



# **CONTENT MARKETING: MAKE AN IMPRESSION**

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[Chapter 4 – Digital Minds v2]

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## Introduction

Content marketing has given small businesses the opportunity to become their own publishers of news and content. It has leveled the playing field between small and large businesses due to the fact that it's now affordable for all of us to publish and curate content. But the challenge that many businesses usually face is finding the time and developing a mindset to create a consistent flow of new, interesting information.

Competitive intelligence, can help you become a content marketing secret agent, but there's another target audience that you need to pay an equal amount of attention to – your ideal customer.

In the past, digital marketers would make educated guesses about the type of content needed for businesses, but this strategy can be a hit-and-miss approach and it leads to creating content that is only read by a few people. In order to be successful at content marketing, you need to add value. You need to speak directly to the challenges that your ideal customer faces and help them solve these challenges – in turn, you become the go-to person for their business. There are a few things you need to do to achieve this.

## Understand Your Customers

This is a key question when determining the roadmap for your content marketing strategy. Where do your customers hang out in real life and online? What forums and websites do they visit? What challenges do they face and what kind of content can you create that will help them overcome these challenges?

Buyers are already overwhelmed by the amount of content that businesses generate (and you're not the only one distributing content – buyers are overwhelmed by the sheer amount of content coming from everybody who is marketing in the digital space). We need to shift our thinking as publishers and provide content that breaks through the vast amount of digital noise. The only way we can do this is by focusing on quality instead of quantity.

Marketing budgets are limited, which is why digital marketers need to focus on generating content that is well-received and leads to conversions. Instead of embarking on a costly exercise of generating new content from the get-go, many marketers can make great strides by taking a step back and conducting a content audit to determine the following:

### **Find out what content already exists within your company.**

There are undoubtedly presentations, proposals, brochures and action plans that can be adapted for content marketing purposes. A lot of great content will already be available within an organization and many times, all you need to do is remove sensitive client information and repurpose it for your target audience.

### **Take a content inventory and identify gaps to fill.**

When creating an inventory of content, you will probably find that there's a lot of information available on a number of products and services, but there are giant gaps when it comes to other

products or services that a company offers. Identifying the gaps will give you a good starting point when it comes to determining what you need to write about.

## Replace or remove outdated content.

Few people visit their corporate website on a daily basis and they're usually horrified to see how outdated some of the information is. A content audit will show you where you need to remove and replace old legacy content.

## Improve the quality of existing content.

If you're working with content that's more than five years old, you might find that it contains good information but the tone, style and focus don't hit the mark. Improving on existing content is a good way to stretch your marketing budget. Instead of getting completely new content written, you can tweak content that's already been created in order to make it more effective.

## Use content in new and different ways.

Case studies can be transformed into downloadable Whitepapers, internal company news can be turned into blog posts, PowerPoint presentations can be repurposed into SlideShare presentations and photos from your conferences and functions can be used to populate your Pinterest account. Making your content strategy as far-reaching and effective as possible starts with being innovative about how you can take content and turn it into multimedia items, news items or any type of content that your target audience would want to consume.

## Find out who you can team up with to curate additional content.

If your primary business isn't to become a news agency for your industry, you can't spend all your time creating quality content. The smart way to share the latest, best and most relevant information with your fans and followers is to dedicate a portion of your content strategy to content curation. Content curation is sorting through a large amount of web content to find the best, most meaningful bits and presenting these in an organized, valuable way. It's a valuable part of any successful content marketing strategy.

## What Your Content Marketing Mix Should Look Like

According to the experts, a best-in-class marketing mix should consist of:

- 65% original content (created by your business)
- 25% curated content
- 10% syndicated content

A marketing mix of different sources of content will not only help you to leverage your resources more efficiently, but it will better engage your target audience because you're focusing on sharing high value content with them.

## Types of Content

Now that you've seen how a marketing mix can consist of different types of content, it's important to understand how content is defined. Here's a quick overview of the top two types of content (original and curated):

### Original Content

Original content is the content that you create yourself – it's the content that takes blood, sweat and tears (or at least dedicated time) to produce. Whether this means your staff members are actively writing blog posts, filming videos, repurposing brochures into long-format press releases or you are writing case studies of the projects you completed, they all fall under the umbrella term of original content.

### Curated Content

While curated content refers to content that was produced by someone else, there is still a level of personalization involved because real people (you, your digital marketer or your staff) have gone through the process of selecting it to share with your audience. The key to getting content curation right is committing to consistently finding, organizing and sharing high quality and relevant digital content with the right target market. In order to do this ethically, keep these tips in mind:

- Remember that you're sharing someone else's original content, so make sure you have credited the original source of the content.
- Make the content more personalized by adding your own point of view, writing style and opinions as you curate the piece.
- Make sure your own comments and input are longer than the piece that you are reposting.

In order to get the most traction out of your content marketing efforts, you have to ensure that your social media strategy is aligned with your goals. Share all your own (and curated content) on social media to make sure they reach your target audience, who can in turn share the content with their own networks. Write intriguing and attention-grabbing social updates and share the link on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+ or any other relevant platform.

