THE

B2B MARKETING PLAYBOOK

A WHOLE DIFFERENT GAME

TAME *the* CHAOS

CLOSED-LOOP STRATEGY IS A GAME CHANGER

PLUS

PLAN, CREATE, DISTRIBUTE, AND OPTIMIZE

CONTENT

kapost®

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THE B2B MARKETING PLAYBOOK

A WHOLE DIFFERENT GAME

THE DESIRED OUTCOME DICTATES YOUR STRATEGY; THIS IS TRUE IN ANY GAME OR COMPETITION.

[B]ut the tactics that win differ depending on your environment, allies, competition, the rules of the game, and the tools at your disposal.

The same is true in marketing—particularly when comparing B2B and B2C.

Across roles and functions—product marketing, demand generation, field marketing, digital and web, content, or communications—B2B marketers face distinct challenges.

It's not that there aren't any similarities between B2B and B2C: the focus on creating, delivering, and tracking buyer-centric content—the lifeblood of modern marketing—and the adoption of tools that support the content lifecycle have evolved in both types of marketing alike.

But with B2B marketing, where the stakes are high, the buying cycle long, and the decision makers many, the teams with a winning strategy are those that successfully address the complex processes and outcomes of the B2B content lifecycle and buyer's journey.

Complexity with a Capital "C": Why Content Chaos Plagues B2B Marketers

THE CONSUMER

In B2C marketing, the process for managing the content lifecycle is built around driving a single consumer to buy a product or service. The marketer's job: engage and move that consumer to an immediate, impulse purchase.

In this game, the B2C content strategy might look something like this:

Awareness

Content Goals
Generate PR

Content Types
Social Posts
Press Releases
Online Ads
Videos

Metrics
Page Views
Impressions
Press Mentions

Lead Capture

Content Goals
Database Growth
Purchase Consideration

Content Types
Social Posts
Emails
Online Catalogues
Online Ads

Metrics
Web Traffic
Subscriptions
Impressions
Clicks

Purchase

Content Goals
Confirm Sale

Content Types
Emails
Help Articles

Metrics
Clicks
Sales Volume

The goals and tools of B2C strategy are brand affinity, repeat sales, social advocacy, and a lower price tag.

But B2B marketing is a whole different ballgame.

Instead of targeting one consumer and driving a quick impulse buy, B2B marketers must address multiple stakeholders, each needing specific information and proof of value depending on their goals and responsibilities. During just one B2B sales cycle, sales and marketing meet multiple players—all of them significant to the purchase.

And that trend is growing. **Nearly half** (43%) of B2B buyers said that the number of people involved in purchase decisions has grown, meaning that buyers need to reach more stakeholders, and this trend is rising.

B2B organizations must target many different stakeholders involved in the purchase process. Even more challenging is that separate teams within your company own the tools and channels that need to touch each of these buyers. Different teams are facilitating different stages of the buying journey.

The growing number of stakeholders and the silos between teams drag on the sales cycle. **Forty percent of B2B buyers** said they're waiting longer to initiate contact with vendors. In order to move buyers through each stage of a longer sales cycle, B2B marketers need to use the right content, at the right stage, with the right KPIs to measure effectiveness. A B2B content journey might look like this:

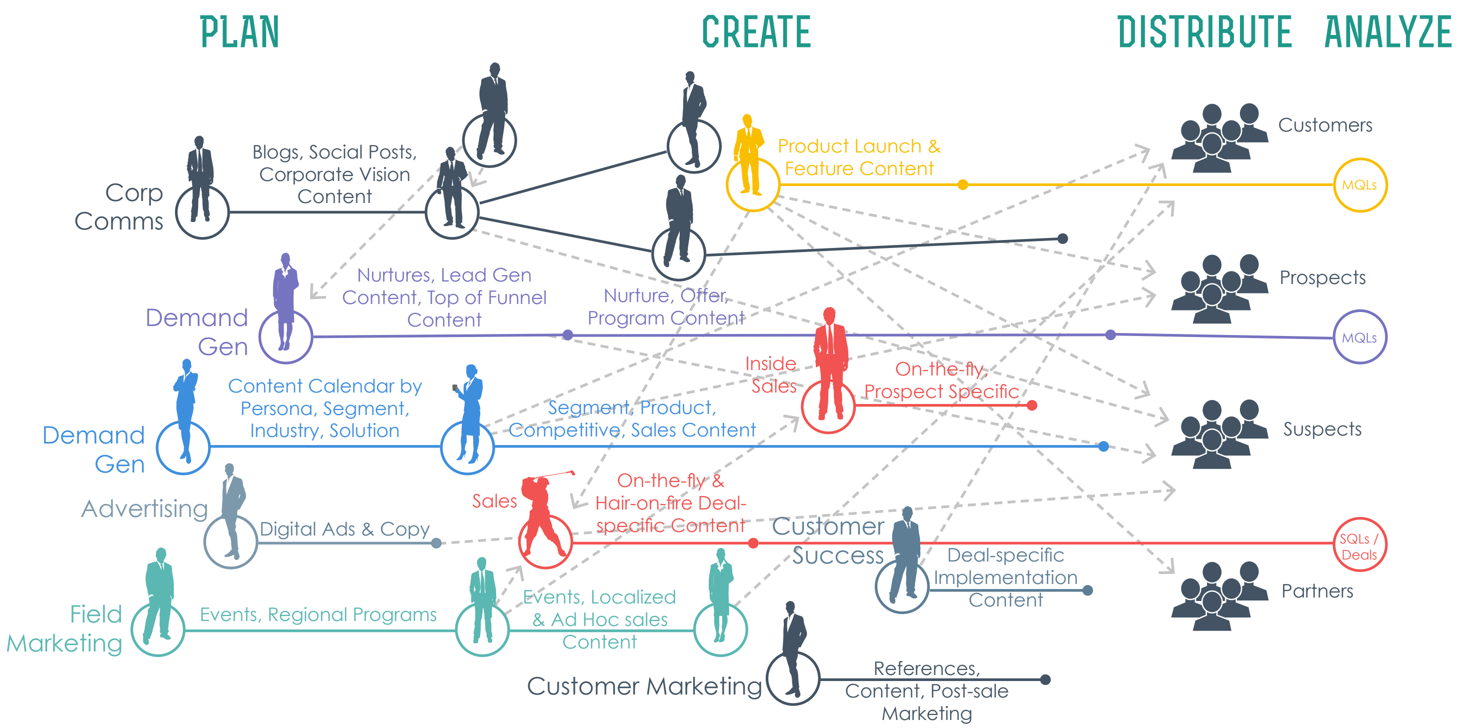
Awareness	Investigation	Comparison	Consideration	Purchase	Ownership
Content Goals Thought Leadership Engagement	**Content Goals** Lead Acquisition Lead Qualification	**Content Goals** Lead Qualification Lead Flow	**Content Goals** Equip Sales Team Build Consensus	**Content Goals** Confirm Value Define Next Steps	**Content Goals** Onboard Ensure Success
Content Types Blog Posts Infographics Educational Videos Online Ads Press Releases	**Content Types** Whitepapers eBooks Webinar Landing Pages Events	**Content Types** Emails Case Studies Video Testimonials	**Content Types** Brochures Fact Sheets Demo Videos Presentations	**Content Types** Onboarding Materials Presentations Emails	**Content Types** Blog Posts Infographics Educational Videos Online Ads Press Releases
Metrics Referral Traffic Social Shares Channel Engagement Downloads	**Metrics** Registrations Downloads New Leads Lead Attribution	**Metrics** Opens Click-Throughs Downloads Conversion Attribution	**Metrics** Content Usage Downloads Open Conversion Attribution	**Metrics** Content Usage Downloads Revenue Attribution	**Metrics** Downloads Opens Content Usage Online Engagement

As you can see, B2B marketing involves many different types of content that are targeted to specific buyers within a single organization, over a multi-stage sales cycle, across channels owned by different teams.

A clearly mapped content journey that extends across all functions within marketing is rare, however. More common is for each functionary or channel owner to work with little insight into the planning, production, and measurement of the content served. The result is an all-too-common state called Content Chaos.

CHAOS IN THE CONTENT LIFECYCLE

Everyone creates content–mostly ad hoc, in silos with no way to measure impact



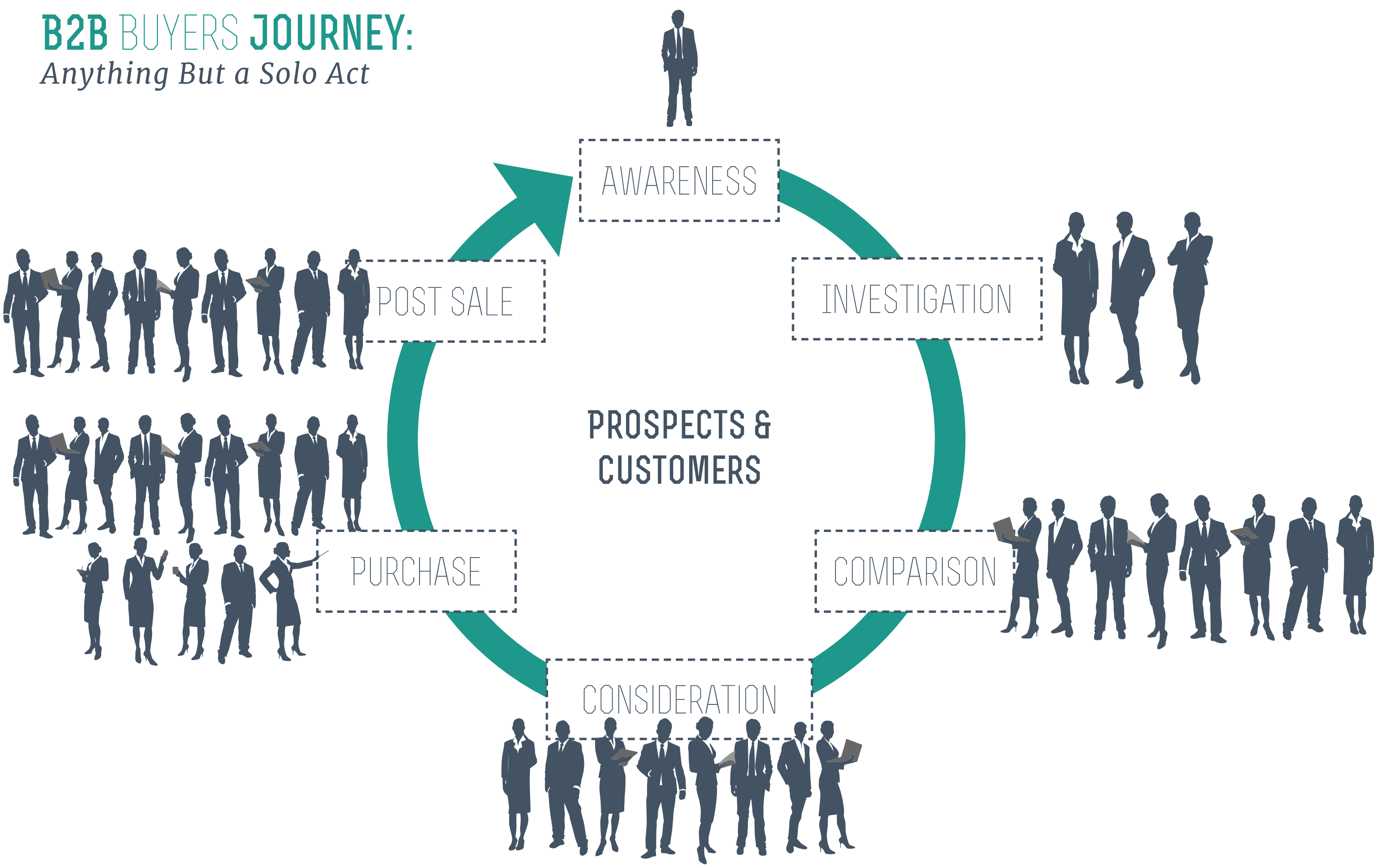
"The upshot of every marketing team being a de facto publisher is colloquially known as 'content chaos'—a scenario of overlapping, invisible, and underused brand assets and collaterals."

