

How to Start a Content Marketing Engine in the Age of AI

Learn how to build the backbone of your Content Marketing Operation in the age of AI Overviews and zero-click content

Content marketing has proven time and time again that it can be a valuable revenue driver for businesses, regardless of industry. While many businesses know the value of content marketing, they struggle to turn content into a consistent, predictable growth channel. All too often, they start a blog, create a few posts, then lose steam. The marketing team looks back at their Analytics account a few weeks later and sees almost nothing, so they move on to other channels.

This challenge is magnified in the AI era, where Google's AI Overviews and other AI search features now intercept 58-60% of search traffic through zero-click results. For technical content marketing, this impact is even greater, with informational queries seeing up to a 34.5% drop in click-through rates when AI Overviews appear. Despite these challenges, content marketing remains essential—it simply requires adaptation to this new reality.

Marketers who fail to succeed at content marketing usually either lack the processes, systems, and frameworks needed, or they lack the discipline to carry out those processes consistently.

In this eBook, I walk you through the pre-requisites and goals of building an effective content marketing engine for technical audiences: The tech stack, strategy, and a tried and trusted framework to help you reverse engineer your production and publishing plan. I also address the specific challenges of creating technical content in an era where AI systems increasingly mediate the relationship between your content and your audience.

About the Author

Manuel Weiss is co-owner of Draft.dev, a Content Creation Agency for Technical Companies. We help Marketing and Developer Relations teams in tech businesses **drive awareness, capture leads, and build trust**.



In the last 15 years, Manuel has helped small and large businesses build lead engines based on content marketing that generated millions of unique visitors per year, driving thousands of marketing-qualified leads every month, helping generate millions of dollars and 1,000s of customers.

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Content Marketing Needs to Drive Revenue

As content marketers, we have a responsibility to the business to provide predictable output of content that drives people from awareness to consideration to purchase decision. We also have a duty to analyze and report on what we do and why we do it, and to learn and revise our actions based on these insights. Marketing in general, but **content marketing specifically, is not an art; it's a science.** It takes robust systems, processes, and discipline to execute.

In today's AI-dominated landscape, our responsibility extends beyond driving website traffic. Technical B2B marketers must now optimize for "content influence" – ensuring our expertise is recognized and cited by AI systems that increasingly mediate how developers and technical professionals discover information. This requires intentional optimization for both traditional search and emerging AI discovery patterns.

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This eBook will walk you through the exact process that you can use to set up a predictable, consistent content engine that provides you with insights and data to **prove its effectiveness to business leadership**.

A “**content marketing engine**” is a repeatable system for creating, publishing, and promoting content designed to reach and convert your target customers.

Each piece of content is aimed at a specific stage of the marketing funnel (awareness, consideration, decision) and should lead to predictable and measurable results for your business. The desired results are typically traffic generation and new leads added to your database.

In the AI era, we must expand these results to include AI Overview appearances, brand citation rates, and technical authority metrics that measure how frequently your content is referenced by AI systems. What's changed is not the fundamental value of content marketing, but how we must adapt our approach for an environment where AI systems like Google's AI Overviews now mediate information discovery and consumption.

In this eBook, I'll focus on written content in the form of blog posts as the primary medium for your content engine. While you don't have to limit your content engine to written content, writing is often the best place to start. **Blog posts can be easily repurposed** into downloadable PDFs, conversations for a podcast, or talks for a conference.

Technical content particularly benefits from this approach, as code examples, technical documentation, and implementation guides **can be strategically structured to maintain value in both AI-summarized and full-length formats**.

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I know this strategy works because we've used it for years, implementing it for companies of all sizes. Whether you're a one-person marketing team with less than \$1 million in annual revenue or part of a multi-million-dollar software company, follow along with this eBook to create a repeatable, scalable, and predictable content marketing engine!

In the following sections, I'll show you how to set up a predictable and scalable content marketing framework - step by step.

First, I'll cover setting up core pre-requisites like your content management system and analytics tracking. Next, I'll show you how to turn anonymous traffic into known leads that you store in your database and increase brand awareness using retargeting.

