

HubSpot Academy

# Content Marketing Workbook

A Beginner's Guide to Applying Content Marketing to Your Business

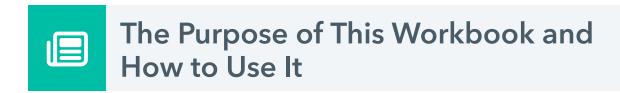
Third Edition



## Table of Contents

The Purpose of This Workbook and How to Use It	.3
Case Study: Townsend Security	.5
Section 1: The Power of Storytelling	.7
Section 2: Building a Content Creation Framework	.8
Section 3: Planning a Long-Term Content Strategy	.9
Section 4: Generating Content Ideas	.12
Section 5: Creating Quality Blog Content Your Audience Loves to Read and Share	.14
Section 6: How HubSpot Uses Blogging to Rank #1 on Google	.16
Section 7: Extending the Value of Your Content Through Repurposing	.18
Section 8: Creating Topic Clusters and Pillar Pages	.21
Section 9: How to Create a Successful Video Marketing Strategy	.23
Section 10: Building a Guest Blogging Strategy Powered by SEO	.25
Section 11: How to Effectively Promote Content	.27
Section 12: Measuring and Analyzing Your Content	.29
Your Completed Workbook	.31





Welcome! You're here because you want to grow your business and career by becoming a content marketing expert.

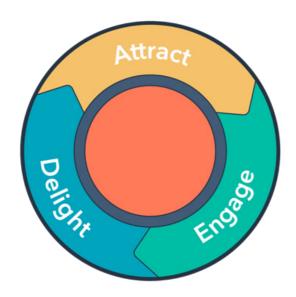
#### To start, what is content marketing?

Content marketing is a strategic marketing and business process focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience and ultimately drive profitable customer action.

When done correctly, this helps create a relationship with your audience, which leads to trust. And when your audience members trust you, they're more willing to do business with you when they're ready to make a purchasing decision.

To communicate with your audience, you need to produce content. Content has the very important job of pulling people from one stage of the inbound methodology to another.

Your content should attract the right people to your site, engage those people into leads, and nurture and help close them into customers. But it doesn't stop there. Your content should also delight your customers and turn them into promoters of your brand.



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In a nutshell, content marketing is the art of communicating with your prospects and customers without having to sell to them. As opposed to advertising your products and services, you're creating helpful, engaging content that your prospects and customers can enjoy and learn from.



The following activities and resources will help you create and grow a repeatable content process for your business. **Each section connects to a lesson featured in the Content Marketing Certification course.** If you haven't done so already, I highly encourage you to sign up for this course and complete each lesson before working on the practical exercises. This course has become the industry standard for content marketing professionals. In fact, more than 40,000 professionals across the globe have completed the Content Marketing Certification since it launched in 2016.

Earning your Content Marketing Certification and completing this workbook are the first steps toward becoming an expert in the industry.

Here's a list of suggestions to get the most value out of this workbook:

- Please save this workbook to the desktop on your computer. This way your progress will be saved correctly as you complete each section.
- If you prefer to have a hard copy to write on, then print this PDF.
- Join the Content Marketing Professionals group on Facebook. We believe the best way to learn content marketing is by implementing strategies, sharing ideas, and discussing what you've learned with a group of marketers, just like you.
- Tweet me (<u>@JustinRChampion</u>) and HubSpot Academy (<u>@HubSpotAcademy</u>). We're here to support you, and we want to follow your journey.

Now let's get started!





Need proof that this workbook is a transformational resource? Learn more from a business that completed the practical exercises from each section and sustainably grew their business (which is still growing today).

Written by Ken Mafli, Townsend Security's Senior Digital Marketing Manager

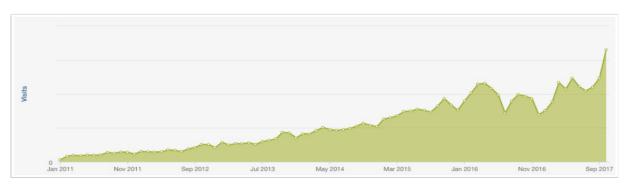
Townsend Security is a leading provider of affordable enterprise-grade encryption key management for an organization's data at rest. We are a smaller company that routinely goes up against competitors whose marketing budgets dwarf our own. So how do we make our voice heard? Simple: a rock-solid, completely human-centric inbound content marketing strategy.

