

Where Does Customer Experience *Begin?*



An integrative approach to content metrics in the role of content creation




Where does the customer experience begin and end at your organization? Sure, you can assume the answer is “Googleable.” A quick search (which by the way, will show you [roughly 338,000 results in just over a minute](#)) will tell you that customer experience describes the interaction between an organization and its customers, across [different touchpoints in the customer journey](#). And that a good experience is when those points of contact meet the customer’s expectations.

Without a doubt, it begins well before a customer actually starts doing business with your organization. But this doesn’t tell you where it all begins.

Customer experience starts with your content. It starts with your content creators, in all industries — no matter if they work in marketing, tech docs, or support.

At every organization, content creation is seen as a necessary part of business. However, not every enterprise realizes that content is where customer experience begins. For many, tracking the customer journey starts with the moment you hit “publish” and start collecting and reporting on various content metrics.

But the truth is: Customer experience actually begins before the first word makes it to the page.



This simple realization has the power to change the way large, global organizations create content. It's not part of the customer experience — **it *is* the customer experience.**

Where are we going wrong?

Here's an example: A typical Fortune 2000 company may have 30+ million visits per year to its website content. People, on average, spend about 23 minutes per visit, which means customers are interacting with content directly for 700+ million minutes per year. And if you add the indirect customer touchpoints, such as interactions with social media or affiliate or partner content, you'll likely find that the indirect content experiences outweigh the time spent in direct contact with your content.

And yet, inconsistent content is ruining customer experiences every day. Product and technical content talks about features and misses the conversation of value. Marketing content talks about value but doesn't consider the actual customer challenges that support teams fully understand. The result? Content from a single enterprise looks fragmented and unclear.

If you're looking at content performance data detached from the value it delivers to customers,

you're not creating content that consumers want. The secondary consequence, of course, is that it's not meeting your business goals.

It's essential to understand content performance metrics in the context of the customer journey. Organizations invest a lot of time and money into creating customer touchpoints, such as Adword campaigns, social campaigns, and display ads. It's important that you link the investment into content creation with your investments in touchpoints — to be sure your content has customer value at every point in the customer journey.

You do that by using metrics early on in the content creation process to create content based on demand, not simply to satisfy the requirements of search engines. And, if you bring those insights to the point of content creation — you give your content operation a competitive advantage.

Connecting Data with **Customer Value**

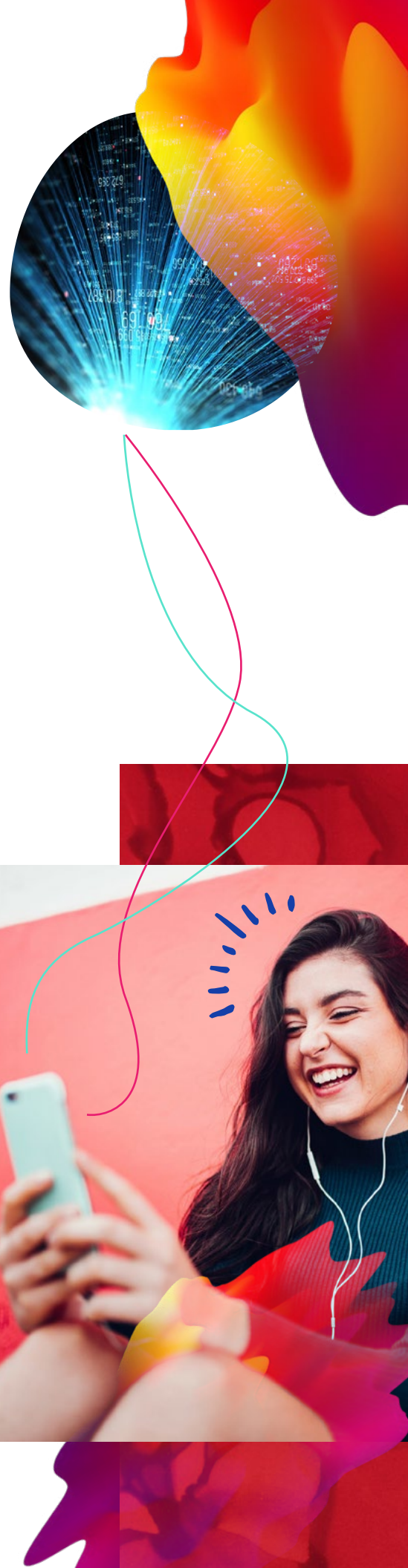
Let's use an example that, by now, everyone in business is familiar with. These days, most companies know to go beyond talking only about features and functionality. That's because consumers don't care about how something works before they know how it will improve their lives. While a list of your target audience's needs is helpful, to really align their needs with your business goals, you also need to pair their requirements with a quantified, dollar value for each benefit.

