JOIN THE ELITE 33% OF MARKETERS GETTING 'EFFECTIVE' RESULTS

7 STEPS TO CREATING EXCEPTIONAL CONTENT

WINNING TIPS, TACTICS & TOOLS

IS CONTENT MARKETING A WASTE OF TIME?

Marketers are producing more content than ever before. But too often, what's created is dull, unfocused and fails to get much interest from buyers:

- **30 companies scored just 12.8 out of 30 for the engagement value of their content - Forrester Research**
- **More than 60% of B2B content ends up in 'content wasteland' - SiriusDecisions**
- **Only 34% of tech marketers believe their efforts are effective - Content Marketing Institute**

The gap between the elite marketers getting it right and those struggling is widening. Unless you want to keep wasting time and money on content that ends up in 'content wasteland' and never gets read, you need a strategy for creating content that's exceptional.

Everything you produce must be interesting to read, actionable and so valuable that people feel compelled to read every word and then share it afterwards. This is the challenge every marketer now faces:

- **87% of marketers say "producing content that engages buyers to be a major challenge" - Forrester Research**

This report outline a 7 step strategy for being among the elite 34% of marketers getting 'effective' results from their content marketing efforts. It also provides the basis for a long-term inbound strategy for turning your website into a hub of information that attracts more visitors and generates more leads as a result.

"THE CONSUMER ISN'T A MORON; SHE IS YOUR WIFE. YOU INSULT HER INTELLIGENCE IF YOU ASSUME A MERE SLOGAN AND A FEW VAPID ADJECTIVES WILL PERSUADE HER TO BUY ANYTHING." - DAVID OGILVY

1. Get to Know Your Reader

How well do you know your readers? It's easy to assume you know what their daily problems are and want they want to know more about. But unless you ask, how do you really know?

Creating a semi-fictional impression of your reader (mine's called Frank) is a great first step in identifying who you're writing to and why. Also known as a 'buyer persona", creating an impression of your reader will help you to keep your content focused as you'll be able to imagine them sat across the table from you when you're writing. This helps stay you on topic and only writing about topics that match their interests.

To create your buyer persona, list details such as their job title, how many people they manage, what frustrates them, what they hope for and even lifestyle details, like their hobbies and interests outside of work.

Creating a buyer persona will require some detective work. You need to do some digging to reveal what motivates or frustrates them. The answers might surprise you. Try conducting some email surveys, run polls on LinkedIn and see what people are talking about in forums. Picking up the phone and speaking to customers directly will also give you a clearer idea of who you're writing to and why.

Tools

SurveyMonkey if you don't already have a contacts a list,

4Q for surveying visitors to your website.

2. FIND A HOT TOPIC

Step one should have given you some ideas on what to write about. Finding out what are the most read, shared and linked to articles in your industry will also help to add some hot topics to the list.

These tools will help you discover the most popular articles in your niche:

Buzzsumo - Find out what content performs best for keywords or your competitors

Topsy - Allows you to find out which industry relevant articles get the most Tweets

Content Strategy Helper - This may look like a spreadsheet, but it's actually a powerful blog topic creation machine powered by data from Google, Reddit, YouTube and other sources to find trending topics

Moz - Use to Iidentify the most popular articles on your competitors' sites

SEM Rush - If you're feeling devious, you can use this to spy on what content and keywords your competitors are targeting to get some pointers for your own.

3. TAKE A STAND

Staying on the fence is boring. People want to read strong opinions, fresh perspectives and challenges to the status quo.

So dont just add your voice to the echo chamber. Take a stand. Rattle some cages. At the minimum, aim to go further in how you tackle a topic than anyone has gone before.

You want to 'rip, pivot and jam'. In other words, cover all the normal bases on a hot topic then find a way to tweak it to add some spice and your own unique twist.

Find additional research, or conduct your own. Get some quotes from thought leaders and find other ways to create the definitive piece of content on a topic. This will give it the best chance of becoming a 'go to' resource and earning lots of juicy social shares, links and traffic to your website

This tactic is also known as the 'skyscraper technique', devised by SEO trailblazer Brian Dean at Backlinko. What works in SEO works in content marketing too, because they're no longer separate disciplines now that it's quality, not quantity, that earns higher rankings.

4. SAY IT WELL

The business world is plagued with bad writing. Too often it's infested with bland marketing cliches, confusing jargon and enthusiastic use of a thesaurus.

Rather than trying to sound clever, your aim should be to communicate clearly and concisely, Let's face facts: you're not trying to win a creative writing prize. Reading can also be hard work. So you want your writing to be easy to understand and make sense on the first read through. If you've done enough research to support your points, it's your core argument that will keep readers engaged. Leave the flowery language to the novelists.

One trick is to simply write the way you speak. This will make your content sound more human and less like, well, marketing. You could try using speech recognition software., or record yourself talking about a topic and have it transcribed. You may be surprised how many highly paid copywriters use this technique.

