

Your guide to getting started with content marketing - for site traffic, leads, and sales.

CONTENT MARKETING BASICS

BY SEVEN OAKS CONSULTING

Content Marketing Basics

Your guide to the basics of content marketing.

Thank you for downloading our e-book! If you want to know how content marketing can help your business, contact us at [Seven Oaks Consulting](#). We offer free consultations to businesses of all shapes and sizes to determine where content marketing fits into their niche and how to leverage it to reach their audience and improve conversions.

Many skilled and experienced marketers still struggle to understand content marketing. They think it's as simple as creating content, designing graphics, and publishing the content on social media channels.

In reality, it's not that straightforward. A lot of work goes into creating content that's engaging, relevant, and useful to the customers.

In this guide, we will give you a bird's eye view of [content marketing](#)—what it is, what it is not, how to create a successful content marketing strategy, and some insider tips to help you level up your content marketing game. Ready?



What Is Content Marketing?

According to the [Content Marketing Institute](#):

“Content marketing is a marketing and business strategy focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience and ultimately drive profitable customer action.”

Content marketing is the process of creating valuable, high-quality content that your target audience is interested in. This can be blog posts, videos, social media content, infographics, podcasts, etc.

The goal is to increase brand awareness, attract visitors or users, generate sales, and drive repeat purchases.

What Isn't Content Marketing?

Most marketers use content writing, content strategy, and content marketing interchangeably, but in practice, they're very different. Is there an overlap? Of course. But are they the same? No.

Content writing is the process of writing content that supports your marketing objectives, while [content strategy](#) focuses on planning, creating, delivering, and governance of content. It's the management of content as a strategic asset across the organization.

Content marketing, on the other hand, delves into ways to engage the audience and create content that changes or enhances a behavior. In a nutshell, it's a marketing strategy.

Benefits

of content marketing



Boosts search engine optimization (SEO)

Top search engine positions result in 70% more click-throughs to websites.

Convert leads to sales

Content marketing has 6x the power of conventional marketing for converting people into leads and then converting those leads into customers.



Shortens sales cycle

When you establish yourself or your business as an industry thought leader, customers seek you out. It shortens the sales cycle considerably.

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Here are a few elements that separate content marketing from others:

- Audience-first approach: Creating useful, engaging, and relevant content for the users.
- Building authority: Positioning yourself as an expert by creating content on industry-related topics.
- Publishing consistently: Having a regular publishing schedule rather than posting occasionally.
- Measuring performance: Determining the content formats that are working and not working with the audience.

Three Examples of Content Marketing That We Love

SAP

SAP is the world's leading software for managing business processes and developing solutions for data processing and information flow across organizations.

The industry leader earned recognition by putting [B2B content marketing](#) front and center. They recognized the challenges that B2B companies face and how they can adapt to the changing trends and opportunities.

Their formula was simple: Focus on creating evergreen content that solves customers' problems. Once the content is published, continually optimize it for SEO to maintain timeliness and search relevance.

Turtl

Turtl, a software company, started a customer-only monthly newsletter that features tips and tricks, checklists, interviews with experts, and exciting discussions on relevant

topics. It has a Hall of Fame section highlighting ideas and stories Turtl users share on Twitter using the hashtag #WFT (i.e., working from Turtl).

This is an excellent example of B2B marketing. The company reinforces trust with the existing customer base through an exclusive newsletter. Sharing customer testimonials, how-to guides, videos, and tips and tricks help customers discover new ways of using the technology and nudge them to buy add-on features or check out a new software the company is launching.

Volvo Construction Equipment

Volvo CE is among the world's leading construction equipment manufacturers. They have several social-good programs in place to promote sustainability.

To further the initiative, they created The Building Tomorrow Project, which amplified their existing efforts, increased awareness of sustainability-related issues, and encouraged people to act. The approach was centered around emotional, humanized storytelling that people could relate to.

They unified their efforts globally through a content hub and social media - regionally in North America through local dealers, networks, and print media, and internally through Volvo's intranet. The emotional quotient and resonance in the content exceeded all previous social media estimates, and the campaign reached 17% more women than earlier campaigns of any type.



**Keyword
Research**



**Content
Research &
Planning**



**Content
Writing**



**Graphic
Design**



Building A Content Marketing Strategy

Consider this:

