

Content Marketing 101

THE NEW FACE OF DIGITAL MARKETING



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Chapter 1: What is Content Marketing?

Content marketing is a phrase often mentioned when discussing digital marketing. It's often used in so many different contexts; it can be tough to understand what it really means. Let's clear that up right now.

Content marketing is the use of any type of media as a tool for garnering exposure and sales for your company or organization.

The media is anything that has been created like blog posts, articles, videos, images or books. What you're reading right now is a form of content or media. It can be in long form or very short. The overall purpose of content is to make a statement in a way that is compelling and attractive to your preferred audience. When you're using content for marketing purposes, you want to include some kind of call to action that encourages people to do something. You can be asking them to click a link, make a call, sign a petition or simply share the information.

The most important thing to remember when you are using content marketing is to focus on providing value. You're not creating a commercial. While commercials are a form of content, they're one sided. Their purpose is solely to sell. When you use content as a marketing tool, your purpose is

to educate, inform and engage people with the goal of turning them into customers.

It's not about direct sales to increase your bottom line; it's about using information to show customers and potential customers that your company can provide value they need to enhance their lives in some way. It's an indirect sales method that can turn customers into consistent clients.

By sharing content, you are encouraging a form of two way communication. Not only do you want people to become customers, you want them to become an active community of clients that use your company consistently.

The reason you've been hearing about content marketing so much is that businesses are starting to recognize that communicating with customers is much more beneficial than communicating at customers. Advertising involves communicating at customers. You put together messages and images you think people will like and you send them their way.

There is no room for dialogue or any type of engagement with your audience. That kind of communication is no longer as effective as it once was. People tend to tune out advertisements so you have to do more of it to make an impact.

People don't tune out information. In fact, in this age of information, people are consuming it in large amounts. The 24 hour news cycle is a prime example of that. You have news networks that are on the air 24 hours a day sharing information. These networks wouldn't be thriving if people

didn't want to know information at any given moment of the day. If you are able to contribute to their desire for knowledge and information, you won't be tuned out.

This is why content marketing should be used by all businesses, especially ones that live in the digital space. You have the opportunity to connect with your audience in a way that is meaningful. You have the opportunity to help quench their thirst for knowledge while providing a product or service to back it up.

This book will help you do that. It will introduce you to the different types of content and show how to use it to get leads and sales. The great thing with content marketing is that anyone can do it. Once you lock in on the type of content you feel most comfortable creating you can do it.

Let's dive into content marketing!

Chapter 2: Why Content Marketing?

Now that you have a better understanding of what content marketing is, you may be wondering why you should use it. Creating content can take time and effort away from other things you could be doing for your business. It's definitely not a magic pill that you can use to experience instant profit making results. It is however a very valuable process you can use multiple times to build your business.

As with any marketing endeavor, you have to take the time to create a strategy, organize a plan and determine how you will measure a content marketing campaign. Yes, this takes time but it is time well spent. Here are some statistics that show the value of creating content.

1. According to Nielsen, 58% of consumers trust editorial content.
2. 80% of business decision makers prefer to get company information in a series of articles versus an advertisement
3. 61% of consumers say they feel better about a company that delivers custom content and, they are also more likely to buy from that company.
4. B2B companies with blogs generate 67% more leads per month on average than non-blogging firms.
5. Content marketing costs 62% less than traditional marketing and generates about 3 times as many leads.
6. Interesting content is the top 3 reasons people follow brands on social media.

Impressive, right?

Since content marketing is still fairly new, its benefits are still being determined but these numbers are more than promising. In the few years that businesses have been incorporating content into their marketing strategy or creating marketing strategy around content, it has provided great value.

If you're on the fence about content marketing because you're wary of making the investment, consider that you're already doing some form of content marketing without even realizing it. Your website, emails and company newsletters are all forms of content that you use to contribute to your company's brand.

You may not realize it but you are already using content in your company business even if your intent isn't to garner sales from it. Now it's time to change how you view the communication pieces you create for your company. Everything you create has the ability to drive sales or build an audience.

Since you're already creating content for your business, shouldn't it help your bottom line?

Here are some additional benefits to help get you off the fence:

- 1. Content marketing is cost effective**

The root of content marketing is information that you already have. All you need is to put it in a format that can be easily shared and digested by potential customers. Some of those formats are free to create and distribute as will be discussed later. They do take time but once you've created a strong piece of content, it can often be used multiple times to generate income. So while the initial time investment may be fairly high, over time the benefits gotten from that piece of content will make that investment worthwhile.

2. Content marketing helps you build a relationship with your audience

Any time you communicate with your audience, you make room for a dialogue which leads to a relationship. Brand loyalty comes when consumers have a relationship with a brand. Before content marketing, that relationship usually took years to develop. Now you can do it in a much shorter amount of time by sharing content that helps put a face to your company and brand. Pulling back the corporate veil to share insights into what drives your company and the values it represents helps create a much more meaningful connection with consumers. Content is the tool you can use to do that.

3. Content marketing lets you be a resource

By sharing valuable information and insights with people, you can demonstrate the value that your company can provide. By presenting yourself as a resource, it gives you the opportunity to build a level of trust before people become customers. When customers trust you, they're much more likely to become long-term clients. They're also much more likely to refer other potential customers to your business.

4. Content marketing gives you a competitive edge

If you're not a multinational corporation with a huge marketing budget, it can seem daunting to get into the marketplace and compete effectively. You may feel like you don't have the ability to compete especially if it's in an industry with a few major players. Sharing content gives you an edge because it levels the playing field. You have a unique perspective and can provide professional insight just like someone at a larger company. Multinational corporations don't have a monopoly on knowledge.