And that's where people seem to get stuck. They have a metric with a dollar value attached to it, and they're focused on improving the metrics so much that they forget about creating an experience. It's too easy to lose sight of the fact that how the customer feels when they read your content has a direct relationship with that dollar value.

Data has become the new "features" conversation. We talk about data a lot, but many organizations are still learning how to harness the value behind it to simultaneously meet customer needs, and their business goals. In short, you can't just measure the effectiveness of your content in the language of data. You need to pair it with value. And not just value in the context of your organization — but the value for your target audience.

We need to start having this conversation differently. One where data and customer value belong in a single sentence. One where it's implied that your business profits when the data reflects customers getting their needs met.

Creating a seamless, unified content experience starts with a holistic view on content creation within the enterprise, and the ability to see the value behind content consumption data. When you see that value, you need to transfer it to the people actually writing the content, so it's created with the customer in mind. Not just from what you think the customer wants to read, but what the data reveals they're interested in.





What is **holistic** content creation?


Holistic content creation across the enterprise happens when you dissolve typical silos and the communication barriers between interdisciplinary teams.

Does your technical communication remember to talk about the value of that new feature, or is it purely factual? Does your marketing content anticipate the questions your customers may ask, or is that still up to support?

Holistically created content considers that every content piece you publish within your organization is part of the customer experience. And no matter which teams create content, you

now need to balance a wide range of customer concerns that are typically managed in silos, in every content type and team.

The rewards of a transparent, systematic content creation process, across your organization, are huge. It's really true that a seamless, unified customer experience with your content starts with a seamless, unified content creation process in the enterprise.



SEO: Popular but (often) poorly executed data in content creation

The process of SEO is a perfect place to get a more detailed view into this problem, and start modeling a new way of looking at data and content creation.

Mostly, companies spend too much time thinking about search, and not enough time thinking about demand. When 51% of all traffic on your site comes from organic search, it's important to use organic search data to estimate demand for different kinds of topics for content. But that's difficult for most content creators to do, because in most organizations the practice of SEO is generally kept separate from the practice of content creation.

There's a crucial difference between using search results to understand consumer demand, and using them to please search engine requirements. When you're too focused on search, you'll likely optimize content for just one or two keywords, focus too heavily on technical

"on-page" SEO optimization, and choose a limited set of metrics to judge if content is performing successfully. But your content itself might fall flat, because you're not writing about what consumers are interested in.

The difference in understanding demand is that you'll do keyword research in broader topics that show a broader range of interest from the people doing the searching: your prospects and customers! It's perfectly possible to create content that captures all the ways people naturally use search engines to find what they're looking for. And when done well, it's possible to create content that contains up to 100 of the best ranking keywords — without keyword stuffing.

You see, if you have authority over the topic you're writing about, you'll probably do this naturally. Because when you truly know what you're talking about, you know all the possible questions the reader may ask, and can communicate using a greater breadth of words and phrases. But when just about every non-professional writer in your enterprise creates content, and some do so in their non-native language, you need a way to intentionally write well-rounded content that performs well. And not by accident!