"THE FIRST DRAFT OF ANYTHING IS SHIT"

- ERNEST HEMINGWAY.

The advantage of keeping your writing simple is that it means you don't have to worry about being a literary genius to create great content. You just need to know how to stay focused on the reader and to write clearly and with brevity.

Clear writing tips:

- Replace long words with shorter versions
- Vary your sentence lengths
- Aim for an average of 15 words per sentence
- Keep one thought or idea to each paragraph
- Break up your paragraphs with subheads
- Limit paragraphs to three or four sentences
- Read it out loud to hear how it sounds
- Review with fresh eyes
- Only hit publish after reviewing three times
- Use bullet point lists and subheads

Find out more - 15 punchy writing tips

Tools

Hemingway - Highlights weak passive sentences, gives you a readability score and tips on how to make your writing easier to read.

Grammarly - Alternative to Hemingway focused more on grammar.

Dragon - Voice recognition software.

Rev- Upload your audio file to get it transcribed for just $1/minute.

5. MAKE IT ACTIONABLE

Reading your content shouldn't be just a passive experience. You want readers to benefit from your advice. This in turn will enhance their impression of your brand, increasing the likelihood of them becoming a customer further down the road.

Create an actionable summary telling readers exactly what to do to benefit from your advice. You could also include a subtle soft sell by suggesting they get in touch if they need further help implementing what you've suggested.

"YOU CAN GET EVERYTHING IN LIFE YOU WANT IF YOU WILL JUST HELP ENOUGH OTHER PEOPLE GET WHAT THEY WANT." - ZIG ZIGLAR

6. PROMOTE IT

One of the key differences between the winners and losers in content marketing is whether you 'post and hope' or 'post and promote'. After all, you don't want your content to rot in 'content wasteland' when you've invested so much effort creating a definitive, status quo smashing piece of thought leadership.

Ideally, promotion should begin during the research stage. You want to first identify then connect with thought leaders in your industry with a large following. Start reading their blogs, commenting and sharing their content. You want to get on their radar as a reputable contributor worthy of their attention with advice worth sharing.

THE PRIMARY REASON THAT CONTENT GOES UNUSED IS THAT THE TOPIC IS NOT RELEVANT TO THE BUYER (29 PERCENT). SECOND IS THAT THE TARGET DOESN'T EVEN KNOW THAT THE CONTENT EXISTS (25 PERCENT) - SIRIUS DECISIONS

Once you've earned some respect among thoughts leaders and in online communities, when you start a discussion with a link to your article you won't get chased out with pitchforks. If anything, people will be happy to share your content if it contains valuable advice. Getting your content shared is a gateway into other people's networks so you can grow your exposure, following and traffic with every piece of content you release.

Tools

Buzzstream - Use to identify people to connect with to grow your network and exposure.

SocialBro - Guides you step by step on how to grow your following and influence on Twitter.

Tweetdeck - Keep track of all your social media channels in one place.

7. TRACK, TWEAK, REPEAT

Content marketing is a marathon. Not a sprint. Hubspot estimates it takes at least six months to get results. So after your content has been released, dig into the data to track your success. Check what feedback you've had, both internally and online, then use it to shape the next piece of content on your list.

It's sensible to note down key metrics before you start. This includes the size of your social media following, the number of links to your website, daily traffic and other KPIs. You can then use this as a starting point for tracking your future progress in generating more traffic, leads and sales with the power of informative, problem solving content.

BECOME A HUB OF VALUABLE INFO FOR BUYERS

Conclusion

Marketers are creating more content than ever before. It's getting tougher all the time to get attention with so many articles, reports and white papers all fighting for eyeballs. The good news is that most B2B content continues to be dull and uninspiring. Use this to your advantage by taking a strategic approach to creating exceptional content that helps your customers solve problems and differentiates your brand as being helpful and in touch with what matters to its customers.

Due to the resources online, it's estimated that two thirds of the buyer's journey is over before they contact you. Having a content strategy in place can also enable you to engage with people during the research stage and give you the edge when they're ready to select a vendor.

So use this seven step strategy to turn your website into a hub of information that draws prospects in and then converts them with informative content. You can then take your place among the elite 34% of marketers getting effective results from their content marketing strategy.

About The Copywriter’s Crucible

Now entering its tenth anniversary, The Copywriter's Crucible has helped over 100 businesses to improve their marketing. Our goal is to replace dull, lifeless copy with marketing that gets people excited. Marketing that motivates readers based on thorough research, detailed problem analysis and real actionable information, freed from the plague of pointless cliches and buzzwords.

Along with writing for some of the biggest names in tech and engineering, we've worked on projects for clients in manufacturing, healthcare, the luxury sector and finance. So if you want to breathe life into your articles, case studies and reports, get in touch for a proposal on how The Copy-writer’s Crucible can help:

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