Content Marketing:

How Search Engines and Social Media Have Outdated Your Old Marketing Strategy



Table of Contents

Introduction: The Content Marketing Revolution		3
Chapter 1:	Traditional Marketing- The Beginning of the End Why Traditional Marketing Methods are No Longer Effective Business Needs to Change its Marketing Ways	6
Chapter 2:	Content Marketing Answers the Challenge What is Content Marketing? Why is Content Marketing the Future of Internet Marketing?	9
Chapter 3:	Let's Get Started: Content Marketing for Beginners A Rose by any Other Name: The Many Faces of Content Marketing Why your Customers Love Content You Need a Plan: 5 Steps to Effective Content Marketing	12
Chapter 4:	Implementing a Content Marketing Strategy Great Content and How to Get It How to Market with Content	16
Chapter 5:	Optimizing Results Promoting your Content How Am I Doing? Measuring the Program	21
Conclusion	: Are you Ready for the Future of Marketing?	26



Introduction: The Content Marketing Revolution

Today's marketers are at a crossroads. Whether they know it or not, the old, familiar ways of doing business are changing, and those who can adapt will survive and even thrive. Those who can't - well, you know what happened to the dinosaurs.

Whether you are head of marketing for a large corporation or the owner of a small business (or anything in between), the path you choose to take to reach your customers at this critical juncture will determine your long-term success. A revolution is going on in the world of marketing, and it all started with the Internet.

For over 15 years, this marvel of technology has provided us with quick and easy access to information of all kinds. During that time, the reasons that people use the Internet have rapidly evolved. According to Lee Rainie, director of the Washington-based Pew Internet and American Life Project, "One of the hallmarks of this era of the Internet that distinguishes it from five years ago, is that it's become a starting point for people [who] are trying to solve their problems." Rainie goes on to say, "In this day and age, people turn to the Internet to address the needs that they have for the context in which they find themselves."

Did you notice the focus on people's *needs* and *problems*? The Internet has become one of the most important sources of information for people looking for help with a variety of things. Often, the ultimate goal of the search is to make a purchase that will help solve a problem or answer a question. The quality of the information found determines whether or not a purchase is made. And this is where marketers need to start paying attention.

In the past, marketing to consumers meant a literal or figurative knock on the door, a tap on the shoulder, an *interruption* that was not always welcome. This came in the form of print and radio ads, direct mail, cold calls and billboards. These traditional marketing methods have been the standard since practically the beginning of mass media itself.

Imagine- you're sitting down to dinner and suddenly you hear a knock on the door, or the phone rings. It's a salesperson, looking to talk you into purchasing a product you didn't ask for and don't need. Needless to say, that person isn't going to be very popular at that moment! This kind of marketing simply doesn't work in the Internet age, and the reason is obvious when you think of it. People don't want to be interrupted anymore. They seek out what they need when they need it- online.

Enter content marketing. People have been selling online for years, but only recently have forward-thinking businesses started to understand what the power of content can do for them. Content can sell goods and services to consumers, but more importantly, it can build *relationships* with them.

Now imagine this- you're sitting down to dinner and suddenly you realize that you need to get some tips on how to prepare a turkey for the Thanksgiving meal you're hosting next week. After dinner, you go to the computer, type in your search terms, and come to a site that offers information on everything from how to thaw, cook and carve a turkey to where to find the best accessories for an elegant holiday table. The site offers a forum for cooks to share tips and ask questions. The blog is a wealth of information about cooking do's and don'ts. You print out a recipe for a cranberry gelatin mold.

This site is so helpful that you sign up for their email newsletter and subscribe to the RSS feed to get the recipe of the week and new blog alerts. You start participating in the forums and comment on the blogs. You click on the links to purchase the products you need to make your dinner a success. You recommend the site to friends and family.

Are you starting to get the picture? It's a whole new game for Internet marketers, and it all starts with a commitment to awesome content and a willingness to market it effectively. You can be the poor salesperson at the door, interrupting your customer's dinner, or you can be the guy answering your customer's knock.

