Excel sheet, a dynamic scheduler, or even a simple dry-erase board.

An editorial calendar can benefit you in three main ways:

- Visibility and alignment
- Accountability
- Organization

You might also consider breaking up content planning into quarterly themes or arcs to help focus your strategy. Then create content that aligns with those themes.

Here's a template you could use to map themes for the year:

Q1

- Theme
- Ebook
- Infographic
- Slide Deck
- Blog Posts

Q2

- Theme
- Ebook
- Infographic
- Slide Deck
- Blog Posts

Q3

- Theme
- Ebook
- Infographic
- Slide Deck
- Blog Posts

Q4

- Theme
- Ebook
- Infographic
- Slide Deck
- Blog Posts

Building a team and developing content

The creation stage

Once you've done the hard work of mapping out your content, it's time to put your plans in motion. Here's how to build a team—including writers, editors, and subject matter experts (SMEs)—so you can develop content that you're proud to publish and make the most of every asset you create.

Building your content team

Before you dive in, you'll need to determine who will manage, create, curate, and distribute your content.

Ideally, you'll have at least one person who owns the function of content marketing. The strategy, project management, and creative skills involved easily equate to a full-time job. Having a dedicated person also encourages consistency and clarifies who's responsible for keeping content on schedule.

Here are the most common roles on a content team, though it's possible for one person to fill multiple roles, including:

- Chief content officer
- Content strategist
- Managing editor
- In-house and outsourced writers
- Designers
- Subject matter experts
- Partners, customers, and thought leaders

“ Increasingly, many of our prospects and customer interactions are managed through content. They go to our resources, read our emails, join our forums, et cetera. That means content is at the center of the buyer-seller relationship. If you don’t have a leader to manage this content, your buyers are in for a bumpy ride, as they’ll likely be getting a lot of discordant and unorganized messaging.

Jesse Noyes

Sr. Director of Organic and Content Marketing, Zenefits

“ I do believe that someone needs to drive content strategy. It’s great to have lots of storytellers, but you can’t have everyone telling a different story. You create the greatest impact when you can keep people on the same page, or at least in the same chapter.

Patricia Travaline

CMO, Skyword



Preparing your planning document

Before you start writing your content, we recommend creating a content strategy document for each asset. This puts your content in a larger context, keeps you on track as you write, and helps your colleagues use your content.

At Adobe, we use a robust content brief, which typically includes the following information:

- Asset name
- Content theme
- Asset type (eBook, infographic, etc.)
- SME name
- Additional stakeholder names
- Intended persona/audience
- Vertical/product line
- Reason for creating the asset
- Related content
- Goals (conversions, downloads, sales enablement)
- Metrics to measure success
- Where the asset will be used
- Person who will own each stage of content creation (outline, writing, editing, design)
- Anyone who will need to approve the content (CEO, VP, legal department, partners or customers who are mentioned)
- Thesis
- Outline
- Suggested visuals
- Activation plan
- Deadline

Organizing with outlines

An outline will keep your thought process in order and your messaging on track.

Your outline should be a joint creation of the writer and the subject matter expert. Start with the concept. Similar to a traditional thesis statement, this is the main message you're trying to get across. If your concept isn't clear, or it can't be easily summarized in a sentence or two, it's time to go back to brainstorming.

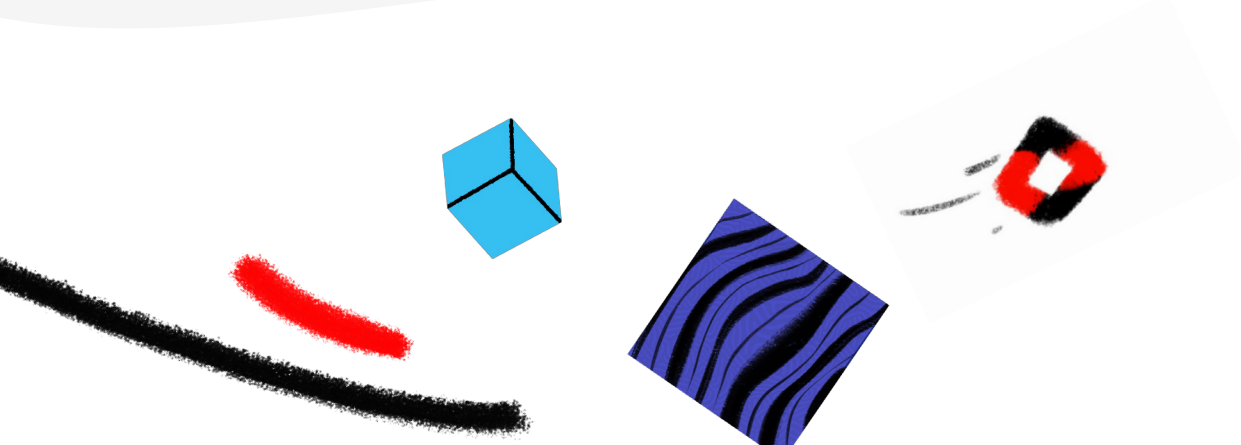
Remember, if you're going to make big changes, this is the right time to do it. Once you actually start writing, big revisions become much more challenging. Make sure that your SME reads the outline carefully and that your highest-level approvers have signed off on the project before you get started.