Align Content Creation to the Customer Journey

What kind of data do we start with?

It might seem obvious, but it's worth noting that SEO isn't the only content metric that makes for robust content marketing. When we talk about using data better, we mean the whole kit n' caboodle such as:

- Web analytics
- Marketing automation
- Search engine marketing tools
- Percentage of keyword coverage
- Scores for clarity and reading ease
- Views, read through rates, activity
- Open to click comparisons
- Cluster traffic
- SERP ranking
- Cost per lead
- Lead volume
- Conversion rate
- CSAT scores

Believe it or not these metrics are valuable for technical content, support content, definitely marketing content, and even legal content. So, what can you do to inspire writers to start thinking about the value of these metrics in content creation? How do you make the outcome of customer experience the very purpose of writing that content in the first place?

The answer: You need to make it easy for writers to create quality content that's aligned with your desired customer experience. And in doing so, create a more efficient and cost effective enterprise content engine.



Different teams across your enterprise will have the answers for each of the questions below. But it's important to realize that an efficient, effective content creation process provides knowledge to all content creators, so that everyone can answer the following:

1. What are the topics/subject matter we want to be known for?
2. What's the demand for the topics we write about?
3. What are the related topics to ours? (Based off research into semantic and user intent)
4. What are the "must have" and "prominent" keywords that we should include in our content?
5. Aside from keywords, what other important words and phrases do we need to include to be findable, consistent, compliant, and on-brand?
6. What kinds of questions do customers ask about what I/we're writing about?
7. Who do we compete with in this specific market/niche? (and how can we be different?)
8. How can I/we measure my content performance against the company's expectations?

The value in this is huge for your business. By increasing the value of the content engine as a corporate asset, you give your enterprise content a real and sustainable competitive advantage.

Here begins your step-by-step guide to creating a content strategy that acknowledges the leading role of content, and aligns it to the customer journey.

1. Connect your metrics to what your customers value and your business needs.

It's important to remember there are two possible levels of business outcomes. Improving the customer experience is a strategic outcome, but it's worthwhile to consider how you can improve operational outcomes, as shown in the table below.

Let's start by mapping some impact metrics that often matter to a customer / prospect, and show how they connect to your business goals. Remember, when writers start drafting content, it makes a difference if they focus on the desired customer experience (strategic outcomes) or your business goals (operational business outcomes) even though the two are connected. It helps to ask:

What kind of content do customers need to experience to engage with the content in a way that meets your business goals?

If you write content that truly empowers your audience at each particular stage of the customer journey, it's a natural byproduct of their satisfaction that you meet your business goals.

Metric	Business Goals	Customers' Experience
Traffic	Improved content findability to improve organic traffic	A greater sense of independence because they can find and educate themselves about your offering and solve their own queries.
Conversion and/or engagement metrics	Higher page engagement and conversion with "better" quality content.	Content that uses words and phrases that resonate with them, and make them feel like your brand speaks their language.
Time to publication/ cost per page of content	Greater editorial efficiencies to create more content for the same or less money.	Content that's available when they need it, with accurate information that reflects their need.
Lead volume	More traffic that converts into leads. Better converting content that improves campaign performance.	Content that matches their expectations depending on where they are in the customer journey. Do you know what customers are searching for? Do you choose well-ranked topics for informative or transactional searches?

2. Decide on the content metrics you think align with your goals.

The data you make available to content creators is different to the kind of data you work with at a management or C-level. You now need to go through and pair the metrics you're measuring into qualities to look for and measure in content.