5. Content marketing isn't industry specific

Every industry can benefit from sharing valuable information and insight with consumers. You don't have to be in a creative or entertainment oriented field to benefit from sharing content.

As long as you are providing value that people can use, you will benefit from content marketing.

6. Content marketing creates educated customers

Sometimes as a business you spend a lot of time answering the same questions over and over again. This is why many business websites have frequently asked questions pages. It's done in an attempt to field some of the more common questions asked to ensure that when consumers make contact, they're knowledgeable. By sharing content, you help increase that level of knowledge even more. It makes your interactions with customers more focused on how you can help than and less focused on why they need your help.

7. Content marketing creates empowered consumers

When people are informed and knowledgeable about something, they're empowered to make informed decisions. When your customers are empowered, they can be more savvy and easier to work with. People can be appreciative when they are given the ability to become empowered, especially when it's through the sharing of information. Appreciative customers can turn into long term clients.

8. Content marketing can lead to a viral campaign

While it's not a great idea to make content solely for the purpose of it going viral, you increase your odds that it will go viral by creating it. It can be tough to make a piece of content go viral largely because the factors that lead to that kind of exposure can vary and are tough to pin down. However, by creating content, you are much more likely to experience a viral piece of content than if you don't create content at all.

9. Content marketing lets you control your message

When you are the one creating the content being used to represent your business, you can control what that message is and what it says. You can determine who your ideal audience is and craft messages solely for them. You can also determine which piece of content will work best. Sometimes traditional advertising and marketing messages aren't the best way to communicate with your ideal customer. Content marketing gives you the flexibility and control to do what's best for your audience.

10. Content marketing allows you to recycle information

When you create a valuable piece of content, it's always possible to reuse that information for additional purposes. You can turn a white paper into a series of articles and then turn those articles into short videos. The possibilities for what you

can do with your content are limited only by your own creativity and imagination.

If the statistics shared at the beginning of this chapter aren't enough to convince you why you should be using content marketing, these benefits that were just outlined should do it. As a small business, you have to be creative with how you reach your audience. Finding ways you can connect and show your value will go a long way towards building a sustained customer base.

Content marketing gives you the ability to use your knowledge and experience to differentiate yourself from the competition. You are leaving money on the table if you don't take full advantage of it. Plus, no one has the same knowledge and experiences as you. Creating content allows you to explore and use your own unique selling proposition.

Chapter 3: Types of Content Marketing

Content marketing is beneficial but if you've never considered it before you may have a tough time figuring out the different types of content you can use. Even if you've tried your hand at content marketing you may be stuck on how to truly get the most out of your content. It always helps to have a list of the different types of content.

Here is a list of that content as well as an explanation of the types of businesses that could benefit most from it.

1. Blog Posts

Blogging has become a popular way for businesses to communicate with customers and potential customers. This type of content marketing allows you to create a voice for your business. It also offers the flexibility of sharing other types of content within the blog. Posts can be text based, image based, video based or a combination of the three. The thing to remember about blog posts is that you have to create them with a level of consistency to keep people coming back to read your blog posts. You don't have to post everyday but you do have to post regularly.

Businesses that could benefit: Blog posts can work for a variety of businesses because it lets you share the type of information that works best for your audience. It's most ideal for

businesses that are information or news heavy. If you have a lot that can be shared and discussed in your blog, you won't be at a loss for content.

2. Guest blog posts

If you aren't interested in hosting your own blog, you can create content for other blogs. This requires you to do some research and identify blogs that are well aligned with your brand with an engaged and active following. You also have to be prepared to pitch your posts to the blog owner. In this instance you should prepare some blog post topics and possibly have some of those topics expanded into posts ready to be published. The best way to ensure that your posts are accepted and published is to take some time and familiarize yourself with the blog voice. You want to make sure your posts fit in with the blog you're submitting them to otherwise your posts won't be shared.

Businesses that could benefit: As with a blog that you create yourself, guest blog posts can also work for a variety of businesses. As long as there is an active blog, you can submit guest posts to it.

3. Cartoons or comics

There was a time when cartoons and comics were reserved for younger audiences but they also provide some value to businesses interested in sharing information in a more whimsical way. Cartoons and comics can be used to explain

topics that may be tough to understand or not particularly interesting overall but need to appeal to a wide audience. This is one of the forms of content being used to explain some tech products that would benefit a non-tech savvy audience.

Creating a cartoon or comic can be done a few ways. You can hire a professional who can design or create a comic. You can also use a tool that will allow you to create your own cartoon.

These are some websites that make it easy for you by offering a menu of characters and scenes.

- a. Go Animate - <http://goanimate.com/>
- b. Moovly - <http://www.moovly.com/>
- c. Wideo - <http://wideo.co/>

Businesses that could benefit: If your organization is targeting children or parents of children, this type of content would work well. It's also great for creating videos about tech products, sanitation products, health products and any other kind of product that could benefit from the whimsical nature of animation.

4. EBooks

EBooks are electronic books written to be shared online or through eReaders. They can be as short as 10 pages or as long as 150 pages. An eBook is a long form of content that is used to provide information. Sometimes there is a call to action in the book but other times it's used as a piece of collateral to build an email list. These pieces of collateral take an extended

amount of time and should be created with a plan for how it's going to be used. An eBook can be used to discuss a topic, educate an audience or tell a story. It can also be used to do all three. You can also create how-to guides in eBook format.

Businesses that could benefit: If your company is related to internet marketing or other business oriented industries, it could benefit from this type of content. It also works well for health and fitness organizations as well as any specialized niche industry. Any time you're dealing with an audience base that appreciates information, you could benefit from creating and distributing an eBook.