Finally, I'll show you how to set up and use a content calendar to ensure that your content engine is consistent and predictable.

Setting Up A Content Management System

The What, Why, and Desired Result

Key Metric:

Content pieces published per month.

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Why it Matters:

You need to reliably publish content in order to attract new people to your site.

Final Result:

Team members can easily create, preview, and publish content on your site.

Set up your blog using a static site generator and a headless CMS

Using a [static site generator](#) and [headless CMS](#) for your blog will eliminate most of your speed and security problems. They make it easy to publish new content, add code snippets (like retargeting and analytics), update your stylesheets, and customize everything about your site. For technical content marketing in the AI era, these systems offer additional advantages: they allow more granular control over content structure, metadata, and schema markup – all critical factors in how AI systems process your content. Implementing proper heading hierarchies, structured data for code samples, and clear technical documentation patterns improves how AI systems parse and cite your expertise.

Of course, you can choose to use different solutions ([WordPress](#), for example) to set up your Content Engine. These solutions work fine, but we typically recommend [Next.js and Netlify](#). This setup can be hosted for free using [Netlify](#) or [GitHub Pages](#), and the ongoing maintenance is much lower than server-side solutions like WordPress.

These solutions also come with a lot of “ready-to-use” features that make performance optimization and tracking capabilities very easy to set up. Having these in place will ensure that your site adheres to Google’s [Web Vitals](#) and will

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lead to better search engine rankings in the long run. Additionally, this architecture makes it easier to implement AI-readable content structures, including explicit answer sections, FAQ schema, and table-based information that AI systems can effectively extract and cite.

What if I already have a blog set up on my domain?

Don't reinvent the wheel. If your CMS works for you and it performs well, there's no need to spend a month migrating to a static site. Website migrations can be very delicate, so consult with your engineering team or an external specialist before you start this process.

If, on the other hand, your CMS is restricting the amount of content you can produce or its poor performance is hurting your ability to rank well in search engines, you should move off it as soon as possible. In the AI era, **technical content needs particular attention** to structure and machine readability. If your current CMS limits your ability to implement structured data, create properly nested heading hierarchies, or control the semantics of your HTML, consider prioritizing migration. These technical elements significantly impact how AI systems process and cite your content – potentially affecting 60% of your potential audience who now consume content through AI interfaces.

One decision you will face then is whether you'd like your blog to be located on a subdirectory (/blog) or on a subdomain (blog.yourdomain.com). There are different viable approaches, depending on the role your blog plays for your business. But, if you'd like to implement the systems taught throughout our Draft.dev resources, our **clear recommendation** is to have your blog located in a subdirectory on your top-level-domain. The reason being that, over time, your published blog content will receive backlinks from external sources and we'd rather have them benefit our top-level-domain than a subdomain.

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Search Engines “see” subdomains as separate entities. So, if we’d receive a lot of backlinks to our subdomain, we’d then have to generate a lot of backlinks to our top-level-domain **from our blog subdomain**. Which means we’d have to link to our “main website” as often as possible from our own blog. Which, depending on the type of content we have published, can make sense in a lot of cases, but won’t make sense 100% of the time and might be perceived as very pushy.

This subdirectory approach becomes even more important in the AI era where domain authority and topical authority influence how AI systems evaluate the credibility of your content. By keeping technical content on your main domain, you consolidate authority signals that help both traditional SEO and AI citation metrics.

What about publishing on Medium, Dev.to or LinkedIn?

Publishing your blog posts exclusively to a third-party platform like Medium, Dev.to, or LinkedIn is tempting because it’s easy, and they offer a built-in distribution network. In the age of AI Overviews and zero-click content consumption it’s also a good approach to establish a multi-platform presence as to not having to solely rely on your website for brand awareness.

That said, especially at the beginning of your content marketing journey it is not a good idea as they won’t help your primary top-level-domain’s ranking in search engines. Links on these platforms are usually “[no-follow links](#),” so they won’t pass much value to other resources or landing pages you reference from them. Once you have your content engine running, you can use publishing on these platforms as opportunities to syndicate optimized versions with canonical links back to your site. For technical content marketing, platforms like Dev.to should be viewed as citation opportunities rather than traffic drivers – places

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where your expertise can be recognized by AI systems and developer communities alike.

