

THE ^{B2B} Content Marketing COOKBOOK

NEW RECIPES FOR
LEAD GENERATION SUCCESS



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LEAD GENERATION SUCCESS

New Edition

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Overview





Welcome to the B2B Content Marketing Cookbook — your easy recipe for instant marketing success.

Before we dive into the practicalities and logistics of making your content work for lead generation, let's cover off the obligatory definitions.

The B2B Content Marketing Cookbook is:

- A framework for creating and promoting content to drive b2b lead generation.
- A framework based upon fixed core principles, but flexible enough to deal with new techniques and technologies as they emerge.
- A framework that can fit around any marcomms planning, regardless of budget.

Some caveats:

The B2B Content Marketing Cookbook isn't about lead 'nurturing'; we'll save that for another day. Another day that involves lots of complex lead scoring matrices and spreadsheets.

For the purposes of this cookbook we are not going into the semantics of 'lead definition'.

It's deliberately broad brush. Everyone has their own different definition of a lead, but everyone has a funnel that they need to fill.

This cookbook is about helping b2b marketers like you and us to move away from a model of producing lots of content 'stuff', to one where everything is produced with clear purpose and measured outcomes. We hope you find some inspiration within these pages to help you achieve better content results.

Cordially yours,

The Marketecture Team



Claude Hopkins

1.1 BEFORE WE START CHOPPING...

First, let's just get a couple of things cleared up once and for all:

1. Content marketing is nothing new

“Remember the people you address are selfish, as we all are.

The best ads ask no one to buy.
That is useless.

The best ads are based entirely on service.
They offer wanted information.”

Claude Hopkins, Scientific Advertising (1923)

Content marketing = 'wanted information' marketing.
Just with a snappier title.

There is indeed nothing new under the sun

In 1904, after many years of struggling to shift its jelly, the marketing people at US company, Jell-O, had a re-think.

Instead of trying to sell its product in the traditional way, Jell-O began publishing a free “best-seller” recipe booklet.

Rather than accosting housewives on doorsteps, door-to-door salesmen began simply handing over beautifully illustrated recipe booklets.

15 million recipe booklets later and Jell-O became an iconic American brand.

No need for bloated product claims or clever advertising. Jell-O simply became a provider of 'wanted information'.

Wanted information that inherently positioned Jell-O as a 'wanted' product.



A classic case study of how content marketing, as we call it now, helped to transform the fortunes of one of the world's most famous consumer brands.

2. There are no new rules of marketing

As yet another marketing guru informs you of the new rules of 2.0, ask yourself one simple question:

Has the human condition changed in any way since Shakespeare's time?

Indeed. So why would b2b buyer psychology suddenly change because someone invented Twitter or LinkedIn?

*Top Tip

Search the marketing archives to discover what actually works. And beware the deafening drums of the social media gurus. Ask a question about ROI: that should keep them quiet for a while.

"People love to buy, but hate being sold to"

Again, nothing new as a principle. Just given a new context by the acceleration of www, search and social media. Digital has made it easier for b2b prospects to control their own buying cycles, on their own terms, meaning that sales people are just required much later in the purchasing process nowadays.

Content marketing is simply a manifestation of another classic marketing mantra:

"Find out what people want and give it to them"

People love to buy. Even more, they love even more to consume useful, relevant and timely information. So give it to them...



1.2 KEY GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Some of the 'fluffier' but necessary factors to consider for success with content marketing:

1. Think like a publisher

Inform, educate and entertain. Publishers know how to create and promote content. They do this stuff for a living.

For ideas on the title for your next content piece, don't search the resource library of your competitor's website. Instead, go to your local newsagent and see how the publishing industry works to proven formulas to sell content.

Emotional benefits, blended with tangible figures that create a perception of easily digestible information:

"Five new recipes to make your next dinner party something special..."

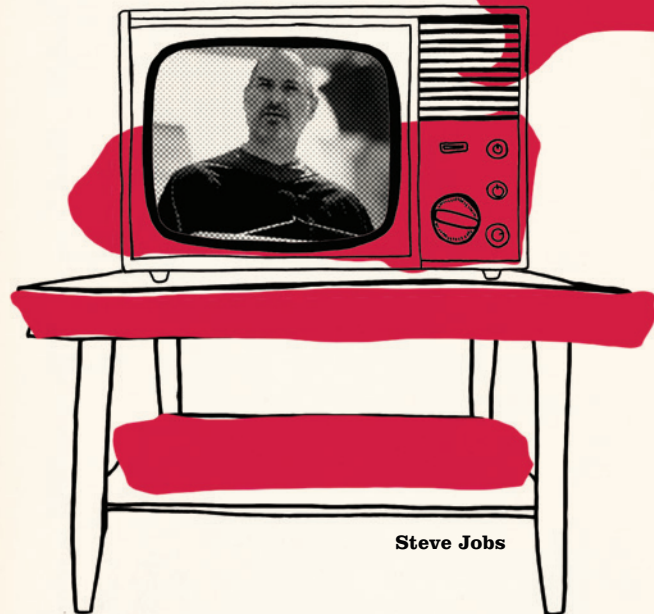
"Seven ways to get yourself bikini-ready for summer..."

2. Tell stories

What's the most popular business video on YouTube?

Steve Jobs' Stanford University address. It begins with a simple line:

"I am just here today to tell three stories"



Steve Jobs

People can relate more to the human experience. It's not always possible to create drama and heroes from your recent network installation case study. But please give it a try — people have been using stories to sell ideas and gain an 'emotional connection' since the dawn of time.

3. Give your intellectual property (IP) away freely

A common challenge presented in editorial decisions around content is just how much IP to give away. A fear of giving the baby away with the bathwater, so to speak.

There a huge payback for giving the market valuable information that can help solve its problems. The inherent positioning created as a trusted problem solver, rather than vendor, has huge implications for the volume and quality of leads generated.

Price negotiations down the line take on a whole new dynamic. If your prospect finds you through your high value content, then where does the negotiation power lie?

Yes, competitors may gain a bit more of an edge on how you think. But aren't you saying something very important anyway?

"If we are prepared to give this amount of good stuff away for free, then imagine how much we're holding back!"



4. Repurpose, repurpose, repurpose.

'Repurpose' is one of the most used buzzwords in content marketing. But it is a buzzword worth remembering for two key reasons:

- 1) Repurposing makes your content sweat harder for you.

Multiple formats mean multiple exposure opportunities. You are just repackaging, not repeating.

OK, so you are repeating. But the prospect who finds you through the SlideShare presentation synopsis of your whitepaper won't care, as they still found you!

Just don't repeat the same content on the same platform. A 'follow' is likely to lead quickly to an 'unfollow' if flogging a dead horse is the way you choose to promote your wares.

- 2) People absorb information in different ways.

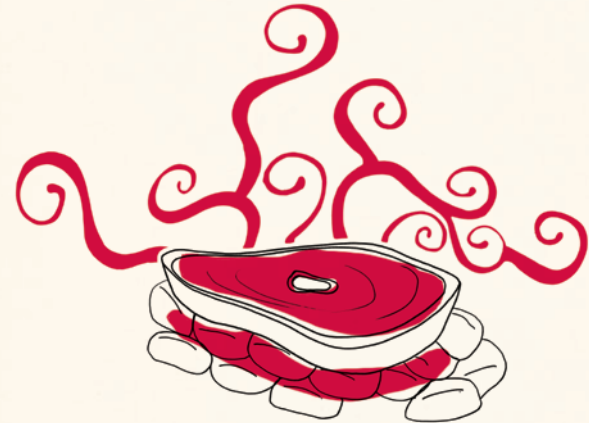
People are different. For every visual person who can only take on board an idea through a one minute video, there's another who much prefers long and detailed text. Different strokes for different folks as they say, so best to cover all bases.

