

Content Marketing Strategy

Goals and concepts, Strategic building blocks, Content creation & channel distribution, Tools of the trade, Advantages and challenges

What is content strategy?

- A content strategy is a plan in which you use content (audio, visual, and/or written) to achieve your business goals. A successful content strategy will attract your target audience at every stage of the funnel and keep them engaged even after a purchase.
- Say your business goals include increasing brand awareness. To achieve this, you might implement a content strategy that focuses on SEO to increase your website's visibility on the search engine results pages (SERPs) and drive traffic to your products or services.
- New business owners might assume a content strategy is a nice-to-have, but not necessary early on. However, producing high-quality content can be invaluable in building trust with new audiences and succeeding in the long haul.
- In essence, a good content strategy is the foundation of your **Attract and Delight stages** in a buyer's journey that follows the inbound marketing framework. Along with attracting prospects to your brand, you can leverage a content strategy for sales enablement and customer satisfaction.

How to Create a Content Strategy Framework

Strategic building Blocks

How to Create a Content Strategy Framework?

1. Define your goal.
2. Conduct persona research.
3. Run a content audit.
4. Choose a content management system.
5. Determine which type of content you want to create.
6. Brainstorm content ideas.
7. Publish and manage your content.



1. Define your goal.

- What's your aim for developing a content marketing plan?
- Why do you want to produce content and create a content marketing plan?
- Know your goals before you begin planning, and you'll have an easier time determining what's best for your strategy.

2. Conduct persona research.

- To develop a successful plan, you need to clearly define your content's target audience — also known as your **buyer persona**.
- This is especially important for those who are starting out or are new to marketing. By knowing your target audience, you can produce more relevant and valuable content that they'll want to read and convert on.
- If you're an experienced marketer, your target may have changed. Do you want to target a new group of people or expand your current target market? Do you want to keep the same target audience? Revisiting your audience parameters by conducting market research each year is crucial to growing your audience.

3. Run a content audit.

- Early on, most brands start with blog posts. If you want to venture out into different formats, you can **run a content audit** to assess your top-performing and lowest-performing content. Then, use that information to inform which direction you take next.
- If you've been in business for a while, you should review your content marketing efforts and the results from it in the last year.
- Figure out what you can do differently in the upcoming year and set new goals. Now is a great time to align your team's goals with the rest of your organization's goals.
- Whatever stage you're in, a content audit will help you determine what resonates best with your audience, identify gaps in your topic clusters, and brainstorm fresh content ideas.

4. Choose a content management system.

- A few vital parts of content management include content creation, content publication, and content analytics.
- You want to invest in a CMS to create, manage, and track your content in an easy and sustainable way.
- Another popular CMS is WordPress.

5. Determine which type of content you want to create.

- There are a variety of options out there for content you can create, from written content like ebooks and blog posts to audio content like podcasts.
- Blog posts
- Ebooks
- Case studies
- Templates
- Infographics
- Videos
- Podcasts
- Social media

6. Brainstorm content ideas.

- [Feedly](#)
- [BuzzSumo](#)
- [BlogAbout](#)
- [CoSchedule Headline Analyzer](#)
- [HubSpot's Website Grader](#)

7. Publish and manage your content.

- With the help of an **editorial calendar**, you'll be on the right track for publishing a well-balanced and diverse content library on your website.
- Then, create a **social media content calendar** to promote and manage your content on other sites.

Types of Content

Types of Content

- Written content
 - Website content
 - Blog content
 - Ebook
- Visual content
 - Images
 - Graphics
 - Infographic
- Audio and video content
 - Podcast
 - Video
 - Live chat

Website Content

- The first content you will be writing when setting up a website is the entire website content, not including a blog.
- This content is divided into several pages or sections, each focused on one particular segment such as the homepage, about us page, pricing, contact page, product description page, etc.
- The main characteristic of this type of content is the fact that it is informative. Through this content, you provide information about who you are and what kind of products or services you offer. You also need practical information such as contact data.