If you already have content on these platforms, I recommend migrating it to your new blog and updating existing platform content with **canonical links pointing to your domain version** and to restructure it to serve as a "preview" that drives users to the complete resource on your site.

Setting Up and Using Analytics

The What, Why, and Desired Result

Key Metrics:

Unique visitors per month, average time on page, citations in AI overviews

Why it Matters:

Analytics give you insights into your audience and tell you how many unique readers your blog posts get, how long those readers are on your site, and where they are based.

Final Result:

Your team can track traffic and user engagement driven by your content marketing efforts. This will help you make meaningful decisions about future content production.

Set up Google Analytics

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By far, the most common option for site analytics is [Google Analytics](#). It's not necessarily the easiest to use, but it's powerful, free, and widely documented. If you're using Next.js, [here is a follow-along tutorial](#) to set it up. If not, here is the detailed [Google Analytics documentation](#).

Alternatively, you can set up your Google Analytics script using the [Google TAG Manager](#) (GTM). GTM allows for automatic asynchronous loading of scripts, which is helpful for optimizing page load speed metrics like the [largest contentful paint](#), but it's more complicated to set up. You can [see a list of TAG manager features here](#) to decide if it's worth the investment when you're getting started.

While Google Analytics remains essential, it's now insufficient for measuring technical content performance in the AI era. Consider complementing it with tools that track AI Overview appearances (for example [ahrefs](#)), brand mentions in search features, and crawler traffic from AI systems. If you want to get very granular, you can also add custom Google Tag Manager events to track when users engage with more advanced technical elements like code examples, API documentation, or interactive tools – behaviors that signal higher intent in technical audiences.

I also recommend setting up Google Search Console to get insights into organic search impression trends.

Track unique visitors

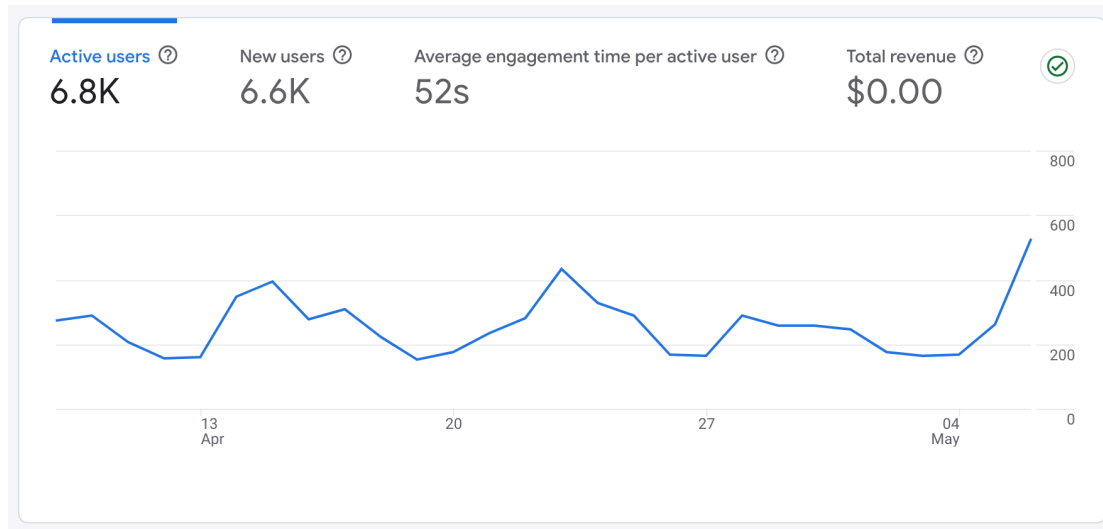
Over time, you obviously want the number of unique visitors to your site to rise. When you publish and promote a new piece of content, you'll likely see a spike in traffic from social media and newsletters, but “organic” search engine traffic from specific keyword searches will drive much more traffic in the long term. In

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Google Analytics, you will want to keep track of the “Active Users” metric to get an overview of how many unique visitors were visiting your site.