This is also a good time to talk to other teams that might use the asset. Often, you'll find that they suggest a few small tweaks that could greatly broaden the content's appeal—saving you time and resources down the line.

“ For longer-form content, outlines are very useful—you can essentially fill in the outline with your story, research, and insights. Of course, sometimes the outline gets tossed when you go in a different direction, but for audience-specific content, it's still important to start with one.

Leo Odden, CEO

TopRank Marketing



Editing like a pro

Editing a piece should never be a problematic process. After all, the writer and editor share the same goal—to create the best quality content that generates the highest ROI.

Don't take it personally when your colleague suggests a big change or rewrites your favorite sentence. And be as constructive as possible when you're the one doing the editing. Avoid unnecessary criticism and suggest an alternative whenever possible. "Why don't we try it this way?" or "Let's clarify the terms in this section" will go a lot further than "I don't like this" or "I'm confused."

“ A great editor is an advocate for the reader—improving the experience for the person who you want to reach.

Ann Handley

Chief Content Officer, MarketingProfs

Style guides

Language is constantly evolving. And while there may be several correct ways to spell and punctuate, consistency is key.

That's why a company style guide is important. It ensures that your brand is consistent, whether you're editing a blog post, a tweet, website copy, or an email.

A style guide doesn't just help your editing process. Once you've created it, you can simply hand it over to new bloggers, outsourced writers, designers, or anyone who writes content for your business to ensure consistency.

Types of editing

The editorial process involves several steps—and for good reason. Trying to fix everything in one pass is both overwhelming and counterproductive.

Developmental editing

In this phase, you'll focus on the big picture: Have you stuck to your outline? Is your message coming across? Is the piece written in your brand voice? Is the content truly valuable?

You'll also want to look at flow. This is where a solid outline pays off in a big way. Does the writing move you gracefully from one idea to the next? Does each section seem to naturally follow the last one, answering questions just as you start to form them?

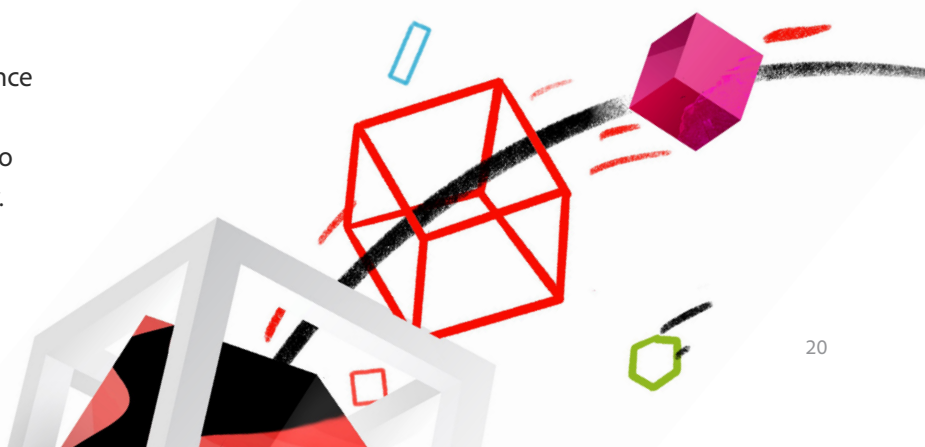
Copyediting

At this phase, the content itself is solid. Your ideas are clear and sharp, the structure is fluid and natural, and you've verified that the piece is aligned to your business objectives. Now it's time to dive into the details.

You'll look for the following:

- Grammar and mechanics: Spelling, capitalization, punctuation, parallelism, and word choice.
- Style and voice: Adherence to brand guidelines, word usage and conventions, product names, and boilerplates.

If there's one thing we can't stress enough, it's this—your content should be copyedited by someone other than the person who originally wrote it.



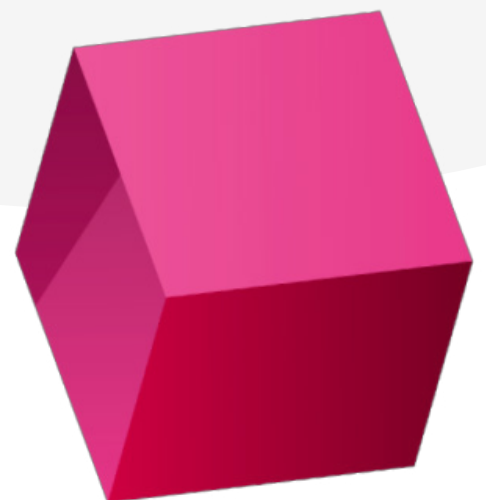
Content curation

While the bulk of your content strategy should involve fresh content that your business creates, content curation can be a valuable add-on to flesh out the ideas you're trying to convey. Even though you're using somebody else's content, you can still add value by bringing together interesting, relevant pieces of content your audience might not have seen. Examples of curated content include best-of lists, roundups, or even summaries of other pieces of content.

