



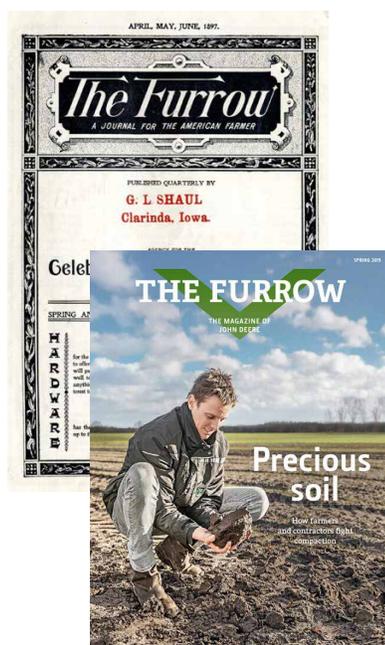
Kicking Off Your Content Marketing

*Develop a Winning Content Marketing
Program for Your Business*

In today's digital age, smart brands are bypassing product promotion and using strategic storytelling to drive action from a clearly defined audience of customers, prospects and partners.

The bottom line...

A strategic approach to content marketing drives engagement, loyalty, and ultimately positive ROI



There is nothing new about content (ask “The Epic of Gilgamesh” from 2700 BC). There’s not even anything new about content marketing (ask John Deere which started the still-published “The Furrow” in 1895). What is relatively new is the ease of content distribution provided by the internet. In the past few years it seems every company has or wants a content program to complement and enhance its other digital marketing activities.

Content marketing is best implemented when a company understands the importance of playing the long game. *According to a recent study by Kapost, the cost per lead from content marketing was 41 percent less per lead than paid search advertising for medium- and large-sized businesses. Further, although hiring a content marketing team takes more time than launching a paid search campaign, it generates over four times more leads within 36 months.*

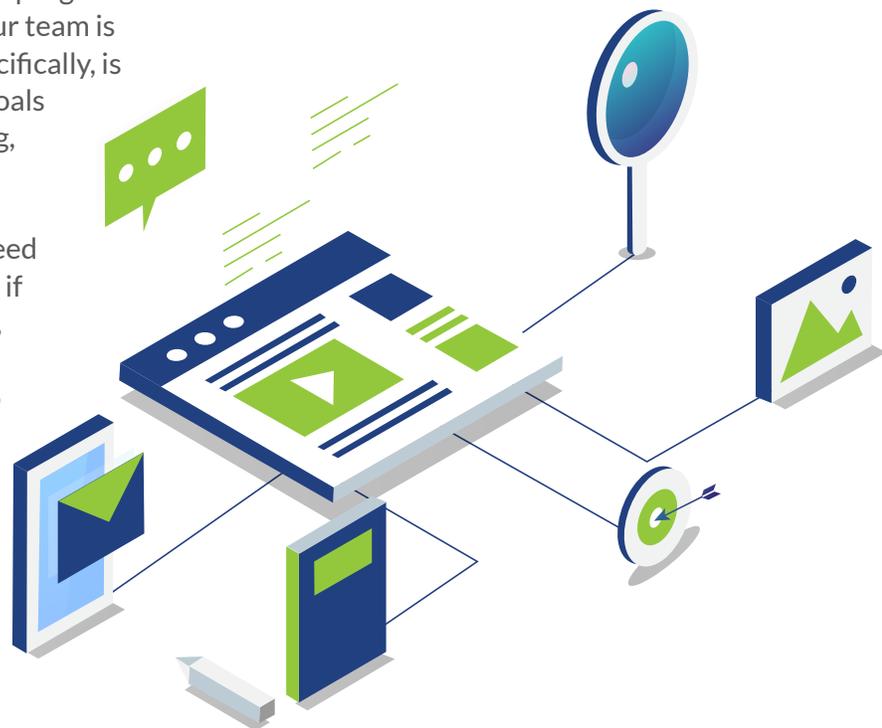
Great content marketing programs can undoubtedly be extremely effective, but oftentimes they aren't easy to execute. A dynamic content marketing plan involves much more than well-written or produced content (although that's, of course, a critical component.) If content truly is king, there are two critical keys to the castle: Content Strategy and Content Creation. Get these right and you'll be able to start executing upon a successful content marketing program, no matter what industry you're in or who your target audience is.

Content Strategy

Before even starting to develop a content marketing plan, there are two critical strategic questions to ask everyone in your organization that will have a hand in content. That means more than just the marketing team, although they'll most likely be the ones to execute the content plan. Great content is a concerted effort between marketing, leadership, key partners, and knowledge holders within your organization so you'll want all of their point-of-view of these two questions:

- 1 What do you WANT content to do as part of your company's success?
- 2 What do you NEED to do to make that happen?