In the AI era, you can focus on segmenting your traffic analysis to distinguish between different types of visitors. Particularly for technical content, track developer-specific metrics like code sample usage, documentation page depth, API interaction, GitHub referrals, and repeat visitor patterns. These signals help identify high-intent technical visitors despite lower overall traffic volumes.

If you’re looking for how to set up specifically tracking traffic from AI sources in Google Analytics you can [check out this tutorial by ahrefs](#).

It’s hard to set realistic goals for the “unique visitors” metric when you’re just starting out because it depends on so many factors ([domain rating](#), existing audience, brand strength, promotional process, industry size, and content saturation). But, as you start your content engine and consistently publish new, search-engine-optimized content, **you should start seeing organic traffic gains within the first six to nine months**. AI citation influence can begin much sooner

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(2-3 months) with properly structured content. Technical marketers should set expectations accordingly, anticipating slower direct traffic growth (due to AI Overviews intercepting informational queries) offset by increasing citation appearances.

Look for week-over-week growth in both metrics – traditional traffic and AI citation appearances – to measure comprehensive content performance.

In a separate asset published on Draft.dev called “Running a Content Program that Drives Thousands of Leads”, I’ll discuss exactly what kind of content you should be creating and offer some tips for optimizing it, but for now, it’s important to get comfortable with Google Analytics so you can analyze your results over time.

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Collecting Leads in Your Database

The What, Why, and Desired Result

Key Metric:

New leads in your database per month.

Why it Matters:

Turn anonymous traffic into “known names” in your database.

Final Result:

Users can opt-in to your database by entering their information in a form, and you can start building a relationship by contacting them regularly via email.

Attracting visitors to your content is obviously the first step, but these visitors will be anonymous unless you find a way to capture their contact information. Businesses rarely make money from anonymous traffic, so you need leads (“known names”) that you can create revenue from.

In the age of AI search, this becomes even more critical. When up to 60% of searches never reach your website, you must make the most of the traffic that does arrive. For technical audiences, this means creating higher-value conversion opportunities that are worth the extra click beyond what AI systems have already provided.

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One of the core responsibilities of content marketing is to turn “anonymous traffic” into “known names” in your database. Pageviews are nice, but you’ll want to care about **unique humans** that you can start building a relationship with. That means we need their email address and name.

For technical audiences, keep the value-to-friction ratio in mind. Technical professionals have high standards for content quality and are resistant to generic lead magnets. Create high quality lead magnets and developer-specific resources like code libraries, debugging tools, interactive sandboxes, configuration generators, or performance analyzers that deliver immediate utility beyond what AI systems can provide.

Identifying anonymous users will allow you to build a relationship with the *people* in your database by sending helpful, value-first emails to them on a recurring basis. As you build relationships with the humans in your database, you can reconnect with them frequently to make them aware of your products and move them through the buyer’s journey.

But first, you need a way to collect these leads and attach a name and email address to each of them.

Set up a CRM like HubSpot or Mailchimp

Both [Mailchimp](#) and [Kit](#) are good solutions for most small marketing teams just getting started. They are easy to set up, highly trusted, and cheap to get going with. Most importantly, they have all the features you’ll need to start building your Content Engine.

When marketing to technical audiences, consider additional capabilities that better serve developer-specific needs. Look for CRMs that support tagging by