“ Curating content adds value for your audience. As great as your own content may be, your audience will want different perspectives and opinions. Reduce the need for them to spend time finding other content and bring it right to them with your own insight in the form of curated content. In addition, adding your own insight to curated content is a great way to ‘create’ in your owned property and get an SEO boost from Google.

Michael Gerard

CMO, e-Spirit



Making your design shine

The design stage

In content marketing, the way you visually present your content is almost as important as the content itself. If you can't entice people to read or view it, your hard work is wasted. This section will walk you through the design process, from initial concept to final proof.

Designing for your audience

Depending on your asset, design might mean anything from converting your Word document into a simple PDF to treating your content with a custom cover—including graphics, design elements, and illustrations.

Ideally, you'll start thinking about design at the same time you're brainstorming your content and defining your audience. The persona and buying stage of your target audience should have a big impact on the direction of your design, as should the way you plan to use your content.

Working with designers

At Adobe, we either work with our in-house designers or we turn to tried-and-true design agencies that are familiar with our visual style. The advantage of using outside designers is that you can scale them up or down to adjust to your internal team's needs and workloads.

Here's the process we recommend to design content, especially when using an outside agency:

1. Define the task at hand

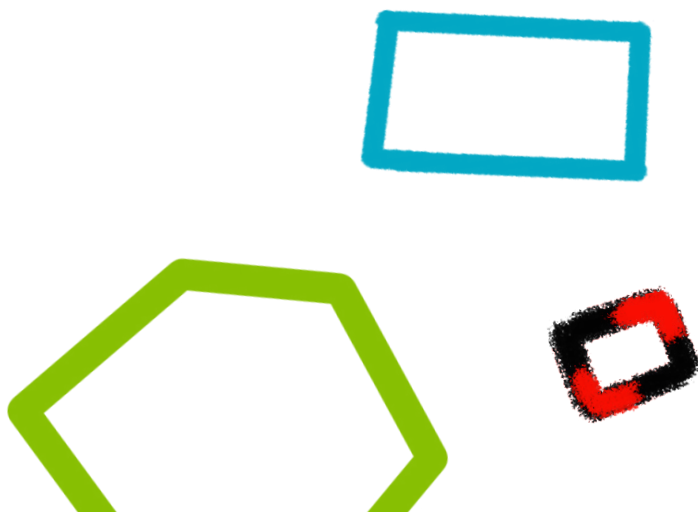
Send the designer a content strategy document and the carefully edited copy for your content. If you already have a design idea, describe it as clearly as you can. It's often difficult to be specific at this stage—especially if you don't have a design background—which is why you should include examples for inspiration. Specify whether you'd like custom graphics and if you'd like the designer to incorporate photography. In return, your designer should send you some preliminary styles to consider. These will probably be comprised of examples the designer has researched and found online.

2. Create initial concepts

Using the copy you've provided and the style you've chosen, the designer will work to create a small section of the asset. We ask our designers to show us at least two different ways to approach the concept, which is why they only design a small portion—typically the cover and one internal page for an eBook, report, or slide deck. As with the preliminary styles, it's important to be as specific as possible with your feedback. Tell the designer what is and isn't working and make your final suggestions.