The revolution is on.





Traditional Marketing- The Beginning of the End

Why Traditional Marketing Methods are No Longer Effective

Prior to the advent of online advertising, traditional marketing methods were the standard way for businesses to reach their customers. They are still the dominant marketing tools in use today. However, a 2009 Forbes survey indicated that over 50% of marketing executives now spend about 25% of their budgets online, and that number is growing by at least one percentage point each year. Why the shift toward online advertising?

The answer is really not complicated. A recent Pew study indicates that search is the most common online activity (after email) for all age groups. And what are people searching for? Studies have shown that 75% of people on the Internet use search engines with the intention of buying a product (TopRank (2009). Top Digital Marketing Tactics for 2009, Feb. 18, 2009).

So, people are going online to find products and services. What does this mean for traditional marketing? Well, it means that, while these methods still have a place in marketing (and probably always will to some degree) the trend is shifting toward digital or Internet marketing. As recently as 5 to 10 years ago, when manufacturers and retailers wanted you to know about their products, they would use the following outlets to tell you:

- Television ads
- Print ads
- Direct mail
- Cold calls

Before the Internet made it easy for the average consumer to find his own information, these methods were often the only way that people had to find out more about the products and services they needed. Online search, and the growing amount of useful, informative online content available to consumers, has changed all that. In the new Internet Information Age, it is much more difficult for companies to *interrupt* consumers with ad material.



Television channels can be switched, mail thrown away and calls hung up on. People are blocking much of what they used to accept in the way of advertising. They now have the choice to go get the information they need when they need it. They are making their own purchasing decisions.

Business Needs to Change its Marketing Ways

This being the case, businesses now have two choices- they can either ignore the trend toward non-interruptive content marketing, or they can get on board. Do companies have to stop printing ads, quit producing TV commercials or halt their direct mail campaigns? No. These methods are important pieces of the marketing puzzle for many businesses. However, they can effectively supplement these efforts by implementing a content marketing strategy that will boost their results, often significantly.

Since marketing to the new, Internet-savvy consumer is becoming increasingly challenging, businesses are finding that they need to start looking at their marketing strategies from a different angle. In order to reach people, they need to stop wasting time and money on non-targeted campaigns that try to tell consumers what they need, and start inviting *conversation* about their products and services.

A revolutionary idea? For traditional marketers, maybe. However, today's Internet consumer will tell you that it makes perfect sense. If you want make the sale, you need to first:

- Find out if the consumer is interested
- Offer him useful, relevant information
- Invite him to participate, through commentary and feedback
- Provide a clear call to action

Do print ads, direct mail or cold calls do this? Or do they force themselves on consumers who may or may not be interested? Content marketing is a way for companies to achieve these steps, and precisely target the ideal market so that precious time, money and other marketing resources are not wasted. Follow them, and you will be talking the people who are interested in your business. Ignore them, and you might as well be talking to yourself.

The Publisher Mindset

Developing the mindset of a content marketer is the first step toward a successful content marketing campaign. This involves rejecting the idea that only large corporations with big marketing budgets have the resources to quickly and effectively reach large groups of people. This is simply no longer true. The Internet has made it possible for businesses and individuals to market themselves quite effectively, simply by writing, publishing and distributing useful content through a variety of readily available outlets.

If you can start thinking more like your customers, and are willing to research what information they need in order to solve their problems, address their concerns and answer their questions, then you are on your way to developing the proper mindset for content marketing.



Content Marketing Answers the Challenge

What is Content Marketing?

At its core, content marketing is a way of marketing products and services to people that takes into account their needs, their opinions and their interests. With content marketing, customers and suppliers engage in a "give and take" that produces a mutually beneficial relationship. Customers offer feedback and advice in exchange for the goods they need. The concept isn't really new. The idea of relationship-based marketing has been around since the days when people bartered for what they needed, and knew which merchants were the most trusted sources.