5. Honesty is always the best policy

If you're struggling to come up with valuable market insights, then you are probably clutching at straws. People can sniff out filler content immediately from the real stuff. Just be honest and move onto your next potential theme.

Also, be honest in how you outline potential solutions in the subject area you are covering—even if you don't like them. It will gain you a lot more credibility to actually note other approaches to solving the problem that may not include your own end solution. People are going to look at other options anyway. Why don't you save them some of the hassle in your content piece by doing the base research?

And be honest when you're selling. The lion's share of your content will need to be real meat, not thinly veiled brochure copy. However, don't fear putting in place signposts and calls to action that point people on the path to purchase. Just make them clear and obvious. Prospects know you are not producing content as a public service.



6. Common sense rules

Your objective is to get your treasured content into the hands of your prospects. If you have a very niche proposition and know pretty much who your addressable market actually is, then contact them directly.

You could take the hard path and engage with them in a 2.0 community of interest. Or you could get your content in their hands directly through good old fashioned DM and email. You don't get any extra bonus points for the level of difficulty involved in generating a lead!

Strategy



And we're off... but where are we going?

There's loads of, well, content out there on the rules for producing great content. But this document is about bypassing the soul searching and head scratching, and just giving you the practical tools to get on with it.

So let's make it simple.

One aim. **Lead generation**

Three steps.

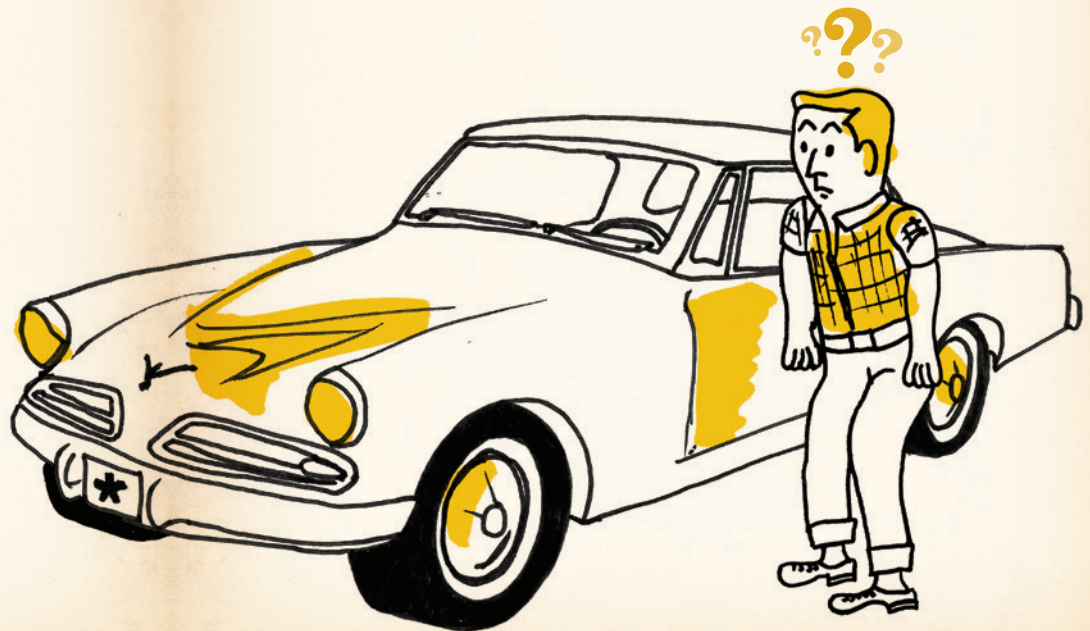
And that's as complicated as it needs to be.



RULE ONE: CREATE

The objective here is to develop a content series which is effectively self-perpetuating. This is not about a rambling soliloquy or a single-minded rant, it's about producing a juicy piece of valuable insight that your customers and prospects will chomp at the bit to get hold of. Think of this piece as the 'hero' to your campaign (or the lead generation hook) and develop it with plenty of 'spin-offs' in mind (the bait piece content to draw your prospects in).

Let's not sugar coat this—of the three steps this is the most arduous, but if scoped and written properly with the long game in mind, you'll end up with a pre-packaged campaign that you can drip-feed with ease to your market over a number of months. Happy days!





RULE TWO: PROMOTE

Once you have your lovely shiny new content, you need to get it into the hands of your prospects. So this step is all about using every relevant marketing communications tactic to do just that. You know your audiences, and as part of your customer profiling, you no doubt also know the best ways to reach them.

Decisions need to be made on the most appropriate formats and channels, so take time to think about whether they're more likely to switch on to video, a DM via snail mail or a group conversation on LinkedIn.

Think about a test and learn project for your first campaign—put a little budget towards different tactics and see what works best. Trial some multivariate testing around your online campaign. Consider PR opportunities—both to your core audience and more lateral influencers. Think about external parties who might be persuaded to push your content out for you.

Above all, make sure everything you do drives traffic back to the hero piece. Because that's where the exchange of value happens, enabling you to get that all important data in the net.

RULE THREE: CONVERT

This is the critical bit. Otherwise you're just producing 'stuff' without a clear goal in mind—and though it might appeal to your inner Chaucer, it's not going to deliver on your marketing objectives and get some leads in your pipeline.

Remember then with everything you produce and promote, all roads should lead to Rome (or your very nicely designed content landing page). Don't give your audiences too many options. Don't distract them with other messages. Don't be tempted to cross-sell or up-sell (the content itself can do this for you).



Looking for more detail on the concept of a prospect's digital interactions?

Search for the phrase: 'digital body language'. There is an excellent book on the matter by Steve Woods of Eloqua fame. It's relatively old now, but arguably the bible.

B2b buying cycles can be complicated things, but for the purposes of your content campaign just define a simple conversion hierarchy and grade digital interactions with your hero piece and spin-off activity accordingly.

2.1 STRATEGY MAP: GOOD FOOD IS ALL ABOUT PRESENTATION

Why?

Selling your new investment in a structured content marketing plan takes charts, lots of charts! People outside of the marketing department have issues understanding our dark arts, so let's make it easier for them.



See over
for How?

How?

Stage 1

CREATE

HERO PIECE

Research
Identify micro-themes
Plan spin-offs
Write
Produce

Stage 2

PROMOTE

HERO PIECE

PR / 2.0
PPC
Advertising
Email
Direct mail

SPIN-OFFS

PR features
Blogs
Infographics
SlideShare
Video
Events

Stage 3

CONVERT

CAPTURE

Content landing page
Corporate website
pURLs

Stage 4

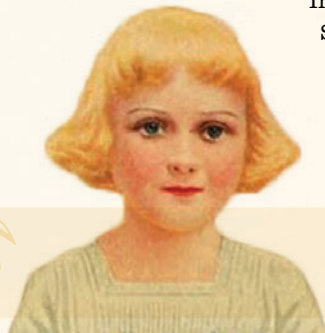
MEASURE

MEASURED ENGAGEMENT

KNOWN ENGAGEMENT

DIRECT ENGAGEMENT

LISTEN



Listen for leads on identified online communities and identify keyword conversations.

2.2 DEFINE AN ROI MODEL UPFRONT

Establishing a content marketing ROI model for lead generation can actually be quite straightforward. It's simply a case of putting monetary value on conversions all the way along your funnel.

Just start that process by asking the killer question at the bottom of the funnel:

What is the average lifetime value of a customer?

Then work backwards.

SUSPECT: Measured engagement

“You know us. We know you’re out there.”

Measured engagement is defined as a measurable digital interaction with your content or a content promotion communication.

Not a conversion as such, but a useful trend indicator to see how the top of the funnel is looking.