5. Infographics

Infographic is short for information graphic. It's when a long, often complex series of statistics and information is put into an easy to read graphic format. If you create a research heavy report or document and want to share the information to a broad audience, this is an ideal way to do it.

Businesses that could benefit: If your business is very statistics oriented or involves making use of complicated information, an infographic is a great way to communicate.

6. Video

The great thing about video is that it can be used by any type of organization. If you're going to use video, it has to be well

planned and executed. You don't have to go out and spend tens of thousands of dollars but if you don't have a huge budget, it's important that you make sure your video is good quality. It's also important to make sure your video isn't too long. You don't want people to feel like they have to sit through a long video when they visit your website.

Make it short and punchy while asking them to take action in some way. When it comes to video length you do have some wiggle room but not much. Ideally, your video shouldn't be much more than 1-3 minutes. However, if you are providing valuable information, it could go up to 5-7 minutes. There are some companies that can make videos that run for as long as half an hour or longer. Don't do that unless you're absolutely sure your audience will tune in. Educational companies may share videos of workshops that provide instruction of some kind. In this instance, a longer video may be accepted.

Businesses that could benefit: Any type of business can use video. The thing to keep in mind is to make the video valuable and not too long. If you find yourself creating a video that's going to run for several minutes, look for ways to break it into chunks and create a series. This is a great way to have people coming back to your website consistently to gain access to all of the information you're providing in the series.

7. Testimonials

Sometimes the best way to encourage people to become new customers is by letting your current customers sing your praises. Testimonials can be very powerful for showing the value of the product or service you are providing. The best testimonials are ones that sound and feel authentic and include specifics about your business. For example, *I was in desperate need of a plumber and Jamie was willing to come to my home on a Saturday and fix my bathroom sink. Without his help, my apartment would have surely flooded! Thanks so much.*

As you can see that testimonial mentions a specific service and employee as well as how it was beneficial. This feels much more authentic than, *I really love working with your company. You guys are the best!* While both are great to share, the first one presents a very specific reason why your customer was pleased with your business. It tells potential customers why they should work with you. When you are working stand out from the competition, showing why your business is better than others is a great way to do that.

Businesses that could benefit: If your business offers a specific product or service, it could benefit from this type of content. It's best to make sure your testimonials reference specific benefits that were gained from using your products or services. You want them to sell your business, not just tell people how cool you are.

8. Livestream Video

This type of video content is different from other video because it is usually centered on a specific event or occasion. There is some planning that must be done, but it usually involves simply setting up a camera to record while other things are going on around it. You do want to make sure whatever you're live streaming will provide value to your audience, but it's usually expected that this will be long form video.

You have to ensure that your video is good quality as well as your internet connection to ensure that the stream isn't broken while the video is airing. The best way to take the most advantage of this type of video is to stream it and capture it to be used at a later date. You can repurpose the streamed video and share snippets of it on your website after the event is over. This video serves two purposes. It brings an audience to your website while the video is being live streamed and provides an opportunity for additional page views if you decide to share the video after the event.

Businesses that could benefit: If your organization hosts workshops, seminars, panel discussions or other educational presentations, it could benefit from livestreaming those events. This is a great way for conferences to expose a portion of the event to people who couldn't attend to encourage them to attend the next time it takes place. It also helps with securing

speakers and presenters. If they know their talk may be featured on the web, they may be more willing to be a part of your event for free or at a reduced cost.

9. Podcast

If you don't have the budget to create a video or aren't comfortable being on camera, you can put together a podcast. This is an audio only form of content that you can use to educate, inform or entertain your audience. You can make it a one-time occurrence or an ongoing podcast series. When it comes to length of podcasts, it's much more liberal than video. People tend to treat podcasts like radio shows which can run for several hours at a time. While you shouldn't create podcasts that run for several hours, you can do them for anywhere from 30 to 90 minutes.

Depending on how compelling your discussion is people will gladly tune in to a 90 minute podcast. Creating podcasts are a bit easier than creating video but it still takes an element of planning and an investment in a good quality recording system. You need a good microphone, the ability to capture audio and an audio editing program. You can host the podcast on your own web server or use a service. It's best to use one of the services that make it possible for you to make your podcast available to a larger audience while featuring it on your website as well.

- a. iTunes - <http://www.apple.com/itunes/podcasts/creatorfaq.html>
- b. Podomatic - <http://www.podomatic.com>
- c. Podbean - <http://www.podbean.com/>
- d. Podcast Garden - <http://www.podcastgarden.com/h/en/>

Those are just a few of the tools available that make it possible for you to host your podcast through a service. You should definitely take some time and research to find the one that best serves your needs.

Businesses that could benefit: Niche oriented businesses with a specialized focus would benefit most from a podcast. Your audience has to have a strong interest in whatever topic you're discussing to tune in for 30 minutes or more. Entertainment and pop culture based companies could also benefit from a podcast.

10. Case studies

These are a little different from testimonials because they're written in a more official context and format. This is a great way to highlight how your business executed a solution to a problem from start to finish. It can demonstrate the layers that come with operating a business and successfully working with clients. Case studies are best when they're no more than a page and a half long. You should keep it brief, and focus on the who, what, why, when, and how of the situation for your clients. You want

to show your potential clients what they can expect when working with you.

Businesses that could benefit: Case studies are great for new businesses with a service focus. It allows you to present your methodologies and work process while marketing your business. One of the hesitations customers may have with trying a new business may be knowing whether it is worth the investment. Case studies can help you demonstrate your worth using a practical example.

