

[the A B C S] of Content Marketing

Building a company is an exciting venture, but creating and sustaining demand for what you are selling can be challenging. Content marketing can help and should be a key component of your promotional strategy.

Content marketing alters the way you sell. It shifts your focus from hyping your products to adding value to prospects' decision making. The goal of content marketing is a "lightbulb moment" when a buyer understands how your product can help them, compelling them to reach out to you. They may do this through your website, your social media footprint or your sales team.

Consider this: 57% of B2B purchase decisions and 72% of B2C ones are made before a buyer contacts a vendor, according to McKinsey & Company. If you fail to embrace the content marketing paradigm you are creating a gap that your competitors will be happy to fill.

Sell Less; Inform More

Content marketing is about creating relevant, informative and unbiased content that attracts buyers and converts them to loyal customers. It is rapidly gaining in popularity as buyers become more wary of marketing hyperbole and increasingly sophisticated at debunking it.

Although typically associated with B2C selling, content marketing is ready to have an impact in B2B environments. See the following insert for an example of a technology company that is using content marketing effectively:

Wistia Learning Center Videos

Wistia, a video hosting service for enterprises, has created a series of educational videos that teach viewers how to be better video marketers (<http://wistia.com/library>). Each short lesson is a microcosm of some concept within video marketing, including bulleted lists for easier retention of the subject matter.

By producing videos like these, Wistia has shifted from pitching its products to delivering content that makes its prospects more informed before they buy.

And like all good content marketing, these videos are helping Wistia to increase its addressable market – someone not necessarily thinking about creating corporate videos may be excited by this content and embark on a journey that ends up with her signing up for a subscription.



A screen grab from a Wistia content marketing video.

Content marketing can consist of webinars, ebooks, infographics, blogs, webinars, case studies, white papers, articles and photos. In every instance, you can focus on delivering information that makes your prospects more informed before they buy, instead of pitching your products or services.

Align Content to Audience Needs

Your long-term goal should be to create a sustainable content marketing engine that helps build your business. In order to accomplish this, consider mapping content to the different stages in the buying process of your prospects.

You could, for example, target the awareness stage of the buying process by creating a brief video that describes the most popular applications of your product. You could, for instance, target the comparison stage of the funnel by commissioning a third-party research agency to write about you and the competitors in your market space.

By aligning content to the relevant buying stage, you increase the probability that it will resonate with prospects. You will discover gaps that need to be filled, and make the best use of existing content.

Moreover, the content you create should align with the interests of your audience. Adjust your content to appeal to the different business roles of the people in the companies you want to attract—large companies may have a dozen or more people involved in approving the purchase. Ask yourself these questions:

“Your website is your mousetrap; your content is the cheese.”

–Andrew Davis



- Who are our ideal prospects and customers?
- How do they go about making a buying decision?
- What are their questions? Pain points? Objections?
- What gaps in information are they lacking that my content can fill?

Avoid the mistake, for example, of talking “speeds and feeds” to someone in finance, or profit and loss to someone in engineering. Develop customer personas and identify their business issues, and create relevant content that informs them.

Become a Catalyst

Your content needs to facilitate conversations among influencers, stakeholders, and decision makers, giving them the confidence to take the next step. If it doesn't, your content marketing strategy will fail. (Or at the very least under-achieve its goal.)

The following three steps will help you uncover the optimum content formula:

- Create content your customers want. Many organizations make the mistake of investing heavily in pushing marketing messages that are important to the company, rather than providing information that's important to the customer. When planning content, always take a customer-centric approach to best ensure you create something of value for your readers.
- Develop an array of content to deploy across multiple channels and devices. Take the time to understand which channels and formats your customers prefer, and then diversify how and where you publish your content to extend your reach. Leverage formats such as html-based articles, blogs, social media sites, webinars and videos, along with PDF versions.
- Don't just create content, curate it. There's enormous value in not only creating original content, but in curating “best of” content from across the internet. By showcasing and sharing relevant content from other thought leaders—from analyst reports, blogs, thought leaders and so on—you demonstrate independence and credibility, which can increase customer affinity and loyalty.



“If you deliver consistent, ongoing, valuable information to your prospects, they ultimately reward you with their business and loyalty.”

–Vertical Response

Build a Bigger Market

Let's be clear: advertising is the best way to build awareness of your company. Even though it is expensive, and the return on investment is often difficult to measure, advertising helps businesses, especially nascent ones, gain recognition. Content marketing, on the other hand, is primarily about increasing the size of your addressable market. Content marketing (which can be used synergistically with advertising) makes people realize that they need your product (see the Wistia example described above) or inspires them to think about uses of your product that you never imagined.

Even better, the best content marketing can create moments of inspiration that trigger an irresistible urge to act on the part of the buyer. Emotion leads to action: the epiphany that comes from realizing how your product is beneficial, can compel your prospect to acquire it.

About Alphabet

Alphabet is a marketing collaborative dedicated to helping small businesses succeed. Our extensible team consists of experts from every marketing discipline including branding, content creation, demand generation, public relations and video production. Learn more at www.alphabetworks.com.



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