INTEREST: Known engagement

“You let us know who you are.”

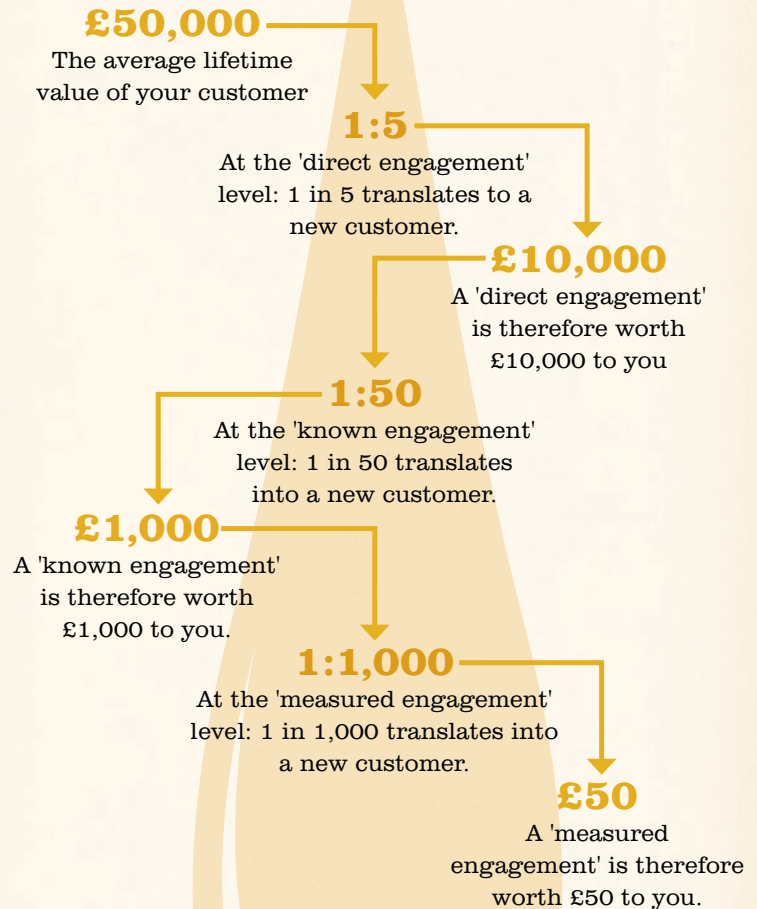
The hand has gone up, albeit tentatively. Possibly with a dodgy email address. However, the perceived quality of your content has created an important psychological exchange: “OK, I’ll swap your content for my precious contact information.”

CONSIDERATION: Direct engagement

“So, you actually want to talk to us?”

Prospects requesting direct sales engagement. A phone call made, a form filled in. In other words, a qualified sales lead.

EXAMPLE ROI CALCULATION



Knowing what a conversation is worth, you can then ask the killer question—how much am I prepared to pay for prospect engagement?



Preparation

3.0 PREPARATION

Steaming ahead with a content marketing plan is a bit like trying to make the proverbial omelette without breaking eggs.

And though the beauty of content marketing is that you're probably 'doing' it in various forms anyway, as with any recipe, it's important to take a look at what you already have in the cupboard.

3.1 TECHNOLOGY PLATFORMS

Ideally you'll already have a marketing automation mothership in place. But, like many businesses, marketing automation may still be on your b2b wishlist. You may have an integrated platform to join all the dots for you. But if you're relatively new to content marketing it's worth a quick 'fit for purpose' checklist:

- **Your blog:** What is its core purpose at the moment? Is it on its own domain or part of your corporate website? Can it be repurposed to support your content campaign? Is the platform fit for SEO requirements? Is the platform compatible for social media integration? e.g. integration with LinkedIn profiles, Google Places etc?
- **Your corporate website:** Does it lend itself to easily display thought leadership content? Does it already contain a knowledge centre? What are the existing conversion paths and points? Is a separate content-led microsite a better option?
- **2.0 readiness:** How are you currently using social media? Do you have existing corporate accounts on Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, Flickr, YouTube, Google+, Pinterest et al? Who currently runs your social media presence? How are individuals in your business using social media? Who are the enthusiasts? And the detractors? What compliance checks do you have in place? Do you have an established 'reputation management' strategy?

- **Landing pages:** Is your Content Management System able to create single purpose microsites or templated landing pages? If not, it may be worth renting a technology platform like www.unbounce.com to give your content campaigns an online hub for push and pull activity, with built-in analytics.
- **Email system:** Most email service providers (ESPs) these days are pretty on the ball with matching new feature updates with each other. But it is worth checking that your ESP is up to scratch with core issues such as deliverability and reporting capabilities.
- **Analytics:** Do you really need anything above and beyond Google Analytics? Are you using any social media monitoring tools which can be integrated into your campaign measurement?

For a content campaign to be truly effective right now, the majority of these items fall into the must-haves camp. Of course, leverage the digital systems you already have in place, but give serious consideration to bolstering your armoury with those you may not have yet explored.

3.2 DESIGN TEMPLATES

If this is your first time entering the content marketing fray, it's unlikely you'll already have design templates for your collateral, be it white papers, toolkits, video, SlideShare presentations or any other tool in the content kit bag.

Do you need a sub-brand style for your content to ensure it has a clear and distinct identity away from your promotional and top level brand collateral? It may be the greatest prose ever written, but if it's indistinguishable from your corporate brochure, who's going to find it? Or realise the difference?

3.3 RESOURCE

By all means go for the start from scratch approach, but if you already have resources at your disposal why not cut your cloth accordingly?

Look within...

...and raid the archives. What information do you already have to hand? Are your files filled with acres of content that could easily be adapted or updated for a campaign? Guides, presentations, PR features?

And what about people? Are there elements of a content campaign you could run in-house; while outsourcing the time-consuming bits to your external agency? If budgets are tight, a little careful distribution of tasks could mean the difference between testing everything and nothing.

Be practical

Don't forget Old Father Time. A good piece of informative and well-researched content takes time to develop and if the theme you have in your head is likely to take too long to deliver, it might be worth thinking again.

And beware the spectre of dissertations-past. Yes, as in academia, bringing in external contributors can add weight to your argument, but it's important to be realistic about how much content they will deliver and how far up their priority list your request for comment is likely to sit.

The golden rule here is 'don't let perfection become the enemy of good enough'. Your audience is interested in the insights you can give them to improve their own business. Whether these insights come from you, a senior academic or your favourite client is immaterial; the end goal is engagement, not name dropping.

3.4 PERSONA PROFILING

Or what used to be called 'audience profiling'. It's just that now it's more about careful consideration of the individual and what's going to touch their hot buttons to pique their interest.

Do you have a clear definition of what your ideal customer or customers look like?

Who do you want to target with your content and what messages do you want to convey about your b2b brand?

If your market is broad, don't try to be all things to all men — 'Jack of all trades, master of all' should be your long-term focus, and if that means targeting one group with this campaign and another with the next, so be it.

As with any dating ritual, it's important to find out a little more about the object of your affections — including most importantly, where they hang out in the digital socialsphere and what seems to be on their agenda right now.



3.4 PERSONA PROFILING

Define their communities of interest

—which LinkedIn groups do they belong to? Twitter lists? Forums? Industry bodies? Trade mags they read?

Define individuals of interest —who are the prolific Tweeters in their field? The journalists, trade bodies, senior academics or any other influencers who could provide third-party endorsement?

Appropriate channels — Alongside where they spend their time, think about how your prospects are better communicated with; if they're rarely in front of a laptop they might prefer to receive your content in hard copy format, or read about it in their monthly trade title, than hover over a snippet on Twitter or a question on Quora.