What kind of content usually increases conversion? Clear content. What kind of content tends to increase time to publication? Content that requires less editing because it already has good spelling and grammar and uses a consistent style, tone, and voice. These are just examples of how to determine the qualities of content that match your goals. Other qualities include:

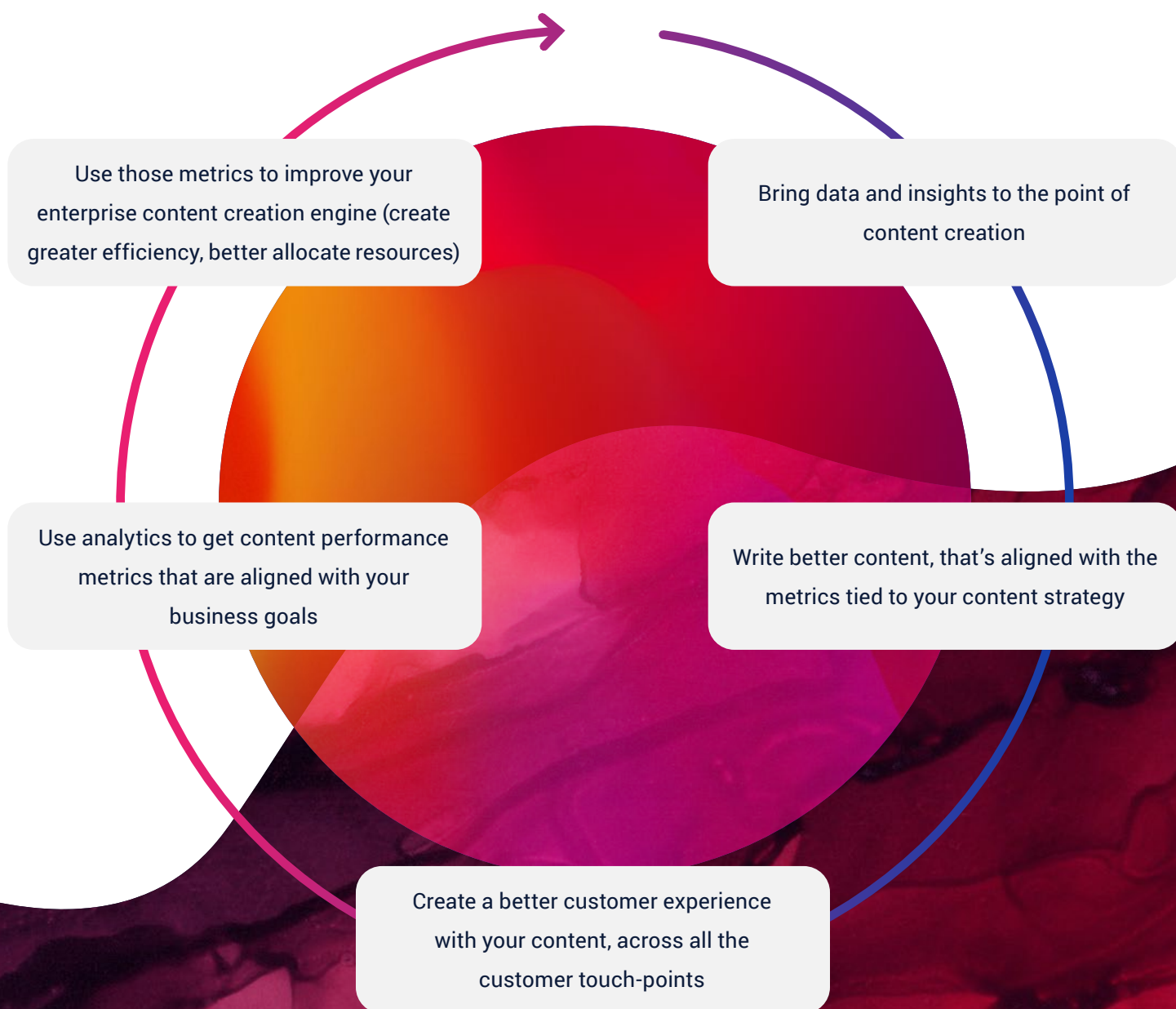
- Scannable content
- Readable (easy to understand)
- Correct (spelling and grammar)
- Consistent use of your brand voice
- Consistent use of your enterprise terminology
- Uses inclusive language
- Uses gender-neutral language
- Sentence length matches your guidelines
- Zero use of non-compliant legal terms
- Intentional and consistent use of emotive language

Every organization prioritizes different content quality metrics, depending on its content strategy, target audience, content types, and industry. We could tell you what tends to align with certain customer experience outcomes or business outcomes, but the best practice is to choose your own metrics, get a baseline score of your current content quality, and then prove the impact via correlation analysis, A/B testing, or other forms of testing.