—The Forrester Wave™: Content Marketing Platforms, Q3 2015

Every role within marketing has its own tools, content types, and channels to manage, each responsible for different aspects of the content and buyer lifecycle. Without a strategy in place for coordinating all of these pieces, seeing the big picture of your marketing impact is almost impossible. Not to mention, ad hoc content creation across departments leads to duplicate, off-brand, or unnecessary content. That's why **65% of content goes unused** in B2B organizations, representing a massive cost center directly located within marketing.

The reality is that marketing content—which every disparate team creates and delivers to support internal teams and engage B2B buyers—needs to be managed as part of a holistic, integrated marketing strategy that addresses the needs of each decision maker at every stage in the purchase process.

B2B BUYERS JOURNEY:
Anything But a Solo Act



Doing this effectively requires a shift in how you organize your marketing initiatives, and content is at the center of this effort. It takes integration, shared business objectives, and collaboration across internal marketing stakeholders, including product, field, demand generation, and digital marketing teams.

Success in B2B marketing takes streamlined, collaborative strategies for tackling every stage of the content lifecycle.

"The reality that B2B marketers live in every day is that content creation is spread across experts that live across the organization, each in a silo. On top of that, the expertise required for content creation lives with some of our most expensive resources (product marketers, product managers). It costs us a lot of money to create and although many organizations think about it as being disposable, it shouldn't be."

- Erin Provey
Service Director, Sirius Decisions

Moving from Chaos to Calm: Introducing a Fluid Cycle for Content Management

[B] 2B organizations need to get a "one team-same team" mentality among their departments and create aligned processes around organization-wide goals. They have to understand content needs, how to efficiently meet them, and how to measure the results. This is the only way to build a truly closed-loop strategy.

Activating all internal stakeholders—from Product and Field Marketing to Demand Gen and Sales—requires enabling teams with the right tools and providing transparency into the content process. Without strategic alignment and involvement across departments, B2B organizations are missing a critical piece in their narrative, and can't effectively meet content needs for every stage of the buyer's journey.

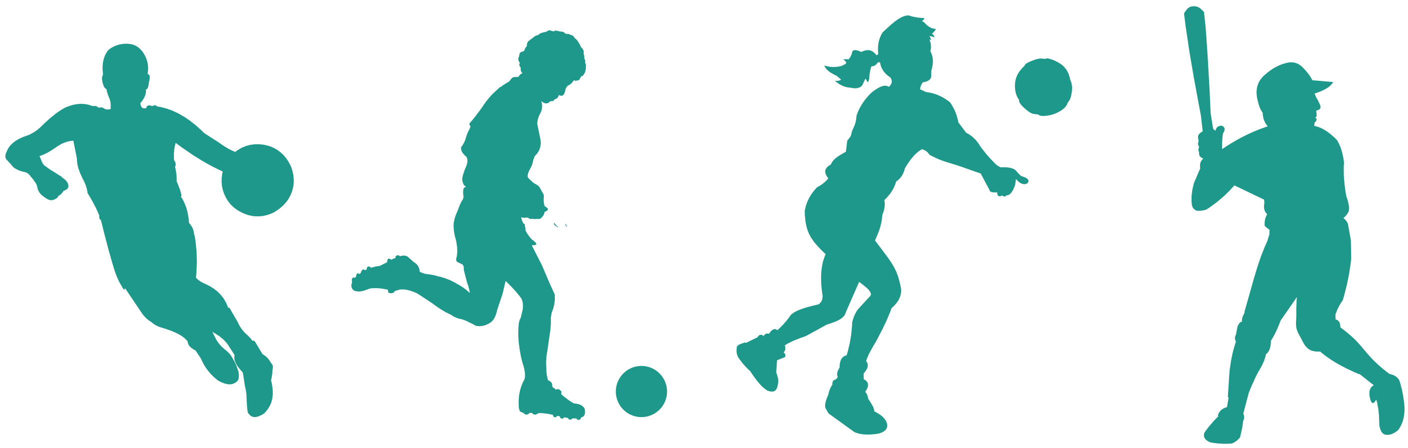
A closed-loop strategy creates impactful, useable content that supports all of your channels and internal teams, delivers valuable and necessary information for prospects, and increases deal velocity.

This process comes down to four steps:

- » ***Plan***
- » ***Execute***
- » ***Distribute***
- » ***Optimize***

CLOSED-LOOP STRATEGY:

The Four Steps to Success



In the pages that follow, these four steps are outlined to help you build a B2B marketing strategy that aligns your organization around shared objectives, delivers relevant and valuable content for every team and stage in the buyer's journey, and helps you meet your goals as an individual marketer, as a marketing team, and as a company.

This playbook is your foundation for a strong, efficient, and winning B2B marketing strategy.

Let the games begin.

01 PLAN

"Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision. The ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results."

— ***Andrew Carnegie***

Budget for Content: Assessing Cost in the System

[B]udget planning for B2B marketing teams can be tricky at best. It's difficult to know where to allocate funds for a winning strategy, including technology to purchase, resources to bring on board, and tactics to implement. It can feel like playing a heated game of darts while blindfolded; you take your best guess, but ultimately, you're throwing blind.

Start by aligning budget with your content goals. If your budget isn't tied to clear marketing objectives, reporting on marketing ROI will likely end in headaches and finger-pointing.

"In 2014, Forrester conducted a survey of 113 senior B2B marketers about how they organize their content marketing efforts and the results they achieve. Of those surveyed, only 6% rated their organization as optimized, and reported tying their content marketing objectives to specific business goals like customer acquisition, retention, and revenue growth."

— Laura Ramos,
Brief: B2B CMOs Drive Content Marketing Results by Fostering Direct Involvement, Forrester Research, Inc., September 9, 2014

To get the dollar signs aligned for a killer marketing content strategy, first assess your goals and objectives. Then, evaluate the people, tools, and channels you need to meet these goals. This includes resources to collaborate internally, execute efficiently, deliver content strategically, and measure the revenue impact of your initiatives.

Technology

One of the most important parts of budgeting for an integrated marketing strategy is knowing the tools and technologies you need in order to meet and measure your goals for product, demand generation, communications, and/or field marketing.

Here are the must-haves for your B2B marketing technology stack, and the foundation for creating content that is valuable, trackable, and persona-based.

- ***CMS (WordPress, Drupal, Kentico, Sitecore, Squarespace)***
- ***Marketing automation (Marketo, Eloqua, Pardot, HubSpot)***
- ***CRM (Salesforce, Microsoft Dynamics)***
- ***Content management platform (Kapost)***
- ***Social media platform scheduling, monitoring, engagement (Hootsuite, Sprout Social, Lithium)***

Technologies should fit your marketing strategy and support collaboration across teams

Once these core platforms are in place, identify the gaps that prevent you from planning, executing, and measuring success efficiently.

For example, digital marketers need tools to push and track ROI on content through paid channels like SEM and retargeting ads. Likewise, they need to provide insight into the status of search engine optimization (SEO) and opportunities to drive more traffic.

Demand generation marketers might look to technologies to test and monitor conversions across contact forms and landing pages.

And the product marketer needs to sync with tools that gather, analyze, and distribute customer feedback and data. Event management or localization support might factor into a product marketer's technology purchases as well.

Technologies should fit your marketing strategy and support collaboration across teams—but make sure they integrate and that you've defined consistent governance fields across each, giving you consistent data for analysis and optimization.

Integrate, Integrate, Integrate!

Make sure your chosen marketing automation platform integrates with your company's CRM and marketing content platforms. By syncing these technologies, your sales funnel becomes streamlined from top to bottom, from first engagement to a closed deal. This makes cross-departmental communication and revenue tracking for your marketing activities more succinct and accurate.

This will help your content and sales teams be more aligned and supported, as your C-Suite and Board of Directors can easily see the impact your content has across the entire sales funnel.

Channels

In addition to technology to manage the planning and execution of your content, you also need to invest in the appropriate channels for delivering that content into the hands of the right B2B buyers across their purchasing journey.

Some of the most important channels for B2B marketers to consider investing budget dollars in are:

- » ***SEM/Retargeting***
- » ***Content recommendation platforms***
- » ***Email advertising***
- » ***Social media advertising***
- » ***Content syndication***

Even though certain strategies are consistent across B2B organizations, your company's products and target audience are unique. Make sure you test and constantly evaluate the effectiveness of these channels so your marketing spend is adding value.

Heather Drugge manages 14 writers to feed her technical blog suite with the right content to attract & support buyers.

Additional Resources

Churning out consistent content across departments requires input from multiple stakeholders within your organization. To actually make content ideas a reality, it's important to budget resources for freelancers or contractors who specialize in various stages of content execution, and use them to remove bottlenecks and fill important content gaps.

Here are some contracted resources to consider factoring into your marketing budget:

- » ***Writers and copyeditors***
- » ***Graphic designers***
- » ***Digital/interactive designers***
- » ***Videographers***
- » ***SEO specialists***
- » ***Data and analysis specialists***

Contractors can help accelerate your marketing functions. For example, **Heather Drugge owns Go Communications**, a firm of writers who focus on content for high-tech and biotech industries. For one particular client in the enterprise biotech industry, Heather oversees the ideation, creation, and daily publication of content to three distinct—yet highly scientific and technical—blogs. She manages 14 writers to feed this digital channel with the right content to attract and support buyers, allowing the full-time marketing staff to focus on strategies to maximize their marketing impact.

Assemble Your Stakeholders: Creating a Cross-Functional, Consistent Strategy

[W]inning B2B marketing strategies are built upon cross-functional, collaborative efforts across marketing teams and departments.

Here are the major stakeholders that should weighin on your strategy.

"B2B MARKETING CONTENT IS ANYTHING BUT A SOLO ACT."

1

Product Marketing

Product marketers are your go-to teammates for all things product- and market-related. By digging into customer data and market research, working closely with product teams, and identifying opportunities for your company to address market needs, these marketers know the true value of your company's solution in the marketplace. Their insights are crucial to B2B success, and they often serve as the bridge between marketing and sales, delivering key content that helps sales reps prove value to prospects and shorten the sales cycle.

2

Field Marketing

Field marketing fosters key relationships with customers and prospects on the local and regional levels, driving strategies to close new business and support retention of target accounts. The field marketer understands the value of personalization, collaboration, and face time with customers and prospects, often running integrated marketing campaigns and supporting sales in key markets and regions.

3

Marketing and Sales Operations

This may be represented by one person or several, but you want to be sure that your automated emails, landing pages, tracking URLs, and other channels associated with each campaign work together seamlessly. This ensures an easy flow from one buyer stage to another, driving a lead further into the sales funnel. Make sure that the appropriate sales reps know about an upcoming campaign in advance, and equip them with the targeted messaging and content they need to convert leads into customers.

4

5

6

Demand Generation

Whether it's paid ads or blog posts, the players responsible for driving leads through the entire funnel have to be looped into your marketing content strategy. They have insight into the types of content that draw people further into the buyer's journey at every stage, and they can provide data-backed insights into what content to produce for each campaign.

Digital and SEO

To grow your organic online reach, select strategic keywords that are relevant and popular to your target audience. This should be deployed across your owned web properties, including websites, blogs, and social channels. Include whoever is responsible for your SEO early in your campaigns. Every asset that will be distributed digitally should be optimized for search, be it a blog post, landing page, or case study. Don't let your marketing content fly under the radar because you didn't add keywords from the start.