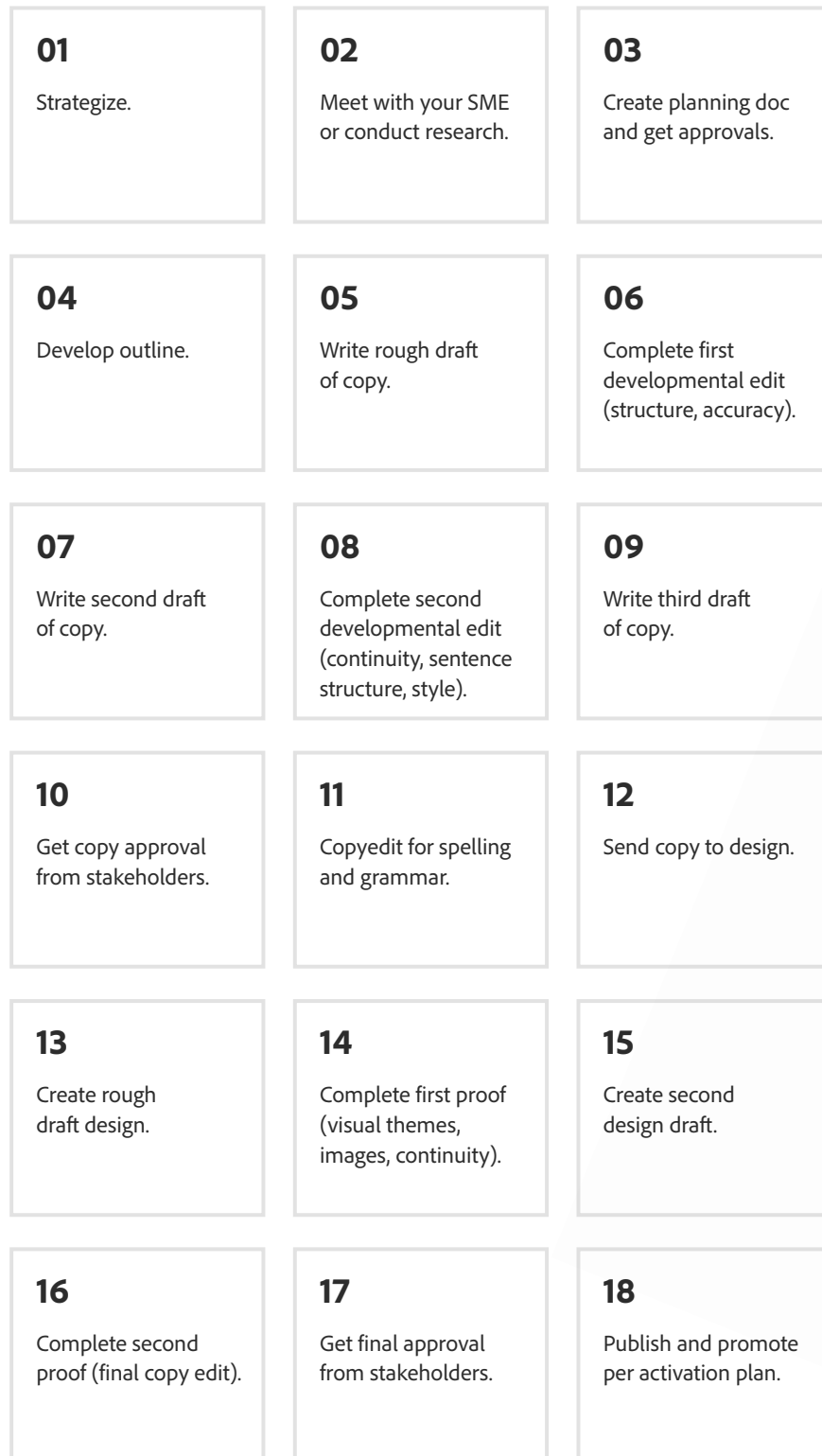
3. Iterate until you've reached your goal

Once you've agreed upon the design direction, styles, and concepts, your designer will show you a complete version of the designed asset, and you'll add your edits. One easy way to add feedback is by using the comment feature in PDFs, as opposed to leaving comments in design files or flat image files like JPEGs and PNGs.



Perfecting your content workflow

Now that we've covered the content creation process step by step, here's how the entire workflow looks when you put it all together—from your first idea to the final proof:



Reaching the right audience

The publishing and promotion stage

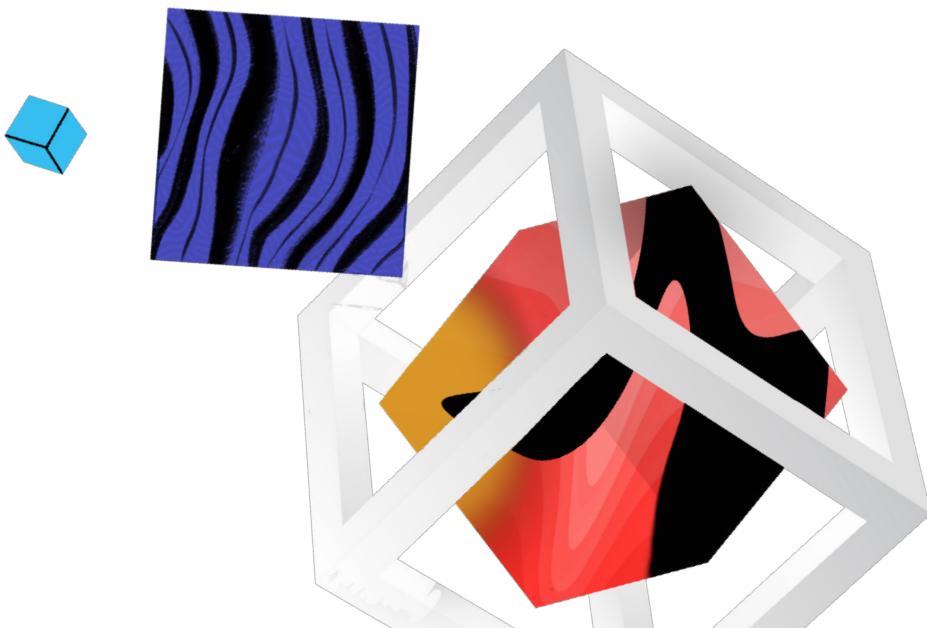
If no one sees your content, it won't make an impact on your brand reach. The goal is to get as much ROI from your content as possible. That's why you need to be sure your content reaches the right audience. Think carefully about where to publish and how to promote it. Here, we'll take a look at why you need a content repository and how you can create a wide-reaching strategy that will help your content get discovered.