11. User Generated Content

This is content that you invite your customers to create and share on your behalf. This is a great way to engage your customers and turn them into marketing representatives for your company. You can invite them to create product demonstrations, reviews or posts about how much they love your product or service. It may require an extra level of management to ensure that this type of content reflects your brand properly. In some cases, it's not a good idea to try to regulate user-generated content too much because that will discourage people from creating it. You should really consider your audience before actively encouraging this type of content. Make sure they will make content that you'll want to have representing your brand.

Businesses that could benefit: This type of content is great for any type of product or customer service heavy business. For example, if you have a tech product, you could invite users to create how to guides or product demonstrations. You could also benefit from this type of content if you have a sporting product that you're selling. Inviting users to create videos showing cool ways they use your product can really help with sales. Any type of product that has a specialized use can benefit from user-generated content.

That's a pretty comprehensive list of the different types of content you could use in a content marketing campaign. However, it's always a good idea to keep an eye out for other forms of content. The thing that makes content marketing valuable is that it's only limited by your own imagination. As long as you don't let your creativity overshadow your product or service, you can explore as many options as you want.

Although there are some businesses that would benefit most from certain pieces of content, you shouldn't limit yourself. If you see a form of content that you want to use for your business, do it. The key is to ensure that you commit to the process of creating the piece of content and keep the quality as high as possible.

If you are a new business and want to livestream a nontraditional event like a new product unveiling or the opening of a new office, go for it. As long as you have a plan for how the content will help your business, you should do it. With content marketing, your ultimate goal is to increase sales for your

business. However, you have the ability to be creative about how you reach that goal.

Now that you have some insight into the different types of content you can create, you have to make sure that your content has a clear objective. Yes your overall objective is to increase sales but how you do that must be decided in advance. There are four objectives you should choose from when creating content.

1. Content that entertains

Do you want your content to be entertaining? If so, you need to look for a creative way to accomplish that objective. This is the type of content that you create to be shared. It can be funny or just very interesting. Since what's considered entertaining can be subjective, it's best to commit to your concept to ensure that it comes across effectively.

2. Content that persuades

Do you want to convince your audience of something? Using your content to persuade is a great way to let it work for you long after it's been created and shared. You should make sure your persuasive message is consistent throughout the content.

3. Content that educates

Do you want to provide value to your audience by educating them? People often appreciate it when you enlighten them about something and help them increase their level of knowledge on a topic.

Educational content can always be valuable well after it's been created and shared initially. Do your best to make sure the educational information you provide is as timeless as possible. You want to be able to use your content for as much time as possible.

4. Content to sell or convert

There is some content you create solely for the purpose of turning potential customers into actual customers. It's perfectly fine to use content solely for this purpose but if you do, it must include a clear call to action.

While there are four distinct objectives, it's entirely possible to combine them when you're creating content. However, it's important that you have a clear purpose with the content. You don't want to create content with a muddled objective. This is why it's important to plan your content before it's created and shared. This allows you to ensure that your objective is clear and that the content does its job effectively.

Chapter 4: Curating vs. Creating Content

Sometimes business owners stress themselves out about creating the content to use for marketing that the process becomes overly laborious and challenging. You don't actually have to create every piece of content you use. There is so much information out there that you can still provide value by wading through it and sharing the most beneficial nuggets of knowledge with your audience.

This is called curating content. It still allows you to display your expertise because you are highlighting information that is the most valuable, accurate and beneficial to your customers. It's important that you keep in mind that curating content also involves time and effort and can take just as much time as creating content when you're new to it.

There are pros and cons to both curating and creating content. Both work well and can help increase sales and exposure for your business. However, it's necessary to weigh the options before making a choice.

Curating Content

The root of curating content involves taking pieces of media created by someone else and sharing it with your audience. This can be very beneficial when done properly. The main thing to make sure you do is give proper credit to the original creator of the content you're sharing. If you don't do that, you will be plagiarizing the content, not curating it. Think of

curating content like gathering information for a research paper. You present the ideas that have been shared by someone else but you give them credit through footnotes, endnotes or a bibliography.

Pros

- You can provide valuable information to your audience
When you share well-curated content, it is still very beneficial to your audience. You are the expert and you know what information will have the most impact. You are also identifying the information that is most important.
- You can save money on creation costs
Curated content has already been created. You are simply finding the information that's available and plucking out what you want to use. This can help when you don't have a budget to create content.
- You can save time
Creating content takes time. If you are using curated content, you save the creation time and can use that time to do something else.
- You can position yourself or your company as a tastemaker
When people begin to rely on you to share valuable information with them, they begin to consider you a tastemaker. You showcase your expertise by becoming known for identifying what information is important and should be read and or used. This can

really help if you want to position yourself as an expert in a specific industry.

There is a lot of value in curating content but I caution you to not lean on it too heavily or not take the time to find content that is truly beneficial and will support the branding efforts of your business. There are content curation specialists who will tout the benefits of it without mentioning the challenges. Don't dive into the content curating arena without taking time to consider all sides of it.

Cons

- You have to be careful to verify the information you share
You can't assume that the content you're sharing is accurate. Remember that whatever content you curate is a reflection of your brand once you share it. Even if you give proper credit to the original creator of the content (which should always happen); you still take responsibility for sharing the information. If one of your customers complains or finds fault in content that you've shared, you will have to answer for it. You have to be aware of this and make sure you are confident in the accuracy of the information you're sharing.
- It takes time to curate content well
While it may not take as much time to curate content as it does to create it, you can't do it haphazardly or in a hurry. You are using this content as a way to benefit your brand

and that must be remembered at all times. This means you have to take the time to really research the content you'll be sharing. Even if you didn't create it yourself, you should be able to share it with same level of confidence.