Social/PR/AR

Your community managers and public/analyst relations teams are the mouthpiece of your company. They are responsible for getting analysts and your personas to quickly understand who you are, what pain points you solve, and why you are the best solution in your industry. They can roll a content campaign into press coverage around a product launch or other correspondence that will have a wider reach than your content alone can. Trust us, you want these folks looped into your content strategy.

B2B marketing content is anything but a solo act. Creating consistent content for every stage of the purchase process requires B2B marketers within your organization to get on the same page, align around goals, and execute strategically.

Define the Buyer's Journey, Sales Stages, and Associated Content Map along the Way

[T]he secret to successful marketing content isn't "create more, faster." If you're not producing relevant, persona-based content that captivates potential buyers at every stage of the buyer's journey, you're wasting your time and resources.

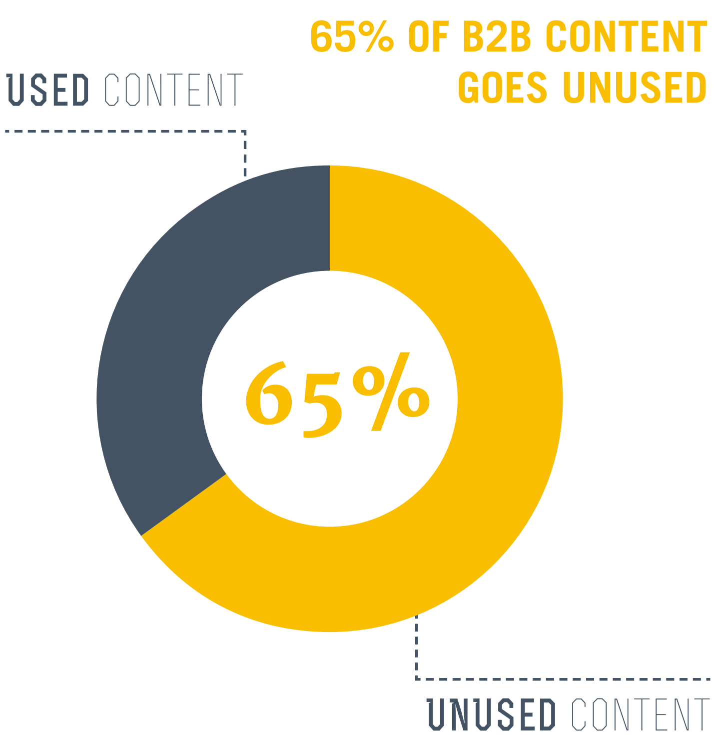
This is a consistent challenge for B2B marketers across functions and industries. SiriusDecisions found that **65% of B2B content goes unused** because content isn't strategically mapped to buyer interests and topics they care about.

To have a truly closed-loop marketing approach, marketing, sales, and support teams all need to have a stake in the revenue goals of your company. Therefore, each of these departments and the teams within them must be aligned across the buyer's journey, equipped with relevant and valuable content at every single stage, and have a stake in your company's revenue goals.

Definitions Matter

The first step toward tackling this challenge is to get agreement across the company about each of the stages in your buyer's journey. Many companies struggle with departments defining these stages differently, particularly among sales and marketing. The result is confusing messaging, miscommunication, and a lack of clarity across departments. This results in convoluted tracking and reporting, and no clear visibility into the health of your pipeline and your strategy's contribution to it.

Below is an example of the buyer's journey aligned with a closed-loop marketing-sales-support funnel. Use this as your template, and incorporate your own sales stages and goals into your strategy. Take note that the definitions you agree upon should be used across the company. This **ensures alignment on the specific pain points addressed as well as the content objectives for each stage**—which means teams across the organization will see value in and use this content more effectively.



Buyer Stage	Buyer Activity	Potential Sales Stage Definition	Teams Responsible
Awareness	First interaction with the brand—via social media, trade show, partner referral, organic search	Marketing qualified leads	Demand gen, field marketing, business development, digital marketing
Investigation/Research	Filled out gated form on website, filled out contact form at event/ trade show, requested to speak with sales	Sales qualified leads	Content marketing, demand gen, field marketing, digital marketing, product marketing
Assess/ Comparison	Initial assessment with sales development rep to determine if lead is an actual opportunity with budget	Opportunity	Business/sales development reps, product marketing
Consideration	Lead has been transitioned to a sales/ account rep	Opportunity	Sales reps, sales engineer, account executive, product marketing, content marketing, product management
Purchase	Lead has decided to purchase	Closed deal	Sales rep, account manager
Implement	End users are identified, onboarding begins	Onboarding	Customer success manager, customer success marketing
Support	Customer receives satisfactory support as needs arise, resulting in a positive ROI use case with the product	Satisfaction	Customer support, customer success manager, customer success marketing, account reps
Renewal / Repeat Customer	Customer success/ account manager upsells new product or feature	Renewal or upsell	Customer success marketing, customer success manager, account reps, product marketing

With the buyer's journey, sales stages, and team/department goals defined, identify the content that supports each stage of the buyer's journey to move leads from one stage to the next.

Propelling a lead through the buyer's journey is anything but a one-man job. As you can see above, there are many overlapping and shared goals across teams and departments. It takes concerted effort across your digital and demand generation, product marketing, sales, and customer support teams to accomplish a truly closed-loop strategy. Ongoing collaboration and communication is critical to a healthy B2B pipeline.

	Awareness	Investigation	Comparison	Consideration	Purchase	Post-Sale
Team	Marcom, digital, social	Demand gen, marketing ops, field marketing, sales	Product marketing, sales consulting, sales	Sales, product marketing, product mgmt, consulting	Sales, customer support, consulting	Customer support, customer marketing
Content Types	Press releases, blog posts, videos, infographics, social posts	eBooks, landing pages, emails, webinars, events	Fact sheets, case studies, videos, testimonials, webinars	FAQ sheets, brochures, tech guides	Onboarding docs, help articles, presentations	Product collateral, events, webinars
Content Goals	Thought leadership, engagement	Lead acquisition, lead qualification	Lead qualification, lead flow	Equip sales team, build consensus	Confirm value, define next steps	Onboard, ensure success
Key Metrics	Referral traffic, social shares, channel engagement, downloads	Registration, downloads, new leads, lead attribution	Opens, click-throughs, downloads, conversion attribution	Content usage, downloads, opens, conversion attribution	Content usage, downloads, revenue attribution	Downloads, opens, content usage, online engagement

Develop and Align Your Personas: Content in a Consensus Sale

[U]nlike B2C sales, B2B marketers have to address several personas within a single sale. Each persona has unique information needs, goals, and concerns related to the purchase, and often join the decision-making process at different stages. B2B marketers are responsible for creating content that addresses the pain points of each of these buyers, at every stage of the buying cycle.

Building Your Personas

Developing personas that will drive results for your organization takes collaborative planning and input from across departments.

Whether you're trying to understand what your product has to offer a specific user, how your target audience consumes information, or what customer success stories you need to tell to increase deal velocity, strategic interviews—both inside and outside your company—are key to developing valuable persona-based content.

Here are some key interviews to consider scheduling as you develop your personas.

1. ***Your Sales Representatives***

Interview sales reps targeting different personas, regions, or company sizes to get diverse insight on who they meet during the sales cycle, and what kind of information or content they need to close a sale more quickly.

Don't only interview decision makers or end users; talk to everyone involved in the purchasing process.

2. ***Your Customer Service Representatives***

Your colleagues on the customer service team onboard new customers, assess customer needs and challenges to help them form best practices, and provide ongoing support when new challenges arise. They have the deepest insight into both successful and struggling customers. By understanding the types of customers who get consistent value out of your company's products or services, and which types of customers typically fail and churn, you can target the right buyers from the get-go. Customer service reps also know the departmental structure of your customers, including the hierarchy of their roles and responsibilities.

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3. ***Your Customers***

Input from internal staff is highly valuable when mapping out your personas, but perhaps the most insightful interviews are with your actual customers. By directly engaging the people who represent your personas, you can confirm or shift your marketing strategies to better address their needs and anticipate—then automate the delivery of—the content they need at every stage of the customer lifecycle. Don't only interview decision makers or end users; talk to everyone involved in the purchasing process.

These interviews provide a company-wide view into your customers and prospects, helping you create marketing content that's driven by the actual needs of your personas.

This process informs every part of marketing. It helps product marketers align specific features or packages to the pain points of personas, and support that story with examples or case studies from successful customers. Field marketing can evaluate the topics and strategies for engaging prospects in conversations and events that validate their needs, building relationships on trust and support. Marketers focused on demand generation can make decisions on the content they need to deliver earlier in the sales cycle to engage buyers and strategically introduce your company's solution through nurture tracks and on-demand content.

B2B MARKETING SPOTLIGHT: DUN & BRADSTREET'S PERSONA-DRIVEN CONTENT

In the financial services industry, building trust is key, albeit challenging.

In fact, 76% of financial services professionals believe content marketing is the most effective method to regain trust in this industry.

Equipped with this knowledge, Dun & Bradstreet, a Kapost customer, fully immersed themselves in a collaborative, detailed persona development process to clearly define and drive their marketing content strategy.

76% OF FINANCIAL SERVICES PROFESSIONALS BELIEVE CONTENT MARKETING IS THE MOST EFFECTIVE METHOD TO REGAIN TRUST IN THIS INDUSTRY.

"We (now) have clear, concise use cases that map our customer pain points to the data-driven products and services Dun & Bradstreet offers," says Brad Young, the global content strategy leader for the company.

To build this data-based marketing engine driven by content, Young suggests the following four steps:

"First, you have to actually know what the goals of the company are.

Second, you have to work your inside game—networking across the company to understand how those goals manifest themselves from product to product, persona to persona, and then applying those learnings to content development.

Third, you have to think of content as a continuum and take responsibility for integration and consistency of storylines from top-of-funnel (really emotional, broader-reaching stories) to end-of-funnel (promotional stuff that tells why your products and services are better than the guy's down the street).

And fourth, you have to learn to respond to the feedback that matters most: sure, your boss and key business stakeholders, but more important the feedback you get from the data.

True success is in aligning your approach to the mission of the company and delivering experiences that drive that home."

Read the full story.

Crowdsource Ideas: Getting Real Insights from the Right People

It probably goes without saying that B2B marketers have a lot of responsibilities. The constant demand for original content ideas to create valuable, persona-driven content can leave a marketer feeling wrung out like a towel that's been hung out to dry. In fact, 99% of marketers say a constant stream of ideas is crucial to effective content marketing, but only 50% of marketers believe they have enough ideas to fuel their content operations.

Marketing should not be the only team carrying the ideation responsibilities for your company. In fact, almost 70% of marketers want to be able to crowdsource ideas more easily from internal employees. Your internal subject matter experts, sales reps, and customer service teams are brimming with buyer-centric ideas; they just need to be mined, appropriately and frequently.

The only way to establish a high-functioning, integrated marketing content operation is through cross-departmental buy-in that's bolstered by executive support. Getting your team involved and excited about content promotes collaboration, which spotlights what content your company needs to create in order to close deals and keep customers happy. It provides insight and access into marketing initiatives, ultimately resulting in a better buyer experience.

Here are three ways to start regularly crowdsourcing content ideas.

1. *Find an Executive Sponsor*

This person will be your content advocate, particularly in the beginning stages if you don't yet have the hard data to show the true ROI of your content. Perhaps this is your CMO or another executive that reports to the CEO, but an effective sponsor should have insight into the company's overarching business goals and the strategy for achieving them.

Find someone who can relay content success up the ladder to an executive, while also establishing credibility and authority to the tactical executors. The goal is to get buy-in at the top so it doesn't feel like an uphill battle every time you try to gather the troops for ideation activity.