Creating a content repository

You're ready to publish your content, but first you need to figure out where to store it. Most companies house their content on their website, where it can be easily accessed and downloaded. But as you create more and more eBooks, guides, webinars, slide decks, infographics, and analyst reports, you might end up with various types of content scattered across your website.

This is why you need a content resource center, or a repository. A content resource center is a section of your website where you can organize and publish your content. This makes it easy for your audience and your team to find and share the content they need.

A content resource center can either be built directly on your website or you can use a content management system like Uberflip, NewsCred, or Kapost. The important thing is that you can easily upload, organize, access, and share each piece of content you create.



To gate or not to gate?

Inviting visitors to download content from your website is a great way to generate interest. But there are diverging perspectives around gating content—that is, requiring visitors to fill out a form in order to access content.

Some approaches include gating all your assets, gating only your product-focused assets, or asking a person to fill out a single form in order to access your entire library. How you make your content available should align with your overall content marketing strategy and goals.

Reasons to gate

If you ask someone to fill out a form, you get their information, and then you can engage with them. If you believe that by downloading a particular piece of content, a visitor indicates real interest in your product, it makes sense to grab their information so you can work on building a relationship.

Reasons not to gate

If you're creating early-stage content, your goal is to build brand awareness and credibility, as well as to earn the right to market to your audience. An interest in early-stage, educational content doesn't necessarily indicate an interest in your product, so it doesn't necessarily make sense to gather their information and try to start building a relationship yet.

Early Stage Pre-purchase	Mid Stage Commit to change	Late Stage Evaluation
Thought leadership and enjoyable content to build brand awareness and desire	Tools that help buyers find you when they are looking for solutions	Tools that help buyers find you when they are looking for solutions
Blog, ebooks, research data, videos, curated lists, infographics, webinars, definitive guides	Buying guides, request for proposal (RFP) templates, ROI calculators, analyst reports	Buying guides, request for proposal (RFP) templates, ROI calculators, analyst reports
Gated? Mostly no	Gated? Yes	Gated? Mostly no
(High-value educational content, such as definitive guides, is gated)		

Define your promotion strategy

Your promotion strategy will depend on your audience and your needs, but the best approach to promotion is a wide-reaching one.

To get your content discovered, you should use both inbound and outbound strategies. Inbound strategies could include search engine optimization (SEO), pay-per-click (PPC), and an easily navigated resource center. Outbound strategies could include display ads, paid promotions on social networks, and content syndication, for example.

To achieve broader reach, your strategy can include a combination of owned, paid, and earned channels:

Owned	Paid	Earned
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social• Email• Blog	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Paid social• Content syndication• Paid email programs• Search marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Earned social• Media pickups• Influencer mentions• SEO

“ When you’re promoting your content on social, you should pay to promote what’s working. I always say that organic is good but paid is better. Adding a paid strategy can give your content legs beyond your initial audience, and with today’s targeting capabilities, there’s no waste if you know who to target.

Jason Miller

Brand Marketing Lead, Microsoft

Testing your content

The measurement stage

Content marketing has a reputation for being difficult to measure, which can make it hard to obtain buy-in and support. But that's no excuse for guessing. There are plenty of ways to test and measure your content. Here's how to measure your early-, mid-, and late-stage content.

Solve the content ROI mystery

Many marketers struggle to prove the return on investment for their content. Rather than making ROI an afterthought, start solving the mystery from the beginning.

Before you start measuring your content, take these steps:

- **Define your content goals.** Will the content be used to build brand awareness or to drive revenue? Establish goals and ROI estimates from the start so you'll know whether you're meeting expectations.
- **Decide how you'll measure results.** Will you measure reach, engagement, time on your website, PR mentions, revenue, and so on? There is such a thing as measuring too much, so focus on the metrics and data that will help you make decisions later.
- **Align key stakeholders.** Measure what matters most to your stakeholders. We recommend covering your bases by measuring early-stage metrics and then tying them back to pipeline and revenue.

“ This might sound overly simple, but the best way to measure content performance is according to the goals you've established for it. The problem in most cases is that marketers create content without accountability in mind outside of exposure.

Lee Odden

CEO, TopRank Marketing

Metrics for different kinds of content

Content at every stage of the funnel should be measured differently. After all, each stage has different goals. Here are the basic metrics for early-, mid-, and late-stage content.

Early-stage metrics

Early-stage metrics don't tie directly to revenue. The purpose of your early-stage content is to build brand awareness, create preference for your brand, educate, entertain, and engage your audience. Shares, downloads, and views tell you whether your content is attracting the right kind of attention.

Early-stage metrics to track include the following:

- Traffic to your blog and website
- Bounce rate
- Views and downloads of your content
- Links to your content
- Social shares and reposts
- Social engagement (comments, likes, mentions, favorited posts, etc.)
- Followers on social/blog subscribers

Mid- and late-stage metrics

Pipeline, opportunity, and revenue allocation provide insight into how your content affects deals.