The question is this: In the Internet Age, how does a business let people know that it is the authority—the "trusted source"? We've established the fact that consumers no longer want to be interrupted with traditional marketing methods. And, since they are finding what they need on their own through online search, how does today's online marketer make sure they find *his* site?

As every Internet user knows, the Web is a crowded place. By conservative estimates, there are over 90 million active sites in existence at any one time. Standing out from this mass of sites, all clamoring for the attention of consumers, is the biggest challenge businesses face. Content marketing answers this challenge, in a way that caters to the new consumer's demand for information.

Content marketing takes many forms. Let's look at our previous example: The home entertaining and cooking site offered several useful resources for people looking to improve their lives at home. It included a page with advice about how to prepare holiday meals. It gave links to sites that sell accessories and related items. It offered a place for people to share their questions, answers and comments. A cook could find and offer advice to other interested parties. Need a recipe? It's here!

This site not only contains a lot of great information, it *invites* you to participate. This is why it works. And, all of the features are content-based. The owner of this site identified the target market, took the time to research what kind of information this market was looking for and created useful content that addressed the needs of visitors. Without a large marketing budget or staff, this site is pulling in subscribers, visitors and leads that would make a corporate giant envious.

Wikipedia defines content marketing in the following way:

"Content marketing is an umbrella term encompassing all marketing formats that involve the creation or sharing of content for the purpose of engaging current and potential consumer bases"

And so it is. But, ultimately, content marketing is more. It's a way to reach out to customers by inviting them to check you out and learn more. It's how you will build long-term relationships that lead to greater profits for your business. It's the effective and economical way to establish your authority and become the trusted source.

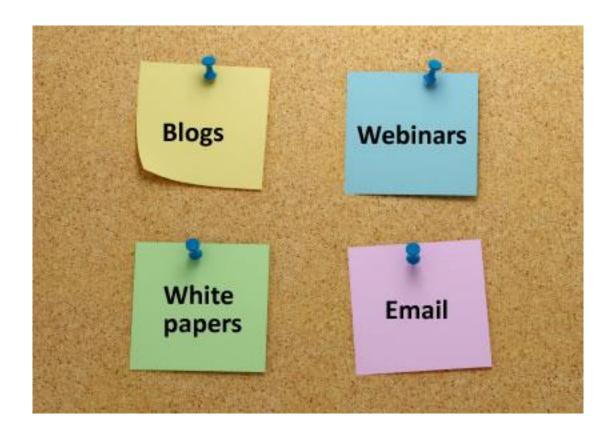
Why is Content Marketing the Future of Internet Marketing?

The future of Internet marketing is the "give and take" between consumers and businesses. Companies that are willing to give free information in exchange for feedback, back links and recommendations find that online consumers come to *them*. Not only that, but these same consumers will start doing their advertising for them. By spreading the word through various outlets such as social media and blog commentaries, your customers give you a permanent source of free traffic.

Traditional marketing methods, because they don't engage the consumer, have a harder time creating the relationships necessary to establish this kind of free advertising. Sure, customers can respond to a TV ad, even recommend the product to a friend. But will they come back to the supplier for information or advice when the time comes to purchase again? Do they see that business as an authority, or just an access point for a product or service?

The future of Internet marketing lies with the companies and marketing methods that can create customer relationships, because this leads to long-term marketing success.





Let's Get Started: Content Marketing For Beginners

A Rose By Any Other Name- The Many Faces of Content Marketing

Would you recognize content marketing if you saw it? It is, in fact, everywhere- you just have to look. Any time you see a company offering information without a sales pitch, whether through a quarterly magazine, a blog or an email newsletter that pops into your inbox once a month, you're looking at a form of content marketing. Free information is the "give" to the customer, the *invitation* to explore further what the company has to offer.