3. Make business insights available at the point of content creation.

What happens when writers create content with qualities that create a better customer experience?
What happens when it becomes possible to do that without additional resources, or even less editing time than usual?

You get a never-ending cycle of improvement in your enterprise content engine. It looks something like this:



4. Create a sustainable enterprise content engine.

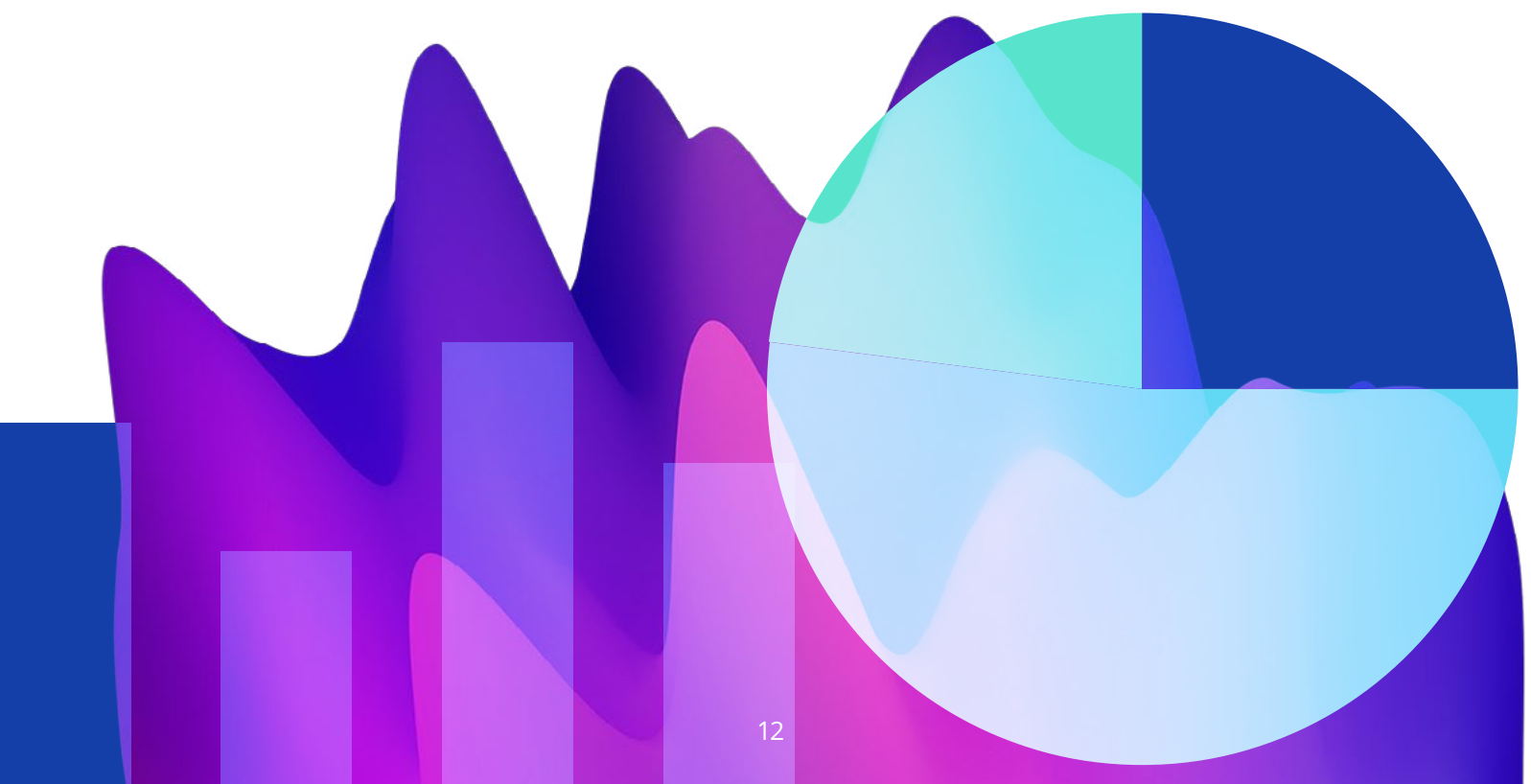
The thing about data is that you need to keep using it, and keep translating it into value, for the different people involved. It's never a once off activity and people need to be involved to interpret the data in a way that's relevant to the different stakeholders.