For mid-stage assets, it's important to measure how your content is generating new interest. For both mid-stage and late-stage assets, you'll want to know how your content is affecting your revenue.

Using reporting like Marketo Engage or Adobe Analytics, you can see the path customers follow to conversion—the PPC ads they clicked on, the webinars they attended, the emails they received, and, of course, the content they downloaded or viewed. A robust reporting solution allows you to see the number of opportunities touched by your content, and any revenue earned from buyers who viewed or downloaded it.

For late-stage content—such as customer testimonials, datasheets, feature guides, or demos—you'll want to know that your sales team is actually using your content. Valuable content should help your sales reps sell, so work with them to make sure your content is resonating with late-stage prospects. Meet with your sales team regularly to gather suggestions for content and train them on the content you've already created.

Mid- and late-stage metrics to track include:

- Lead generation (mid-stage only)
- Pipeline and opportunity allocation
- Revenue allocation
- Sales use

“ We maintain a close relationship with the people on the front lines—our sales team. We meet twice a month to discuss lead nurturing efforts and to make sure that when we create content to fill in the gaps, it features topics that truly speak to the needs of our target audience.

Steve Peck

Regional Sales Director, Services, Netsuite

Marketing attribution

Marketing attribution provides insights into which marketing programs and content assets are responsible for generating closed-won opportunities and revenue. Activity-based metrics track actions such as email opens, click-through rates, downloads, and event attendance.

Marketing attribution takes it a step further, giving revenue accountability and full-funnel transparency that can result in more efficient marketing content and better customer engagement. Attribution improves the marketer's ability to create engaging content, target audiences, and refine their efforts by allocating budget to the programs and content that generate more revenue.

Analytics solutions such as Adobe Analytics, Bizible, and the Marketo Advanced Report Builder in Marketo Engage have several marketing attribution models that you can use to track performance and assign credit for revenue generation. These marketing attribution models include the following:

Single-touch attribution

All the credit for revenue generated goes to just one marketing touch in this attribution model. The credit may be assigned to the first touch or the last touch before it becomes an opportunity. This model is the easiest to implement, but it tends to underestimate the value of mid-funnel marketing activities

Weighted multi-touch attribution

This model tells the most complete and accurate story of the buyer's journey. It assigns different amounts of credit for multiple marketing touches and requires the sales and marketing teams to work in tandem to give a complete picture of attribution.

Omnichannel attribution

Omnichannel attribution allows marketers to see the impact of every customer interaction, from keyword searches to events. By integrating marketing attribution with customer relationship management (CRM), advanced attribution can track and credit touchpoints, both online and offline.

“ The only metrics that matter to me ultimately are new leads and new business. But at the same time, I do pay some attention to so-called superfluous metrics like shares and likes—because they deliver a gut reaction to what resonates with people. That helps me jack up my content creation muscles—they're like a learning steroid. I learn a lot about what works by watching what others like.

Ann Handley

Chief Content Officer, MarketingProfs

“ While there is no 'holy grail' metric, I believe the subscriber metric is the most valuable for us. Once we can attract someone to be a subscriber, we can start to see behavior changes—are they buying? Are they buying more? Are they engaging in the content? Does that affect buying behavior? The majority of our revenue comes from people that were first subscribers to our content. Subscribers drive our business.

Joe Pulizzi

Founder, Content Marketing Institute

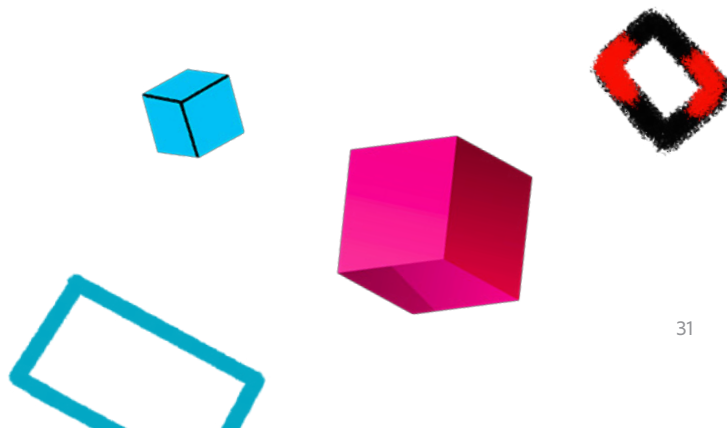
Account-based attribution

Some organizations use account-based marketing to target specific high-value accounts in order to increase the efficiency of their sales and marketing efforts. This requires a metrics solution that can give credit for marketing touches made by different personas or job roles and roll them up to the account level.

At Adobe, we track our own content success using multi-touch attribution. If a buyer's first interaction with our marketing is to download a piece of content, and that buyer becomes an opportunity, the content gets first-touch credit for that opportunity.

But content can influence opportunities at any stage in the process, which is why we also track multi-touch influence.