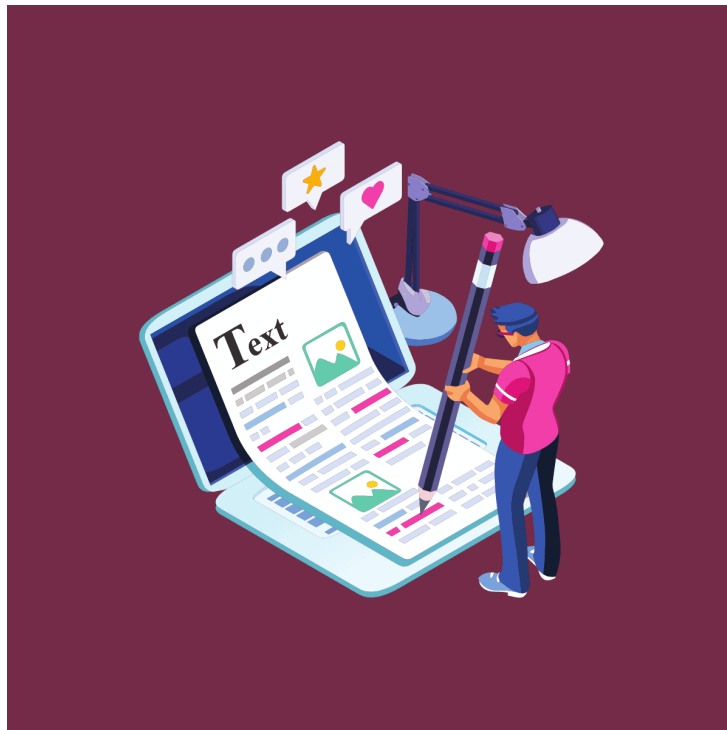
Your company is in the launch phase and sitting on a lot of content. Product photos, videos, how-to guides, blogs, etc. How do you plan to get this in front of your audience? Do you have specific goals tied to the content? Is it to increase leads? Maybe attract more visitors and build brand awareness? Or to improve your bottom line?

If you don't have answers to these, you need a content marketing strategy.

According to the recent Content Marketing Institute [report](#), 60% of the most successful B2B marketers have a documented content marketing strategy in place. This means companies with a strategic content marketing strategy have higher chances of success than those who haven't invested.

So how should you go about building a content marketing strategy? There are nine steps that will get you started.

1. Set goals and KPIs
2. Decide your target audience
3. Review your existing content
4. Figure out the best content channels
5. Decide the types of content to post
6. Plan your resources
7. Build an editorial calendar
8. Publish, market, and distribute content
9. Measure & track your content performance



Step 1: Set goals and KPIs

Do a small exercise. Take a pen and paper and write down the goals you want to achieve from your [content marketing strategy](#). It can be to improve your bottom line, create a social media presence, generate leads, or build loyalty with existing customers.

Once you have the goals down, you need to establish the key performance indicators (KPIs). Key performance indicators are quantifiable data points you can use to measure your performance against a goal.

Depending on your business goals, you can choose to track some KPIs and ignore others. Below is a list of the relevant KPIs you can track. Bear in mind that this is not an exhaustive list.

CONTENT MARKETING KPIs




Measure the success of your content marketing activities



BLOG POSTS

- Page views
- Unique visitors
- Time on page
- Bounce rate
- Exit rate




EMAIL

- Open rate
- Conversion rate
- Opt-out rate
- Click through rate
- Delivery rate



SOCIAL MEDIA

- Followers/fans
- Post reach
- Interactions
- Amplification/share rate



VIDEOS

- Views
- Subscribers
- Comments
- Traffic sources
- Shares

Step 2: Determine your target audience

You're telling a story but who are you telling the story to? You need a target audience who wants to listen to what you have to say. Here are three ways to determine your target audience:

- Collect demographic data

The first step to creating a content marketing strategy is collecting the demographic data of your visitors, social media followers, and email subscribers.

Variables such as age, gender, job title, location, and background details can help you understand the target audience interested in your product or service.

Look into web, social media, and email analytics to collect demographic data. Once you have the required insights, move to the next step of creating buyer personas.

- Get customer feedback

If you already have customers, collect feedback from them to know more about your audience. Ask them how they feel about your content, whether it solves and addresses the challenges they face, and what else they would like to see the brand do.

This can help to understand the audience's priorities, flesh out buyer personas, and create relevant content that speaks to them.

- Creating buyer personas

Audience personas are the fictitious, generalized representation of the ideal audience interested in your product or service.

To arrive at your buyer persona, do this:

- List the demographic and psychographic traits of your ideal customer
- Visualize this person. Consider using a stock photo to understand how your ideal customer looks.
- Analyze the photo and write a paragraph on your ideal customer. Describe their feelings and the environment the persona lives in.
- Now give them a name and describe their day-to-day activities.
- Figure out the channels of communication they use the most. Is it Facebook, Twitter, or Snapchat?
- If they're not online, do they attend in-person events, conferences, and webinars?

Narrowing down the ideal persona can help you focus on qualified prospects, guide product development as per their needs, and align the organizational work accordingly.

Step 3: Review your existing content

If you've been in operation for a while, you may be creating content already. This can include blog posts, social media content, videos, infographics, e-books, case studies, etc.

The next step is to audit your existing content to understand if it's helping you to meet your goals.

Here are a few things to consider:

- Topics: What are you writing about?
- Types: What type of content are you posting?
- Channels: What channels are you posting on?
- Performance: How is the performance of the content on these channels?

Once you've mapped out the basics, ask these questions:

- Have I targeted the right keywords?
- At what position does my content rank on Google?
- Are there enough inbound links in my content piece?
- How often has it been liked, shared, or commented on?

This exercise will give you a clear idea of the content that works with your audience and what doesn't work. Based on this knowledge, create a topic cluster your readers are interested in, list the keywords to target, and double down on content formats that work the best for you.