When it first became recognized as a viable alternative to traditional marketing, content marketing was known as *custom publishing*. In the publishing and marketing industries, however, it goes by a variety of names, some of which you may recognize:

- Content marketing
- Custom publishing
- Corporate media
- Information marketing
- Corporate publishing
- Branded content

There are more, but you get the picture. The idea is that, regardless of what you call it, this type of marketing promotes business content initiatives. Joe Pulizzi, in his 2009 book "Get Content, Get Customers" says,

"We chose *content marketing* because it seems to be the term that's most understandable to marketing professionals. It's the blend of both content and the marketing of that content that enables customer behavior."

So, content marketing it is.

If you want to get started with content marketing, you should first know what kinds of products or vehicles can be used to distribute and promote your content. At the beginning of this chapter, we asked if you would recognize content marketing if you saw it. Have you ever seen any of these?

- Industry magazines (quarterly or monthly publications, etc.)
- White papers
- Newsletters (both print and email)
- Web sites
- E-Books (like this one)
- Blogs
- Videos (YouTube, etc.)
- Webinars
- Articles

If you're like the average person, you've come into contact with at least a couple of these content products, or types, at some point in your life. They all offer ways that businesses can create, distribute and promote informational content to their target markets.

These content vehicles represent the many faces of content marketing. A company that wants to get started in content marketing can use any or all of them as part of a strategy to reach its target markets. The ones you use will depend on a number of factors-- budget, goals and market.

Magazines, for example, are a great way to engage a target market, but they usually involve a hefty initial investment. Email newsletters, on the other hand, are much less expensive to produce but require that you build a subscriber list.

Later, we'll talk more about implementing a content marketing strategy. Now, let's take a look at how content addresses your customers' needs.

Why your Customers Love Content

A 2009 Survey on Marketing, Media and Measurement conducted by King Fish Media found that 86% of the 230 marketers polled were already creating, or planning to create, original marketing content for their customers in the coming year. The same survey reported that custom content was considered the most effective way to reach current customers by 78% of respondents.

Incidentally, email marketing, web sites and social media were the other top marketing methods. All involve forms of content marketing.

The surveyors concluded that a growing number of companies are starting to focus on direct communication with their customers, using content and social media as the way to do it. Companies are beginning to recognize the marketing power of social sites such as Twitter and Facebook, for example, and are ready to accept that their power comes from *engagement*. The word-of-mouth referrals and recommendations that are passed around through content vehicles such as social media sites, blogs and social bookmarking sites have become coveted by the new online marketer.

In the popularity of social media, blogs, web sites and other content vehicles, we see the answer to our question. People love content because it gives them what they are looking for when they search the Web—information, with the opportunity to engage. Content marketing offers businesses the best way to reach potential and current customers because it answers questions without a sales pitch, solves problems without asking for anything in return, and is easy to pass around.

Consumers have spoken, and marketers are finally starting to listen.

You Need a Plan: 5 Steps to Effective Content Marketing



Content marketing is all about building your brand, your reputation and your visibility. Like any other marketing method, it needs to address these general goals in order to be effective. However, each company has specific goals, as well. The first step to take before implementing a content marketing strategy is to develop a plan that involves 5 key elements:

- 1. Define your goals- You've got a great product, but you're competing with a growing number of companies that want to get in on the action. You need to define the goals that will place you ahead of the others. This might include building a better web site, conducting studies that will connect your name with the product and retaining customer loyalty through a content initiative.
- **2. Determine Customers' Needs-** What kind of information do your customers need from you? If you want to be the trusted source, you need to first find out what their issues are and how your product can help. You can find out what you need to know through online surveys, face to face meetings and even through your business blog.
- **3. Determine Desired Customer Action-** What do you want your customers to do? Once you've found out their needs and determined that your product is the answer, you want to start thinking about how you can increase awareness of the product with your target market. Use feedback gathered during step 2 to see what people need in order to buy from you.
- **4. Choose your Content Products-** Content marketing is a flexible strategy in the sense that you can create a mix of different products that suits your needs. If your customers tell you that they like to get their information through a web site, you can add content to your site. If they would welcome a quarterly print newsletter, you can plan a newsletter campaign.