In the eight-plus years we've been doing inbound, we've seen upward of 1,085% more non-paid traffic to our website. The real shocker: In that time, my team has grown its monthly new contacts by roughly 19,000% for non-paid leads. The disparity between those two numbers is a perfect example of the power of inbound: more highly qualified web traffic that converts to a much higher rate of leads.

Content marketing is continuously evolving. HubSpot has proven time and again to be on the forefront of the best-producing content marketing strategies. In 2016, we were invited to participate in a beta program that HubSpot was conducting that would later be known as the topic cluster framework. In it, you produce a pillar page – a webpage that completely informs prospects about a specific topic. From there, you surround your pillar page with subtopics (e.g., blog posts, videos, infographics, etc.), each with a link back to the pillar page.

With this methodology in hand, we created our first pillar page and launched it in the first week of January 2017. Over the next six months, we continued to optimize it, all the while promoting it via social media and online information security magazines.

The results were outstanding. Our pillar page brought record-high organic traffic and a record number of leads. We couldn't be happier with the results and with the guidance that HubSpot provided through its free resources and one-on-one consulting.



That said, content marketing isn't for the faint of heart. If you're looking for a "slap it on the website and they will come" approach, you're in the wrong place. You need true grit and the unwavering resolve to fully understand what your personas need at each step of the buyer's journey — and you need to provide it like no one else does. If you provide your prospects with the experience they deserve, you — like us — will be amazed by the results.

The Content Marketing Workbook is the road map you will need to chart your course toward success. Throughout this workbook, you'll learn from some of our examples. I'm confident that by using this workbook, you will build a unique content strategy that's tailored to the needs of your personas. By doing so, and by executing on that plan, you will find your own path to success and reach results you never thought possible.



# 1 Section 1 The Power of Storytelling

Everyone loves a great story. People want to feel connected to a group, to belong. Stories give us a reason to communicate and relate. Stories are stimulating and give us something to believe in. Stories make us feel better, smarter, safer, or even loved.

Business storytelling is similar. It's about creating alignment between your business and your prospects and customers.

But telling your brand's story is more than what you write on your website, your blog, or even social media. It's your value, your mission, and how you communicate them consistently to your audience – wherever they are.

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Let's	put	Ιτ	Into	practice.

LEARNING MODULE
Lesson: The Power of Storytelling



#### **RESOURCES**

Blog post: Executive Summary: The Golden Circle With Simon Sinek



#### PRACTICAL EXERCISE 1

n the box below, write your business's "why." This should be written in the form of a onesentence purpose or mission statement.					

#### TOWNSEND SECURITY EXAMPLE

Here's Townsend Security's "why": Townsend Security creates data privacy solutions that give organizations the ability to keep their data safe.

If you get stuck and need help, complete the lesson "<u>The Power of Storytelling</u>" in the Content Marketing Certification course.

# 2 Section 2 Buildi

## **Building a Content Creation Framework**

A content creation framework is a structure of processes for publishing content – from the beginning stages to post-publication.

With a framework in place, your team can foster creative ideas in an organized, scalable manner. A framework strikes that perfect balance between autonomous creativity and long-term content sustainability.

#### Let's put it into practice.



#### **LEARNING MODULE**

Lesson: Building a Content Creation Framework



#### **RESOURCES**

Blog post: How to Create an Editorial Calendar in Google Calendar [Free Templates]

Blog post: How to Hire a Freelancer in 5 Simple Steps

Tool: HubSpot CRM



#### **PRACTICAL EXERCISE 1**

If you don't already have the following free analytics platforms in place, sign up for them:

- Google Analytics
- HubSpot Marketing Analytics



### PRACTICAL EXERCISE 2

If you don't already have a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) platform in place, <u>sign up</u> <u>for HubSpot's free tool</u>.