- You are providing a platform for whoever created the content
By sharing content created by someone else, you are effectively providing that person or organization with a platform. This can benefit you but it can also send your customers to another organization which could be a potential competitor. You have to choose the source of your content carefully to make sure it's a brand you don't mind promoting and isn't a direct competitor.

Curating content can be very valuable and a great way to provide information without having to create it yourself. The keys to good content curation are research, moderation and insight.

1. Research

It's imperative that you research the content you want to share before you share it. Don't just read it over and make your decision from that point. Take the time to check the sources given and research the creator of the piece of content. Make sure you aren't unknowingly supporting a company that isn't aligned with your branding.

2. Moderation

There should be a balance in the amount of curated content you share. Don't become a content curation factory, only known for sharing information created by other organizations. When you do that, you become more of an aggregator and less a curator. You should look for ways to create your own content as well. It's important that you create your unique voice while you're sharing the insights of others.

3. Insight

While you are curating content and sharing it, you also need to include your own perspective. It's never a good idea to simply share a link to a piece of content. Include your thoughts about the content and why you are sharing it. Doing this shows that you've taken the time to really read and digest the information you're sharing. This also helps you to include your own voice while demonstrating why this piece of content supports your brand.

If you're going to incorporate curated content into your content marketing strategy, you must treat it as an extension of your brand just like you would content that you've created in house. That may seem like an easier route to go once you consider the pros and cons of curating content. However, there are also pros and cons to creating content.

Creating Content

When you want to share content, you may decide that you'd rather create it yourself. This is definitely a viable way to go but there are considerations that must be made before you move forward.

Pros

- You have control over the content
When you create your own content, you have creative control over what it looks like and how the information is conveyed. This ensures that the finished product is exactly what you want and a proper reflection of your brand.
- You are the source and the content will best reflect your knowledge and insight
When you create your own content you know that it's a true reflection of your own level of knowledge and experience. You can speak confidently about it when asked. You can also comfortably defend it if anyone has questions about it.
- You own the exclusive rights to your content
Any content you create is wholly owned by you and your company. You have the ability to repurpose it anyway you see fit. You don't have to ask permission or make it a point to give credit to someone else. If a piece of content that you create goes viral, you can take full credit for it and reap all of the benefits.
- You can specifically tailor your content to your audience

When you curate content, you don't have the ability to tailor it to your specific audience. You have to represent it as is. When you create your own content, you have the flexibility to make it speak most effectively to your target demographic. This is important because you may have multiple audiences and need to alter your message accordingly.

There are some great benefits to creating your own content which is why so many businesses do it. But there are also some cons which must be considered and weighed before beginning to create your own content.

Cons

- **Creating content can be very time consuming**
When you want to create and share content as a reflection of your business, you should be prepared to put the time into doing it the best way possible. This means you could end up taking a lot of time to make sure your content looks the way you want and communicates your message in the way that best supports your brand.
- **Creating content can cost money**
Depending on the type of content you want to create, you could end up having to make a financial investment to do it well. Since any content you create is a direct reflection of your brand, you don't want to skimp on the quality. Sometimes that quality costs money.

- You may be pressured to create content consistently
Once you've created a piece of content, you may feel pressured to do it again. Some forms of content lend themselves very well to being one off creations that you can use consistently. Other forms of content can put you in a position where you'll want to create more once you've done it successfully. This can lead to an added layer of expectation on top of the other expectations you're working to meet.

- Your piece of content may only reflect one aspect of your business
Most businesses are multifaceted with different layers and insights that make up one brand. Effective content should be singularly focused which means you have to choose one aspect of your brand to highlight with it. This means that your content may create the perception that your brand is one sided.

Creating content is a very viable piece of a strong content marketing strategy. The keys to creating good content are preparation, authenticity and thinking conservatively.

1. Preparation

The best way to avoid unnecessary costs is to prepare before you begin creating content. It's necessary to determine the overall scope and vision of your piece of content to see where you may encounter

costs or roadblocks. In these instances, it may be best to create a different type of content that will serve the same purpose but for a smaller investment of time, money or both.

2. Authenticity

The point of creating content is to share your knowledge and voice with your audience. You have to do this authentically in order for it to be beneficial. You don't want your content to come across as too sales-y or disingenuous. Find your authentic voice before you begin creating content and work to make sure that it's a common thread in all of your marketing strategies.

3. Thinking conservatively

Some business owners end up spending a lot of time and money creating content because their ideas are really lofty. Sometimes rockets and rainbows are the only way to go but other times you can scale it down some to still get your message across. If you are a big thinker, it's often important to run your idea past a more conservative thinker to see if there are ways you can make your idea more realistic. That doesn't mean you have to make your content less effective, but you should be open to making it less showy. While people are impressed by bells and whistles, they stick around for value. Focus on providing value.

When you are creating a content marketing campaign, it's important to consider all of your options and that includes how you get your content. As with any other element of business, there are pros and cons to deciding

whether you want to curate content or create it yourself. It's best to educate yourself then make an informed decision.

It's ultimately up to you to decide what will work best. A mix of curated and created content can be most beneficial. It allows you to benefit from both without worrying about the pressure that comes with properly maintaining either. This is yet another reason why taking the time to plan and prepare your content marketing strategy is necessary.

You can sit down and create a map for how you plan to introduce and implement your content. You can decide the best mix of curated and created content and how you will share it for maximum effectiveness. You may want to start with more curated content while you work up to having the time to create your own good, solid content.

Taking the time to research and read through the different type of content will not only provide you with information to share it will also show you the different types of content that already exists. It could give you some inspiration for types of content you can make and the ability to see what works and what doesn't. While this planning does take time initially, it will save you time in the long run.