You'll find yourself in a never-ending cycle of translating content metrics into business value metrics, and business value metrics into content metrics. And (hopefully), those conversations will eventually boil down to conversations about how audience-centric content is the main priority, no matter what you're writing.

Having a systematic way to evaluate your content against your enterprise goals unifies your organization. So that everyone understands the value of what they're producing, at every level across the company.

It's important to remember that while there's a million ways to get high-impact content in the short term, you need to create a sustainable content creation engine that can out run that of your competitors over the long haul. By making content guidelines transparent and accessible, you optimize your teams to create the volume of quality content you need to serve your business.

Technology and automation to align writers to your content goals bring huge benefits to your business. Automation means you can check 100% of your content, across all teams, geographical locations, and time zones. It gives you the most comprehensive overview of your content quality, and the best way to improve the efficiency of your entire enterprise content operation. It doesn't get in the way of content creators — and for your business, it can help you do more with the resources you have, reduce editorial cycles, and guarantee compliance to highly-regulated content standards.



Putting it into **practice**

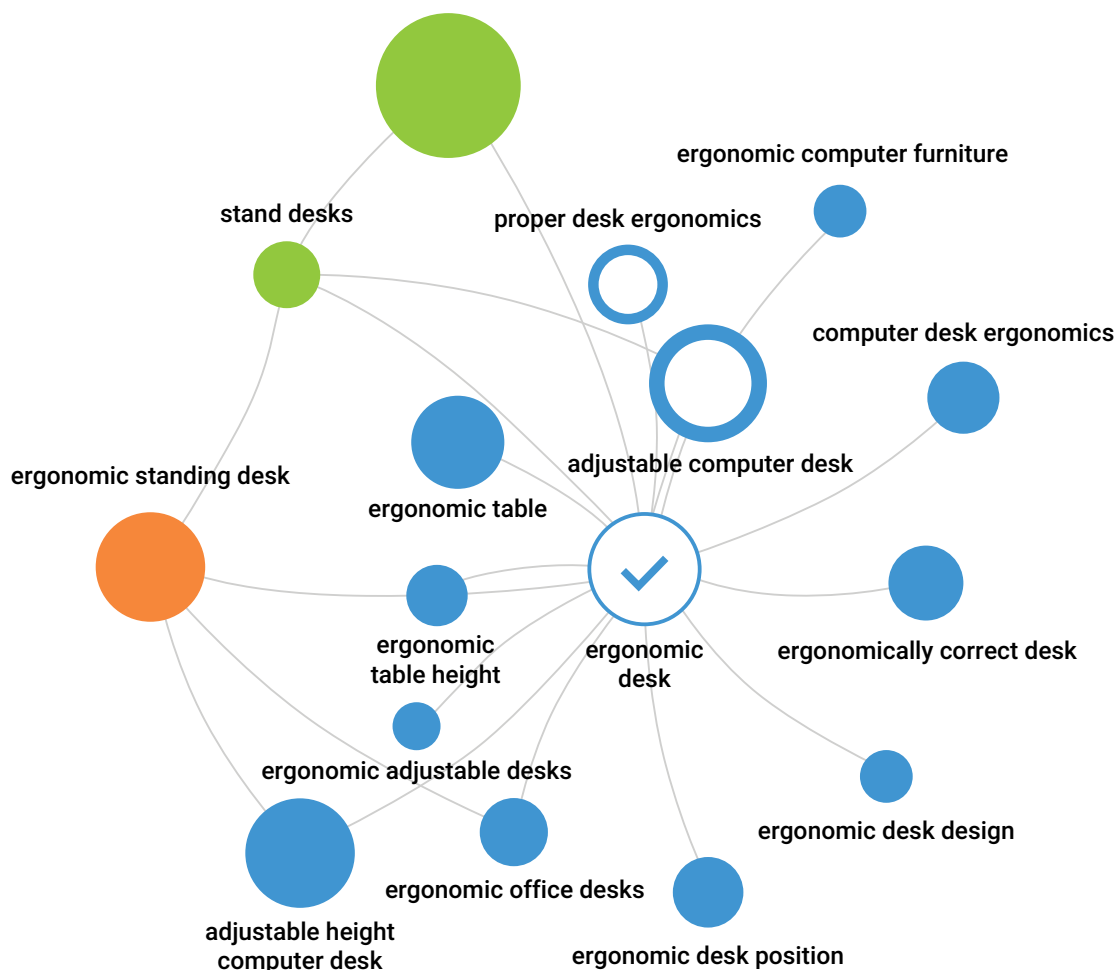
The customer journey as it relates to content will usually start in a search engine. Your content needs to be prepared to take a consumer all the way from providing the information they're looking for, to the point of transaction. There are steps in between, but we'll focus on a simple model for now – from a customer searching for information until purchase.