#### **PRACTICAL EXERCISE 3**

An editorial calendar is the first step toward achieving a sustainable content creation process. Use this <u>free template</u> to create an editorial calendar for your business.

If you get stuck and need help, complete the "Building a Content Creation Framework" lesson in the Content Marketing Certification course.

# 3 Section 3 Plann

### Planning a Long-term Content Strategy

Planning provides a road map for your content. You'll be making confident and more tactical decisions regarding what topic you'll be talking about, what format your content will take, and when you'll be publishing it.

With a content plan, you and your team can stay organized and even factor in ad hoc content requests like company initiatives or other on-demand marketing tasks.

#### Let's put it into practice.



#### **LEARNING MODULE**

Lesson: Planning a Long-Term Content Strategy



#### **RESOURCES**

Template: Long-Term Content Planning Worksheet [Google Sheets]

Content offer: Content Gap Analysis



#### PRACTICAL EXERCISE 1

If you don't already have a primary buyer persona established for your business, create one using HubSpot's free Make My Persona tool.

n the box below, write	a quick profile for	your primary buyer persor	ıa.
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#### TOWNSEND SECURITY EXAMPLE

Below is an overview of Townsend Security's primary buyer persona, Growing Awareness Andy:

Andy's quick profile: Andy is an IT professional whose job touches on cybersecurity.
 While his title might not always reflect his data security responsibilities, he has taken on these duties in an effort to help his company with its cybersecurity challenges.

• Awareness stage driver: Key stakeholders in his company are uneasy about the company's current security posture, and recent breaches in the news have only highlighted the need for increased security. They are not sure what they need in order to better secure their data, but they know they have to do something.



### PRACTICAL EXERCISE 2

Perform a content audit and an event-based audit for your business using <u>this Google Sheets</u> <u>template</u>.



### PRACTICAL EXERCISE 3

Identify the buyer's journey for your primary buyer persona. The goal is to help this buyer through each stage: awareness, consideration, and decision. And while there's no magic number for the amount of content within the buyer's journey, let's start by identifying three pieces of content.

\*\*For the awareness stage, we recommend identifying a comprehensive educational resource like a guide or ebook.\*\*

#### 1. Awareness stage

n the box below, outline a content format and theme. (Think of this like a working title. What do you want to communicate?)					

#### 2. Consideration stage

In the box below, outline a content format and theme. (Think of this like a working title. What do you want to communicate?)



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n the box below, outline a content format and theme. (Think of this like a working title. What do rou want to communicate?)					

#### TOWNSEND SECURITY EXAMPLE

Below is an example of the buyer's journey Townsend Security identified for its primary buyer persona, Growing Awareness Andy.

- Awareness stage:
  - · Content format: Guide
  - · Theme: The Definitive Guide to Encryption Key Management Fundamentals
- Consideration stage:
  - · Content format: Webinar
  - · Theme: Encryption Key Management Simplified
- Decision stage:
  - · Content format: Product evaluation
  - · Theme: Alliance Key Manager

If you get stuck and need help, complete the "<u>Planning a Long-Term Content Strategy</u>" lesson in the Content Marketing Certification course.



# 4 Section 4 Generating Content Ideas

Humans are always coming up with new ideas. Whether we're lying in bed, commuting to work, or going for a run, our minds have a seemingly endless ability to generate new ideas.

But as natural and easy as this process might sometimes feel, it gets tricky when your job depends on it.

A content marketer – or any creative, for that matter – doesn't have the leisure to have an "off day." Your content ideas fuel your work. Run out of gas, and your content initiatives will stall.

#### Let's put it into practice.



#### **LEARNING MODULE**

Lesson: Generating Content Ideas



#### **RESOURCES**

Blog post: How to Figure Out What Keywords Your Potential Customers Are Using

Book: <u>A Technique for Producing Ideas</u>
Tool: <u>HubSpot Blog Ideas Generator</u>



#### PRACTICAL EXERCISE 1

In the boxes below, write down a few blog post ideas that support an educational topic your business wants to be known for and build authority around. For now, consider creating a descriptive working title for each blog post.