One of the reasons business owners spend a lot of time on content and run the risk of becoming overwhelmed or underwhelmed about the benefits, is because they jump in with both feet without preparing in advance. Don't do that. Even if you don't think you have the time to stop and focus on crafting a new strategy, it's worth it if you take the time.

You'll get much more benefit from content marketing if you prepare accordingly.

Chapter 5: Use Content to Get Leads

You may be wondering how content marketing can directly support your bottom line. There are a variety of ways but this chapter will specifically discuss how you can use it to get leads. Yes, it is entirely possible to take any of the forms of content and use one of them to generate a list of warm leads.

This is one of the content marketing avenues. In fact, if you're new to content marketing this is one way to become acclimated to it. You have a clear goal from the beginning and you are creating a strategy to support that goal. Here's how you do it.

1. Determine how many leads you'd like to get over the course of this content marketing campaign and how long it will last.

It's important that you begin with the end in mind. You should know what you're working towards and how long you'll be doing it.

Sometimes business owners can launch great ideas and begin campaigns designed to improve business but if there is no clear end game, the idea can eventually falter and the campaign can go on forever. You need a clear ending to give you a deadline to work towards. Don't worry. You can tweak the number of leads if your research calls for it but you can't tweak the length of the campaign.

2. Decide how you will capture the emails to build your email list

There are email marketing tools you can use that will help you build your email list. Before you start your campaign or create your content, you need to know where the information will go. Don't try to facilitate this whole process yourself. Trying to keep track of emails can become overwhelming and tedious. Take advantage of the tools out there to make it easy for you. Some of them have a free plan or a free trial while others cost a monthly fee. Take the time to do some research to choose the tool that will work best for your business. Here are some of the more popular tools to get you started:

- a. Aweber – <http://aweber.com>
- b. MailChimp – <http://mailchimp.com>
- c. GetResponse – <http://getresponse.com>
- d. Constant Contact – <http://constantcontact.com>

These are some you can look into to get an idea of how they work. All of these sources will help you gather emails, manage your email list and communicate with your list. If you're not sure which one to go with, try talking to other business owners in your industry to see which one works for them. Don't make your final decision based solely on price. Take some time and make sure it has the specific features you need to support your business.

3. Set up your email marketing tool

Don't dive into this process without setting up your email marketing funnel first. This is the value in using a tool over trying to do it yourself. Most tools have the process set up for you. All you have to

do is go in and create the messages you want to send to your customers when they enter your sales funnel. Take advantage of the tutorials and other how to guides available showing you how to make the most of the tool. Go through and familiarize yourself with how it works. You should also make it a point to see how it handles the distribution of files via email. If you can't find this information on the website, send a message to customer service. This will come in handy later on in this process so check on this now.

4. Create a piece of content that you are willing to give away for free
While it's completely understandable that you want to benefit from any piece of content you create, it's not always a good idea to charge for it. Sometimes a valuable piece of content can be used to build up your sales funnel which will turn into income down the line. It doesn't have to be a huge piece of content that takes a lot of time to create. As long as it has a high perceived value, it will be well received by your audience. Here are some types of content you can use to give away.

- a. eBook

A short but informative eBook is a great piece of content to give away. It shouldn't be more than 25 pages long or less than 10. You want it to have a high perceived value and if it's too short, that value won't be there. If it's too long, you'll be less inclined to give it away because you will have taken a lot of time and effort to create it. Keep it relatively short but informative without giving away too much information.

- b. Coupon

You could offer a coupon for a discount on any products and services you sell. It has to be a coupon with a high perceived value so it can't be 10% off of your least expensive product/service. People have to want to get the coupon and be willing to provide some information in exchange for it. But the coupon shouldn't be so good that you feel ripped off when it's redeemed. Look for balance.

c. Free product

If you have a product that you can easily give away in bulk, that's a great thing to give away for free. Yes an eBook is a type of product but you may have others that you can easily use.

d. Free consulting session

If you offer consulting services, you could give away a free session in return for joining your email list. Look for ways to keep the session manageable. You can do it electronically and offer to answer specific questions or you can make it a short session. The key is to make sure you aren't giving too much of your time with the free session so that it becomes a burden. Make it doable.

The point is for you to not put yourself in debt or in a state of struggle to do this. However, you should definitely have something you can give people in exchange for them sharing their email address. You also want to offer something they will find interesting. If the piece of content is of enough value, you will find people that are truly interested in what your company has to offer.

5. Make your content available

Now you have to promote the free piece of content that you have.

You should create a sign up form on your website that people have to input their email address into gain access to the giveaway. This form should be prominently featured on your website with a clear call to action directing people to share their email addresses. You'll also have to do some promotion across other networks. This is a great time to make use of social media advertising. You can either create an advertising campaign through Facebook or Google Ads. The purpose of the campaign is to let people know about the giveaway. You have to do something to make your special deal easy to be discovered. If you already have a presence on social media, use that profile or page to share your special as well.

Once you've made your special deal available, you can start keeping track of how many email addresses you get. Since this campaign should have a clear end date, you can start the clock once you've made your offer available to the public. This should give you a concentrated period of time to let your campaign run while you measure the results.

Aim for at least three months. If this is your first content marketing campaign, three months will give you some time to see how things go without committing you to something longer. This will give you the ability to assess what worked and what didn't. You also gain great insight into your ability to execute a campaign when you actually do it.

If you've done a campaign in the past and are comfortable with them, you may want to let it run longer than three months but it shouldn't last more than six months total. You don't want your campaign to go on so long that it's virtually never ending. You need time to see how well it works so you can make any necessary adjustments. In fact, it may be best to stick with the three month time frame and run the campaign several times, making adjustments along the way.