Prospect data hygiene —the old 'if a tree falls in a forest and no-one is around to hear it...' quandary. Data is a dull but necessary evil for any direct marketing campaign to be a success. If your content plan is going to include outbound activity (and we recommend it does) then you need to go through the painful data cleansing process if you haven't done so already.

3.5 KEYWORD PROFILING

“If content is the meal, then think of keywords as the raw ingredients.”

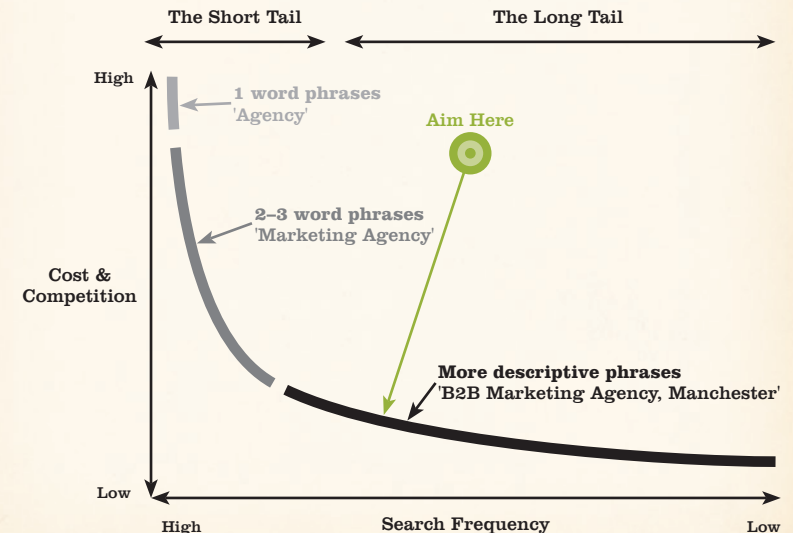
A well considered keyword profile is essential to letting the world find you and your content. It also disciplines your content production efforts around answering questions that your marketplace is asking, in the form of keywords.

This isn't about getting knees deep in the dark science of SEO. It's about considering your buying cycle and the context in which your prospects 'think' along that buying cycle.

Don't restrict your thinking on keywords to web pages. A defined keyword profile will enable effective tagging of all the spin-off assets you produce i.e. SlideShare, YouTube etc.

So what should your keyword game plan be?

Be realistic. Aim for the mid-long tail.



Long vs short tail

Outside of extremely niche markets with only one or two market players, you can safely assume that an SEO battle has been raging for some time. This battle is no doubt largely based around optimising corporate websites for keywords with the highest traffic volume and perceived profitability i.e. the short tail.

If you sell accountancy software then the short tail will be generic industry keywords: [accountancy software].

Work on the assumption that lots of time and money has already been invested in grabbing the 'short tail' with dedicated SEO efforts. Instead go for the path of least resistance for optimum ROI.

Benefits of the mid-long tail

- Lower traffic but less competition = higher chance of success.
- Long tail searches = higher buyer propensity.
 - Think about it — someone using a very specific search term will be a much more qualified prospect: ie. [accountancy software] Vs [online bookkeeping for small businesses]
- Balance your keywords to target prospects in both 'research mode' and 'buying mode'.
- See 5.2.2 for a more comprehensive look at keywords and blogging.

Keyword Profiling

There are many tools out there to help with keyword profiling. Not least Google's own tool:

Search [Google Keyword Tool]

This will give you a competitive picture from a Google Adwords perspective.

However, there are a number of free or low rent software tools that will tell you whether a keyword profile is worth pursuing. Try:

www.trafficttravis.com

www.seomoz.org

www.analyticseo.com

www.freekeywords.wordtracker.com

www.spyfu.com

And **www.inboundwriter.com** goes beyond search to look at real time 'social intelligence' to discover just what your prospects might be talking about.



Creation

4.0 CREATION

The 'hero' piece

Remember the main ground rule...

Plan everything around your hero piece. To be of value it should contain plenty of micro themes that can be spun out to draw people back to the hero piece.

Consider PR opportunities that can be developed from the core content or sit alongside it. Think feature articles, forum conversation starters, an online survey casting for wider opinion; even a round table debate with clients and prospects that could be videoed, or an invite for a guest blog from an industry expert or journalist.

And then get going...

4.1 PICKING A THEME — SO WHAT?

So you've thought of a theme. The first thing to do is evaluate it for its potential interest to your audience. And be tough. Yes, Bob may have spent 20 years knees-deep in IT infrastructure and has some fairly firm views on the subject, but is it new? Is it engaging? Will it stand up against what your competitors are doing? If not; sorry Bob but it's back to the drawing board.

Think of it as the 'so what?' test.

And if that's not enough of a benchmark, consider how the arbiter of all things permission-marketing, Seth Godin would assess it.

"Remarkable doesn't mean remarkable to me. Am I going to make a remark about it? If not, then you're average, and average is for losers."

Ouch. But he has a point—if you're not convinced of the validity of your theme, think of a different angle. Are there moves afoot in your market that will compel your audience to think differently about your products and services? Can you be the first out there with considered opinion on an emerging subject?

It can help when you've decided on a main theme to use the faithful spider diagram—sit your chosen subject in the centre and consider the relevant sub themes that will provide your spin-offs. Then start drawing together a synopsis, ordering these sections to give your piece flow.



And think in headlines: hidden costs and hidden truths are compelling; as are industry perspectives—not forgetting of course the mantra of thinking like a publisher and the benefits of numerical subject headers—think '50 ways to leave your lover'; Paul Simon obviously had his eye on the spin-off opportunities with that one...

Above all, don't be afraid to take a stand. Choose a subject with which you can be candid, colourful and controversial. If you can tease strong opinion out into the media and blogosphere, it will be much more likely to spark debate and interest in your full content than an on-the-fence stance.

4.2 WRITING TIPS

1. Number one—and the most important one of all; don't be precious about your writing ability. Your office may harbour the greatest sales people in the world, but that doesn't necessarily make them the greatest writers. Writing—and content writing, which is so often about well-researched thought leadership—is a journalistic skill and if you don't have it in-house, consider outsourcing.
2. If you are confident you can write, make it digestible—whether your audience is filled with Guardian or Sun readers, no one wants to fall asleep over fifty word sentences. Stick to basic copywriting principles; keep it concise, to the point, but above all, engaging. Think about tone—do you have an established brand tone of voice? If not, we'd recommend direct and professional, yet conversational, and interspersed with bullet points, tips and graphics where appropriate.
3. Cheat—No, we're not recommending plagiarism; just delving through your files or current PR material for any pre-approved copy that can be re-worked or updated for your hero piece. If you already have something you can use as a starter for ten, getting your first campaign off the ground will be much easier.
4. Think soft sell—the aim is not to be overtly promotional—your other marketing communications activities can fulfil this role. Instead draw attention to and offer guidance on the issues facing your target market; their pain points and problems, thereby implicitly providing comfort that you are **the** expert in providing the solutions.

5. Make it useful—Is there anything practical you can include to help prolong your hero content's shelf life? Perhaps templates or checklists that can act as reference tools at a later date?
6. Bring balance to the force—Don't be afraid of referencing the counter-view to your own. Of course, the ultimate aim is to draw readers to the solution that you can offer, but so long as this is more compelling than the counter argument, deliver a rounded discussion by covering off both sides of any opinion-based debate.



7. Think about where people will read your content—OK, so many will print out a hard copy and browse through it at their desk—but they're equally likely to digest it during a train journey, on their iPad, smart phone or other mobile device.

Remember this when deciding on format. Your content should be developed to be contextually relevant—and in the case of mobile this means 'strokeable'; i.e. as easy to flick through on a tablet as in paper format. Consider an e-book version, a playbook or interactive PDF. Make sure the font size is legible and it's easy to navigate.