## Creating Your Content Team

In order to produce the best content, you need to build your own content marketing team and this starts with hiring strong writers. Not only should they be able to write in plain, compelling language and produce content that flows and reads well, but they also need to understand what your audience's needs. Besides your own team, you can also supplement your resources with a team of reliable freelancers who can help with creating content under your guidance.

Content marketing doesn't have to be limited to two or three people. Encourage participation from outside the marketing team. The people within your company have probably been asked many questions about your products that have never been addressed to a wide audience. These questions will help you generate content ideas that need to be researched. Similarly, if customers are contacting you with questions, chances are there are hundreds of people online that are asking the same thing. You want your brand to be there at the forefront to answer them.

Look at the experts or experienced people in your organization who have a lot of valuable information to share and either ask them to contribute content or provide information so that your writers can rework this information into eBooks, case studies and whitepapers.

Once you've got content ideas and people assigned to create this content (which can include managers, sales representatives, marketers and support staff), set targets so that everyone knows how many blog posts and social media updates – such as tweets and Facebook posts – need to be posted within a specific timeframe. Keep in mind that the backbone of successful content marketing is a consistent flow of new, interesting information.

## The Importance of Establishing Buyer Personas

Your website should be more about customers and less about your bottom line. If your customers can see that you are prioritizing them, they are more likely to trust you and your product. Encouraging customers to share information about your brand and products will build up your brand reputation and eventually reflect on your bottom line.

Use the content you produce to let your customers know that you understand their unique challenges and are focused on tailoring your information, products and services in order to help make their lives easier.

## What Are Buyer Personas?

Buyer personas are fictional, generalized representations of your ideal customers. They help you understand your customers (and potential customers) better, and make it easier for you to tailor content to the specific needs, behaviors, and concerns of different groups.

The strongest buyer personas are based on market research as well as on insights you gather from your actual customer base (through surveys, interviews, etc.). Depending on your business, you could have as few as one or two personas, or as many as 10 or 20. If you're new to personas, start small! You can always develop more personas these questions if needed.

Here are some of the key questions you need to answer about your consumers when developing personas for your business:

1. What is their demographic information?
2. What is their job and level of seniority?
3. What does a day in their life look like?

4. What are their pain points?
5. What do you help them solve?
6. What do they value most? What are their goals?
7. Where do they go for information?
8. What experience are they looking for when seeking out your products or services?
9. What are their most common objections to your product or service?

To help you get started, you can download our full guide, *How to Create Buyer Personas* at this link: [www.wsiworld.com/buyer-personas](http://www.wsiworld.com/buyer-personas)

## How Can You Use Personas

At the most basic level, personas allow you to personalize or target your marketing for different segments of your audience. For example, instead of sending the same lead nurturing emails to everyone in your database, you can segment by buyer persona and tailor your messaging according to what you know about those different personas.

Let's say you have a paint supply company. Who do you want to buy your product? Do-it-yourselfers on a budget, small or large contractors and artists, for example. What would their concerns be? What do they want from your product? The answer to these questions will give you topics that you can use to attract potential customers looking for a solution rather than a product. Potential content ideas could be "how to paint wooden furniture" or "what paint products are best for industrial buildings?"

## The Details of Persona Development

There are a number of other details to consider when you begin to develop your customer personas. Here are a few of those considerations:

### SEO

Using relevant keywords to create and optimize compelling content is an important part of an effective content strategy, but you first need to take a step back and determine what techniques will really align with your customers' needs. You need to create a search persona to better understand what your customers would be searching for online.

### Industry Verticals

When you start to research your buyer personas, you will also see how there are specific personas in each industry vertical (such as initiators, decision makers, buyers and gate-keepers). In order to create content that appeals to them and helps them make a decision, you need to know the ins and outs of each industry vertical's decision-making process. The benefit is that you can feed each industry vertical with the type of information that engages them. Instead of using a single

brand voice in all your content marketing, you can interact with the right people using the lingo they use, on the platforms they read and give them the content they want to consume with ease.

## Stages of the Buying Cycle

The marketing funnel is a model that shows the journey of how a potential customer becomes a client. Planning and creating a funnel helps you strategize exactly how you can create a streamlined process that will result in increased sales for your company.

This model will help ensure that you don't miss out on the most significant audience – the people who are looking for a solution, but are not yet aware that your company can provide it. The content you create -blogs, articles or curated content that you share on social media - needs to speak to the specific stages of the buyer's journey so that it is relevant and valuable. This helps with moving the reader down the funnel of awareness to a purchase decision.



The Buyer's Journey Source: [www.HubSpot.com](http://www.HubSpot.com)

### Awareness Stage

In the first stage, potential buyers have a query about something they are looking to do but may not know how to go about addressing the issue or what product they require. Potential buyers will use a search engine to type in their query, finding you on Facebook, Twitter or through blog posts that address this query.