Blog post idea 1:		
Blog post idea 2:		

Blog post idea 3:			
Blog post idea 4:			

#### TOWNSEND SECURITY EXAMPLE

Below is a list of blog post ideas that Townsend Security identified for its topic "encryption key management."

- 1. Key Management: The Hardest Part of Encryption
- 2. Trying to Outfox the Other: A Brief Look at Cryptography and Cryptanalysis
- 3. 3 Ways to Fast-Track Your Encryption and Key Management Project
- 4. Fixing the TDE Key Management Problem in Microsoft SQL Server

If you get stuck and need help, complete the "<u>Generating Content Ideas</u>" lesson in the Content Marketing Certification course.



# 5

#### Section 5

## Creating Quality Blog Content Your Audience Loves to Read and Share

Think back to the last blog post you read. Did you skim through it as opposed to reading it because the introduction didn't hold your attention? Did the content seem to ramble as opposed to getting to the point? Were you unable to find a helpful next step to continue your journey?

If you answered "yes" to all of these questions, the author who wrote the blog post probably didn't pay close enough attention to the structure of the content. And he or she is suffering the consequences: You, along with many others, stopped reading the post.

All effective blog posts have a blueprint. You might not easily see it, but it's there, and it's meant to help you, the reader, through your journey to making a well-informed, confident decision – whatever that decision might be.

#### Let's put it into practice.



#### **LEARNING MODULE**

Lesson: Creating Quality Blog Content Your Audience Loves to Read and Share



#### **RESOURCES**

Training: <u>Business Blogging Course</u>

Blog post: <u>How to Write a Blog Post: A Step-by-Step Guide [+ Free Blog Post Templates]</u>

Tool: Moz Keyword Explorer



#### PRACTICAL EXERCISE 1

For almost every piece of content, come up with at least five to 10 different headlines. In the box below, write five different headlines for your business's next blog post.

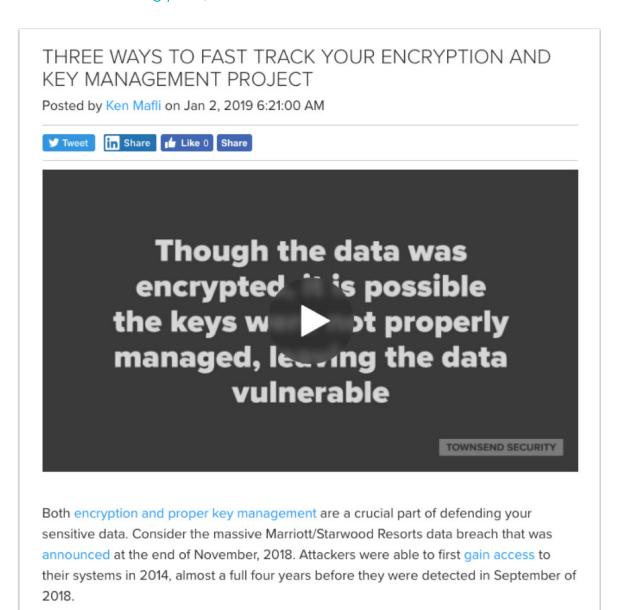


Write your business's next blog post.

#### TOWNSEND SECURITY EXAMPLE

Below is a blog post that Townsend Security created to support one of its primary topics, "encryption key management.

(Click here to read the blog post.)



If you get stuck and need help, complete the "<u>Creating Quality Blog Content Your Audience Loves to Read and Share</u>" lesson in the Content Marketing Certification course.



# 6

#### Section 6

## How HubSpot Uses Blogging to Rank #1 on Google

Here at HubSpot, blogging is our primary source of traffic. In fact, a significant percentage of HubSpot customers first stumbled upon our brand and our website through our blog – usually by searching for something on Google and clicking through to one of our blog posts.

To understand how HubSpot uses blogging to rank in search, we have to first understand how blogging helps anyone rank in search. Blogging on topics that are relevant to your business will do two things: help you build relevance to rank for more search queries and help you build authority on those topics to rank higher in search results.