> **Reactive content strategies do not translate into positive ROI for your team and your company**

2. *Establish a Content Committee*

Identify key stakeholders and subject matter experts across your company and establish an official "content committee." Consider pulling in representatives from the following teams:

- ***Sales/business development***
- ***Customer support***
- ***Customer success***
- ***Product marketing***
- ***Field marketing***
- ***Demand generation***
- ***Marcomm/PR***
- ***Social and community***

By forming an official content committee, you can gain additional insight into themes and content types that will resonate with buyers, while fostering buy-in and internal alignment around marketing content.

3. *Brainstorm, Then Cluster Ideas into Themes*

Many a content marketer has fallen into the trap of reactive content creation. You've probably experienced it before—a sales colleague requests a blog post responding to a question she was just asked by a prospect; a product manager wants a whitepaper yesterday addressing a new pain point the product will address. While these ideas may warrant consideration, reactive content strategies do not translate into positive ROI for your team and your company.

Marketing must always be nimble, and one-off content assets just add to the pile of unused content when they aren't aligned with the goals of your organization.

As mentioned above, the content committee should have representation from buyer-facing teams such as sales, support, and services. They will be able to source ideas for content from buyer feedback or insights into their own role at the organization.

But don't try to tackle these requests one by one—if you do, you'll fall into the trap of creating random acts of content. Instead, group ideas into themes that can be approached strategically and are aligned with larger business goals.

B2B MARKETING SPOTLIGHT: DATAVAIL CROWDSOURCES IDEAS FOR GAME-CHANGING CONTENT

[T]hink it takes an enterprise-sized marketing department for content to make a significant impact?

Think again.

In the case of Datavail, Kelley Bjella and Megan Isherwood blow that myth out of the water. With a focused, data-driven strategy in place, the content managed by their small—but mighty—team now contributes to 75% of Datavail's monthly revenue.

The team implemented monthly roundtables with Datavail's subject matter experts, mining content ideas in a formal, systematic setting. The meetings function like question-and-answer sessions, and ideas are immediately pulled into Kapost.

"Before Kapost, if we weren't able write ideas down or if we would lose ideas in meeting notes, they were just gone—you couldn't get them back," Megan said. Now, ideas are sourced, organized, and accessible.

Once these ideas move to production, efficient processes are key to staying on track and on time. Kelley set up workflows for each step in the content creation process, ensuring that every stakeholder is given a task and deadline. "I can see where I am in production with everything and which personas I'm hitting well and not others, or channels I'm hitting or not hitting often enough," Kelley said. "So it helps us fill in those gaps."

Between more consistent idea generation and a streamlined process for managing content execution, Kelley now successfully runs three times the amount of campaigns that she used to, managing 37 active campaigns in only seven months.

Read the full story.

Build Timelines: From Big Picture to the Details

[W]hen it comes to B2B marketing campaign planning, your rallying cheer should be "communicate, communicate, and communicate some more!"

Launching new content, messaging, or products into the world isn't an ad hoc, siloed act.

Launching new content, messaging, or products into the world isn't an ad hoc, siloed act. A seamless, successful marketing campaign is the end result of department-wide visibility into timelines and responsibilities, in addition to streamlined workflows. Here's the step-by-step timeline that we use at Kapost.

1

Step 1: Set Your Major Asset Deadline

When building go-to-market strategies for marketing content or new product launches, start with the go-live or launch date of the major asset from which your other assets will build. Kapost's content strategy uses the pillar model, where you create and build your campaigns around one major asset, such as an eBook, and build supporting assets from the pillar. You'll work backward to fill in the supporting content deadlines relevant to your pillar launch date.

Step 2: Set Deadlines for Supporting Assets

Next, think through each supporting asset of your pillar launch and assign a deadline for each. Here is an easy template for assigning deadlines for assets supporting your pillar campaign:

Appetizer

Top-of-funnel, highly engaging asset such as an infographic, video, or blog post.

Time of launch: Same day as your pillar/campaign launch. This asset should drive viewers to download your pillar.

Entree (Pillar)

This is your conversion piece. It is gated and brings new leads into your database for your team to determine whether or not they are sales qualified. If this is the first asset that the new lead has interacted with, your team should follow up with drip emails to nurture them to interact with your content even more, and implement content scoring to determine if they are ready for a sales rep to engage them directly.

Time of launch: Day of campaign launch. Have your sales team send the pillar to their leads, and send an email to your existing database in an effort to make them sales qualified.

Dessert

Product-centric piece focused on solution-based content that drives leads to engage with sales.

Time of launch: After a lead has interacted with the entree and become sales qualified. Your sales team uses this asset to drive leads further into the sales cycle.

- *Content authors*
- *Content editors*
- *Content publishers*
- *Graphics*
- *Social optimization*
- *SEO optimization*

Step 3: Assign Content Tasks and Workflows

Assign a deadline and owner to every task to ensure that internal stakeholders know their responsibilities while being able to see the status of others' tasks within the same project or campaign. Identify every task that needs to happen—and who is responsible for completing it—before and after the date of your pillar launch. Consider the tasks and owners to the left when building workflows for each piece of content.

3

4

Step 4: Schedule Collaborative Meetings in Advance

Pre-Production

- *Content brainstorm*
- *Meet with PR, social/community engagement, and events/field departments to align efforts with the campaign*
- *Plan SEO strategy for launch*
- *Meet with design team to determine visual direction of campaign and associated assets*
- *Determine digital strategy (e.g., landing pages, automated email campaigns, A/B testing strategy, etc.)*
- *Final check-ins with all above parties in preparation for campaign launch*

Post-Production

- *Update sales and customer support with relevant assets and email templates from the campaign*
- *Formal review of campaign metrics to determine what worked, what didn't, and key takeaways for future campaigns*

Plan Early, Win BIG

Building out timelines up front prevents a strategy from taking a reactive, ad hoc approach, and keeps marketers from falling into a state of content chaos. By planning your campaign piece by piece, identifying owners early, and scheduling fixed meetings beforehand, you set yourself up to have more room to improve and iterate on future campaign rollouts.

And while it might sound counterintuitive, early planning makes your team more agile and responsive when time-sensitive, high-priority content does need to be produced. By staying organized and scheduled in advance, you give your team more room to innovate, test, and respond quickly to the constantly changing and shifting world of B2B marketing.

> **“Planned marketing strategy” doesn’t mean that your marketing lacks spontaneity”**
>
> *–Ann Handley*

Petulance, Planning, and Pea Guac: A Word from Ann Handley

Author, *Everybody Writes* and Chief Content Officer, MarketingProfs

You and your significant other bae are excited to be eating at a new Mexican restaurant that you’ve heard great things about. At last! We are here! Best table in the place!

But then when you try to order the pea guac (it sounds weird—but just go with it), the waiter informs you that the menu has been changed overnight from Mexican to Chinese.

No guac. Not even any salsa.

But how about some bok choy? It’s a vegetable, right? So. What’s the difference?

Reactive marketing feels like that. Your team is in the groove; spirits are high. Together you are in control and you own the results of your marketing programs. You’ve got this! High-fives all around!

Then the CEO abruptly shifts gears with a request that doesn’t align with your plans.

Requests that come out of left field are annoying and distressing and demoralizing. And when it happens regularly, it derails any sense of shared purpose or teamwork.

And worst of all, your programs will be less effective, because your team doesn’t feel ownership of the process—including the critical outcome.

By the way, a “planned marketing strategy” doesn’t mean that your marketing lacks spontaneity. It just means that whatever creative or spontaneous programs you might consider should align with a bigger marketing strategy

QVIDIAN SCALED CONTENT QUICKLY

LEARN HOW

02 CREATE

"Combining deep customer insights with deep discipline for execution is critical. And rare."

— Matt Heinz,
President, Heinz Marketing Inc.

On your mark. Get set. Go!

[B] **udgets** have been drawn up, personas and sales stages have been mapped, and ideas have been curated. You have all the tools you need to execute on a killer marketing content strategy. But when the pressure's on—can you walk the talk?

The content creation stage is often where marketing teams find themselves feeling overstretched and drowning in content chaos—often because they don't have the right processes in place to automate their efforts.

Managing the overall content production process can get so complicated that it was cited as a top challenge for B2B marketers in 2015. Inefficiencies in content production processes cost midsize-to-large companies a whopping **$958 million each year**.

$958 MILLION

COST OF INEFFICIENCIES IN CONTENT PROCESS FOR MIDSIZE-TO-LARGE COMPANIES

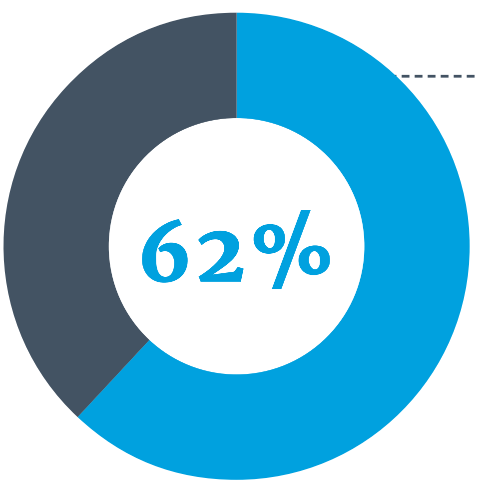
Managing the content production process is the top challenge for B2B marketers.

So why is the content production process causing headaches and internal turmoil?

To put it simply—it's complicated. With potentially dozens of assets being created simultaneously, and multiple players owning different pieces of the creation process, asset generation essentially operates on an assembly line, and needs a machine to power it.

A study by Gleanster Research found that B2B firms with over 250 employees estimate that in an average month, marketing staff allocates 62% of their time to content production. But without a rock-solid plan of attack, valuable time is wasted trying to work around inefficient content processes.

Marketers who are effective at producing content at volume have efficient workflows and structured operations. They set smart deadlines, give their internal teams visibility into the production cycle, and effectively collaborate across departments and teams.



Time B2B firms of over 250 employees spend in content production

Map the Process: Identifying Key Tasks and Roles

Lack of process is the most common opponent to content productivity, eating up time and frustrating even the strongest teams. Without the right processes in place to fuel content creation, assets are constantly stalled in the production phase, with no real insight as to why.

And process has a real impact on performance. While only 45% of average-performing companies use workflows or templates to streamline the production of similar content assets, 80% of marketing top-performers implement these steps into their content processes, creating a solid foundation for meeting and exceeding their revenue goals.

80%

Of top-performing companies utilize templates to streamline content production.

After establishing a process to manage their asset production, USGBC saw a 79% improvement in production time.

Manual production management eats up valuable time and resources, stifling opportunities. When the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) initiated their content operation, their marketing team was overwhelmed with how much content they needed to create, and had no process in place to manage it. After establishing a process to manage their asset production, USGBC cut down their review time from seven days to 12 hours, and saw a 79% improvement in production time.

Having a documented content production process in place streamlines workflows and unites efforts across campaigns, asset types, and even internal teams, allowing marketers to focus on creating high-quality, targeted content to meet their goals, whether that means generating revenue, driving more marketing qualified leads, reducing churn, or supporting sales.

So, what's your first move?

Establish a Team Structure: Aligning Process to People

[E] **veryone** in your organization is a content creator. From marketing to sales to customer success, your internal stakeholders all have skin in the game. Ambiguity in roles and responsibilities within a team structure can quickly leave marketers and other stakeholders wondering, "Who's on first?" when they should be rounding second base.

To map people to the process, decide who's responsible for what, and keep it consistent across content types. Assigning responsibilities to specific people organizes everyone's place within a workflow, which can help teams immediately identify "who's up next" in the queue.

For example, when initiating the content type "landing page," the demand generation team will likely own creating the email within your organization's email automation system. However, they probably aren't responsible for writing the copy or creating images for the page.

Chaos ensues when there are too many variables/ players and not enough clarity around how something needs to be completed. When roles and responsibilities are transparent and assignments are consistent, workflows are streamlined and less time is spent managing production cycles.

The beauty of consistency is faster execution on valuable content that impacts your business.

Chaos ensues when there are too many variables / players and not enough clarity around how something needs to be completed.

