

MARKETING
STRATEGIES &
SOLUTIONS

UNLOCK THE POWER OF B2B CONTENT MARKETING

PART II



PART II

HOW TO CREATE A CONTENT MARKETING PLAN

Step 1: Set a goal

Like any project, content marketing should begin with a goal. 35% of content marketers have a documented content marketing strategy, according to a survey by the Content Marketing Institute. The top three goals* for content marketing are:

1. Brand awareness – According to the survey, 84% of B2B marketers say that ‘brand awareness’ is their most important goal for content marketing.
2. Lead generation
3. Engagement



Once you’ve established your goal, consider how you can track it. Then create SMART goals using these metrics, for example, to increase web traffic by 20% within one year.

1. Brand awareness metrics

- Search terms report
- Website visits
- Inquiries from website

2. Lead generation metrics

- Contact form completed
- Calls from website or ads

3. Engagement metrics

- Shares, re-tweets
- Social media posts
- Google alerts

*Source: 2015 Benchmarks, Budgets and Trends – North America B2B Content Marketing survey by the Content Marketing Institute.

Step 2: Identify your target markets

Now it's time to identify your ideal customer or customers. Where do they live? What are their roles? How old are they? Are they male or female?

Maybe you haven't looked at your potential buyers like this before, but demographics such as age, gender and cultural bias provide a unique perspective. Not everyone thinks like you or consumes information the way you do. That's important to keep in mind for a content marketing program. For example, if you're a Baby Boomer, you may think that it's 'common sense' to contact a trusted sales person to learn how a product would work in a particular industry. For a millennial, it would be instinctual to look for the same information on a social network. Increasingly, B2B buyers are relying on information from social media to make their purchasing decisions, according to the 2015 B2B Buyer's Survey Report by Demand Gen.

Much has been written about the characteristics of each demographic. Here's a brief overview based on our research and understanding.



Baby Boomers

- Born between 1946 and 1964
- Represent 20 percent of the population
- Trust traditional media
- Take more time to make decisions



Gen X

- Born 1960 and 1980
- "Baby Busters" "Lost Generation"
- Comfortable with both traditional and digital media
- Under-targeted through marketing as they represent fewer people



Millennial

- Born early 1980s to mid 1990s
- "The me generation"
- Highly educated
- Immersed in technology
- Define themselves by social media use
- Eager to promote brands they like



Personas

Personas are one way for you and anyone involved in content marketing in your organization to quickly understand the differences between audience segments. Personas are profiles of characters that represent a specific demographic of your potential customers. You can create them based on customer surveys and questions as well as information from the sales team. The demographics are important, but it's particularly useful to understand how and why people make decisions.

Here are some examples of personas. All three of these characters may be involved in the purchasing decision on a large piece of equipment. Obviously the roles may differ from company to company. You may want to add a fleet manager or an operations manager, for example.



CEO

Age: 63 (Baby Boomer)

Sex: Male

Working style: top-down management, respectful of authority

Media use:

- Likes talking to people he knows about new products
- Values expert opinion from manufacturers
- Looks through hard copies of industry magazines

Key factors in decision-making:

1. Trust in the company he's buying from
2. Are his competitors using the product or service?



Purchasing Manager

Age: 44 (Generation X)

Sex: Female (Research in the financial industry demonstrates that women may be more risk averse or cautious)

Working style: methodical and self-reliant

Media use:

- Comfortable with traditional and digital media
- Researches new products via corporate websites and industry magazine websites
- Uses Facebook to keep in touch with her family
- Has a profile on LinkedIn but is not an active user

Key factors in decision-making:

1. Demonstrated long-term value
2. Buying price vs. service life and maintenance costs



Senior Mechanic

Age: 27 (Millennial)

Sex: Male

Working style: quickly adapts to change

Media use:

- Researches products through LinkedIn and industry blogs
 - Googles questions about specific applications
 - Looks on YouTube for examples of equipment working in various industries
- Key factor in decision-making: positive comments on social media

Step 3: Determine content requirements

Content requirements and preferred media for each audience segment:

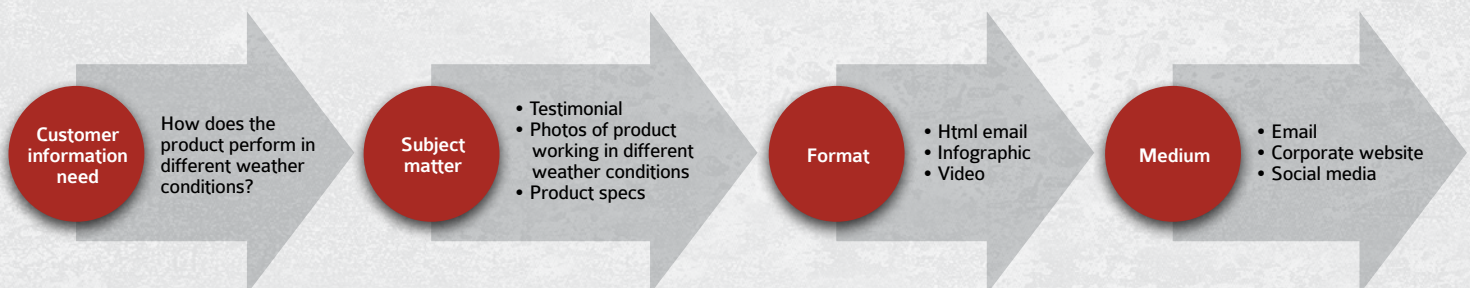
Persona	Content requirements (What do they need to know?)	Preferred media
CEO	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Competitive analysis• Expert endorsements• Corporate governance, strength and stability messages	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trade show or other in-person events• Industry magazines
Purchasing Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• General understanding of whether or not the product is a good fit• Sample service record of a similar product• Purchase price	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Website content• Industry magazines
Senior Mechanic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Details of product features• How the product works in his industry• Peer endorsements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Spec sheets• YouTube videos of the product working in his industry• Social media