#### **LEARNING MODULE**

Lesson: How HubSpot Uses Blogging to Rank #1 on Google



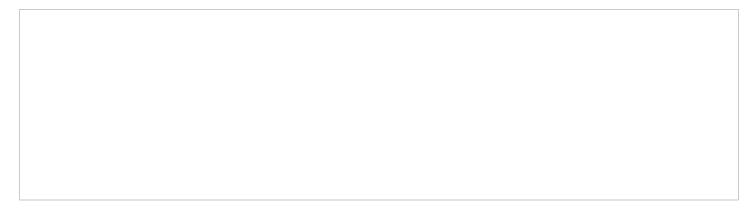
#### **RESOURCES**

Blog post: How to Optimize Your Content for Google's Featured Snippet Box



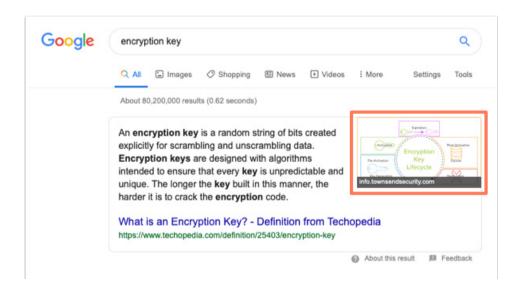
#### PRACTICAL EXERCISE 1

In the box below, identify 2 blog posts that have a chance of winning the featured snippet.



#### TOWNSEND SECURITY EXAMPLE

Below is a featured snippet for one of Townsend Security's website pages.





Choose one of the blog posts from the previous practical exercise, and optimize it for the featured snippet.

If you get stuck and need help, complete the "<u>How HubSpot Uses Blogging to Rank #1 on Google</u>" lesson in the Content Marketing Certification course.



# 7

#### Section 7

## Extending the Value of Your Content Through Repurposing

Imagine you're a content creator tasked with writing blog posts, content offers, video scripts, and so on as part of your daily job function. That's a lot of content to create.

Repurposing content allows you to extend the value of your content by changing it to serve a different purpose, like transforming the messaging of several blog posts to create a guide or reusing content from your guide to help you create an educational video series. The messaging is the same, but the channel or format in which it's consumed is different.

Let's put it into practice.



#### **LEARNING MODULE**

Lesson: Extending the Value of Your Content Through Repurposing



#### **RESOURCES**

Blog post: <u>How to Repurpose Campaign Content for Different Channels (and Never Waste the Leftovers)</u>



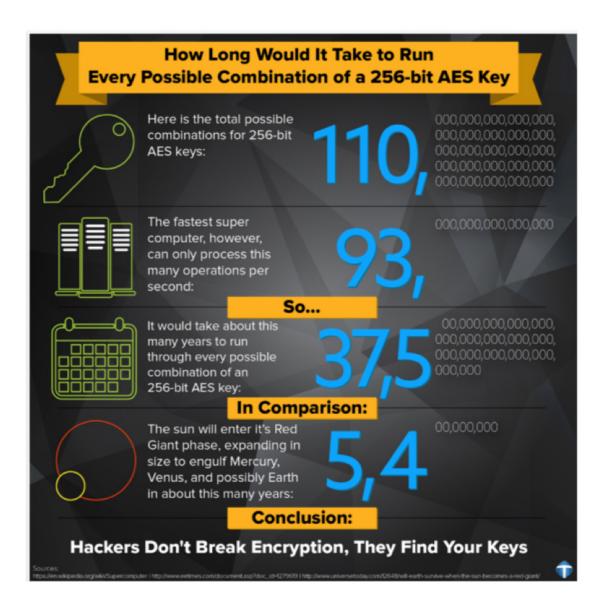
#### PRACTICAL EXERCISE 1

Repurpose one of your blog posts into an infographic using Venngage's free infographic maker.

#### TOWNSEND SECURITY EXAMPLE

Below is an infographic Townsend Security created by repurposing stats from one of its educational pieces of content.