Build Workflows: Planning Your Content Types

[N]ot all content types are created equal. Each content type has its own nuances to consider and steps to follow. To cover all the bases, list out every type of asset your organization creates (or plans to create). Some examples include:

- ***eBook***
- ***Whitepaper***
- ***Webinar***
- ***Product sheet***
- ***Workbook***
- ***Blog post***
- ***Infographic***
- ***Landing page***
- ***Email***

Next, list out every task to be completed for each asset before it can go into completion status. Be as detailed as possible.

WORKFLOWS DO NOT NECESSARILY HAVE TO BE SET IN STONE.

Example of a blog post workflow:

1. *Identify SEO keywords*
2. *Assign asset to author*
3. *Submit copy*
4. *Add image*
5. *Complete SEO*
6. *Edit/review*
7. *Final approval*
8. *Publish*
9. *Schedule social*
10. *Evaluate metrics*

Revisit your established workflows annually and take a magnifying glass to the process.

Where are there bottlenecks? Are there steps that need to be added or eliminated? Workflows do not necessarily have to be set in stone. Try testing a few strategies and see what works best for your team—don't be afraid to fine-tune.

Set Smart Timelines: Assigning Deadlines for Major Initiatives

[M]eeting task deadlines is where marketers struggle most in the production process—yet deadlines are one of the best indicators of efficiency. Deadlines help marketers stay on track, measure their progress, and identify bottlenecks.

However, deadlines are not arbitrary dates set simply to motivate us. Smart deadlines take into consideration the average production time per content type—preferably with some wiggle room. They provide framework for accountability, and they align with broader corporate goals.

Identify the Average Production Process for a Content Type

Understanding how long it takes to produce a single type of content is the first step in setting smart deadlines. It gives marketers clarity on how long it should take to complete all the required steps, and it sets realistic expectations. Underestimating the time it takes to complete an asset can quickly lead to burnout among your teams, resulting in sub-par content quality.

72% of marketers say they consistently miss their content creation deadlines.

When considering how long it takes to complete each asset type, use content workflows to frame your planning. Each step in the workflow should be consistent in the amount of time it takes to complete. When [72% of marketers] say they consistently miss their content creation deadlines, that's telling evidence that either: (a) processes are inefficient or (b) deadlines are unrealistic.

Establish the Framework for Accountability

Many hands make light work—until one of the hands forgets, or didn't get the memo.

Just as there are many steps involved in creating a single piece of content, typically there are many stakeholders responsible for different tasks in the workflow. When you assign a deadline to individual tasks, it keeps all stakeholders accountable for their piece. This also eliminates the need for excessive email correspondence, which quickly burns time and kills efficiency.

By communicating deadlines from start to finish before beginning a project, your team starts off with clear expectations and eliminates surprises.

Align Content Initiatives to Corporate Goals

As mentioned before, strategic marketing content is meant to serve the needs of the entire B2B organization. When setting deadlines for major content initiatives, consider other major deadlines within the organization.

Is the product team planning a new release? Is the field marketing team attending an event?

By leveraging broader company initiatives to build your deadline framework, you not only establish a clear purpose and alignment that you can measure and track; you create a richer experience for your audience all around.

For example, if an executive goal is to sell more of a product package that the product team is about to release, marketing can create campaigns around that release, taking all the stakeholders' needs into account. Marketing may produce an eBook and derivative assets to drive traffic and lead volume, but they can also tailor those assets to serve the needs of sales and customer success teams.

When marketing aligns its goals with broader organizational objectives and initiatives, content becomes strategic and mission critical, rather than ad hoc and reactive. The result? Your content consumers are delivered a consistent and complete brand narrative.

When marketing aligns its goals with broader organizational objectives and initiatives, content becomes strategic and mission critical, rather than ad hoc and reactive.

Gain Visibility: Establishing Insight into the Content Production Cycle

[A]s mentioned before, content creation often requires input from many different players across departments and marketing teams. One of the greatest "confusion factors" in content execution stems from not having visibility on the status of a specific piece of content. Likewise, not having a broader view of all deadlines across a project, from start to finish and across every stakeholder, keeps a content strategy from being successful—and puts it at great risk for failure.

Using a central calendar system gives all internal stakeholders visibility into the content production process and also gives marketers insight into what else is happening within the organization.

Using a content calendar cross-functionally enables teams to collaborate easier and align goals and initiatives across teams.

Work Cross-Functionally: Collaborating across Teams without Chaos

Charles Darwin once said, "In the long history of humankind, those who learned to collaborate and improvise most effectively have prevailed."

Just like we, as humans, have learned to work together toward greater innovation, creating marketing content is a concerted effort that transcends a single team. Marketers may create the majority of content, but they rely on the expertise of their internal teams to garner relevant information, gain access to key customers, ideate, and, often, get final approval.

As a marketer, you need to leverage your internal teams as subject matter experts to build an authentic and credible voice for the brand. Successful content creation depends on gathering all of that knowledge from internal contributors without letting it get lost in the shuffle. Because when it's hard to collaborate, it simply doesn't happen. And it's a prevalent issue, too. In fact, **81% of marketers struggle with collaboration and coordination between content production resources.**

For example, when multinational computer tech company Lenovo realized there was no visibility into their content operation and internal teams were being siloed, **they knew they had a big problem**. Not only was lack of visibility slowing down their production cycles, it was also causing ad hoc content creation, which often results in off-brand messaging and redundant efforts. To solve the problem, they invested in streamlining their content marketing program across departments, effectively doubling their asset production over two years.

> **"We had four to five static Excel sheets per segment with hyperlinks to content. We didn't have any history, including which campaign it was part of, how it was produced, or the measurement on the back end. We had no visibility into any of it."**
>
> —*Steve Barnard, Lenovo*

Which leaves us with the burning question, how do you manage content across teams efficiently?

81% of marketers struggle with collaboration and coordination between content production resources.

Establish an Internal Communications System

First and foremost, identify how and where you're communicating with all your teams. Content creation can be seriously stagnated when internal teams don't know where to find it. Establish a singular location where content will live throughout its entire production cycle, and give all stakeholders access to it.

Integrate Technologies for a More Efficient Workflow

When teams are working with different tools and technologies, managing the content creation process becomes more complex. If sales teams are doing the majority of their work in Salesforce, asking them to access another platform or integrate another technology into their workflow can be daunting, and often falls flat.

When assessing your marketing technology needs, be sure that you can integrate as many of your tools as possible. This is particularly important among your marketing automation software and CRM platform, as the flow between initial engagement to sales qualified lead can be more smooth, trackable, and measurable. It's a win for both sales and marketing.

B2B MARKETING SPOTLIGHT: FIVE9 TRIPLES CONTENT LEADS USING ALIGNED WORKFLOWS

[W]hat's the result of establishing a content production workflow that's aligned across a marketing organization?

A beautifully executed pillar campaign that launches on time and yields triple the leads and quadruple the revenue.

When Pat Oldenburg became the Senior Manager of Content Marketing at Five9, everyone was creating content—and it was a mess.

"A lot of people in marketing were creating content in one form or another. PR was making content for media pitches and press releases. Product marketing was creating data sheets and whitepapers for our product. But nobody was creating anything that was buyer-centric content," Pat said.

Facing growing expectations for demand generation and lead growth, Pat needed a process that would enable him to create buyer-centric content at volume and collaborate with all of his key players.

After building a complete content operation that addressed the needs for structure, deadlines, and accountability, Pat saw a dramatic shift in the way he and his team were working, communicating, and collaborating together.

"We created double the number of assets for the pillar campaign than we had for the previous two campaigns combined," Pat said.

> **"We created double the number of assets for the pillar campaign than we had for the previous two campaigns combined"**

The substantial growth in content production also yielded substantial growth in lead volume and revenue. After implementing processes and workflows that enabled persona-specific content, Pat's team produced three times the number of leads and four times the amount of revenue over their previous two campaigns.

"We've heard anecdotally from our sales folks that after this campaign they've had some of the best conversations with prospects that they they've ever had," he said.

[Read the full story.]

Ensure Content Governance: Delivering Consistent, Streamlined Content

[T]o simply say marketers publish a lot of content is an understatement. A study by the **Content Marketing Institute** found that nearly half of all marketers are publishing new content weekly. And to get it all done, marketers across functions rely on a wide range of sources to create it.

That's a lot of different voices and styles—not to mention words—to monitor and keep consistent.

Having a unique voice is important, but if it doesn't align with the voice of the overall brand, there's a problem. Audiences trust sources that are accurate and consistent. If your content doesn't reflect a singular tone and message across the buying experience, from first touch to onboarding, you risk hurting the trustworthiness and credibility of your brand.

Ensure the Right Style – Building a Style Guide

Marketing content helps companies establish trust and authority, and supports the entire customer lifecycle. But if your content doesn't have a consistent look and feel, it's confusing for your audiences, and with multiple contributors working to create content, it can be difficult to manage.

To avoid inconsistency in style and ensure quality content every time, develop an editorial style guide and a visual style guide that you can share with your content creators.

An editorial style guide should include:

- » ***Your company's mission and tagline***
- » ***A preferred word list for the company (for example: do you use "email," or "e-mail"?)***
- » ***A section describing the company's tone and voice***
- » ***A brief section on troublesome grammar***

If you're starting from scratch, use this **style guide template** to help you navigate the tone and style needs of your marketing content.

"Your prospects are searching based on pain points, needs, desires. They are looking for solutions they don't yet know exist. The better you can speak your prospect's language, the better you will be able to align your content with prospect intent."

— Matt Heinz, President, Heinz Marketing Inc.

Put SEO into Your Process

Optimizing content for organic search is critical to its success, yet it's an area that often leaves marketers scratching their heads, unsure of how to tackle the elusive search engine. **Only 52% of marketing organizations are aligning SEO to their content**, while the other 39% are falling behind, hidden on page three of Google search results.

By incorporating SEO directly into the content production process, marketers can stress less about whether their content is optimized for search, because it's included in the production process.

To incorporate SEO into the content production process, marketers need to do three things:

1. *Include it as a key task in your content workflows. SEO should be part of the content creation process, not an afterthought.*
2. *Write meta titles and descriptions. It's an extra step, but it comes with big payoffs.*
3. *Be keyword-aware vs. keyword-driven. Keyword research is essential to SEO. However, relevant, quality content will always trump content that is jam-packed with keywords. The point of marketing content is to serve the needs of your audience and drive impact. Poorly chosen, keyword-heavy content doesn't support that ultimate goal*

START CREATING BETTER CONTENT

CONTACT KAPOST

03 DISTRIBUTE

"Your content strategy starts with your story. We need to write or articulate our story, and then share it across the organization to get everyone on the same page, literally. It's crazy hard to construct a content strategy when we have no story as scaffolding."

—Ann Handley,
Author, Everybody Writes;
Chief Content Officer, MarketingProfs

Creating a Closed-Loop Channel Strategy

[B]uilding a closed-loop channel strategy isn't an easy undertaking, but the rewards are sweet. By amplifying content through your sales, customer support, influencers, partners, and digital channels, you gain an unbeatable advantage over your competition. The following section highlights the major channels to consider in your distribution plan.

Ah, can't you hear the roaring crowd and cheers of victory already?

Maximize Your Internal Channels

As a modern marketer, when you consider your distribution channels, it's easy to think only of your digital channels like your website and social media. While these are certainly key to any successful B2B marketing strategy, in the age of all things digital, it's easy to forget about significant human channels, both internal and external. Some of these channels include sales, field marketing, customer support and success, industry influencers, and channel partners. Failing to leverage these channels does a massive disservice to your overall B2B market strategy, and is a missed opportunity for deeper reach and brand awareness.

Business Development and Sales

Whether you're a product, demand generation, or digital marketer, getting content to your sales team is absolutely critical to determine your team's ROI to closed deals. As marketing becomes more data- and results-driven with the rise of better, smarter technology solutions, top executives will hold marketing increasingly accountable for its contributions to new revenue.