Blog content

- A blog is a place where you publish regular updates, news, and articles related to your niche.
- It is helpful in terms of SEO, and it also helps with increasing traffic and engagement. Content formatting is especially important with blogging because it highlights different parts of the text, it makes it reader friendly, as well as SEO friendly.
- A blog post may or may not have visual elements, such as images or videos, added

Ebook

- To a certain extent, an ebook is similar to a blog post. It has a topic that relates to your visitors, it is supposed to increase engagement and visits, and formatting is also a necessary part of a good ebook. Unlike a blog post, an ebook is usually not published on your blog, but instead, it is a file that can be downloaded from your website or blog. As such, an ebook has a different layout and design. When it comes to word count, again, there are no specific guidelines. Your ebook can be as short or as long as you want and need it to be. Its main purpose is to provide useful information to the readers and inspire interest in your company. Ebooks are also a great material for lead generation

Visual content

According to the statistics, visual content has better performance than any other type of content. Visual content attracts the visitors' attention more quickly, and the information presented in such a way is likely to linger more in people's minds than when presented in a form of a text.

Not only that, but the visual content is also more likely to be shared on social media, thus increasing both engagement and traffic to the website or blog. Having in mind the better performance of the visual content, it is obvious why different types of this content are constantly being used when creating content. In fact, visuals are often used together with the text. This way they serve as attention grabbers, plus they illustrate the main idea which is presented in the article.

Images

- Images are most commonly used pieces of visual content. Content creators can use their own photos, they can purchase or download free images, or they can use screenshots of other websites or applications.
- When using images, you should make sure:
 - You have the permission to use the image
 - Link to the external image source if necessary
 - The image is related to the content on the page
 - The image is appropriate for your audience
 - You add your own logo/company name if the image is yours (Optional)
- When choosing an image or several images for the content, think about the effect the image will create. How will the readers feel when seeing the article for the first time? Will they be intrigued by the image? Will they like it and thus continue reading the text? Understanding your audience in such a way helps you choose the most effective images

Graphics

- Graphics are image designs which usually feature pictorial representation of information, in a form of charts, text, symbols, etc. They sometimes combine all these forms. In content marketing, graphics are usually created to be functional, which means they have sections and data presented deliberately in such a way to highlight certain aspects. When creating a graphic, there is a clear goal in mind, something you want to achieve with it. You could make a poster to announce an event, where you will include the date and place of the event. You might want to present the data from your latest research, in which case a chart or a pie chart would be an element included in the graphic.
- When designing a graphic, think about:
 - The goal you want to achieve
 - The main information you want to include
 - The way you will present the concept
 - Adding elements such as a photo, a text, or illustrations
 - Adding your own logo/company name (Optional)

Infographic

- Infographic, or information graphic, is a visual representation of data. This makes it a bit similar to graphics, but the main distinction is that an infographic represents a collection of data. Its main purpose is to present the data or the information in a clear, easy-to-spot way. This way you basically summarize information that would otherwise be presented in a form of a text but would receive far less engagement than when using graphic elements.
- Infographics visualize information, statistics, maps, time frames, hierarchies, etc. They engage
- the readers with the visual representation and make a bundle of data and numbers seem more
- coherent and easy to compare with one another. Things to have in mind when creating an
- infographic:
 - Choose colors, fonts, and illustrations that are clear and easily visible
 - You could add a title at the top of the infographic
 - If you have data that could be divided into segments, make sure you divide the
 - infographic in such a way
 - If you use the data provided by external resources, add the list of resources used at the bottom of the infographic
 - Add your own logo/company name

Audio and video content

Audio and video content is often considered to be the most difficult type of content to make. Besides the fact that it demands time to think about the concept and the ways to present it, it also requires skill and time for recording and editing.

This usually means that you will also need software for editing sound or video, as well as the know-how to use it. This is the main reason why many companies and businesses are skeptical about using this type of content, and frequently avoid it.