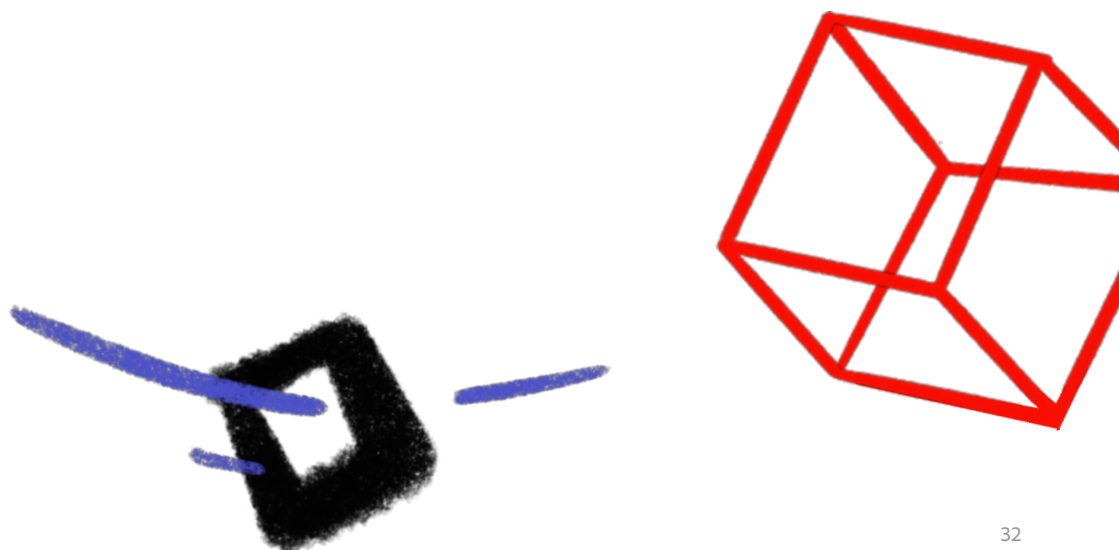
If a buyer becomes an opportunity after downloading content at any point in the cycle, the content still gets credit if it successfully influences the contacts associated with that opportunity. (Tip: To do this properly, you need to tag which content assets are associated with each program that touches the account.)



In the example report below, you can see how various content assets sourced new opportunities (first-touch opportunities, or FT OPS created), or influenced the creation of opportunities (multi-touch opportunities, or MT OPS influenced).

Program Name	FT OPS Created	MT OPS Influenced
Early-stage, long-form educational asset 1	16.7	35.3
Early-stage, long-form educational asset 2	10.2	30.8
Industry analyst report	11.8	33.7
Early-stage, long-form educational asset 3	15.6	43.6
Blog 1	2.2	8.2
Blog 2	1.1	8.2
Tip sheet	0.1	0.8
Early-stage, long-form educational asset 4	2.6	19.6
Mid-stage workbook	0.6	1.0
Early-stage, long-form educational asset 5	4.1	12.6

We also look at how content affects actual revenue. If you're facing skepticism about the effectiveness of content marketing, or you're having doubts yourself, there's no better way to prove its value than tying content directly to closed-won deals. Below, you can see an example report from the Marketo Engage Revenue Cycle Explorer, which shows how the same assets have contributed to revenue so far.



The “FT revenue won” column refers to revenue generated from customers who originally entered our database by downloading that particular asset. The “MT revenue won” column refers to revenue generated from customers who downloaded that asset at some point during the buying cycle.

Program Name	FT Revenue Won	MT Revenue Won
Early-stage, long-form educational asset 1	\$139,975	\$341,111
Early-stage, long-form educational asset 2	\$89,677	\$366,900
Industry analyst report	\$55,489	\$366,803
Early-stage, long-form educational asset 3	\$103,884	\$514,526
Blog 1	\$5,478	\$126,168
Blog 2	\$1,156	\$74,413
Tip sheet	\$151	\$9,893
Early-stage, long-form educational asset 4	\$24,545	\$225,444
Mid-stage workbook	\$0	\$12,787
Early-stage, long-form educational asset 5	\$9,694	\$144,314



With this type of reporting, it's important to keep in mind that it will take time for your content to generate opportunities or revenue, depending on the typical length of your sales cycle.

Rather than comparing an asset you created a year ago to an asset created six months ago, check in on the metrics of both assets six months after they're published—and compare those numbers for an accurate view.

Finally, you'll also want to see how programs using your content performed, such as email programs that used your content as an offer.

There are a lot of factors involved in an asset's performance, including the relevance of the content, the email subject line and copy, and more. But if your content is consistently failing in certain types of programs, it's time to sit down with your team to figure out what's going wrong. If your content is performing beautifully, you'll want to keep up the good work.

In this illustration, you can see how five different content assets performed, all sent within the same blog program.

From this report, we can see that for our Example Blog Program, Blog #5 brought in a high number of new names and the highest FT pipeline ratio.

Blog #2, on the other hand, brought the most new names—but those names didn't turn into pipeline. Note that it could take months before you see your programs pay off in pipeline, depending on the length of your sales cycle.