By getting the right content into the hands of your sales and business development teams at the right time, you ensure your team's value and ROI to your company as you support sales. It's a win-win.

Customer Success

A good customer success team becomes an invaluable partner and trusted resource to their customers. They know your customers' pain points and upselling opportunities more than anyone else in your company. Leverage this internal channel with plenty of upsell content and content around best-practice use and other supporting assets.

Field Marketing

Field marketing fosters key relationships with customers and prospects on the local and regional levels, driving strategies to close new business and support retention of target accounts. These team members get quality face-to-face time with potential customers—equip them with valuable, actionable content, and start seeing new leads pouring into your funnel.

Avoid Internal Content Chaos: Build a Central Content Repository

You know that equipping your internal channels with quality content will result in big returns for your marketing strategy. But even though you're pumping out endless streams of content for these channels, chances are these teams still aren't finding and using that content appropriately.

Needless to say, it's frustrating for everyone involved, including the sales guy who still can't remember where to find the right content.

Basically, while your content lives in a nebulous file somewhere, other teams don't even know it exists, where to find it, or how to use it effectively. It's expensive, it's wasteful, and, unfortunately, it's extremely common.

As marketing expert Barry Feldman puts it, ***"It's like pouring money and resources into works of art, only to store them in the hallway closet."***

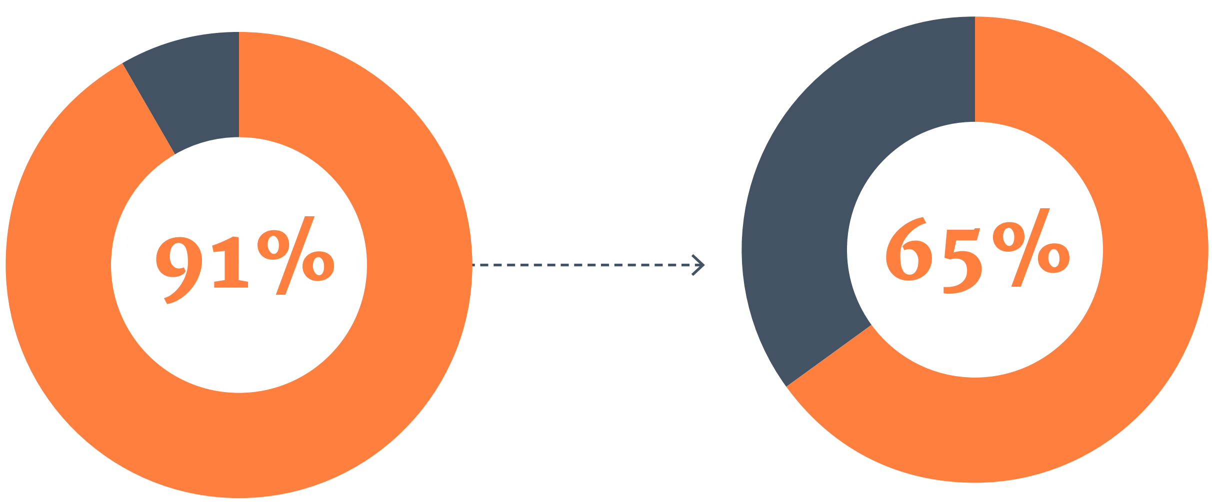
And this isn't an anecdotal issue, either.

While 91% of B2B marketers use content marketing, 65% of B2B content goes unused.

When considering how to reorganize your content into a central repository, remember that successful content becomes "ART":

- ***Accessible***
- ***Relevant***
- ***Trackable***

We wrote an entire eBook on building internal content repositories. **Check it out here.**



B2B MARKETERS THAT USE CONTENT

AMOUNT OF THAT CONTETNT THAT GOES UNUSED

Traditional PR Is Dead: Make a Splash with Influencers

While social sharing, paid ads, and organic traffic are critical to getting leads into your pipeline, it's important to remember to build a sound public relations strategy. But modern marketers know that PR as we knew it in the 90s no longer exists. PR for the modern marketer is all about engaging influencers in your space.

It's important to remember to build a sound public relations strategy. But modern marketers know that PR as we knew it in the 90s no longer exists.

Start by researching what media outlets, analysts, and influencers are covering your industry already: who are the major mouthpieces in your space?

Form relationships with the most impactful and relevant influencers among your target personas. If you have few or no media relationships already established, start off by researching individual reporters covering specific beats relevant to your company.

Once you've identified key contacts, reach out to them directly and introduce yourself as an expert on an industry-related topic, and offer to help them with any stories they're working on. For media outlets, make sure you're not giving them a hard pitch quite yet. You need to establish yourself as an expert and a value-add for other related articles first. For influencers, invite them to guest post to your company's blog, or request their permission to quote them from a book they've authored. The key is to form a trusted relationship.

Once that relationship is built, you can reach out to them with requests and story ideas that would interest that particular outlet, and your influencers will become engaged and enthusiastic channel partners for your company.

Leverage Channel Partners

Leveraging your channel partners is the difference between a first-base hit and a home run, and strong channel partnerships guarantee a more robust reach for your content.

By maximizing your partner relationships, you:

1. ***Gain access to large, new networks that will distribute your content and increase your brand awareness***
2. ***Gain a partnership that resells your product in the marketplace via their existing channels and networks, maximizing your reach and increasing your revenue opportunities***

Coordinate Technology: Distributing the Right Content through the Right Channels

"Content fuels not only the top of funnel, but also accelerates pipeline throughout our sales cycle."

—Doug Sechrist, Vice President of Demand Marketing, Five9

[F]or even the savviest, most experienced marketers, integrating and coordinating your matrix of marketing technologies can be the stuff of nightmares. You've got marketing automation, CRM, CMS, and social media channels. How do you get them to all play nice with each other to create a winning strategy that moves a lead seamlessly and intuitively through your sales pipeline?

Let's start by breaking down the major digital channels you'll likely use to distribute your B2B content, and what to coordinate for a truly integrated B2B marketing content strategy.

You've got marketing automation, CRM, CMS, and social media channels. How do you get them to all play nice with each other to create a winning strategy that moves a lead seamlessly and intuitively through your sales pipeline?

EMAIL

There are so many tools for email out there, how does one even choose? The key here is integration. Integrate your email campaigns with your chosen marketing automation tool, CRM, and marketing content platform. By aligning email campaigns with the right technology, you can get more accurate insight into which emails work or fall flat among the different segments of your database.

Likewise, make sure your automation system integrates with your CRM platform. Otherwise, you risk your contacts getting lost and disorganized as they transition from one system into another, costing your team valuable data about a lead's activity, and ultimately, the revenue-based impact your content has on closed deals.

Here are some things to consider when rolling out your email campaigns.

Segmentation and Targeted Messaging

Successful email marketing is like reading the field and choosing the appropriate play. You have to know your opponent inside and out—it takes tedious study, precision, and discipline. Even if you think that quirky move of yours will delight your audience, the data might show you otherwise.

If your data says your audience likes straightforward messaging, or case studies over product videos, you need to deliver that to them—or face ultimate defeat, via really embarrassing open and click-through rates.

A/B Testing

Most marketing automation software will let you implement A/B testing in your email campaigns. Leverage this feature heavily—it will make your marketing smarter and sharper, and will result in increased ROI from your content.

Test your subject lines and dynamic content. Often.

Do your different personas prefer soft, "you've got a friend in me" language to more academic and to-the-point subject lines?

Do your personas prefer short, no-nonsense body copy that gets right to the point, or do they enjoy a bit of humor threaded within it?

Does the blue or gray call-to-action button attract more clicks?

You get the idea.

BLOG

For many B2B companies, the corporate blog is one of the most successful top-of-funnel channels. It inspires anonymous users to become known leads and eventual customers.

Be sure each blog post ends with a clear call to action that drives leads to either:

1. ***Subscribe to the blog so you have their email information for future campaigns***
2. ***Download gated content via one of your landing pages, thereby raising their content score and pushing them further into the funnel***

Also, make sure your blog is synced with your automation system so it can track which calls to action are the most successful among your subscribers.

PAID ADVERTISING

Make sure that whoever manages your paid and SEM advertising is plugged into your campaign launches. Paid ads can attract new leads in ways your organic leads won't. Ensure that your messaging is aligned so you're attracting the right leads.

Consider implementing content promotion tools like Outbrain, which will help promote your content on top media sites where your target audience is already engaged.

For many B2B companies, the corporate blog is one of the most successful top-of-funnel channels

Strategize for Social: Employing Tactics to Boost Amplification

> **"Social can play a major role in accelerating the buyer cycle, driving revenue, and encouraging customer loyalty. But you must have the technology in place to measure its impact. That technology is marketing automation, and it's powered by good content and a smart marketing team."**
>
> *—Jason Miller, Welcome to the Funnel*

Along with your company blog, a key top-of-funnel channel is social media. However, it often gets a bad rap for not driving people deeper into the funnel.

But a sound social strategy that's aligned with your overall marketing goals can be a killer revenue generator for your company, driving mass amounts of eyes (and future leads) to your landing pages. But you need a sound strategy to optimize this channel.

Here are some key things to consider when building out your social strategy.

INTEGRATE SOCIAL WITH YOUR MARKETING CONTENT STRATEGY

If you're creating excellent content, you already have a strong foundation for social. Here are a few ways to incorporate social seamlessly into your overall marketing content strategy.

- ***Break down larger content assets into shareable, bite-sized pieces***
- ***Focus on building a conversation from your content-sharing activity***
- ***Ensure that share buttons are easily accessible on every piece of content to make it easier for others to distribute to their networks***

IDENTIFY RELEVANT SOCIAL CHANNELS

It can feel like a different social channel pops up every day, but to get the most out of social, you need to choose the ones that resonate most deeply with your target buyers. With that in mind, consider the following channels for your B2B content.

> **"[If] content is fire, social media is gasoline."**
>
> *—Jay Baer, Content Marketing Expert and President, Convince and Convert*

LinkedIn

LinkedIn can be a powerful distribution channel for B2B marketers—in fact, it's ranked as **the top source for professional content.** There are strategic ways to use LinkedIn to build relationships and drive conversion. Start by engaging in LinkedIn groups associated with your industry, and join conversations that relate to your target personas. Also, you can use the publishing platform to share thought leadership and push your content to new audiences.

Twitter

There are over 500 million users on this idea-sharing tool. Twitter is a great tool for having discussions with your audience and answering their questions in a less formal environment. Identify trending conversations in your industry by using hashtags. Hashtagify is free and helps you identify which hashtags are trending among your audience.

SlideShare

SlideShare is an excellent channel for top-of-funnel engagement. To date, it's the largest presentation-sharing community that exists online. It has approximately 60 million visitors per month, and it's largely used by businesses. SlideShare can easily integrate into blog posts and emails, so you can repurpose your presentations for several different channels. Column Five Media referred to SlideShare as the "quiet giant of content marketing."

Facebook

Generally speaking, Facebook is used most commonly for B2C marketing, but it can still be a great tool if it's a channel your audience engages with frequently. Identifying potential personas' preferred engagement channels is key to avoid wasting time and resources on an irrelevant channel.

Pinterest

Depending on your audience, Pinterest can be a lucrative tool for your visual content. Used for visual content sharing such as infographics, blog header images, eBook covers, and photos, people in your industry may be searching for business-related content that can be easily digestible and "pin-able." Consider adding this to your social toolbox.

OPTIMIZE AND ANALYZE SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

To understand the value of your social strategy, and to see which channels and content types resonate with your target personas, you need to measure the impact. There are a variety of social tools out there to track conversions and engagement. Choose one that integrates with your other technologies so you can dig into the data and begin refining your strategy to better fit your personas.