Start with a quality informative content experience

We know that the better, more differentiated the informational content, the more likely you'll capture the transaction.

So let's begin to develop a piece of content for a fictional character looking to buy a new ergonomic desk for their home office. You'll start by answering the questions:

1. How many people enter the search phrase "ergonomic desk" in any given month or season?
2. What is the demand for similar topics?



As we see from the results, there are more than 16 closely related topics and search phrases. Limiting our SEO process until after the content is written, or focusing only on one or two keywords, simply isn't competitive or compelling enough. Just selecting "ergonomic desk" as a topic reveals **an average monthly search volume of 5,598 searches, that peaks at 6,452 searches in August.**

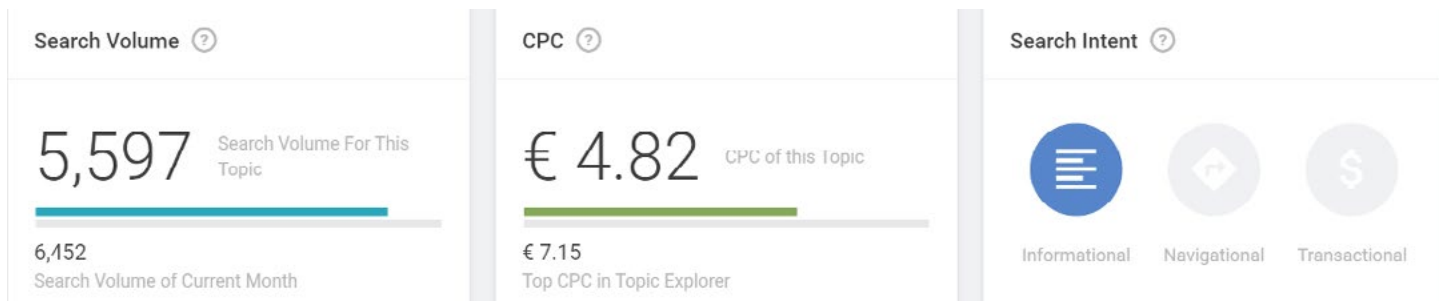


Image source: Searchmetrics

You can support your content writers by finding one keyword that has a decent monthly search volume, and then adding other relevant keywords that have a semantic proximity to your main term.