Promotion

5.0 PROMOTION

Divide your promotional activity into two; the hero piece and the 'spin-offs'.

5.1 PROMOTING THE HERO PIECE

5.1.1 PR

In reality, much of what we now refer to as 'content' is the thought leadership you've been packaging up and using to promote your business through PR for years. It's just that now (aside from a bit of hair gel and shiny new shoes) it has added ROI tangibility and new promotion channels thrown in for good measure.

PR then, is intrinsically linked to content marketing and should be the very first tactic on your promotion list.

One of the benefits of PR of course is the potential to extend the reach of media relations material with just a few tweaks, so consider how your core content could appeal to your different verticals or individuals and tailor your launch release accordingly.

To make it topical, when you're ready to unleash your hero piece to the world, do a quick check of the general news agenda—in your market and more broadly—to see if there's a hook that you can weave in to pique media interest.

Check out upcoming trade press features lists too, to see if there are any relevant to submit comments to, or to offer an exclusive overview of your content theme.

And don't forget online media and the blogosphere—many of the media have online correspondents specific to individual sectors and issues and they should also be on your distribution list.

5.1.2 SOCIAL MEDIA

Whether you're a 2.0 master chef or a fast learning commis, effective use of social media to promote your content will depend on a number of factors.

Yes, the tools may be fairly prescriptive (although beware local differences if you're speaking to an international audience), but the way you use them shouldn't be. Internal policies, brand style and your current presence will all impact on your campaign.

And if you don't already have a social media strategy in place, use your content project as a 'test and learn' opportunity.



Recipe Tips

Consider the following:

1. Generic or campaign specific? Is your prospect universe broad? Has your content been created with a specific audience or issue in mind? If the answer's yes, then consider setting up separate social media accounts, or groups by sector or theme to ensure en pointe relevance to your audience.
2. Company or individual-led? Is your aim to position specific individuals from your company as your brand ambassadors? Is your content opinion-led? If so, lead with people rather than your b2b brand to encourage engagement.
3. In-house or agency driven? Resource is a key issue for maintaining momentum when it comes to social media execution. The objective once you've started the conversation is to keep it going and it can often prove difficult for this to be handled effectively in-house with so many other projects fighting for time. If your agency has guidelines and sticks to the agenda set by your hero content, there's no reason why they shouldn't manage your social media presence with a clear steer. Of course, on certain platforms e.g. LinkedIn, it's all about what you as an individual can bring to the party, so engagement here is better handled in-house, but your agency can provide you with pre-packaged conversation starters and responses.

4. Which brings us neatly on to compliance: do you have a strict social media policy already in place? Will everything you tweet need to pass via the brand police first? If you can't get them to relax the rules a little, make sure your hero content is approved and calendarise your 2.0 activity around relevant themes and forthcoming events as much as possible. Consistency in tone of voice is brand critical, but an overly zealous policy for policy's sake can quickly kill enthusiasm and dilute great opinion if too heavily guarded.
5. What about language barriers? Social networking revolves around peer-to-peer conversation. Some platforms, such as Twitter, are effective for broadcasting news, in which case English, as the default business language is acceptable. However others tend towards personal interaction and opinion. If you're dealing with an international audience careful consideration should be given to local champions who can converse in the correct language on your behalf.
6. How should you 'sound' on the social stage? In 2012 social media is as likely to be your audience's first interaction with your brand as any other marketing communication, so your tone of voice in the 2.0 universe should reflect your b2b brand's personality and values as much as any other media. Of course Twitter and LinkedIn can be much more conversational and casual than your corporate brochure (particularly if people, rather than company-driven) but the ground rules remain the same—be authentic, avoid jargon and keep it clear.



Quick wins—exchange your content for a 2.0 thumbs-up

Include social networking plugins within your landing page and get visitors to promote it to their own followers via a 'like' or 'recommend'. Not only will it get your content in front of a broader audience, it will also imply pre-qualified endorsement.

Alternatively, take it a step further and offer your hero knowledge share in exchange for a 'like', or encourage visitors to 'pay with a tweet'—an automated message and link that appears in their Twitter timeline. OK, so you won't get that all important email address, but they'll fall into the 'known' camp and your content will get some free promotion for zero or little effort.

www.paywithatweet.com

Be proactive

Social media platforms provide the easiest option to promote your hero content. Whether you tweet a link to your landing page, upload your white paper to your LinkedIn profile, start your own issue-led social group, or generate Pinterest in your latest infographic, it's the quickest route to conversational engagement with your audience.

Of course it's important if you're new to the social media game to ensure that you have an audience to play to in the first place, so before signposting your hero content, spend some time on small talk first. Identify people you would like to converse with. Follow them—then take a look at who's in their network and follow them too. Pick through the groups they're members of and join those that look relevant. Start tweeting links to interesting external content, or drop your preamble thoughts into a quick blog and signpost that.

Above all, keep momentum and give people what they want. Think of a follow from an individual on social media as an implied contract—that you will continue to hold their interest so long as you provide them with useful information and don't deviate from what they've come to expect from you.

And remember mobile when considering your social media strategy—mobile social media can be as much about a requirement for quick response as bored browsing, but either way, the key is 'quick and digestible'.

Health and Safety Warning: Be careful with cross promotion. The world is getting used to social media and using each platform for what it's intended. Yes, you can link your Twitter feed to your Facebook page but it doesn't mean that you should. Particularly if your network on one platform is entirely different to another.

Be reactive — listen for leads

A 'listening' service should sit alongside your proactive social media programme to provide the reactive counter-balance.

Keep your ear to the ground across multiple platforms. Subscribe to relevant e-newsletters, set up RSS feeds and Google Alerts, join online communities and LinkedIn groups and read blogs from influencers in your field. Monitor the news agenda—broadly and in your sectors—and be prepared to respond with quick and timely comment when appropriate.

This might mean a hastily crafted press release for the on and offline media, a blog comment, a tweet to relevant content or a forum conversation starter.

Just remember. Signpost your hero content at every relevant opportunity.

5.1.3 MEDIA ADVERTISING

Advertise your content. Think of brand awareness as a happy by-product of all that tangible ROI from your data capture. Remember Claude Hopkins' mantra from 1923 that the best ads offer 'wanted information'.

And remember, beside this wanted information that your content can provide, think about how it positions your brand in terms of implied expertise:

'Read our content and come to your own conclusion that we're great' is a much more powerful message than 'We're great. Because we say we are.'

Consider a print or banner ad campaign on your trade media's sites or industry e-newsletters. Test different benefit-driven messages ('Free' tends to work well...), ad formats and pages. And make sure your tracking is set up properly to capture as much intel as you can from multivariate testing activity.

Outbound activity

If your budget allows, it's worth considering some outbound activity to support your inbound efforts.

5.1.4 EMAIL

Give your content a free promotional ride in your regular e-newsletter if you have one set up. Consider a stand-alone launch campaign for your hero piece to your prospect base. Look at a template for your sales guys to adapt with personal messages. If you've got marketing automation, great — if not, use your content as a one-to-one tool for sales engagement with your prospects.

5.1.5 DIRECT MAIL

Yes email is easy to measure in terms of effectiveness—but how important does it make your prospects feel? Physical DM holds an implication of value against today's saturated inbox.

Think back to your customer life value calculations: how much are you prepared to spend to secure a lead? If necessary, tier your audience, work out a sensible unit cost, and drive them back to the web for that all important measurable engagement.

If you're a junkie for measurable engagement, then it may also be worth a look at how you can track response to your print promotion with personalised URLs (pURLs).