Adding a blog encourages customer feedback, e-books and white papers offer in-depth information. Email newsletters and social media keep fans up-to-date on the latest industry news. You can announce any piece of news relating to your company through press releases.

5. Track Results- A content marketing strategy is quite trackable, using analytic software, services and sites, such as Google Analytics and Alexa.com. You can find out a wealth of information about the effectiveness of your content initiatives by looking at unique page views and visitors, e-book downloads, Twitter statistics and subscriber numbers.

Sales that result from downloads and other customer actions can be tracked, which makes it easy to compile statistics and determine what's working and what is not. Marketing dollars can then be funneled to the most effective initiatives.

By taking the time to plan out your content marketing strategy carefully, based on customer feedback and industry research, you will target your efforts more precisely and, therefore, increase your chance of success.



Implementing a Content Marketing Strategy

Great Content and Where to Get It

As mentioned above, one of the steps to effective content marketing is choosing content products. But, where does this content come from? In the sense that content is the foundation of your marketing strategy, it can also be the biggest challenge you have. Why? If you're like most business owners, you're geared toward selling products and services, not creating content. You are new to the idea of the publisher mindset. Consistently developing and implementing great content as part of a marketing strategy is still foreign to you.

The good news is that, while you're learning more about content marketing, you can outsource the content development portion of your plan to outside experts. This would include editors and writers who understand how to write search engine optimized content that will appeal to your customers. Large corporations have been doing this for years. They hire firms that handle everything from project management to content creation and distribution. This frees up time for owners to focus on overseeing product development and other aspects of their businesses.

Does the small business owner need a large corporation budget in order to effectively outsource? Absolutely not. As you are starting to see, content marketing can be scaled to any budget, because it is not dependent on having a complex corporate infrastructure. A one-man start-up can do the same kinds of content marketing as a Fortune 500 company- just on a smaller scale.

Getting outside help is a good idea for people who lack the time and expertise to create and distribute their marketing content. However, outsourcing your content doesn't mean that you can let go of the process. In fact, before you choose your team and implement your content strategy, you should plan out and supervise the process. This will give you the structure you need to ensure that your campaign runs smoothly.

So, where does great content come from? Ultimately, it comes from a great plan and the skill of those who know how to write effective online marketing copy. Journalists and seo copywriters are two resources for content that is both engaging and easy to find by the search engines. Targeting your hiring efforts to these groups is sure to yield good results.

Where else can you find great content? Sources for content are everywhere, including your own company. Have you or anyone in your organization given a presentation lately? Do you produce technical documents on a regular basis? Do you write white papers a few times a year? All of these pieces of content can be rewritten and repurposed for your customers. The information in a presentation, for example, can be turned into a video and put on YouTube. Your white paper could become an engaging eBook. The ideas are almost endless.

So, getting great content is often a matter of knowing where to look. Outsourcing your content allows you to take advantage of the years of experience that journalists and seo content writers have. But, you can also repurpose existing content, and you can also create your own content on a regular basis. Business owners, for example, are starting to find that a company blog is a great way for them to engage directly with their customers. You don't need to be an experienced writer to create content that people will find interesting and informative. You just need to be willing to share your knowledge and expertise, and post regularly to retain the interest of your readers.

SEO

We've talked a little bit about where to get great content. But what about how to use it? There are many inventive ways to use content for marketing purposes. However, all online marketing content, regardless of the content vehicle, must adhere to the principles of SEO in order to be found by search engines. SEO is search engine optimization- the techniques used by writers to make content visible to search engines.

Without SEO techniques, your content may not be indexed properly, and it will be more difficult for potential customers to find you. To put its importance in perspective, if your pet grooming service is showing up in searches for "hair salons", you have a problem. Clearly, in this case, the search engines are not able to



index your site properly. So, people searching for your site won't find you.

