



Content Marketing

Tips for Building an Achievable Plan

By: Megan Miller

The customer journey we hear so much about is not a cab ride from point A to point B. It is a circuitous route – a scenic tour, if you will – during which individuals gather data to inform a future action or decision.

Think of content marketing as taking a customer on a journey. Innovative marketers are moving away from a singular focus on conversion, toward a multidimensional view of the evolution of a customer. Content marketing is the process of providing useful, practical and educational content and delivering it to the right contact at the appropriate time along a customer's journey.

Effective content marketing can elevate your brand in the minds of your audience and increase loyalty and future revenue potential, so it is a worthwhile endeavor. But if you are new to content marketing, the level of effort and expertise required to create and deliver compelling content on an individualized basis can seem overwhelming. To start, you must have a marketing plan.

The Marketing Plan Serves Business Strategy

Depending on the size of your company, or the industry, your leadership team may have a three- or five-year strategic plan, and an annual business plan, documenting strategies and decisions on corporate financial goals, R&D, staffing and corporate structure. Whether combined with the business plan or published separately, the marketing plan must align with the business plan and support its goals.

Building a Content Marketing Plan

- Confirm the company's strategic objectives.
- Get all groups in the organization to contribute to and agree to the plan and schedule.
- Identify resource requirements to be included in the annual budget.
- Create a framework for consistent, proactive marketing campaigns.
- Identify key topics and repurpose content, maximizing the content development investment.
- Take advantage of early or volume commitment discounts from event organizers and publications.

To be effective, it is important to document your content marketing strategy. The 2015 [annual survey of marketers](#) conducted by the Content Marketing Institute showed a strong shift toward content marketing as a key initiative in most companies. However, only 35 percent report they have a documented content marketing strategy; and 48 percent admit they have a content marketing strategy but it is not documented.

Building the Content Marketing Calendar

Once you have documented your content marketing strategy, you are ready to build the content marketing calendar.

- Consider significant dates and initiatives – both internal and external – around which to build potential campaigns. This includes internal events like product launches or release schedules, new rules or regulations taking effect and external events such as industry conferences and trade shows.
- For each offering planned for the coming year, develop a single page value proposition, defining the target customer and key benefit statements.



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- Build out the marketing programs calendar. Capture all the marketing and public relations communication channels that can be leveraged to deliver the message on each campaign or product launch. This process will help identify resource gaps in content creation, allowing you to begin outreach to product experts or contract writers to complete those items.
- Gather details on important live events and conferences from industry organizers and websites. Add those to the calendar, with dates and locations.
- Fill in webinars or company-organized live events. These are less expensive to produce and can augment the larger industry events with highly customizable live educational events or presentations.
- Map out your marketing plan in calendar view in quarterly or monthly format. Label rows for articles, white papers, webinars, social posts and other content types.
- Take a few weeks to work through team discussions and content options. Draft your plan for the upcoming two to four quarters and you will reap the benefits in terms of efficiency and cost savings.
- Be sure to maximize cross-channel engagement.

Cross-channel Engagement

Implementing a content marketing strategy is about creating cross-channel engagement. When a topic of interest is identified, leverage that content and make the most of your marketing investment by resizing or repackaging it for various channels. For example, a white paper can be downsized into an article, but do not stop there, promote each piece by using social media or an email campaign. A cross-channel approach increases visibility, and the odds that a prospective customer might learn about your product or service in the venue and format that he or she prefers.

You may be feeling overwhelmed at the scope of the challenge you face in implementing a content marketing plan. Do not be daunted! This may be the single most important investment of time and thought that you will make all year. Once a solid plan is in place, it will be clear what additional skills or resources you may need to make the vision a reality. The content calendar keeps the team on course and on message, not scrambling for the next great topic.

About the Author

Megan Miller is a senior consultant with Edge Legal Marketing, assisting clients in development and execution of strategic marketing plans and implementation of marketing technologies. A global technology hound, Miller has built brands, trained teams and introduced successful products for global companies and startups. A certified eDiscovery expert, Miller has written on trends and topics in electronic discovery, consumer electronics and the Internet of Things – before it was even called the Internet of Things. Her work has appeared in Attorney at Law, US Tech, TechnoLawyer, ACEDS and other industry publications.



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