Step 4: Identify the best content channels

After you conduct the preliminary analysis of existing content, you will have an idea of where your audience likes to hang out.

To be certain, you can investigate your web analytics and see where the referral sources are coming from. Log in to Google Analytics. Go to Acquisition > Social > Overview. This will tell you the channels where your content is shared the most.

Once you have the data, you can focus on these channels, build a growth strategy, and create content that is most useful to the audience.

One Idea

Multiple content types to reach your target market



Step 5: Decide the types of content to post

Use the information from audience research and content audit to decide the type of content you want to create. This can include podcasts, videos, blogs, webinars, case studies, email content, whitepapers, and guides.

For example, if you are a B2B SaaS company, content formats such as long-form blogs, case studies, guides, and eBooks are more likely to help with your business goals.

Creating content also depends on where your customers are at the marketing funnel stage. The picture below demonstrates the types of content you can create as a B2B company across different marketing stages:

Step 6: Plan your resources

Once you have an idea about your target audience, the type of content to create, and where you will share it, the next step is to identify and allocate the resources you will need to create content. Here are some things to consider:

1. Are you going to outsource or create content internally?

Depending on the size of the company and your business goals, you can take the content operations in-house, outsource to an agency, or opt for both.

Hiring in-house resources limits you to the person's skills, time, and expertise. Outsourcing or hiring a consultant helps to draw from a pool of specialists who have set processes and expertise for a quicker turnaround.

Some companies need trained personnel on projects because of specific branding guidelines and compliances. In such a case, having an in-house team works out better. Managers can ensure that writers adhere to the brand style and guidelines and maintain the quality of work.

A good mix of an in-house team and outsourcing can improve your efficiency and help you scale faster.

2. What tools or resources do you need to create content?

The next step is to understand what resources you need to create content. This can include:

- Keyword research tools

If you're creating content in-house, you need to know what your audience is searching for. Tools such as Ahrefs and SEMRush can help to identify long-tail keywords, i.e., the exact query users search on Google and the competitors ranking for those keywords. Based on the data, you can decide on the content topics and the relevant keywords to target to outrank the competition.

- Content management tool

Whether outsourcing or creating content in-house, a content management tool can streamline the workflow. From assigning briefs to creating content, editing, and publishing, a content management tool can automate content efforts and keep everyone on the same page.

Step 7: Build an editorial calendar

Once you know the content topics you want to write on, start building a content calendar.

A content or editorial calendar is a tool or document that keeps track of the publishing schedule, and who is responsible for getting what done. If you only publish a few times a month, you can use a simple spreadsheet with columns such as topics, due dates, content links, and deadlines.

But if you produce content often, investigate a more comprehensive tool such as Asana or Notion. They can streamline content operations, manage projects and tasks, and keep your teams organized and on track.

An editorial calendar can make your life easier and boost everyone's efficiency on the team, so it's worth taking the time to choose a tool or software that caters to the needs of your team.

Step 8: Publish, market, and distribute content

Once you have the calendar ready, you can start creating content and publishing it on your chosen channels. It can be on Q&A forums, communities such as Slack and Reddit, or social media networks. While doing so, you can either choose to grow your brand organically or pay to promote the content on these sites.

Remember to repurpose content in different formats for effective distribution. A case study can be converted into a long-form blog or several short-form posts. A blog post can be further condensed into a social media post.

Ensure your chosen distribution channels align with your audience's preferences and behaviors. Also, optimize your owned distribution channels — newsletters, blogs, and social media feed. It's the quickest and most inexpensive way to build a loyal, engaged community and drive organic traffic.

Step 9: Measure and track your performance

The difference between content and content marketing is data measurement. Once you have published the content on different channels, measure the performance using the chosen metrics. What's the engagement rate? What about the daily or monthly traffic? How many MQLs have you acquired this month?

Revisit the KPIs you initially set and compare the results. What did you achieve? What did you miss? Based on the data, tweak your existing content strategy, double down on what worked, and define the next steps.

Consider establishing a routine as outlined below:

- Daily: A quick analysis of how the posts are performing. Which post is picking up? Which post hasn't seen engagement? How many people are sharing your posts?
- Monthly: Monitor the content performance against the monthly KPIs. Look into top trends and other factors that might have emerged during the period.
- As and when necessary: Evaluate the performance of a new content initiative or a format you've tried recently. Do spot-checks as and when necessary.

Take The First Step

Reevaluating your existing content marketing strategy can be daunting. But if your content marketing strategy is not yielding results, it's a problem you can't afford to ignore.

Seven Oaks Consulting – B2B Content Marketing Services

[Seven Oaks Consulting](#) is here to help. We help you build a strategic content marketing roadmap aligned with your content goals and initiatives.

To book a free consultation, call or reach out to Jeanne at (434) 574-6253 or jeanne@sevenoaksconsulting.com. We would love to hear from you!



Seven Oaks Consulting is a business-to-business (B2B) content marketing agency providing [technology content marketing](#) and [freelance writing services](#) to the tech and manufacturing industries and the companies they work with. We specialize in written content: blog posts, articles, marketing materials, e-books, case studies, use cases, whitepapers and more to inspire, educate, and motivate customers to take action.

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