Whether you outsource to an seo copywriter or do it yourself, you should understand how seo will help market your site. Back in the days of the early, less sophisticated, search engines, most seo content was really nothing more than keyword-stuffed fluff. People realized that all they needed to do to rank in Google was to place a lot of their relevant keywords on their site. This led to content that was often essentially meaningless sales material that didn't make sense and did not sound natural.

One might say that content marketing is the antithesis of this kind of content. Mentioning the way it used to be done helps to illustrate how far marketers have come regarding seo content. The principles of seo remain much the same- it's how we use it that has changed drastically, and for the better.

You still need to research your keywords. Google AdWords and other research tools make it easy to find the ones that are targeted to your site without being too competitive. Once you have your keywords, however, the most important thing to remember is that they should be used intelligently in your content. They should fit in naturally, and they should be surrounded by related terms. Your article about pet grooming, for example, should be sprinkled with terms such as "dog", "cat", "paws", "claws" and "groomer". This will ensure that the new (more sophisticated) search engine algorithms make no mistake about your topic.

Above all, seo content must engage the reader. Rather than making search terms the main focus of the content, think about how the content can solve a problem, tell a story or provide a benefit to the consumer. Just like actual conversation, it should sound natural.

Distribution Options

SEO is essential to online visibility for your content. Once you've got the idea of how to write good seo copy (and recognize it, if you're outsourcing), you want to think about how you can distribute it. We've mentioned a few of the most popular content types, or products, used by online marketers. Each of them has a path they take for creation and distribution.

For example, **email newsletters** are a great way to use new or repurposed content in order to stay in touch with customers. These require that you build a subscriber list, generally through your site. One way to build your list is to use a squeeze page that contains a call to action. For example, you can offer something to your visitors, such as a white paper or eBook, in exchange for an email address. In general, email newsletters should be mostly informational, but can also include some sales material from time to time. This is where you can put the latest company news and product launches, articles related to your industry, even stories and contests designed to elicit a response and keep interest high among your subscribers.

Blogs are probably the most popular form of content marketing in use today. In fact, a recent study by GuideWireGroup revealed that approximately 89 percent of businesses polled use blogs as a way to communicate with their customers. Blogs are a content type, usually located on your site, that allow direct engagement with readers. The fact that readers can comment on your blog gives you a free source of feedback, and thus, a way to improve your products and services without having to spend marketing resources on focus groups, surveys and test markets.

Distributing your blog can be done through subscriptions to an RSS feed, social bookmarking and links on your social media pages.

Another way to distribute content and establish your authority is through **articles**. As part of your content marketing strategy, plan on creating at least one new article each week that talks about topics related to your field. Submit these articles to article directories such as EzineArticles, GoArticles and ArticleDashboard. These directories allow you to link your articles directly to your site. So, consumers can read your content, determine that you're a good source for information, and go to your site to see more.

It's important that your article content be strictly informational, and not salesy. Establishing trust through article marketing depends upon giving your readers free, useful information that does not ask for anything in return. The quality of your information is what draws potential customers to you.

Another very effective vehicle for your content is **video**. Many people don't think of videos as content, but, as a publisher (remember the publisher mindset!) you need to start thinking of everything your company produces as content that can be used for marketing purposes. You can make videos inexpensively, with content that you create or with content that was originally used

for something else. Think about that white paper you just produced. Could you turn it into a script for a video?

Inventive, compelling videos consistently rank high in the search engines. People like this format because it appeals to their visual nature. It's an effective way to distribute your content and improve visibility for your company.





Optimizing Results

Promoting your Content

There are many ways to distribute your content; however, when it comes to getting noticed, distribution is only half the story. The fact is, once your content is out there, you need to promote it. This doesn't mean that you need to have a large budget or put together an extravagant ad campaign. Content marketing lends itself to a variety of affordable but highly effective promotion methods, most of which can be implemented by anyone.