Step 4: Generate content ideas

When it comes to content marketing, subject matter is often confused with format and media. It's easy to say, "Let's do an infographic!" Sure, infographics are fun and cool and increase engagement. Maybe you should create an infographic, but that's not where you should start.

[HINT – Start with what customers want.]

Say that your customers are wondering how your products will perform in different weather conditions. You can provide the information (subject matter) in different ways. You could ask customers for testimonials about how the product operated in different weather conditions. You could take pictures of the product operating in different weather conditions. You could pull out the product spec sheets to demonstrate that the product can work in different weather conditions, or post a positive reply to a question on social media (i.e. Does your product work in this weather?). You get the idea.





Here are some places you'll find subject matter to cover:

- Customer FAQs
- Customer service experiences (positive and negative)
- Industry trends
- Frequently Googled questions
- Trouble-shooting tips
- Price lists
- Product reviews & comparison
- Curated content from industry media
- Corporate news (including management changes, mergers, acquisitions, etc.)
- Dealer news
- Location-specific news
- Industry news
- New products
- New uses for existing products
- News related to holidays or special events

Even though you primarily sell a product, you are also selling a service. People want to rely on your company if they have questions or concerns about your product. Good customer service is an invaluable selling feature. If you handle customer service via social media, potential buyers can see what they will get. It doesn't have to be 100% positive. Even more impressive to potential buyers is how your company handles its mistakes. That's what will set you apart. If you have an example of going above and beyond on customer service or correcting a mistake in product manufacturing, delivery or service, create content around it.



More ways to find content ideas

If you are working alone on the content marketing strategy for your company or in a distinct unit, try to evangelize. People with different knowledge and perspectives in your company can generate new ideas for content and possibly help you create it

You may already have content that you could use. Look at the content that is getting a lot of clicks and views on your website and social media and use this to generate new ideas

Step 5: Think about format

Consider what format and medium (or media) you want to use to deliver the message.

The entertainment value of content should be inversely proportional to the interest of a given audience. For example, you're reading a white paper, which has limited entertainment value. It has lots of words. It was designed for people who have a high interest in the subject of content marketing. If we were creating a piece of content for an audience who had only a passing interest in content marketing, the form of the content would be shorter and flashier such as an image-based social media post or a short video.



Here are some format options:

- Photos
- Videos
- Product illustrations
- Audio recording
- CAD drawings
- News briefs
- eNewsletter articles
- News releases
- Infographic
- Printed material
- PPT presentation

Step 6: Ensure the medium suits the message

Finally, select a medium or media through which your content will reach your audience. Unfortunately, generating content is not a linear, 1-2-3 thought process. Certain formats are better for certain media. An audio recording, for example, would be ideal as a podcast, but product illustrations might not work as social media images. And some formats are almost synonymous with their medium such as blogs and social media posts. You'll hear people say, "I'm going to tweet this news." No one has ever said this: "I'm going to write a 140-character news brief and then share it on the Twitter social media platform."

Ideally, you will share your content through a variety of media. For example, if you create a PowerPoint presentation, you could share it on Slideshare and LinkedIn and use it in a webinar, but you can also have a designer create shareable images from key slides and use those in social media posts.

How Marketing Strategies & Solutions can help

The B2B buying process in industrial manufacturing is evolving. It's now longer and more complex than ever before. Likely there are several people involved in every decision, all with different decision-making styles and information needs. Plus, social media is playing an increasingly important role in the sales cycle as buyers turn to their peers for solutions and recommendations.

Content marketing provides a means to educate and support each stakeholder through every step in the buying cycle through a variety of media. But developing and distributing quality content takes time and skill. Before you commit to a content marketing program, assess what you have to work with. Do you have full-time marketing staff? Can you leverage the expertise of other departments? Is there a budget available to hire freelance writers and designers or an agency?

Give us a call and we can begin the process to start your content marketing program or email us at admin@marketingstrategiesandsolutions.com.



About Marketing Strategies & Solutions

We have industry-specific expertise in construction, mining, landscaping and heavy equipment manufacturing. We have experienced writers, designers and content strategists who can help you create and execute a strategic content marketing plan that will build awareness and engagement with potential customers.

Marketing Strategies & Solutions is a full-service marketing firm providing clients in heavy equipment manufacturing and construction industries with integrated communications services.

Our President, Robert Adeland first opened the doors of Marketing Strategies & Solutions in 1997 in London, Ontario as a one-person operation. From the outset, his firm set itself apart from other marketing agencies with the ability to bring focused creative thinking to clients' communication problems. Today, we are a tight-knit group of experienced professionals working closely to create effective solutions for our clients.

Contact us to get started today!

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