How does this inform written content creation?

By researching this topic, the keyword "ergonomic desk" proves to be an informational keyword. That's great, because it matches the consumer's intentions. You're going to choose a format and channel to publish your content that:

- Chooses a topic that has real demand.
- Creates awareness through useful information, not product-focused content.
- Addresses most of the related topics and keywords that enables a conversation with our target audience.
- Covers more than one keyword (covers more than one way your audience searches). This makes your content more discoverable.
- Is published in a time where people are looking for that information (August).



Transactional content without the hard sell

The value of a top-ranking piece of content that can generate the equivalent amount of traffic without spending money with Google AdWords is \$1.209 per month for a single keyword. Imagine what you could achieve if one piece of content ranked for more than 100 keywords?

The list of top ranking competition for ergonomic desks is (surprise) YouTube and Amazon. It's time to do your research, so you can create the most differentiated content that captures the attention of your audience.

To outperform your competitors, you also need to think carefully about other content qualities such as:

- Content Score (for keyword coverage)
- Text Length
- Clarity
- Readability
- Scannability

URL	Position
www.youtube.com/watch?v=F8_ME4VwTiw	1
www.youtube.com/watch?v=SIYxDYVYvA0	2
www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ree1CWifQTg	3
www.amazon.com/ergonomic-desk/s?k=ergonomic+desk	4
www.amazon.com/slp/ergonomic-desk/g7ypnz8jj2qb4s5	5
ergonomictrends.com/the-best-ergonomic-computer-desks/	6

Image source: Searchmetrics

How does this inform written content creation?

- Make sure you're not using informative keywords in transactional content. The words and phrases in your content should be congruent with your audience's intentions.
- Before you start writing, analyze a piece of content from one of the higher ranking competitors and see if you can broaden your topic to include more/different phrases, terms, and topics. It might even help to come up with a new spin on a worn out topic!
- Sometimes the words that "sell" are the ones you'd least expect. Don't assume that because everyone is doing it that those keywords will also work for you!

Choosing the Right Technology

So how do you set up your enterprise content engine in a way that helps create a better customer experience and meets your strategic and operational business goals?

Is there a difference between an authoring assistant, an SEO tool, a customer experience management software, and an enterprise-ready content improvement platform?

A content improvement platform, specifically designed for the enterprise, is different from one designed to help single writers. It should:

- Support all types of content (file types, different authoring tools) and content creation workflows.
- Align all content to your product and content strategy at the point of authoring.
- Provide support across the entire content lifecycle.
- Streamline processes to improve communication and collaboration.
- Improve individual and team performance.
- Provide measurable metrics to help make business decisions.
- Help your collective content creators communicate with one clear voice.



Better Content. Faster.

Acrolinx: Insights Delivered to Where You Write Content

Global enterprises invest billions of dollars into creating customer touchpoints — content that appears in all the channels that consumers find relevant. However, less energy goes into making sure that every point in the content journey is a positive customer experience. It's time to bridge the gap between content creators and customers, to avoid the hit and miss results that come from mediocre content.

Acrolinx is an AI-powered content improvement platform founded on the idea that content and content creation are as important as any other areas of your business. It helps you turn your enterprise content engine into a competitive differentiator. It does that by turning your data into actionable insights — and bringing them to where people write content.

Acrolinx addresses both your content and business goals in three ways. It helps:

1. Improve your content so that it directly improves your defined content-related KPIs.
2. Gives you more time and resources to focus on creating and maintaining more content.
3. Frees up your teams and talented individuals to focus on high-value business activities with the same headcount or budget.

Our enterprise content platform enables executives and team leaders to govern and measure 100% of your enterprise content with measurable, reportable metrics. For content creators, it assists collaboration across teams, and improves the quality of content right from the first draft.

www.acrolinx.com