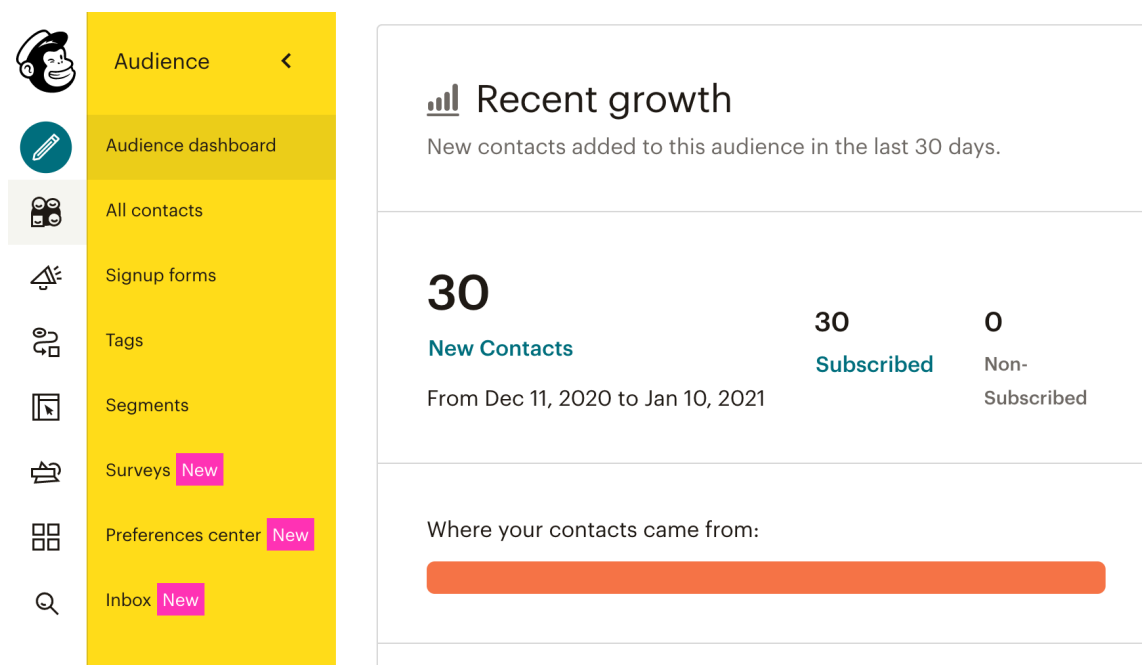
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programming languages, technical specialties, or specific tech stack components. Technical audiences respond better to precisely targeted, relevant communications than to generic marketing messages.

Of course, these are not the only viable solutions. We recommend Mailchimp or Kit when you are just getting started, but **suggest HubSpot once you have more contacts to manage and the budget and team to support it**. You can use a different service, but, for the upcoming examples, I'll walk through Mailchimp.



Mailchimp is a powerful, cost-effective service to start growing your lead database.

Create a newsletter signup form and welcome email

As a first step, I encourage you to create a [signup form](#) and a [welcome email](#).

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If you have some HTML and CSS skills, you can customize the email signup form. If not, just use Mailchimp's [form builder](#) to create a signup form at the bottom of each blog post you publish. Use a [double opt-in](#) process to ensure high-quality leads.

For technical content marketing, implement contextual signup forms based on content topic. Developers reading Python content should see Python-specific offers, while those viewing cloud architecture content should receive cloud-focused incentives. These contextual offers can achieve 30-40% higher conversion rates than generic newsletter signups among technical audiences.

Finally, you could consider adding a [pop-up signup form](#). But be aware that this is very aggressive and intrusive. If you have a technical audience it is very likely this will hurt your brand. **Your content's primary goal should be building trust.** Pop-ups might hurt your reputation more than they help in the long run.

This caution is especially important for technical audiences, who have even lower tolerance for interruptive marketing tactics. Instead, implement "value-trigger" conversion points – offering extended code examples, downloadable configurations, or interactive tools at natural breakpoints in technical content. These contextual offers convert 3-5x better than pop-ups with technical audiences while preserving trust.

Trade contact details for assets that provide value

Once your content engine is up and running, you should create a gated content asset to attract more signups to your email list. Such an asset is typically a downloadable piece of content with more depth than a typical blog post placed behind a signup form.

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In the AI era, your gated content must deliver substantially more value than what AI systems already provide for free. **For technical audiences, focus on creating assets with high implementation value:** detailed architectural patterns, production-ready code libraries, benchmarking tools, security checklists, or interactive learning environments that solve specific developer problems.