Of course, whatever method you choose, be aware that, while content promotion can be costeffective and simple, it does take time. Keeping your content in the public eye involves an
ongoing outlay of time and energy, and a commitment to constantly creating fresh content for
your target market. Optimizing results means that you not only keep track of your customers'
needs and the latest developments in your industry, but also monitor your results and make
adjustments as necessary. This kind of agility is often what separates online marketing from its
counterparts in traditional marketing, and what makes it so successful.

Some good ways to promote content include:

- Article marketing
- Social Media (Facebook, Twitter)
- Social News/Networking Sites (Digg, Reddit, StumbleUpon, LinkedIn)
- Press Releases

Article Marketing

As mentioned in a previous chapter, articles are one way to market your business. They're popular because they're cheap and easy to do, and yield surprisingly good results for many companies. If you can put in the time to produce fresh articles every week (or hire someone to do it for you), you can quickly develop your reputation as an authority.

Promoting with articles is called article marketing. It involves creating an account with an article directory that publishes your articles so that they can be viewed by millions of interested readers. Check into which directories are the most reputable and which ones will consistently give you the best ranking in search engines. EzineArticles and ArticlesBase are two of the most popular.

These directories allow you to add information to a resource box or section at the bottom where you can link to your site, so that readers can access you directly. If you produce enough quality articles over time, you can see an increase in traffic on the strength of your authority alone.

Social Media

The recent social media explosion has opened up opportunities to use this tool for content promotion. Some marketing departments even have social media coordinators now, to handle the daily posting and monitoring of information that passes through these accounts. Facebook and Twitter are the most popular, but there are many others.

Both of these sites have features designed to help users promote their businesses. Facebook, for example, allows you to create a fan page for your business where people can find out about your latest news and upcoming events. Users can recommend your fan page to others, thus giving you free traffic and links to your content. Twitter allows short links that give people access to your articles or to your site, where they can view your content. Like Facebook, users often recommend, or "retweet" your information, thus spreading the word for you.

Social News/Networking Sites

Another recommended option is to "bookmark" your content to social sites that compile news and articles. If your content becomes popular through exposure and votes by the site community, others will do the job of bookmarking for you. Like social media, social bookmarking sites can spread your content through reader recommendations and back linking.

Reddit, Digg and StumbleUpon are three of the most widely used sites for social bookmarking. LinkedIn is a professional networking site that also allows you to bookmark to it, thus making it available to thousands of people in your field and other interested parties.

All of these social media sites can be highly effective at exposing your content to a wide audience. They also demonstrate why your content needs to be of the highest quality. Users of these sites will not accept salesy content, and they will not pass on content that is not interesting, compelling or in some way useful. After all, a recommendation is a reflection on the person making it.

Press Releases

The press release is not a new idea in marketing. Traditional marketers have been doing them for years. In the digital age, however, their potential to reach wide, targeted audiences is even greater. Sites such as PRWeb will distribute your release to dozens of news sites throughout the Web, where readers interested in your industry can filter through to find yours. There are options for getting the maximum exposure, as well.

Consider setting up a schedule for your press releases, whereby you release a certain quantity per month. Mix educational content in with announcements, such as product launches and company events. An example could be the release of an eBook, or a personnel hiring. As with articles, viewers will be able to link to your site through the press release.

How Am I Doing? Measuring the Program



Tracking the results of your content marketing campaign is a critical step in the entire process. Once you have implemented your campaign by planning, creating, distributing and promoting your content through all available vehicles, you need to know how well the plan is working. The good news is that, because content marketing is such an agile and flexible kind of marketing, and

methods of tracking and measuring results are often in real time, you can quickly make adjustments to your plan.

Since your content is, essentially, your company's Web presence, you will want to keep track of a number of Web statistics that tell you how effective it is at improving both your visibility and your sales. Some of these are:

- Alexa.com rating
- Blog comments
- Google PageRank
- Unique site visitors
- Repeat visits
- Downloads (of eBooks, white papers, etc.)
- Social media conversations
- Subscription rates (RSS feeds, newsletters, etc.)