Maximize Your Website for Inbound: Turning Your Site into a Content Conversion Machine

[T]hink of your website as your B2B marketing hub, the mechanism for converting anonymous visitors to qualified leads and eventually paying customers. Building a website optimized for content conversion is a major undertaking and investment, but it's worth it. Your website shouldn't be a static entity serving as nothing more than a digital brochure. It has to be interactive, delighting those who visit with high-quality content that drives the right people to become leads and pushes them further into the sales funnel.

How do you maximize your website to become a conversion machine? Here are some key aspects of your website to consider focusing on.

B2B marketers invest $10-$20 billion annually in mid-funnel technology like email marketing and marketing automation, but **75% of marketers** [who've invested] say the #1 reason that marketing automation fails is the lack of content and processes.

Make Landing Pages Optimized, Primary Destinations

Landing pages are the ultimate power play for turning a person from interested visitor to qualified lead in your pipeline. When you gate your most valuable content, such as whitepapers, templates, or eBooks, you draw in anonymous visitors to engage with your content in a more valuable way—one that merits higher content scores than simply reading a blog or liking a tweet.

Many of your B2B marketing channels will drive to a landing page or contact form, and you need to make sure these pieces are highly optimized for maximum conversion.

Things to consider when building landing pages:

» ***Ensure your message is clear and value-focused.*** Make your value proposition immediately obvious to a reader—they have to know that the sacrifice of their former anonymity will be worth it.

» ***A/B test your landing pages.*** When you're targeting different personas, try two different landing pages for the same persona and see which messaging is more compelling for them. Test different button colors and locations. Test different form fields. This will help you refine your messaging across all of your marketing activities and result in more quality leads for your sales team.

» ***Be honest.*** The last thing you want is for an interested person to find your landing page compelling enough to fill out your form and download the content, just to find that the content is not what was promised to them. In the B2B world, click-baiting will only end in failure. You may get more clicks and traffic initially, but you'll end up with less revenue-based ROI and a bad reputation. Resist the temptation, and be real with your prospective buyers.

Make Calls to Action Clear and Compelling

If landing pages are the doors to conversion, CTAs are the keys that unlock them. Messaging throughout your entire website is key. But the messaging in your calls to action is perhaps the most important part, because this is the piece that sparks the initial content conversion. Make sure your messaging is compelling and speaks directly to persona pain points. It has to pique enough interest to merit the visitor giving you his or her contact information. In other words, the offer has to promise a value exchange.

Make Content Dynamic and Persona-Driven

You want your website to immediately speak to the persona you're targeting. If you're like many other B2B companies, you're targeting multiple personas within a single organization—each important to closing your sale. So how do you focus your messaging on your website to speak to all of them?

Dynamic content.

It takes a hefty investment to personalize your website to your personas, but the result is powerful. Picture this: a company sells software to healthcare providers, and they target administrative heads as well as clinical practitioners. The pain points and value props for these two types of B2B buyers are very different.

With dynamic content, digital marketers can optimize a website to serve up specific messaging based on previous user engagement or known demographic information, such as industry and title. So, if a medical administrator downloaded two whitepapers that focused on better interdepartmental communication or improving board-administration relations, your website could continue to offer administration-focused content instead of clinically-focused content. This creates a tailored user experience on your website, delivering only the content that's relevant to a visitor. This engages the buyer more effectively, as they immediately understand the value as it relates to them. With this strategy, marketers can further impact the buyer's journey in a positive way and contribute to a shorter sales cycle.

Make SEO a Priority

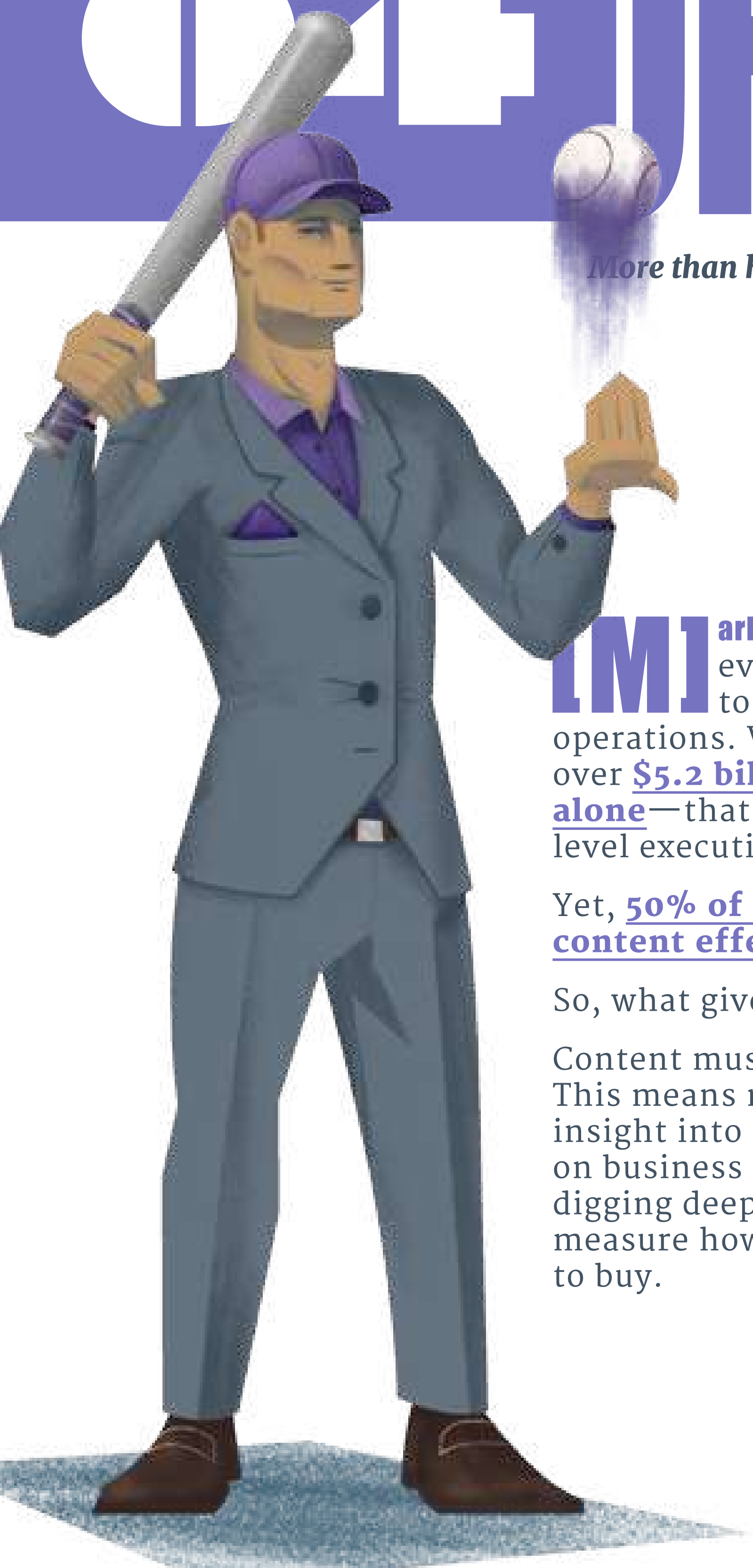
Nothing could be more depressing to a marketer's ears than a beautiful, content-rich (and expensive) website that never gets any traffic attention.

SEO should be a high priority for every website. Research and identify target keywords early in the development of your website, rather than having to go back and rework your messaging to fit keywords. Work with your web and digital experts to get SEO nailed down from day one

HACH AMPLIFIED CONTENT ACROSS CHANNELS

★ READ MORE ★

04 OPTIMIZE



More than half of the average annual marketing budget is dedicated to content

[M]arketing budgets are growing. Now more than ever, marketers are feeling the pressure to prove, and quantify, the value of their operations. With B2B firms in North America spending over **$5.2 billion a year on content creation efforts alone**—that's 55% of overall marketing budgets—top-level executives want to see the impact.

Yet, **50% of B2B enterprise marketers say measuring content effectiveness is a challenge.**

So, what gives?

Content must be tied to revenue to show real value. This means marketers need metrics that give them insight into how content drives quantifiable impact on business goals. Optimizing content for ROI means digging deeper than top-of-funnel reach metrics to measure how content influences a prospect's decision to buy.

Otherwise it's a game of content roulette, and the results aren't pretty.

To measure content's full impact across the buyer's journey, marketers need to track and measure the pillars of B2B content metrics according to their goals and objectives.

Without insight into performance at every stage of the purchase process, marketers can't prove that their strategic content initiatives contribute to revenue.

Measure Results: Reporting on the Pillars of B2B Content Metrics

[M]arketing content has become a major priority for B2B marketers; more time is being spent creating and managing content, and bigger budget dollars are being allocated to it.

B2B marketers create content for a complex matrix of buyer personas and sales stages that—when working efficiently—reach the target audience every time. But top-of-funnel metrics don't tell the full story. Without insight into performance at every stage of the purchase process, marketers can't prove that their strategic content initiatives contribute to revenue.

To measure the full impact of content driving the right engagement, converting buyers at every stage of the funnel, and supporting internal teams to close new business more quickly, B2B marketers have to track performance at every stage of the content and buyer lifecycle.

Internal Reach: How Your Team Uses and Shares Content

Effective B2B marketing content is not created solely for top-of-funnel audiences.

In the complex matrix of B2B selling, internal teams use content to build buyer and customer engagement at early, late, and post-sale stages of the customer journey. Content helps sales and customer success teams establish authority and build trusting relationships with prospective or current clients.

Content plays a critical role in moving buyers toward a closed deal and increasing customer retention; it should be tracked, reported on, and measured against in context of these goals.

Think of every division of your organization as a distribution channel. Internal teams are using content to communicate through one-on-one channels such as email, offering content to meet the specific needs of individuals based on their role, sales stage, product use case, and interests.

By tracking the way internal teams consume and distribute content, assets can be optimized for better targeting and results.

To measure internal content use, content needs to be stored in one single, accessible content repository where internal teams can discover and distribute it. Content should be tagged to specific objectives, such as campaign, sales stage, persona, and asset type, so internal stakeholders can quickly, and easily, find the relevant content the need.

But to gauge if your product, field, or digital marketing content serves the needs of your internal teams, you need to benchmark and track the following:

- » ***How much of the content is used by internal teams?***
- » ***Are teams using content to drive engagement?***
- » ***What kind of buyer engagement is being facilitated as a result of internal content shares?***

Content plays a critical role in moving buyers toward a purchase.

Internal Consumption

- # MONTH OVER MONTH INTERNAL VIEWS OF ASSETS
- # MOM INTERNAL DOWNLOADS OF ASSETS

Internal Shares

- # MOM INTERNAL SHARES OF ASSETS VIA EMAIL OR SOCIAL

Referrals Earned

- # MOM REFERRAL TRAFFIC FROM INTERNAL SHARES

External Reach: Performance across Channels

Tracking types and number of engagements is part of external reach metrics, but marketers must also look at how content creates engagement across channels, and which tools were used to spark valuable action.

Insights that delve into the how, when, and where of content engagement give marketers a full picture of how content performs at different stages and through different channels.

These insights explain where our target audience goes to find relevant content, and how they react to it depending on who they are and where they are in the buying process.

To see impact at every stage of the content lifecycle, track the metrics that matter. Get started with [this B2B metrics template.]

