

# 101

## Content Marketing

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## 1. The Lowdown

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Today's Internet-savvy buyers are hungry for content—relevant content that offers solutions to their problems and helps them lead successful, productive lives and acquire enjoyable jobs.

However, they are also inundated by thousands of marketing messages every day, most of which they ignore. To connect, you need to communicate differently—you need to do more than just sell products and services. You need to provide information.

Content marketing is the art of understanding exactly what your customers need to know and delivering it to them in a relevant and compelling way to grow your business. This extends beyond offering product information into the realm of thought leadership, industry best practices, innovative thinking, and more.

Content marketing enables companies to build a level of trust among their customers that makes it easy for those customers to buy. This is easy to say but hard to do because it almost certainly means changing the way you think and act about marketing.

## 2. Why do I need to know about it?

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In 2007, Forrester research showed that 90 percent of purchasing decisions begin online. What this means for you is opportunity—an opportunity to educate potential buyers about your industry, possible solution choices, best practices, and the right questions to ask. In this way, you have already begun a relationship that will make it easier for them to buy.

This change in the way buyers search for information and the way that information is delivered by both traditional media and nontraditional content creators is turning content into the engine that makes marketing go.

### Six Reasons Why Content Matters More Than Ever

- A change in buyer attitudes toward the “credibility” of content. Whereas in the past customers were wary about information that didn't come from a traditional media source, today's savvy buyers can sniff out the good content from the bad and don't mind if the information comes from a business.
- Traditional media sources can't be counted on to help you reach your customers. Since today's buyers are more in control over the content they choose to read, traditional media sources are losing reach. In fact, you may have better information about your customers and prospects in your own database than any media company trying to sell you traditional marketing solutions.
- Shrinking media company budgets reduce content quality. Continued cutbacks in editorial staff and circulation size have created a void that nontraditional content creators can fill.
- Selling to your customers is becoming more challenging. The more informed the consumer or buyer is, the more difficult it is to sell them. A better approach is to provide relevant

content that positions your company as a trusted source. You begin as a source of information and continue as a source of products and services.

- Technology is changing. Technology is both cheap and easy to use, and even small companies can deliver great content solutions to a targeted customer base.
- Businesses have learned how to create great editorial content. The key to a successful content marketing strategy is, you guessed it, great content. Buyers know the difference between great content and a blatant sales pitch with no inherent value. Even if you do not have internal editorial talent, plenty of brilliant editors, reporters, publishers, and agencies will be happy to put their talents to work on behalf of your company.

### 3. Content Marketing Case Studies

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**Pinsent Masons:** Pinsent Masons is an international law firm specializing in IT and e-commerce that uses online, print, and podcasting tools to attract new customers and build relationships with existing ones. In 2000, Pinsent Masons realized it needed to be an information provider that could speak in terms that prospects and clients could “really” understand. To achieve that goal, it hired a writer/lawyer whose only job responsibility is to drive the firm’s content marketing efforts. The resulting website (OUT-LAW.com) is very much news driven, delivering new content every day and containing more than 8,000 articles about technology and law. It clearly states: “The site exists because we want you to choose our law firm when you need more help.”

**Motorola:** A full 50 percent of Motorola’s revenues come from the business-to-business market, and its two most important objectives for getting new business are: 1) customers must trust Motorola first and 2) Motorola must show the human element (not the technology) in order to sell products and services.

Motorola has found that 80 percent of technology buyers use the Web as their primary purchasing decision tool. Therefore, online informational tools are at the center of its marketing strategy; microsites, video case studies/libraries, digital magazines, white papers, online communities, and even a virtual city that provides real-world examples of how visitors can best leverage technology. From these, the company looks to convert the 1.3 million information seekers that visit their b-to-b site every month, into prospects for Motorola solutions.

### 4. The thing to remember is...

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Business marketers already allocate around 30 percent of their marketing budgets to content creation and execution (BtoB magazine/Junta42 2008 Study)—this figure could easily grow to 50 percent given the changes described above. To use content effectively, you must change the way you think about marketing—from a way to deliver sales messages to delivering useful, relevant, and engaging information.

A few content marketing takeaways:

- Successful Content Marketing Needs a Plan – Use the BEST approach to develop your strategy:
  - Behavioral— Everything you communicate to your customers has a purpose. What do you want them to do?
  - Essential— Deliver information that your best prospects and customers require to succeed at work or in life.
  - Strategic— Your content marketing efforts must be an integral part of your overall business strategy. Link your content strategy to bottom-line results.
  - Targeted— You must target your content precisely so that it is truly relevant to your buyers.
- Execute Well – Get outside help, develop an editorial plan and assign a project manager to own the process.
- Measure Your Performance – Content marketing can always be measured, if you have a clear understanding of your strategic communication objectives. Just keep it simple and answer the question, “How will we know that the content plan is working?”
- Content Without Promotion Is Meaningless – There’s not much point in creating great content if you do nothing to let people know it’s there.

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