Of course you could simplify the process all together and get your content in the hands of your prospects by simply sending it to them with a personal letter. Handwriting introduces a whole new level of personalisation for highly targeted campaigns where you have a limited audience.

Why the effort to personalise? Because they're worth it...

5.2 SPIN-OFFS

Remember the main ground rule...

Calendarise: plan to drip feed your spin-off and content promotion activities over several weeks post-launch so you're all aware of what's coming next. Keep the ball rolling.

The slog has gone into producing the hero piece. Everything is signed off and approved, now you can really start to spin out that content in as many ways as possible—or as far as your budget will allow.

5.2.1 SPIN-OFF PR

Once your launch campaign for the hero piece is complete, the world's your lobster as far as spin-off PR is concerned.

Consider traditional media relations tactics—news, features and commentary opportunities and continue to listen for leads and respond accordingly.

Plan ahead as far as possible, taking your (carefully planned) sub-themes as the focus for spin-off features, even broadening their appeal by including client or prospect input.

Client case studies are in fact a worthwhile addition to your hero piece if relevant—if your client is willing, take their perspective and pitch it out to the media; often journalists want to hear about how a theory works in practice, so this may be an ideal opportunity.

Think about the headline potential of a quick and dirty online survey around one of your sub-themes—or a picture story based around an infographic and some headline stats.

Look too into the opportunities to draw the story out into more rounded campaigns.

Would your content theme appeal to one of your key titles to work in partnership with you for example? Why not pitch in a series of co-branded activities? An opinion piece, followed by a survey, followed by a round table debate chaired by your media partner with influential industry representatives and your key prospects in attendance?

It may be of course that a little palm greasing is required, but with advertising revenues at an all-time low, and the fast pace of online news leading to a move away from breaking news to opinion forming, the print media in particular is often more open to campaigns that position their titles as thought leaders, as much as you.

5.2.2 BLOGS

Aside from PR and social media, a blog can be your most effective spin-off tactic, so it's worth taking some time out to consider its benefits and develop a concerted plan for blog content development.

Remember; stick to your guns about the core principles:

Create; promote; convert.

Rinse and repeat.

CREATE

Take a step back — why are you blogging?

For you

To gain a 'free' source of inbound leads from prospects searching for answers on the ether.

For your prospects

To gain relevant insights, thinking and answers that will help them to be more successful in their own roles. “You can improve my knowledge and make me look good” is still one of the most effective drivers for people to follow you socially.

Stick to the plan.

If your hero content piece has been planned correctly then you should already have a ready-made blog series.

Your micro themes can now be repurposed as blog articles that answer specific questions posed by your prospect universe.

Example: If your hero piece is titled “10 new industry trends that will impact your business strategy in 2013”.

Voila—you have 10 separate blog articles ready to be repurposed and promoted.

Keyword planning

Don't view optimising your blog for SEO as some kind of nefarious black hat activity. You have produced a great piece of content; so be confident — this will have real value for a particular prospect at a particular time in their buying cycle.

All you are doing is gently letting the search engines know your blog should be considered as a valuable resource for specific search engine queries.

Just think of your blog as the 'A' bit of a Q&A session.

A Q&A session between human beings. Remember the old mantra that businesses don't buy from businesses; people buy from people.

So how do you find the Qs?

All roads start at Google's own tools for assessing search volumes and competitiveness.

However, always treat with a heavy dose of scepticism the revealed keyword volumes and competitiveness. You only really get a true sense of keyword volumes and the realistic prospects of a page listing once your page is live.

It seems counter-intuitive, but try not to think of keywords as keywords. Keywords are essentially a snapshot of how your prospects are thinking at a particular time. They could be in research mode or buyer mode, but they are implicitly using keywords as a question to locate answers.

As a rule: the more specific the question, the lower the competition and the higher the chance of getting your blog listing on the Search Engine Results Pages (SERPs).

Think laterally about the types of questions your market may ask. Better still, gain some concrete evidence.

Test your thoughts on the keyword profile that your prospects might use on platforms such as LinkedIn Groups, LinkedIn Answers, Branch, Quora, BepI, Technorati, Reddit and Yahoo Answers.

Also, why not grab the short tail keyword phrase and insert a hashtag to see what people are actually trending and talking about on Twitter?

And don't be afraid of picking up the phone and ringing existing customers to understand how they searched for information along their original path to purchase. What type of keyword phrases would they instinctively use?

Finally, look at what your competitors are doing. What page titles are they using for their own blogs?

Keyword profile checklist:

- 1) Is the keyword profile realistically achievable from a search results listing perspective?
- 2) Are the target keyword phrases clearly focused on the specific subject area you are covering in your 'micro-themed' blog?
- 3) Make sure you include no more than three target keyword phrases per blog. What synonyms are available for your target keyword profile to avoid being overly repetitive?

Recipe Tips

Forget keyword density. Page titles and headers are where the action is at these days — Google is categorical on this.

- Don't fear low traffic volumes. Most b2b marketers operate in niche markets so even if the traffic volumes are low just think who these people might actually be. Fewer = more qualified.
- Use images and don't forget the alt tag descriptions with the target keyword profile inserted.
- Use the target key phrase in the first and last sentence.
- Copy length — aim for anywhere between 200–600 words.
- Use the target key phrase approximately once every other paragraph.
- Use bold to highlight target keyword phrases.

Writing your blog

The overriding principle: Write for humans first and the search engines second.

Check: Base content should be taken from a micro-theme from within the hero content piece.

Check: Carefully choose three tightly targeted keyword variants.

[Indemnity Cover]

[Professional Indemnity Cover]

[Professional Indemnity Insurance Cover]

Headers

Your page header and page title should always include your target keywords and should be close to the target keyword phrase. Try to put the keyword as close to the start of the header as possible.

The same principle applies to those crucial <h1> tags.

Sub-headers

Long copy is fine; just break it down into digestible chunks. Sub-headers are not only essential in creating readable and scan-able copy but are also great for SEO.

- Mention target keyword phrases in sub-headers where you can (at least 30–50% of the time).
- Don't overkill the keywords though; try using synonyms instead. Search engines are pretty clever and can easily work out synonyms so there's no need to worry that they won't understand. But if possible try and use variations of your keywords. Remember; humans first, bots second.

Blogs

For inbuilt guidance on what constitutes a well optimised blog, try installing the www.yoast.com plug-in for WordPress.

You may want to toil with the manual approach first. Then perhaps leap into an all-in-one solution for all your inbound activity such as www.hubspot.com



PROMOTE

There are probably over 100 things you could do to effectively promote your blog. Some more laborious than others, but the good news is that automation tools are making all this a lot easier.

For now there are essentially three categories of promotional activity for blogs:

- 1) Let the search engines know
- 2) Let the relevant online communities of interest know
- 3) Get some free rides

1) Let the search engines know

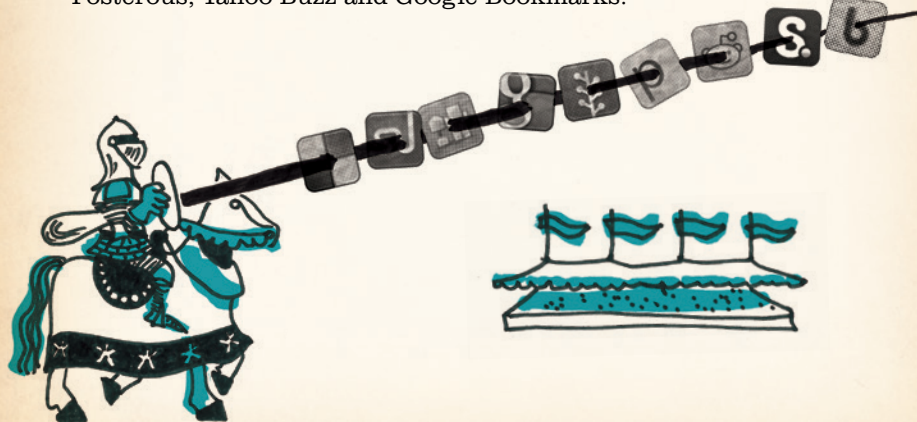
- Social bookmarking sites.