Cross-Channel Reach

- # ENGAGEMENTS PER MONTH BY TYPE OF ENGAGEMENT (I.E. VIEWS, DOWNLOADS, OPENS, ETC.)
- TRAFFIC BY CHANNEL CATEGORY (I.E. DIRECT, PAID, ORGANIC, ETC.)
- REFERRAL PERCENTAGE BY CHANNEL SOURCE

Engagement by Category

- # ENGAGEMENTS BY CONTENT TYPE (I.E. BLOG POST, VIDEO, EMAIL, ETC.)
- # ENGAGEMENTS BY BUYER PERSONA
- # ENGAGEMENTS BY SALES STAGES

Top Engaged Assets

- 10 MOST ENGAGED ASSETS PER QUARTER
- 10 MOST SHARED ASSETS PER QUARTER

Conversions: Content's Impact on Leads and Revenue

Tying content to revenue is one of the greatest challenges modern marketers face. Using a content scoring model, marketers can determine the value and role of their content throughout all stages of the sales funnel. Content conversion metrics provide invaluable insights into marketing content effectiveness, pulling results at various stages of the buyer's journey and identifying opportunities to optimize for greater results.

But how do you do it?

To determine a content score for any type of content, you first need to evaluate a buyer's movement through each stage of the sales funnel, and the content consumed during that stage. Divide the number of conversions by the number of content pieces consumed, broken down into asset categories.

Including content conversions in your dashboard yields the best insights into how well your content is ultimately performing. Attaching numeric value to content assets not only makes it easier to compare the performance of specific assets at various stages of the funnel; it also gives you concrete evidence that shows how your content is working.

STAGES OF PIPELINE	VOLUME IN STAGE	METRICS TO CAPTURE
MQLs	600	» CONTENT SCORE BY ASSET » CONTENT SCORE BY CAMPAIGN (MULTIPLE ASSETS AND CONTENT TYPES) » CONTENT SCORE BY CATEGORY (MULTIPLE CONTENT TYPES AND CAMPAIGNS)
SALs	200	» CONTENT SCORE BY ASSET » CONTENT SCORE BY CAMPAIGN (MULTIPLE ASSETS AND CONTENT TYPES) » CONTENT SCORE BY CATEGORY (MULTIPLE CONTENT TYPES AND CAMPAIGNS)
Closed Deals	20	» CONTENT SCORE BY ASSET » CONTENT SCORE BY CAMPAIGN (MULTIPLE ASSETS AND CONTENT TYPES) » CONTENT SCORE BY CATEGORY (MULTIPLE CONTENT TYPES AND CAMPAIGNS) » REVENUE BY ASSET » REVENUE BY CAMPAIGN (MULTIPLE ASSETS AND CONTENT TYPES) » REVENUE BY CATEGORY (MULTIPLE CONTENT TYPES AND CAMPAIGNS)

"Our biggest competitor isn't another technology company," says Guy Weismantel, SVP of Marketing at Vertafore. "Our biggest competitor is the status quo."

–Guy Weismantel
Vertafore

B2B MARKETING SPOTLIGHT: VERTAFORE USES CONTENT ANALYTICS TO PROVE IMPACT ON REVENUE

"Our biggest competitor isn't another technology company," says Guy Weismantel, SVP of Marketing at Vertafore. "Our biggest competitor is the status quo."

At Vertafore, Guy Weismantel's primary goal is to activate their audience with relevant content, validate wins, and optimize for future success. But to feed a hungry sales pipeline and prove the impact of their efforts, Guy needed data-backed evidence to know what was working, and what failed.

"Marketing at large has matured beyond a 'spray and see what sticks' approach," Guy says. And in order to report on his content operation, he needed the answers to burning questions:

- ***What content is resonating the most?***
- ***Which marketing channel is delivering the best results?***
- ***Where are we strong and where are we weak [in our content production] by buyer persona and product line?***
- ***What is our content conversion rate for leads, opportunities, and revenue?***
- ***What changes need to be made to our strategy or budget to reflect what the data is telling us?***

To find out, Guy implemented a closed-loop reporting system that tied actual revenue to his buyer persona-informed content development.

By tracking content performance throughout its lifecycle and tying it to specific buyer personas and sales stages, Guy was able to easily—and accurately—determine which content was effective and which was not, enabling him to hold his marketing team accountable for their impact on revenue.

Production:
Finding and Clearing Inefficiencies

Time wasted is money spent. Inefficiencies in the content production process cost businesses money—and it's often the most ignored area in content measurement.

Content is the product of content marketing, and marketers need to know how long it takes to get that product to market, find and eliminate bottlenecks in the process, and identify content coverage gaps. It starts with these four areas of measurement.

Average Production Time

In order to gauge process efficiencies from ideation to distribution, start by benchmarking the amount of time it takes to create content in days, per asset.

Once a benchmark has been established, use these benchmarks to identify workflow bottlenecks and clear away inefficiencies in the process.

Average On-Time Delivery Rate

Marketers struggle most with delivering content on time. While pushed deadlines have almost become a given, without metrics to measure what content is being delivered late, and which step in the workflow is delaying the process, marketers have no way of addressing the issue.

To quantify the late-content problem, marketers need to capture how often deadlines are missed, by asset type and contributor.

Bottlenecks and Challenges in Workflows

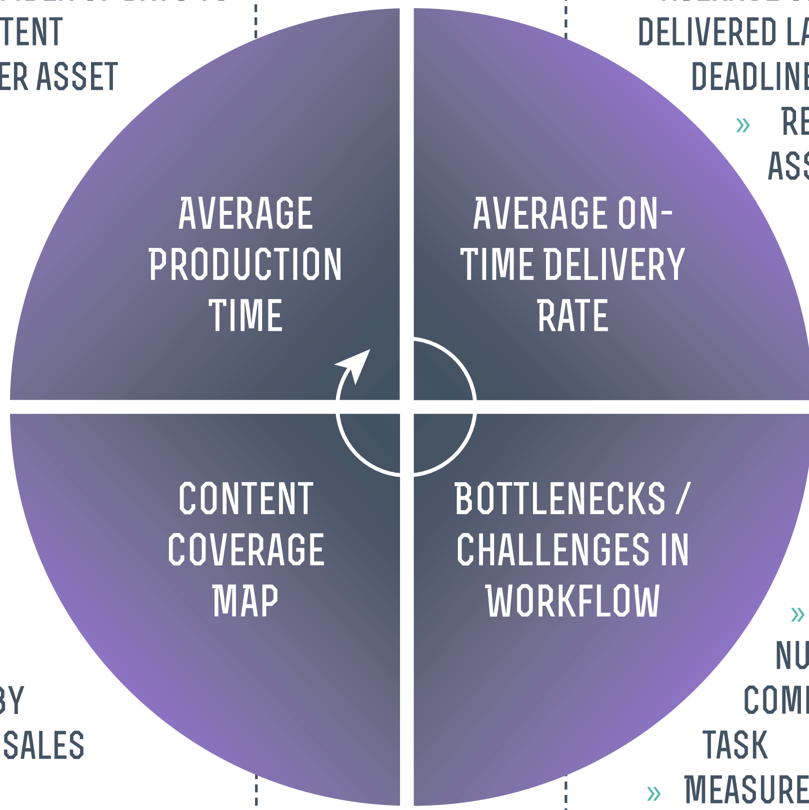
Since workflows guide content creation, marketers need to pinpoint which tasks slow down production. These could be big steps like submitting or designing content, or smaller, yet critical, steps such as approvals or copyedits. To measure this, compare the average time it takes to complete a specific task in a workflow against how often that task is completed late. Armed with this data, marketers can tackle bottlenecks, many of which are easy to fix but typically hidden.

Content Coverage Gaps

In B2B marketing, mapping content to specific buyer personas and sales stages is critical; it's the only way to consistently develop targeted, relevant, and timely content. By aligning content to the buyer's journey (as well as other key objectives like regions, business units, etc.), marketers can locate gaps in coverage and address them strategically. Otherwise, marketers will continue to rely on guesswork to fill important gaps, rather than actual data.

- » AVERAGE NUMBER OF DAYS TO PRODUCE CONTENT
- » REPORTED PER ASSET TYPE

- » AVERAGE OF CONTENT DELIVERED LATE / PAST DEADLINE
- » REPORTED PER ASSET TYPE



- » NUMBER OF ASSETS IN PRODUCTION BY PERSONA AND SALES STAGE

- » AVERAGE NUMBER OF DAYS TO COMPLETE WORKFLOW TASK
- » MEASURED BY DAYS AND PERCENTAGE OF TIME DELIVERED LATE
- » REPORTED PER ASSET

Content is the product of content marketing, and marketers need to know how long it takes to get that product to market, find and eliminate bottlenecks in the process, and identify content coverage gaps.

Create a Content Metrics Dashboard: Measuring and Optimizing Shared Goals across Teams

Understanding how your content is performing across its entire lifecycle not only tells you where your high performers are; it also lets you know how you're reaching your goals. To do this, set up a content measurement dashboard.

A content measurement dashboard should include the metrics examined above, mainly:

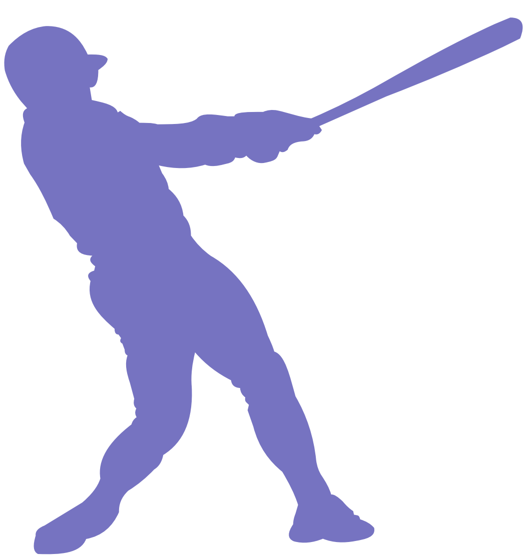
» ***The health of the content production cycle***

» ***Internal and external content engagement***

» ***Conversions and content score***

With a consistent dashboard that tracks performance month over month, quarter over quarter, and year over year, B2B marketers can take important steps toward benchmarking success and sharing quantifiable results with the broader marketing organization and team.

Remember, success is not singular. Your content helps your sales and customer success teams close deals and generate more revenue. Being able to measure how marketing content—from product spec sheets to case studies to whitepapers to nurture tracks—supports the broader organization and helps other teams meet their goals. Metrics showing your content's ROI will increase buy-in for an integrated marketing content strategy and company-wide collaboration.



B2B MARKETING SPOTLIGHT: LINKEDIN'S DATA-BACKED CONTENT INSIGHTS

With 29 unique content types and 23 multi-channel campaigns under their belt, it's safe to say content is at the heart of LinkedIn's marketing operations.

After having great success with the rollout of their first campaigns, the marketing team at LinkedIn needed to scale their content operation.

LinkedIn uses an analytics dashboard to find out which assets are working and which aren't. Using attribution modeling, or "content scoring," LinkedIn is able to pinpoint assets and campaigns that worked in order to optimize content for future campaigns, ultimately resulting in stronger ROI.

Incorporate Findings: Closing the Loop between Metrics and Strategy

The final step is to take your findings and results and incorporate them back into your planning stages for content creation. This is the key to optimization. By measuring the right metrics, you'll be able to make more strategic decisions across the content lifecycle.

For example, if you find that customers who watch a video testimonial are purchasing two times faster than average, ramp up video testimonial production to address all your personas and decision makers. Or, if you notice that customers who learn about your company through Facebook ads convert to qualified leads only .0008% of the time, invest your dollars elsewhere.

Optimization should always feed back into your overarching go-to-market strategy—and with the data to back up your decisions, you'll be able to execute even more quickly, with the support you need from across the organization

MEET THE B2B MARKETING CHALLENGE

B2B marketers, you're on top of your game. Now your team is no longer a cost center, as B2B marketers drive and track revenue across complex sales cycles with persona-driven and data-backed marketing content. But to manage the process requires a strategy for collaboration at every stage of the content lifecycle: plan, create, distribute, and optimize.

It's time to get out of content chaos with a streamlined, integrated B2B marketing strategy. When you play smart, you win big.

Ready? Time to take the field, B2B marketers.

READY TO MEASURE YOUR IMPACT?

★ LEARN MORE ★