Podcast

- A podcast is a form of an audio broadcast which is published online. Podcasts are much like radio shows, but instead of music, they feature some sort of narrative content.
- The content featured in a podcast can be: • A narrative about a certain topic • Question and answer session • A chat between experts in a certain field or industry leaders • Review of a product • An interview • A course or a lesson
- Regardless the topic, podcasts are a perfect way to distribute information online in a form other than written text. This form is somewhat easier for people to focus on because they can access it on the go, without the need to read and scroll through the text on the mobile devices. Instead, they put on their headphones, hit that play button and they are in.
- Online users subscribe to the podcasts the same way they subscribe to a blog, which means they will get notified when a new podcast is live. Podcast recordings are available all the time, 24 which is perfect for people who want to listen to them when they have enough time, rather than aiming for a specific time.

Video

- Just like images, videos are great for visual presentation of content, great for social media engagement, as well as for video ads. They often feature music or audio narrative along the visual content, making this type of content quite catchy and interesting to watch. Different types of videos, including short clips, vlogs, commercial videos, tutorials, and review videos, provide a range of different options for businesses to discover and use this medium for the purpose of promotion.
- The development of technology, with mobile devices featuring a camera, and popularity of platforms for sharing videos such as YouTube, enabled this expansion of the video content, so more and more businesses are considering using videos.
- When it comes to the production of such content, it requires more skills and more time. Sometimes it also requires more time for planning and preparing everything. This is why, despite the fact that it is quite effective and successful at bringing results, a video is still one of the least used types of content.

Live chat

- This is a form of video content that has been popularized recently, as live streaming became one of the features introduced by many social networks, including YouTube, Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, etc. The main distinction of this type of video is that it usually requires less of preparation than a regular video. It is sort of chatty, improvised on-the-spot.
- It is also quite flexible because you can start a live chat from anywhere at any moment.
- Live chat is also a bit more interactive type of video because comments are updated in real time, meaning the person broadcasting the video can actually see and respond to the comments from the community.

Content Creation and Channel Distribution

Content Creation

- Content creation is a process that starts with an idea and ends with a published piece of content, regardless if that is written, visual, audio or video content. When you create content, you have several options.
- Large businesses usually have a special department, usually within marketing sector, which will be in charge of content creation as a part of content marketing strategy.
- Small-sized companies can hire a person to join the team with the main task being content marketing or one of the existing team members can also take up creating content.
- Occasionally, some business owners decide to hire content creators to work on a specific content creation project rather than being involved in the entire process of content marketing.
- Regardless if you are creating content yourself or you provide instructions for someone to do it for you, it is essential to understand the process of content creation and how it goes from one phase to another.

Content Creation Steps

- Think about the goals.
- Choose a topic.
- Brainstorm the ideas.
- Content presentation.
 - Writing process
 - Visual and audio/video content
- Publishing

Think about the Goals

- Content marketing helps you with improving business. That is a sort of the ultimate goal you will have but it is too vague. With such a goal, you will have a hard time conducting and evaluating the strategy.
- To make this content marketing strategy a success you need to determine more concrete goals.
- Some of those goals can be: • Increase sales • Generate more leads • Get more social media followers • Improve the reputation • Work on branding • Get more visits.
- When you determine concrete goals, try adding some sort of a quantifier, to make them quantifiable and comparable. You can either use specific numbers (generate 1000 more leads) or percentages (increase visits by 15%). Quantifiable goals are great for reporting and analyzing the strategy and comparing the results with the previous campaigns. In all, this will immensely improve your business and the way you organize not only content marketing, but the entire online marketing.
- Besides reporting and analysis, which actually comes in the end, goals are also crucial in the beginning. They help you with defining which kind of content you will create. For example, if you want to increase leads, an ebook would be a great choice.
- This way you give an ebook for free in exchange for an email, while at the same time you grow your mailing list. On the other hand, if you want to boost social media performance, you could benefit from images and graphics.

Choose a topic

- The second step in the process of content creation is choosing a topic. Through planning and thinking about goals you have probably chosen the type of content and now you need the topic. The topic does not refer to the actual title, it is simply a subject you want to explore in that specific piece of content, regardless if that is a video, a blog article or a graphic. In this regard, you want to focus on three main things.