Used by about 60% of site owners, Google Analytics is the most popular platform with which people measure many of these important statistics. There are, however, other options. Some of questions you can answer with these services are:

- -What are my most lucrative geographic markets?
- -Which pages on my site are most popular?
- -Are people who download content products more likely to make a purchase?
- -Have I reached my sales goals?
- -Which of my efforts are not producing results?

This is just a sampling of the information you can get when you track your results using analytics. By monitoring results on a weekly or even daily basis, online marketers have the ability to quickly determine strengths and weaknesses. There is no longer a need to conduct studies (although you can, if you like), wait for survey and focus group information to come through or waste time on initiatives that aren't working.

Your Alexa.com rating is another useful indicator. This site compiles information about websites. As a site owner, you can use it to discover how popular your site is (or your competitor sites). You can also find out which search terms people are using to find you, and which ones your competitors are using to get traffic. Explore Alexa to find out how to use it to get the information you need.

So, how are you doing? The only way to find out is to check your analytics, compile the statistics, and act on them. If your content isn't performing up to your expectations, check the following:

 Quality- Is your content compelling? Does it contain the proper keywords? Does it offer something of use to your readers every time? Have outside parties and/or SEO experts read through your articles, blogs etc. to see why your content isn't ranking.

- Distribution- the distribution of your content may be missing the mark. Target your audience precisely by seeing where your market is getting its information. This can be done through surveys and information gleaned through analytics services.
- Promotion- Make sure you're promoting your content properly. Maintain your social media accounts every day, update your material and post something interesting on a regular basis. Run contests and take surveys to keep people interested. Keep up with your press release schedule. If you can't manage the maintenance, consider hiring an outside firm to handle it. It's too important to neglect.

By staying on top of your content marketing campaign, you'll know exactly what measures you need to take in order to achieve your goals. If you adhere to the five steps for effective content marketing, are willing to make changes as necessary, and commit your time to it, your content strategy will pay big dividends in increased authority, better visibility and long-term profitability for your company.



Conclusion: Are You Ready for the Future of Marketing?

"Content marketing is the only marketing left" - Seth Godin

At the beginning of this book, we stated that today's marketers are at a crossroads. Hopefully we have explained why. The doors that have opened as a result of the Internet, and the consumers' endless quest for answers and solutions, are letting in a host of new possibilities for marketers. Content marketing is leading the way. Why? Content lends itself to solutions. It gives Internet

consumers what they need and want. It allows businesses of any size to take full advantage of the opportunity to reach thousands and even millions of potential customers. By providing something of value to those who need it most, content has become the linchpin for marketing success.

Is it, as marketing guru Seth Godin states, the only marketing left? According to the Search Engine Marketing Professional Organization, search engine marketing spending is expected to reach \$11 billion dollars in 2010. The number is rising each year. With content as its foundation, SEM has established a strong foothold with Internet marketers.

At this time, there are many marketing methods available to companies. The future, however, belongs to content, and to those who not only understand its power as a marketing tool, but who can successfully use it. To this end, we've provided you with an overview of what content can do for you, and how it will help you to gain visibility and enhance your online presence.

Why is content so important? For today's marketers, the answer lies in the fact that people are bypassing interruptive methods of advertising, and finding out what they need to know for themselves. Content gives them the information they need. Is your content (on your site and elsewhere) drawing your customers to you? If it is, then, much the like the owners of our successful home entertaining and cooking site, you have harnessed its power to gain massive exposure, back links and increased traffic.

Start with the publisher mindset. Start thinking of yourself as a publisher who can create unique, authoritative content as well as, if not better than, any big-budget multinational company. Take that content and use it to get the word out, whether it's on your site, your blog or your social media fan page. Watch as you transform into a customer-focused organization with a global reach.

In the end, whether you're a large corporation or a small business, it's the connection with your customers that reaps big dividends for your company, and useful, problem-solving, thought-provoking content is what builds that connection. You are at a marketing crossroads. It's time to decide which path you're going to take.

Go forth and become part of the content marketing revolution!