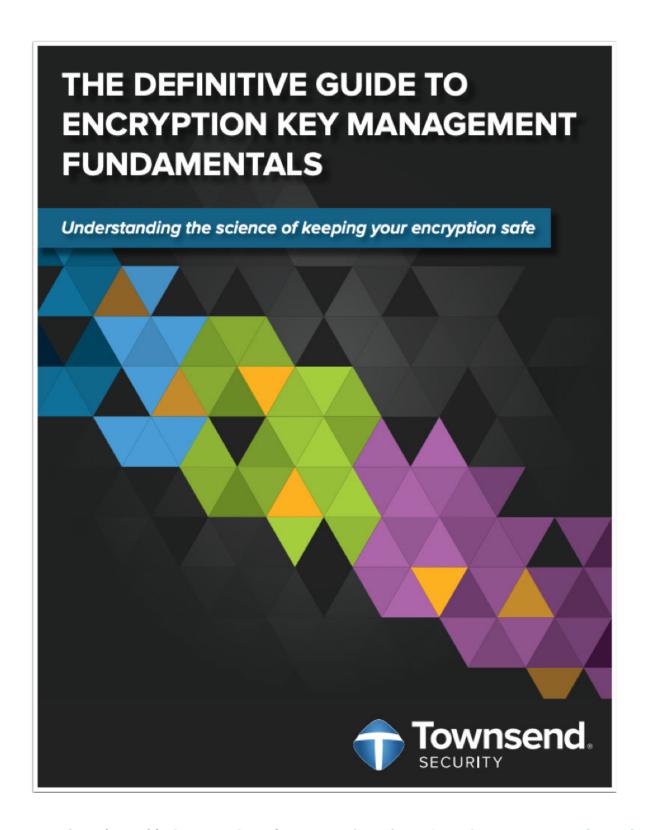


Create an awareness-stage guide for your business. However, instead of starting from scratch, consider how you can repurpose the current assets you have at your disposal.

#### TOWNSEND SECURITY EXAMPLE

Below is a guide that Townsend Security created for its topic "encryption key management."





If you get stuck and need help, complete the "Extending the Value of Your Content Through Repurposing" lesson in the Content Marketing Certification course.

## 8

#### Section 8

### **Creating Topic Clusters and Pillar Pages**

If you want to create effective content that converts visitors into leads and eventually customers, you need to create a helpful, positive user experience that solves for both the searcher and the search engine, not just one or the other.

Here's how you can solve for both: Create targeted clusters of relevant content that each covers a specific topic in depth. These targeted clusters then need to lead to a centralized hub, known as a pillar page.

A pillar page (also known as a content pillar or power page) is a website page that covers a specific topic in depth and is linked to a cluster of related content.

Let's put it into practice.



#### **LEARNING MODULE**

Lesson: Creating Topic Clusters and Pillar Pages



#### **RESOURCES**

Blog post: <u>Topic Clusters: The Next Evolution of SEO</u>



#### PRACTICAL EXERCISE 1

Repurpose one of your awareness-stage guides into a pillar page.

#### TOWNSEND SECURITY EXAMPLE

Below is a pillar page Townsend Security created by repurposing content from its awareness-stage offer, "The Definitive Guide to Encryption Key Management Fundamentals."

(Click here to read the pillar page.)







#### WHAT IS ENCRYPTION KEY MANAGEMENT?

Encryption key management is administering the full lifecycle of cryptographic keys and protecting them from loss or misuse. The lifecycle includes: generating, using, storing, archiving, and deleting of keys. Protection of the encryption keys includes limiting access to the keys physically, logically, and through user/role access.

#### **SHORTCUTS**

Introduction

Types of Encryption Keys and How They Work

How Encryption Key Systems Work

The Full Life-Cycle of Keys

Segregated Roles in Key Management

The Domains to Secure Encryption Keys

**Communication Protocols** 

Platforms for Housing the Encryption Key Manager

**Encryption Key Management in Meeting Compliance** 

Bonus Content: A Brief History - the Need for Encryption Key Management





#### **PRACTICAL EXERCISE 2**

If you don't already have a solution for a pop-up form on your website, sign up for HubSpot's free tool.