Relevance

- The topic should be relevant to your business and to your website or blog. You want to attract people who are interested in your business. It does not matter if those are new subscribers, social media followers or website visitors. This means that you always have to consider your target group and choose a kind of topic that will be relevant to them.

Uniqueness

- With the amount of content nowadays, it seems impossible to be unique and original. Despite that, you should have in mind that “in 2016, there were 15% of new daily search queries that Google has never encountered before” (Source). Even if you decide to go for a topic that someone has already posted about, you can make it unique by implementing your distinctive style.

Necessity

The topic should be something your audience needs. Helpful content that provides a solution to a problem and answers a question has proven as high-performing content, which performs best. It brings most visits, it helps with positioning your website in the search engines, and it also helps you attract the people interested in that kind of a topic.

Brainstorm the ideas

- When you think about the topic, a lot of ideas come to your mind. The way your mind works, it brings a bunch of terms and phrases related to the topic, but they are all simply cluttered without any structure. This is a starting point. Put down all the ideas that you have. For example, think about chapters of the ebook, or paragraphs of the article. Write the words you associate with these concepts. Write essential phrases or terms you would want to use. When you have everything, it is time to get organized. Try to group similar ideas and concepts. Define sections of content and categorize them. The goal here is to make these ideas structured. This way you get a coherent structure to follow when you start with the content presentation.
- The purpose of the brainstorming is to capture all of your best ideas. You might want to do the process again to get even more ideas. At this point, there is no need to start with content presentation immediately. Instead, the focus is to prepare the concept which will be a basic structure for adding more materials and developing the topic in details.

Content presentation

Writing process

- When you have the idea and concept developed, the next part is the actual process of writing. This process can involve one or several people, and this depends on both your business and the complexity of the project. Essentially, we can differentiate three types of writing roles people can take in the writing process.

Writer

- This is the person who writes the content. In a company, it can be one member of online marketing team or it can be a contracted writer for the project in question. In small-sized companies, sometimes the owners or other team members can write content.

Ghost

- writer Another situation with the writing is hiring someone else to write the content instead of you. The thing with the ghost writing is that the content is not attributed to the actual content writer, as per mutual agreement. Instead, a different person can be presented as a writer (one of the team members, for example) or the content can be posted without any author reference. A ghost writer most commonly is not a member of the team, but a writer hired for a specific project.

Guest writer

- Guest writer is a hired writer who has his or her own blog and has gained a reputation online as a writer. Hiring a guest writer is a great opportunity to expand your reach and work on mutual promotion. Although additional promotion is one of the reasons for hiring a guest writer, this is also done when you want highly targeted content and a topic covered by an expert in this field. In this case, a guest writer is not a member of your team, but he or she is attributed as the author of the content.

Visual and audio/video content

With visual content, things are a bit more complex. The process of preparation and final editing is similar for all types of content, including written content, with different ways of presentations for each. There is a specific group of tasks that are involved in the process and one or several people can be responsible for those tasks.

Writing

Some types of visual content have written content, such as the case with some types of podcasts, for example. This kind of audio presentation should be prepared in advance in a written form first. This task comes first, after the preparation phase but before the creation of visual/audio content.

Designing

The next part is designing. If we talk about images and graphics, this is the main part of content creation. Besides hiring the person who designs the content, it is necessary to use design tools for this purpose. During this process, it is very important to have the main idea in mind, as well as the goals of the content creation and the company reputation. The final product should match your company vision and the way you are planning to present your brand online through this visual content.

Visual and audio/video content

Recording

- With audio and video content, the next phase will be presenting the material and recording it. The development of technology has enabled easy recording audio and video content. It is much less complex to do it than it used to be. Pretty much any smartphone can be used for this purpose, but for the professional content creation, it is recommended to use the adequate equipment. During the recording, it is very important to think about the way you are presenting the content. The engaging and interesting presentation is just as important as the quality of the content being shared this way.