### Consideration Stage

Their next step will be to do further research on your products or their query, requiring more in-depth information from eBooks, webinars and industry reports in order to make an informed

decision. Your case studies and customer testimonials will then provide the corroborating material to reassure potential customers that your product and service is the best choice to address their need.

## Decision Stage

Lastly, detailed and technical product information and analyst reports will tell the potential client exactly how to use your product upon purchase.

By developing content that speaks to a consumer based on what part of the buyer's journey they are at, you can address and hold your potential client's attention from the very beginning, allowing them to navigate through content towards a purchase while empowering them at each individual stage with appropriate information.

Not only will buyer personas and industry verticals help you narrow down the types of content that you need to create, but it will also help you understand the triggers that cause people to search for information in your industry.

In many cases a potential customer is triggered to start searching for solutions once they become aware of an existing or potential problem. If you're selling home insurance, for example, people could either start searching for what you've got to offer after they move into a new home, after they've been burgled, if they're investing in new household items and electrics or if they're expecting a baby. Knowing that these are the triggers, you will be able to determine what questions each persona will need answered in order to achieve their goal. This is a vital aspect for developing an effective content strategy that will usher potential customers down the content funnel until they become a buyer.

By using persona information to create content that answers the searcher's question in a helpful way it will also build trust in your brand and help establish you as a thought leader in your industry.

## The Value of a Content Calendar

To make sure your potential customers are receiving relevant material at every level (and at frequent, regular intervals), you need to create a content calendar. This tool allows you to schedule and organize material for blogs and social networks well in advance. This way you can make sure that your Twitter and Facebook posts coincide with relevant blog posts, creating cohesion. A content calendar that includes all your posting platforms helps you ensure that potential customers can move through social media along a clearly defined path that addresses their specific need.

## Marketing Your Content

After you've written your content and you are ready to distribute it, you need to start planning how you are going to market it on each social media channel. Posting and distributing content online gives you the opportunity to create more ways for your customers to find you, read about you and trust you. When you have a content marketing strategy that includes social media marketing, you can create a campaign-driven, highly strategic plan to track the cause and

effect of your efforts through consumer engagement. Who's retweeting you? How many people are sharing your content and what does it take to make it go viral and grow your online community? This kind of measurement will show your success, challenges and help you shape future campaigns.

Different target audiences hang out on different social media sites, so you need to adapt your updates accordingly (even if you're not changing every individual blog post or article for each social media channel). Your LinkedIn audience, for example, might include more suppliers, colleagues and customers than your Facebook page, so make sure you craft a well thought-out update about the content that you are sharing. Pictures also do particularly well on Facebook, so make sure you've chosen an eye-catching image to accompany your post on this platform.

One of the easiest ways to make sure you're sharing your content on a regular basis across all your social media profiles is to use a social media management tool like Hootsuite. One of the benefits of using social media tools that allow you to schedule your posts is that you don't have to login to each social media profile and manually post an update. You can simply write your different updates and indicate which post should go where (and you can set the time in advance, so you could easily schedule a week or even a month's worth of social media updates all at once). Many of these online tools also offer reporting tools so that you can see how many people clicked on your links or shared your content with their networks, which can be valuable when you need to identify what type of content is performing well on your social media channels.

## Conclusion

A content marketing strategy is the blueprint to achieving your goals. At WSI, we have our content marketing strategy template that outlines everything from your company's content marketing goals to the various content themes that you will be focusing on each month. A few other things that your content marketing strategy should include are the commitments that were made from team members, factors that can contribute to the success of the strategy, the components of the strategy (such as webinars, webcasts, social media updates, whitepapers, blog posts, newsletters and videos) and the steps that need to be followed in order to successfully execute each phase of the strategy. It also includes a high-level calendar so that you can see which marketing tactics are planned for each month of the year.

The true power of your content marketing strategy occurs when your content is shared and syndicated across your customer's social channels as well. Once you've determined how you're going to go about creating and distributing content, you can use this strategy to encourage your audience to share your content and help build your brand's awareness.

## About the Author



As a speaker, trainer and Digital Marketing Consultant, Francois conducts many training days, boot camps and conference presentations on Digital Marketing and Social Media.

Francois is known for his ability to take complex Web and social media topics and make them easy to understand and accessible for everyday people and small business owners.

Francois' training is aimed at everyone from Gen Y's to Baby Boomers in strategically using social media for their business and personal brand.

He educates business owners on the practical applications of social media networks like LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook and YouTube.

When he's not training, speaking and consulting in the digital space, you'll find him fishing, playing golf and spending time with his family.

## About WSI

WSI is a digital marketing company with a strong international presence. Our Digital Marketing Consultants use their knowledge and expertise to make a difference for businesses all around the world. Headquartered in Toronto, Canada, we also have offices in over 80 countries. We're a powerful network of marketers who strive to discover, analyze, build and implement digital solutions that win digital marketing awards and help businesses succeed online.

Over the last 20 years, WSI has won multiple digital marketing awards for our solutions by adapting to the constantly shifting landscape of the Internet. We take pride in helping businesses make the most of the dollars they spend on digital marketing.

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