Program Name	Content Asset	Program Cost	New Names	FT Pipeline Ratio
Awesome Blog Program V1	Blog #1	\$7,500	593	1
Awesome Blog Program V2	Blog #2	\$7,500	1,068	7
Awesome Blog Program V3	Blog #3	\$7,500	200	2
Awesome Blog Program V4	Blog #4	\$7,500	320	8
Awesome Blog Program V5	Blog #5	\$7,500	945	12

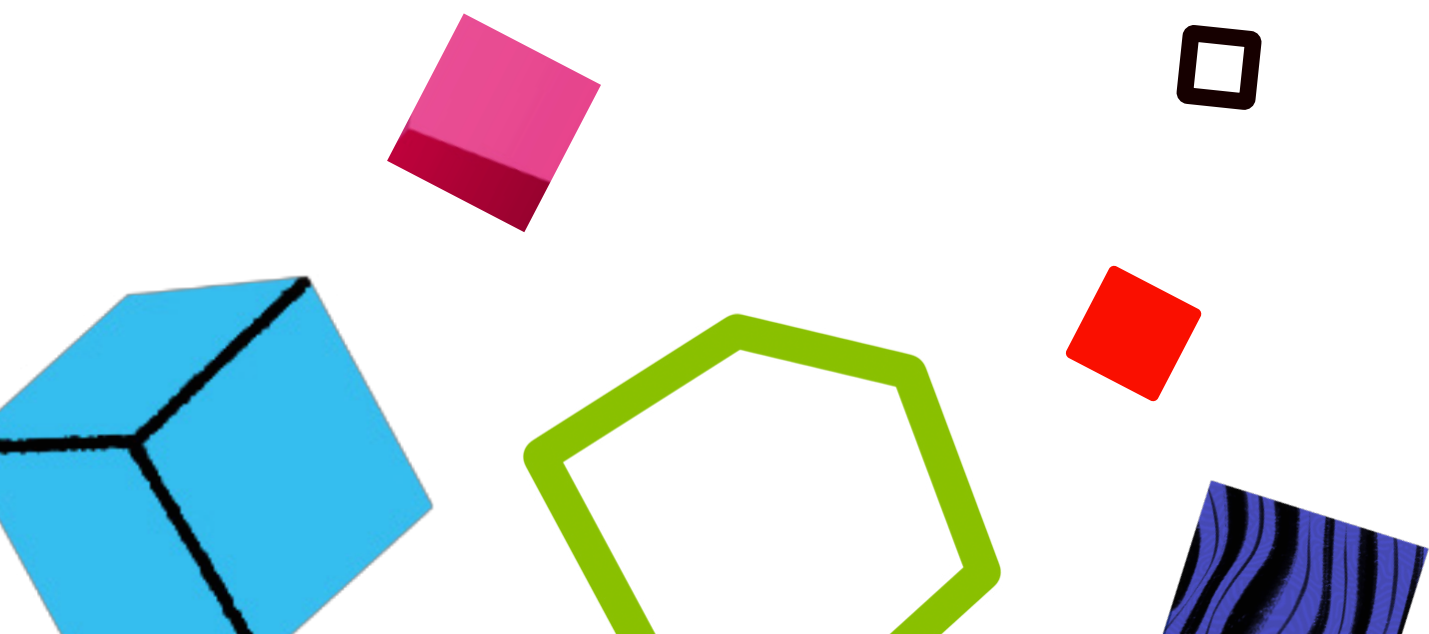
Conclusion: Getting to the heart of content marketing

In order to capture buyer attention and interest in today's noisy market, content marketing mastery isn't just a nice-to-have—it's a must.

An effective content marketing strategy helps your brand engage with potential customers early in the buying cycle, building a relationship with them over time as they move through their lifecycle with your brand.

After reading this *Definitive Guide to Engaging Content Marketing*, you now have the tools you need to build a successful content marketing strategy. Get to know your audience and plan a variety of content for every stage of their journey. Use your content to tell a continuous story about your brand. Share your content on the channels your audience prefers. And give every content asset a clear purpose and system of measurement—and do it without sacrificing efficiency or quality.

Don't forget that the heart of content marketing is value. You need to help before you sell. Use the best practices and strategies laid out in this guide to engage your audience with valuable content that entertains, educates, inspires, and begs to be shared.



Adobe Experience Cloud

Adobe Experience Cloud is the most comprehensive suite of customer experience management tools on the market. With solutions for data, content, engagement, commerce, personalization, and more, Experience Cloud is built on the world's first platform designed explicitly for customer experience. So each product is infused with artificial intelligence and works seamlessly together, but also integrates with your existing technology and your future innovations so you can consistently deliver the right experience every time.

Adobe Marketo Engage

Adobe Marketo Engage specializes in customer engagement over complex B2B buying journeys. As a complete solution for lead management, it brings marketing and sales together to nurture leads, orchestrate personalized experiences, optimize content, and measure business impact across every channel. Marketo natively supports both demand and account-based marketing strategies, providing a single, integrated lead management platform from acquisition to advocacy. Build engaging, personalized experiences at scale and prove impact with Marketo Engage.