Editing and proofreading

- This is the last stage that precedes the publishing of the content. During this phase, the goal is to check the content material that has been created. This part is far from redundant. On the contrary, editing and proofreading, especially when it comes to written material may take the 46 same, if not even more time than the actual content creation. Through this process of editing and proofreading, you make sure that the material is perfectly shaped according to your vision, without any errors in accuracy, grammar, spelling, video editing, etc.

Publishing

- In the end, you get to publish the final product. Once you are perfectly happy with the way it turned out, you are ready to present the content to the internet users. When it comes to publishing, the platform you are going to use depends on the type of content. If it is a blog article, you will probably publish it on your own blog or perhaps on another blog where you are presented as a guest author. If the video is the content in question, you also have several options. You could host it on your server, or you could use a more popular option and publish the video on a video hosting platform such as YouTube.
- Essentially, it is always best to publish on your own platform, because this way you have access to the servers and you can make sure that the content is really there, without the risk of being removed. However, the main benefit of hosting your video on YouTube, for example, is the fact that you are likely to reach more people this way due to a social character of this platform.

Content Distribution

What is Content Distribution?

- Content distribution represents the delivery of content to the online users. It includes all types of content and all channels that are available for online content sharing. When you distribute content online, that content can be streamed, in which case it is available upon user's request, or it can be downloaded, when a user stores the content permanently.
- Having published the content, it is natural to expect visitors and feedback, but rather than keep waiting for those to come on their own, content distribution helps with sharing content with the internet users. This way you speed up the reach and the attention the content gains, and you boost traffic.

Channels for content distribution

Distribution of content is done through so-called channels for content distribution. Basically, these are the media used to share the content and you have several of them you could use when distributing content.

Email

- Email is the most important distribution channel you should use, because it delivers the highest ROI. Not only is the email campaign the best way to reach those genuinely interested in your business (which is why they have subscribed in the first place), but email marketing is a type of marketing that has consistently been the most profitable strategy.
- The success of distributing content this way is based on the quality of your mailing list, as well as on your skillfulness of communicating through emails. Firstly, a mailing list should include only the people who are really interested in receiving messages about your business. This ensures the highest open and click-through rates. It also means that the bounce rate and unsubscribe rate will be low. The second component of success is the way you communicate with your subscribers. You have to use a personalized approach, you have to optimize each email, to adjust the message to your target group and to constantly monitor statistics and 73 feedback. All of this helps you with writing emails that perform better and running campaigns that give results.
- When it comes to using email as a distribution channel, make sure you use it for this purpose only when you have something really valuable to share with your subscribers. Even though it might seem tempting to use it to boost your traffic, email should be only for really great content, which is preferably tailored to the subscriber's preferences. What this means is that even if you publish two or three articles a day on your blog, you do not want to send an email about each of them to your subscribers. Instead, you could send an email once or twice a week with the latest scoop.

Social networks

- On the other hand, we have social networks, where the content distribution is done more frequently. This means that once you publish new content, you are most likely to share it on social media. In fact, you will probably end up sharing more than once.
- Social networks have become a very dominant part of people's lives, which is why most of the online users are active on at least one social network. Actually, social media is one of the trends you need to have in mind when developing your business strategy. In terms of business, this means that you can take advantage of this trend and use social media to interact with the users.
- The most popular social networks, at this moment, include: • Facebook • YouTube • LinkedIn • Twitter • Instagram • Pinterest.
- The list keeps changing with new social networks being introduced and gaining popularity, but the first four have been at the top of the list for a couple of years now.
- To start using social media as a channel for distribution, you will first need to create a profile or a page on the network. You should then optimize the profile with images, a description, links to your website or other social profiles, etc. This way you present your business and provide information on how to contact you, information about your product, services, current 74 promotions, etc. You will then work on building the group of followers and establishing your influence on that particular network by implementing a social media marketing strategy.