While you are collecting the email addresses, create a plan for how you will move those leads through the sales funnel. You need to have an idea of how often you plan to communicate with them and what you're going to share. It's important to make sure you don't inundate their email inboxes with information. But it's just as important that you don't disappear once you have their information.

These are warm leads that you can target for potential customers. Make sure you deliver the free content right away and create a schedule for when you will contact them and how often. It's best that all of your communications not be sales solicitations. The same way that you garnered their interest is the same way you can keep them in your sales funnel.

Provide value while asking for the sale and people won't automatically unsubscribe from your email list. You can use this form of content marketing to consistently build your sales funnel. You can also use it as a way to become more comfortable with content marketing overall. Once you've done it a few times you can start expanding your use of content.

Chapter 6: Content Marketing and Social Media

Social media and content marketing can work really well together, especially for small business owners and entrepreneurs with limited resources. Once you've created a piece of content that you'd like to use for marketing and set up a functioning email list, you can use social media to look for leads.

There are four social networking websites that all business owners should be aware of. While you shouldn't try to maintain a profile on all of them, you need to know they exist. Here is a short description of each of those websites as a refresher.

Facebook

This is currently the largest social networking website in the world. It has been said to have over a billion users. In fact, some people would say that the number of Facebook users makes it the size of a country. The billion users are on the website for a variety of reasons but they're largely social. People use Facebook as a tool for keeping in touch with friends, family, classmates, business associates and anyone else they want to connect with.

Because there are so many people using Facebook, it's very valuable for businesses. There are about 15 million businesses using Facebook as a

marketing and community building tool. One of the reasons that number is so high is because it's free to have a Facebook account whether you're a business or an individual. Another reason that number is so high is because being on Facebook gives you direct access to a lot of people in one central place.

Not only does Facebook have a free option for reaching your audience, it also has a paid service called Facebook Ads. This allows you to run ads on Facebook targeting a very specific demographic. You can also do it while working with any sized budget. You choose the keywords, audience and region you want to target and set the budget then run your campaign.

You pay a set amount for each person that clicks on your ad. Once your budget runs out, your ad stops running. Then you can go in and review the statistics and see how effective your ad was at getting leads.

With these two different ways to engage and interact with the Facebook community, it makes sense that about 15 million businesses would have a presence on the website.

Twitter

This is one of the largest social networking websites with a focus on micro blogging. Twitter users communicate through short 140 character posts. There are about half a million users on Twitter and over four million businesses on it. It's free for a business to create a profile and start using Twitter. Many businesses use Twitter to communicate with their audience.

Some of them use it to feature giveaways and share special offers while others use it as a customer service tool.

Twitter provides a lot of value to businesses because it makes it possible for them to have conversations with their audience. It also makes it possible for them to tune in to the conversations being had and gain some insight into what people really want. Some brands have found very creative ways to leverage their Twitter community and experience a lot of benefit from it.

In addition to the free profile that every business can create, Twitter has a new advertising feature. You can either promote your specific Twitter account or promote specific tweets. It works two different ways.

Promoted Account

If you want to get more Twitter followers overall, you would create a campaign to promote your account. You choose your budget and are charged only when someone follows you. Once your budget is exhausted, your campaign will stop running.

Promoted Tweets

If you want to highlight a specific tweet, you would create a campaign to promote that tweet. You choose your budget and are charged when someone interacts with your tweet in some way. This means that any time someone retweets, favorites or replies to your tweet you will be charged. Once your budget is exhausted, your tweet will stop being promoted.

Twitter is a very active community and the new advertising option makes it very valuable for businesses to reach a large audience at once. It's even more valuable because you don't pay until your tweet garners some kind of interaction or response.

LinkedIn

With over 250 million users, LinkedIn is a social media community with a strong business to business audience. It's largely used by companies as a recruiting tool and by people seeking job opportunities. The format of the profile is like an interactive resume and the groups are all centered on a type of professional development. People can only request connections from others that they have some kind of relationship with or have been referred to by someone else.

LinkedIn is the top business focused social media network. It's free for businesses to create a page as long as there is a personal profile created by the person setting it up. There are different safeguards in place to ensure that LinkedIn remains a valuable network for the business community. LinkedIn has a focus on networking which is why users can't randomly send requests to anyone. It also has different communities set up for individuals with similar professional interests can come together.

Those safeguards have worked pretty well so far which is why there are about three million businesses using the network. You can rest assured that the people following your business are doing it because they're interested in your company specifically.

As a business user, you can share information about your company, including the website. You can also share company updates. In fact, the best way to make your LinkedIn page valuable is to actively share updates and information on a regular basis.

As with the other social networking websites, LinkedIn has a feature that allows you to purchase sponsored updates. You choose your target audience and how you'd like to pay and set your bid. Your post will be visible to that audience until your budget is exhausted then your update will stop being featured. The same goes for any ads you'd like to run.

You can run ads whether you have a business account or not but if you want to establish your brand on LinkedIn, it's best to create a company page.

Pinterest

It started out as an online scrapbooking website but now Pinterest is one of the largest social media communities. It has over 70 million users. Initially the audience on Pinterest was largely made up of women who would share pictures of recipes, weddings, fashion and other women oriented lifestyle images.

It has since exploded with a growing and broadening audience and businesses began to see the benefit in joining the Pinterest community. It's free for business to join Pinterest and there isn't an official advertising

feature just yet. Pinterest is experimenting with having promoted pins but there's no definitive program currently in place.

Using Pinterest gives you access to the community of 70 million users that enjoy interacting with images and videos. You can use Pinterest's visual focus to create an image that supports your brand.