As Earl Nightingale said, "people with goals succeed because they know where they're going." A content program is no different. There are likely many things your team is doing to grow your company so what, specifically, is content's role in that mix? What are the goals both specifically tied to content marketing, but also the overall company goals that content will help you achieve? Finally, and perhaps most importantly, what do you need to execute upon these goals. For instance, if a nimble communication vehicle is a must, but your website is hardcoded and very hard to update, that will be a roadblock to achieving content marketing objectives. Understanding where you're heading and how to get there is your first key for the content castle.



There are three different models you might consider when determining what role content marketing has in your business:



Content Department

Perhaps most often, content marketing is designed as its own department or as a dedicated team within a larger marketing department. It's role is to promote a brand's value to directly support sales, talent recruitment, retention or any number of other overall company goals.



Content Contributor

In this model, content is created by or for different parts of your company creating a connected and ongoing content stream. The topics here are wide-ranging, covering subjects that impact your customers both directly aligned to your offering and those that are tangential. For example, a hospital delivering content about healthy recipes.



Content Service

This is a very successful “rising tide” strategy specifically for companies that rely on third-party resellers to deliver a product or service to customers. In this model you develop content written for end-users, but that is delivered through your resellers or other partners. Like that in the Contributor strategy, this content is wide-ranging and is often unbranded, allowing partners to brand it themselves. It's in the efficient delivery and cohesive messaging that this strategy really shines. Content Services might also educate resellers on their own content strategy to ensure the message is getting out broadly.

While these are fairly general and there are many ways to successfully execute upon each, selecting which strategic direction you'll follow with your content marketing program is an invaluable decision path.

Content Creation

You've likely heard this adage: "people don't want to buy a quarter-inch drill, they want a quarter-inch hole." Theodore Levitt wasn't talking about content marketing specifically when he said this decades ago, but he might as well have been. Perhaps a clearer way to get the point across: "it's not me, it's you." While you want to tell everyone how wonderful your product or service is, content marketing is not about you. Rather it's all about your customers, their pain points, and how they are seeking information to solve their problems. Instead of focusing upon the intrinsic benefits of whatever you're offering, use content to speak to your customer about themselves. Content Marketing Institute uses a very simple phrase to help you get started:

"When I _____ I want to _____ so I can _____," said my customer.

Use this format to understand what content you should create for any audience. Here are a few examples:

You are an imaging center looking to grow your mammogram business. At first pass you might think that content should tout your accreditation, reputation, research, and unsurpassed technology. But when you put your customer's needs at the forefront you might construct this:

"When I NEED MY FIRST MAMMOGRAM I want to UNDERSTAND THE PROCESS so I can HAVE LESS ANXIETY."



So now you know exactly what kind of content you should develop: guides on preparing for a mammogram, a list of what to bring, stories of womens' first experiences.

You are a provider of small-business back-office software solutions. You offer the best user experience, the most seamless device compliance, mobile usability and have unsurpassed technology driving your product. But your customers are thinking about this:

“When I AM STARTING MY BUSINESS I want to GET ADMIN WORK DONE EASILY so I can FOCUS ON MY CRAFT.”



With that change of perspective, you can develop content that provides small business owners tips on how to run a business that go beyond your specific solution which they might not yet even know they need. Providing support as they build a prospect list, get marketing materials developed, and understand cash flow will position you as their partner before they're your customer.

You are a performance outdoor apparel manufacturer. Of course, your content should include all of your product details – its amazingly designed, its breathable, its lightweight, and of course, it has unsurpassed technology. But here's what your customers are looking for:

“When I AM TRAINING I want to VARY MY WORKOUTS so I can BE PREPARED FOR ANYTHING THAT HAPPENS DURING A RACE.”



Understanding these customer needs might result in content focused on weather, terrain, lists of the most interesting places to train, etc.

The rise of the internet has empowered consumers and B2B buyers like never before. They have the ability to get important information about a purchase decision without having to rely on a salesperson or a company's marketing material.

As a marketer, your opportunity lies in becoming the resource the decision maker is actively pursuing. Effective content marketers share information that enriches the lives of their target audience. They equip them with knowledge. This means the content needs to be strategic, well developed, promoted to the right audiences, and measured to understand its effect on your bottom line.

Need help getting started with your content marketing initiatives?

Connect with us to explore some options for developing effective programs –
<https://masondigital.com/contact/>