Social bookmarking websites

- Social bookmarking websites are online platforms that enable adding and sharing web pages as a form of a bookmark. Additional options usually include tagging and organizing bookmarks in categories. The ability to interact with other users is what gives that social character to bookmarking websites. People use these platforms to discover content that matches their interests, which is how this can help with distributing content. Amplifying your content through social bookmarking websites has great potential, especially in terms of traffic gained through these platforms.
- • Reddit - The content shared here is mostly time-sensitive and updated in real time. Reddit stories are voted by the community. • Delicious - The service owned by Yahoo, has lots of users who store links in their personal or public collections with tags to categorize everything. • Digg - This is a news aggregator for sharing content. • Pearltrees - This content curation platform is organized like a mind map. • StumbleUpon - With its large user base, StumbleUpon offers a great potential for gaining traffic. The platform enables bookmarking, searching and voting for the content you find valuable. ScoopIt - Content curation service where you create topics and share scoops related to these topics.
- These are some of the most popular social bookmarking websites, but as you browse online, you will find many more of those.

Online communities and forums

- Online communities and forums are also helpful with content distribution. However, with these communities, you should not be focused on the direct promotion of your content, but instead, you should try to become a member, the one who helps with useful tips, the one who solves problems, the one who answers the question. This is what differentiates communities from social media and social bookmarking websites.
- The best way to take advantage of these websites is to join a certain community, start interacting with other members, participate in the discussions, etc. Gradually, over time you will get an opportunity to promote your own content and to share it with other members. Communities are also a great place to get feedback and new ideas that can show you how to improve your business.
- Popular communities for content distribution: • Quora • Inbound • Triberr • GrowthHackers

Influencers

- Distributing content can get tough, especially if you are only starting out and your audience is currently rather limited. You are not able to reach enough people, and your content might be performing poorly. To counter this, there is an option to work with influencers.
- Influencers are renowned individuals in a particular sector, who enjoy trust and respect from a large community. Influencers already have a significant following, and they have the power to influence people by sharing their opinion, impressions, feedback, etc. Working with influencers is an amazing technique for reaching their audience and distributing content this way.

Paid advertising

- Finally, content can be distributed through paid channels as well. The main advantage of this approach is that it is fast and easy to manage. Once the content is created, all that is left to do is to choose the method of advertising, set up the campaign, and monitor the results. This approach is particularly helpful for blogs and websites that are only beginning to build their presence online, and thus they are unable to use other methods for content distribution, such as an email campaign because they still do not have enough leads they would contact. Paid advertising can also be helpful for time-sensitive content when you need to boost its performance in a particular period, or otherwise, the content will become outdated and irrelevant.
- The main drawback of the approach is the costs involved. The costs depend on the campaign, and since most paid advertising programs offer auction-type of advertising, you do not have a way to exactly predict the costs of such campaign. What you can do to plan this action is to set up a budget and use it as a limit. When setting up the campaign, make sure you indicate your limit, regardless if that is a daily, weekly or even monthly limit. This will help you stay within the budget you have available for paid content distribution.

Methods that can be used for paid advertising

Search engine ads

- Search engine marketing is a great method to reach new users and gain new leads. Google AdWords and Bing Ads are two most frequently used advertising programs as two largest search engines. You have the option to create a campaign through the campaign manager and optimize it by choosing the target audience, keywords, location targeting, etc. You could also schedule the campaign to appear on specific days or period of the day. When it comes to Google AdWords, the option to set up and manage a YouTube campaign is also a part of the program, because this video sharing social network is owned by Google.

Social network advertising

- Social networks also offer opportunities for advertising with sponsored posts and stories that are shown to the social network users while they are browsing the content. The ads are usually set up through a specific ad manager available by the network. Like with search engine ads, ads on social networks also offer plenty of optimization and targeting features to fully customize the campaign and maximize its performance.

Social bookmarking website advertising

- Even though it is not an option as popular as the previous two, social bookmarking websites also provide advertising. Sometimes they offer this option as sponsored stories, but some social bookmarking websites also offer paid accounts with advanced features to promote and distribute content.