Write a synopsis of your blog—the blog elevator pitch if you like.

One that includes your target keyword profile and clearly states a benefit and/or curiosity factor behind your blog entry.

Then post this to social bookmarking sites:

Reddit, StumbleUpon, NewsVine, Delicious, Digg, Scribd, Posterous, Yahoo Buzz and Google Bookmarks.



Labour saving devices

Try www.onlywire.com to automate the whole promotion process on social bookmarks and social media at the click of a button.

- Set up a quick Pay per Click campaign

If your post is too valuable to risk relying on the lottery of an organic listing then why not set up a niche/long tail Google Adwords campaign specifically for your blog? Assess the conversion performance against directing people directly to your corporate website. Think about the rules for social media: are people more engaged by a human voice than a corporate voice?

2) Let the relevant online communities of interest know

Quora, LinkedIn Groups, LinkedIn Answers, Google+, Branch, Facebook groups and relevant industry forums.

- Contribute to groups and forums

Existing conversations

Search around your target keyword profile and see if there are any conversations around the subject area, which you and your blog post can add some value to.

Health and Safety Warning: People can sniff out templated 2.0 conversations just as easily as they can sniff out a formulaic telesales script. Make your contribution useful and contextual; if there is a genuine value to the conversation in your blog, then post a back link.

Start your own conversations

Use a link to your blog as a prompt for a conversation starter. Again, moderation and common sense prevail in terms of your approach—no one likes a self-promoting narcissist.

- Comment on other people's blogs

Using your trusty keyword profile, search for blogs that you might be in a strong position to offer comment and pointers on to link back to your own blog:

www.google.com/blogsearch

www.technorati.com

Health and Safety Warning: Check the rules and policies in set for comments. The most popular blogs get hammered by people looking to trade off a high Google Page Rank with spammy backlinks. The rules to keep front of mind—be useful and contextual.

- Post to Twitter

Post your blog pitch to Twitter. Search out any hashtags to see if you can join an established thread to capitalise on a #trending topic and a captive audience in waiting.

If you have followers that are known mavens/influencers in your space then direct message (DM) them and ask for their thoughts on your musings.

- Contribute as a guest blogger

Submit your blog to the editors of your online trade media/associations and ask if they think it will be of value to their readership. Adapt the blog focus, and if necessary, the tone of voice to the needs of their specific readership but stick to your core ideas and thinking.

The profile opportunity and SEO benefits from this activity are well worth the time investment in a highly personalised approach. Hey, why not even pick up the phone rather than email?

- Get a blogroll

You post the blogs you like and it builds further relationships in the blogosphere. It's based upon reciprocation, so be prepared to give to get.

3) Jump on some 'free rides'

- Add a prominent 'Share' button to your blog so that readers can spread the word.
- RSS—don't forget to turn on your site feeds. If people are receiving updates to their newsreaders they are generally more likely to read your blog.
- Add your blog URL to all corporate email signatures.
- Email your LinkedIn contacts with a synopsis (TIP: make sure this is genuinely insightful and unique information—trust online is hard to gain but really easy to lose).
- Add a blog link feature to your regular e-newsletters.
- Email your prospect data set with a simple plain text email with your adapted blog pitch.

Important technical stuff

URLs

Your blogging efforts will really help with the SEO performance of your corporate website if you go for this URL structure:

<http://www.companyname.com/blog>

<http://blog.companyname.com> will create SEO authority for the blog, not necessarily the corporate domain.

Quick vs Effective

Yes there are some great free 'point and click' tools that can get you set up and blogging in minutes. Almost all the usual suspects have some great interfaces for DIY blogs—WordPress, TypePad, blogger.com etc.

But caveat emptor, if your blog looks like an off the shelf job, quickly thrown together, then this may turn off prospects immediately. They are looking for immediate clues as to the quality of your ideas and thinking; don't do them an injustice with a blocky blog template. Even if design only turns off a third of visitors, it's a third fewer getting to see your content.

Also, if you are essentially renting directly from a blog build website (for example: <http://blogname.wordpress.org>), then the SEO benefits of your labours will be largely accredited to WordPress and not your corporate website.

Where budget and time allow, always go for a self-hosted solution that you can customise to your heart's content.

Recommended self-hosted platforms: www.WordPress.org and www.Drupal.org (TIP: Both are compatible with LinkedIn, so your blog can be easily pulled through to your profile, unlike some other blog platforms).

5.2.3 INFOGRAPHICS

Infographics—or if we're being totally up to speed; datavisualisations (or dataviz)—are one of the most effective ways to get your content point across, particularly if it's heavily supported by facts and stats.

Often used within the broadsheets and consumer media and making their mark on the world of billboard advertising, they are particularly successful in the social media arena—with an infographic on a blog much more likely to be shared than a standard text post—fact!

There are a few key pointers to keep front of mind when using infographics:

1. Keep it simple
2. Keep it relevant
3. Ensure that it simplifies, rather than confuses your content theme
4. Always reference your sources or give credit, where credit's due
5. Make sure that your infographic is easy to download (try capturing an image and posting to Flickr)

As with any information vehicle, there are online resources to help you produce these visual data feasts for free, so don't go spending a fortune on graphics, if you don't need to.

5.2.4 VIDEO

According to research conducted by Forrester, Google values video content around 50 times higher than static text.

But this doesn't mean you need to discover your inner Spielberg. Just think about your spin-off content and how its reach can be extended through video.

Sending out some feature commentary?

Then why not interview your key spokesperson delivering the same thoughts in a 'talking heads' style interview and pitch it out to your online media?

Running a seminar or a round table discussion?

Video and edit any shared wisdom and pick up the keynote speeches, soundbites and key issues being debated. Set up your own YouTube or Vimeo channel, stream it into your site or offer it as a free taster for your hero content on your content campaign landing page.

Or take things further and aim for the 'Share'—be a little controversial or off the wall and turn your audience on to the viral potential of your video content.

5.2.5 SLIDESHARE

SlideShare is a simple, yet effective medium for promoting your hero content in a digestible spin off format. Perhaps one of the most effective 'freemium' media distribution platforms out there.

Already have a PowerPoint template? Just draft a quick digest of the key facts from your content to attract your audience into visiting your site and downloading your full hero piece.

And take note from SlideShare's own tips on creating the perfect presentation. The idea of course is to tease viewers into downloading your hero content, so keep it short, sweet and visual.

5.2.6 PREZI

Prezi is an online presentation tool that offers an inventive way to share your content. It acts like a PowerPoint presentation, but with a dynamic canvas that lets you zoom in and pan around slides, providing a much more interesting experience for the viewer.

You can import PowerPoint slides, images and video to create a presentation that can inform and impress in equal measure. You can also add PDFs, be it a downloadable summary of the presentation or a whitepaper on the same subject.

With such creative options at your fingertips, it can be tempting to over-egg the pudding, but it's important to remember that your content has a job to do. Start with a specific goal in mind and make sure your presentation takes viewers where you want them to go. There are tutorials and example presentations on the Prezi site that illustrate how to get your point across both creatively and succinctly.

www.prezi.com/explore

5.2.7 EVENTS

Eager to speak directly to your prospects? Content is a great basis for events. Think about testing feedback with a round table or breakfast debate, and if it's well received run a seminar, or use the subject matter to pitch yourself as a keynote speaker at an industry exhibition.