If you get stuck and need help, complete the "<u>Creating Topic Clusters and Pillar Pages</u>" lesson in the Content Marketing Certification course.



9

#### Section 9

## How to Create a Successful Video Marketing Strategy

Thanks to the rise of technology, video is used more widely as a business strategy across marketing, sales, and service teams. When done correctly, a video marketing strategy is an effective way to attract, engage, and delight your audience in a human and helpful way.

But creating any old video isn't enough. You need to create memorable videos that engage your audience.

Let's put it into practice.



#### **LEARNING MODULE**

Lesson: How to Create a Successful Video Marketing Strategy



#### **RESOURCES**

Training: Video Marketing Course

Blog Post: How to Get Started With Video Marketing: A Checklist for Marketers



### PRACTICAL EXERCISE 1

Create a script for one of your educational website pages using this template.

#### TOWNSEND SECURITY EXAMPLE

Below is a snippet video script that Townsend Security created by repurposing content from its encryption key management pillar page.

SCRIPT	SHOT LIST
Hi, I'd like to introduce you to the basic concepts around encryption and proper key management.	Intro screen with title pop-in and Townsend logo.
Encryption is like a safe with the encryption keys being the combination to that safe.	Dissolve title, intro safe and spin the combination knob.
If you have data that needs to be protected,	Intro database icon.
using strong encryption can protect your data, even from the most ingenious hackers.	Put safe over the database, put a bomb next to the safe and explode it, with it being moved to the left side, intact.
But if you leave the combination to that safe just lying around, even the strongest safe can't protect your data.	Intro the encryption key "paper" with the hacker reading it and spinning the combination knob. Have a line come under the safe and flip it.



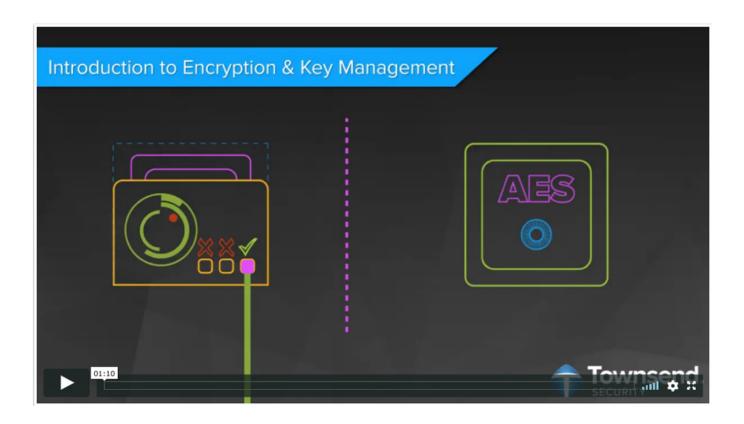


Using the script you wrote, create a video and embed it on your website.

#### **TOWNSEND SECURITY EXAMPLE**

Below is a video that Townsend Security created and embedded at the top of its encryption key management pillar page.

(Click here to view the video.)



If you get stuck and need help, complete the "<u>How to Create a Successful Video Marketing Strategy</u>" lesson in the Content Marketing Certification course.



#### Section 10

### 1 Building a Guest Blogging Strategy Powered by SEO

Guest blogging is an effective tactic that helps your business in more ways than one. Not only does it help you build authority as a thought leader within your industry, but also, and more importantly, it's a powerful way to optimize your website for search when done correctly.

Let's put it into practice.



#### **LEARNING MODULE**

Lesson: Building a Guest Blogging Strategy Powered by SEO



#### **RESOURCES**

Training: **SEO Training Course** 

Blog post: A Simple SEO Strategy for 2019 (The 'Middleman' Method)

Tool: Moz Link Explorer



#### PRACTICAL EXERCISE 1

Do research on Google and find five websites that you'd like to write a guest blog post for. Write them down here:

#### PRACTICAL EXERCISE 2

Start building a relationship before reaching out for a guest blogging opportunity with each company you identified in the previous practical exercise. One effective way to do this is to start a discussion by commenting on one of the company's blog posts.