Even though you can't run ads on Pinterest, you can share pins that link back to your website and encourage people to make a purchase. Some businesses have experienced success with creating pin boards around a specific type of product and encouraging users to click through to purchase that product.

While these are four of the more popular social media websites, it's not necessary for you to create a profile for your business on all of them. In fact, you should choose the one that works best for you and focus on that one. It takes time to really take advantage of any social media website even if you incorporate an advertising campaign into your use of it.

However, many business owners aren't sure how to best benefit from the use of social media. Here's an example of how you can use Facebook to build a community and sales leads.

Facebook for Sales Leads

You have to create a Facebook profile before you can do anything business oriented on Facebook. Once your profile is set up with a decent amount of information, you can create a Facebook Page for your business. Put your personal picture on your page and include a description with a link to your website. Now you're ready to start using Facebook to build your business.

1. Invite your personal friends to like your Facebook page.

This is why you should have an active account before you set up a page. It helps to jump start your likes with your own personal friends. By having your personal photo on the page, you increase the odds that your friends will like your page out of support for you.

2. Jazz up your page with your company logo and an interesting cover photo.

Find an interesting image to represent your company. This should be your cover photo. Then change your main picture to your company logo. Use a cover photo that incorporates you and your company logo. You want to find a way to prominently feature your face so your friends will be more likely to like the page. Make these changes after you've sent out the initial invites and some of your friends have liked your page. By doing it this way, any updates you make will show up in your feed and theirs giving you additional exposure.

3. Start sharing posts on your page.

This is a great place to start sharing curated content. Look for interesting articles, videos and pictures you can share with your new community. Keep an eye out for ways to engage them wherever possible.

4. Create an advertising campaign using Facebook Ads to get more likes to your page.

Get more likes for your page by doing a small budget advertising campaign. Don't spend more than \$50 for the campaign. You shouldn't break the bank with this campaign. You just want to get a few more followers. Plus this is a great way for you to familiarize yourself with the way Facebook Ads works.

5. Continue to engage your growing community using content.

You want to keep finding ways to engage with your audience. Experiment with different forms of content and observe how your audience interacts with it. This will give you some great insight into the types of content that is most effective with your audience.

6. Create a content marketing campaign.

Create a campaign where you giveaway a piece of content in exchange for emails using an email marketing service. Make sure you put the campaign on your website and look for ways to promote it.

7. Create an advertising campaign on Facebook to get more emails added to your list.

Once you've created the campaign and featured it prominently on your website you should run an ad on Facebook. You can keep the budget modest with the idea of running it a few times while you're doing the campaign.

8. Invite members of your growing Facebook community to join your email list.

You can invite your Facebook community to join your email list and get a free download of the piece of content you've created.

You have now officially launched and executed a Facebook marketing campaign using content. If you keep engaging your growing audience while running short, budget friendly advertising campaigns, you will experience some measurable results. Yes you will have had to make some financial investment but it won't be expensive and you will have an active presence on the largest social networking website in the world.

This is just an example of how you can use Facebook in conjunction with your content marketing campaign to get more sales leads. It's fairly simplistic and if you take the time to map it out in advance, you can hand it off to a qualified assistant so you can focus on other business building activities.

It's not hard to benefit from social media. All it takes is an understanding of the outlet you want to use and a plan to make the most of it. The plan is necessary to ensure that you are getting the most benefits out of your social profile. It's also necessary so you can use it again in the future.

The great thing about social media business profiles is that people expect a level of marketing when they join your community. As long as you balance that marketing with engagement and look for ways to provide value as often as possible, you'll be able to really benefit from your use of social media.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

There you have it. You know what it takes to craft a content marketing campaign and use it to make money. Now you have a formula that you can use over and over again. Simply determine the type of content you want to create, insert then rinse and repeat.

Here's a recap of what was discussed:

- Content marketing involves using the creation of content to implement a strategy for increasing sales and building an audience.
- While content marketing is most often discussed as it relates to businesses that do a lot of work in the digital space, it's just as valuable for any kind of business.
- Content marketing is cost effective, lets you control your message and encourages your customers to be educated and empowered among other benefits.
- There are lots of different types of content you can create for your business. Some of them are video, cartoons, case studies and blog posts.
- The content you create is only limited by your own creativity. As long as you keep marketing your business as the main goal, you can do whatever you think will have the most impact.

- When you create content, you should decide whether it's going to entertain, persuade, educate or convert. Once you've chosen one, you can decide if you want to choose another objective.
- It's most important that the objective of your content is clear and easily understood by your audience.
- When you want to use content as a part of a content marketing campaign, you should determine whether to curate or create that content.
- The best way to take full advantage of a content marketing campaign is to use a combination of curated content and created content.
- Content marketing can be used to get warm leads for your sales funnel.
- Social media and content marketing work really well together.
- You can create a strong social media content marketing campaign to fill your sales funnel and build a community at the same time.

As you can see from some of the steps covered in this book, when it comes to content marketing it's important to understand the rules. Once you get them and have practiced them at least once, you can break them. The most important thing to keep in mind is the point of your content marketing campaign—making money.

When you're confident and clear about why you're crafting a content marketing strategy you can do whatever you think will work best for your audience. That's the great thing about content marketing. As long as you keep the ultimate goal in mind, you can be as creative as you can. But it's best to take some time to familiarize yourself with what works then branch out from there.

Content marketing is a tool that all small business owners, entrepreneurs and Internet marketing professionals should use. When you don't have a marketing budget, it's important to find a way to reach your audience without breaking the bank.

With a well thought out content marketing campaign, you can use content to engage an audience, gain subscribers and improve sales. You have the rules, now go out and build your business!