If your target market is spread a little further afield, consider broadening your geographical reach with a webinar. Think about making it as interactive as possible—include visual aids, consider including customers and prospects for a panel debate and invite live questions or run polls and feed back to the audience as the results come in.

Webinar tools are becoming more mainstream with free platforms offering as much interactivity and as many support tools as paid for platforms—the only difference being some exposure to on-screen advertising.

Many of the more established operators offer a freemium model, with events for up to a certain number of attendees or a cap on time offered free of charge, and tailored packages for more regular or larger events offered at variable monthly subscription rates.

Almost all platforms make arranging a webinar easy though, with integrated scheduling, invitations and automatic attendee reminders commonplace.

Webinars

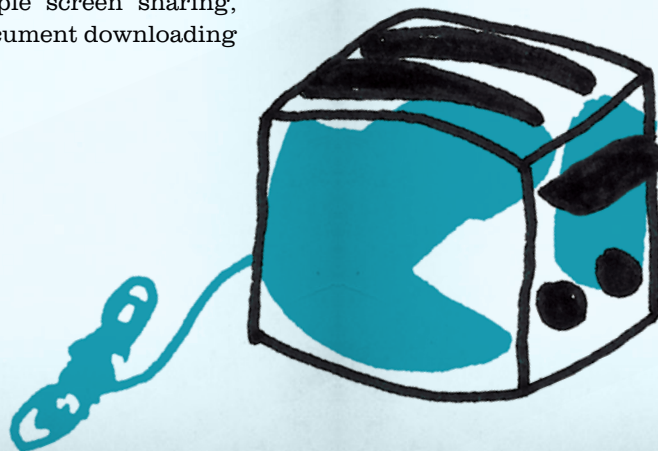


www.brighttalk.co.uk — pretty much the current weapon of choice for most b2b marketers.

www.anymeeting.com — completely free, but incorporating advanced features rivalling the best paid-for platforms. Allows up to 200 participants, with multiple screen sharing, customised branding, document downloading and data collation.



www.gatherplace.com — both PC and Mac compatible (including iPhone), gatherplace.com allows guests to remotely control shared applications, chat privately or publically and annotate documents during the webinar.



www.instantconference.com — four packages available, with the 'premium' model allowing up to 10,000 minutes of conferencing a month for up to 150 attendees. Includes integrated Outlook booking, real-time moderation and an mp3 recording facility.



www.fuzemeeting.com — particularly suited to smaller scale web conferences and mobile use, with Android, iPhone, iPad and Blackberry versions available as a free download.



Conversion

6.0 CONVERSION

Getting your content out there is one thing. Achieving high engagement levels in 2.0 conversations is a whole different ballgame.

But to borrow a well worn phrase: “It’s about productivity, not activity”.

All the promotional activity in the world means nothing without the productivity of a clear conversion strategy.

The key conversion point in this model is the data capture for the hero content — ‘Known Engagement’.

All the “spin-offs” are essentially snippets of your hero content. So promote a conversion goal wherever possible (on blogs, videos, SlideShare etc.) for the offer of the full hero piece. Clear calls to action directing prospects to the hub of a landing page.



Why bother with a campaign specific landing page?

Landing pages, or single purpose microsites, are a proven model for improving conversion performance. Direct prospects to your corporate website at your peril. Your corporate website has far too many distractions and options, so just present your prospects with one clear and simple task.

Once you have that valuable opt-in email address you can then start the lead nurturing process. Regular emails containing high value relevant content but with clear signposts to your hard offer will kick-start the nurturing process nicely.

Landing Pages

If you are running a marketing automation platform, or if your website CMS has a landing page template, then you are probably more than ready to turn on the gas.

If not then try

www.unbounce.com.

This inbuilt multivariate testing tool is well worth a play as part of your test and learn strategy.



To really become a master chef on the whole science of conversion marketing, then you could do worse than visiting: www.marketingexperiments.com





Evaluation

7.0 EVALUATION

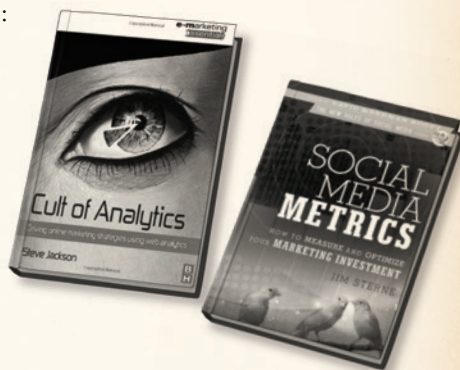
In section 2.2 we talked about defining an ROI model up front. With the right analytics tools you can bring real meaning to this with some clear metrics. Metrics that have genuine relevance to your own unique conversion funnel.

Metrics should be caveated with a dose of common sense. You can't cash a cheque that reads "Twitter Follower", but all the engagements with your content should be measured and analysed nonetheless.

Getting serious about analytics

To become an expert at understanding web metrics and translating this information into meaningful insight then check out:

- **Cult of Analytics:**
Driving online marketing strategies using web analytics by Steve Jackson.
- **Social Media Metrics:**
How to Measure and Optimize Your Marketing Investment by Jim Sterne.



Measured engagement

Suspect: "You know us. We know you're out there."

Sample conversion metrics:

- No. of click throughs to dedicated URLs housing content
- No. of click throughs from banner ads/sponsored links promoting content

- No. of brand searches made on your content themes
- No. of click throughs from paid search promoting your content
- No. of click throughs from organic search listings of your content
- No. of click throughs from online PR referencing your content
- No. of click throughs from referred domains of social media/2.0 websites referencing your content
- No. of webinar pre-sell page views
- No. of SlideShare page views
- No. of blog page views

Known engagement

Interest: "You let us know who you are."

- Exchanged name and email for premium content download
- Registered for an event
- Registered for a webinar
- Joined a LinkedIn Group
- Followed on Twitter
- Retweeted

Direct engagement

Consideration: "So, you actually want to talk to us."

- Prospects who have called through on a dedicated phone number
- Completed contact form requesting demo/meeting/phone contact

May the fork be with you!



8.0 MAY THE FORK BE WITH YOU!

So there you have it. A cookbook you can hopefully dip in and out of as you work your way towards content marketing mastery. No doubt by the time you get to this section there will be another raft of new tools and 'game changing' platforms for you to try out. By all means do, but please remember to stick to the core principles outlined here.

Success in content marketing is about the long haul. Getting your content marketing machine up and running will be fraught with frustration and obstacles. But remember, according to the queen of the kitchen:

“Good equipment is expensive, but most lasts a lifetime and will pay for itself over and over again.”

Delia Smith



Contentment

What now?

If you are thinking that you may need some external resource to support your plans for content world domination, then please contact the Marketecture team.

Have you found contentment yet?

Whet your appetite...

CONTENTMENT IS A BRAND NEW MODEL DEVELOPED
BY MARKETECTURE TO SUPPORT THE PRACTICAL DELIVERY
OF B2B CONTENT MARKETING FOR LEAD GENERATION.

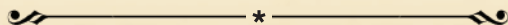
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**MULTI
AWARD
WINNING**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Marketecture is a multi-award winning 'pure' b2b marketing agency. Offering a fully integrated marketing service to an international client base, our aim is to deliver intelligent answers to complex b2b challenges, stretching the boundaries of what effective marketing can achieve.

We're passionate about all things b2b. We're the producers of inspiring ideas, carefully-crafted creative and insightful strategy. More importantly, we're focused on achieving results that help our clients' businesses to be more successful.

As a top 50 UK b2b agency, we also rank fourth in B2B Marketing magazine's 2012 agency reputation index and we are proud to work with some of the world's leading innovators and brands.