Repurpose one of your educational pieces of content into a guest blog post that links back to your website.

#### TOWNSEND SECURITY EXAMPLE

Below is a guest blog post Townsend Security wrote for Infosecurity Magazine.

(Click here to read the guest blog post.)



If you get stuck and need help, complete the "<u>Building a Guest Blogging Strategy Powered by SEO</u>" lesson in the Content Marketing Certification course.



# 11 Section 11 How to Effectively Promote Content

One of the biggest challenges marketers face when creating content is visibility. Creating great content simply isn't enough. A successful content strategy should include a promotional plan that strategically shares content with the people who will benefit most from it.

#### Let's put it into practice.



#### **LEARNING MODULE**

Lesson: How to Effectively Promote Content



#### **RESOURCES**

Training: <u>Social Media Certification Course</u> Template: <u>Social Media Content Calendar</u>

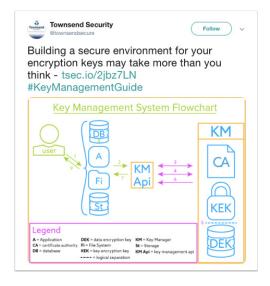


#### **PRACTICAL EXERCISE 1**

Create 10 social posts by repurposing content from one of your educational website pages.

#### TOWNSEND SECURITY EXAMPLE

Below is a tweet that offers an interesting snippet with a relevant image from Townsend Security's encryption key management pillar page.



## PRACTICAL EXERCISE 2

Identify a top-engaged social media post that offers a link to one of your website pages with a form on it and boost it with ad spend. \*\*If this is your first time purchasing a digital ad, then start with minimal budget you're comfortable spending as an experiment.\*\*

If you get stuck and need help, complete the "<u>How to Effectively Promote Content</u>" lesson in the Content Marketing Certification course.



# 12 Section 12 Measuring and Analyzing Your Content

There are a ton of metrics out there that you can report on to understand your content's performance. For a blog post, you might be interested in webpage visitors, time on page, and referral traffic. For a video, maybe you're more interested in watch time, social media shares, and impressions. And if you're offering a webinar, landing page conversions for registration might be your top metric. Regardless of what type of content you're measuring, there are numerous metrics that impact its success.

#### Let's put it into practice.



#### **LEARNING MODULE**

Lesson: Measuring and Analyzing Your Content



#### **RESOURCES**

Blog post: 15 Metrics Every Marketing Manager Should Be Tracking

Template: Monthly Marketing Reporting Templates



### PRACTICAL EXERCISE 1

Use your CRM and web analytics data to inform your ad campaigns and see exactly which ads are turning prospects into loyal customers. \*\*If you don't already have a paid ads tracker in place, sign up for HubSpot's free tool.



#### **PRACTICAL EXERCISE 2**

Create a monthly marketing report to communicate the performance of your content creation efforts.

\*\*If you need a reporting template, then click here to access one.\*\*



#### TOWNSEND SECURITY EXAMPLE

Below is a list of metrics Townsend Security reports on each month:

- Target keywords' search engine results page position
- Total average search engine results page position
- Organic search traffic
- Visitor average time on page
- Visitor bounce rate
- Total inbound links

If you get stuck and need help, complete the "Measuring and Analyzing Content" lesson in the Content Marketing Certification course.





**Congratulations!** By completing the practical exercises in this workbook, you've taken a step toward transforming yourself into an effective content marketer. Give yourself a pat on the back.

The next step is to continue growing your plan and stay consistent in your approach. Always be on the lookout for new content opportunities that provide value to your audience. Remember, your audience is the reason you're doing this in the first place – if you want to start a relationship with audience members, make sure to give them the care and attention they deserve.

#### Want to have your example featured on HubSpot's blog?

HubSpot Academy's mission is to educate and inspire people so that we, together, transform the way the world does business. If you put in the effort and see results, we want to know about it. Share your example with us for the chance to be featured on HubSpot's blog. We'll even link to your website, giving you a boost in authority.

Click here to submit your example.

Keep up the good work!

Justin Champion
HubSpot Academy