If you don't have such a piece yet, you can start by inviting readers to "join our weekly newsletter," "get updates about new posts," or "sign up for a free trial." Put this call to action (CTA) at the bottom of each blog post.

For technical audiences specifically, create CTAs that speak to developer value propositions: "Get the complete code repository," "Access advanced implementation guides," or "Join our developer community." **Avoid marketing language that sounds too promotional**, as it tends to alienate technical professionals.

If you are interested in learning more about creating high-quality digital assets that provide value to your readers, check out our other resources about creating blog posts and gated assets based on keyword research and content clusters on our [Draft.dev](https://draft.dev) website.

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Setting Up Retargeting Audiences

The What, Why, and Desired Result

Key Metric:

Retargeting audience size.

Why it Matters:

Retargeting helps increase brand awareness by serving ad impressions to previous blog visitors, and it increases repeat visits to your site.

Final Result:

Advertising impressions to visitors that have previously engaged with your content.

Understanding how retargeting works

After you install a retargeting code snippet, new visitors are marked with a cookie whenever they read one of your blog posts. This cookie stays in the user's browser for a certain amount of time, during which you can use retargeting to put advertisements in front of those visitors. Retargeting advertisements can appear on social media sites and any websites that are part of the Google Advertising Network.

Install the appropriate retargeting scripts

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Depending on your target audience, install the [Meta](#), [Google](#), [Twitter/X](#), or [LinkedIn](#) retargeting scripts on your blog. This code usually goes in the same place as your Google Analytics code does, but there's very good documentation for implementing these snippets on each platform's documentation page. If you opt to use Google Tag Manager, you can load your snippets from Tag Manager directly.

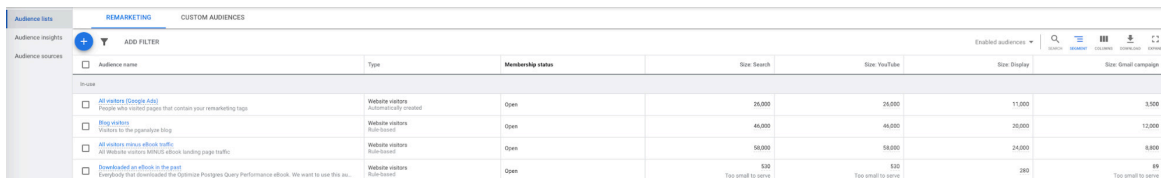
What about privacy?

According to GDPR regulations in Europe and the CCPA act in California, users must give consent to these retargeting cookies. We recommend cookie consent solutions like [Cookie Script](#) or [Iubenda](#) for this. You can find a list of "Content Mode Partners" on [Google's CMP Partner Program page](#).

If you are not sure about the rules in your locale, be sure to check with a lawyer or experienced professional first.

What if you don't have an advertising budget yet?

Even if you don't run ads right away, it's very powerful to have these tracking scripts in place ahead of time. That way, whenever you do decide to start advertising, you can turn it on and *immediately* start sending ad impressions to your cookie'd visitors, driving traffic to your landing page of choice.



Audience insights		REMARKETING		CUSTOM AUDIENCES	
Audience sources		ADD FILTER		Enabled audiences	
Audience name	Type	Membership status	Size Search	Size YouTube	Size Display
To use					
<input type="checkbox"/> All visitors (Google Ads)	Website visitors	Automatically created	Open	35,000	11,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Engaged visitors	Website visitors	Downloaded	Open	40,000	20,000
<input type="checkbox"/> All visitors who visited your site	Website visitors	Open	Open	50,000	14,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Downloaded on mobile in the past	Website visitors	Downloaded	Open	50	200
<input type="checkbox"/> Everyone that downloaded the Optimizely Performance eBook. We want to use this...	Website visitors	Downloaded	Open	Too small to serve	Too small to serve

Dedicated retargeting audiences, based on which pages your visitors have visited, are very powerful.

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Creating a Content Calendar

The What, Why, and Desired Result

Key Metric:

Content pieces published per month.

Why it Matters:

Predictability comes from *acting*, not *reacting*. Content should be planned and created with intention.

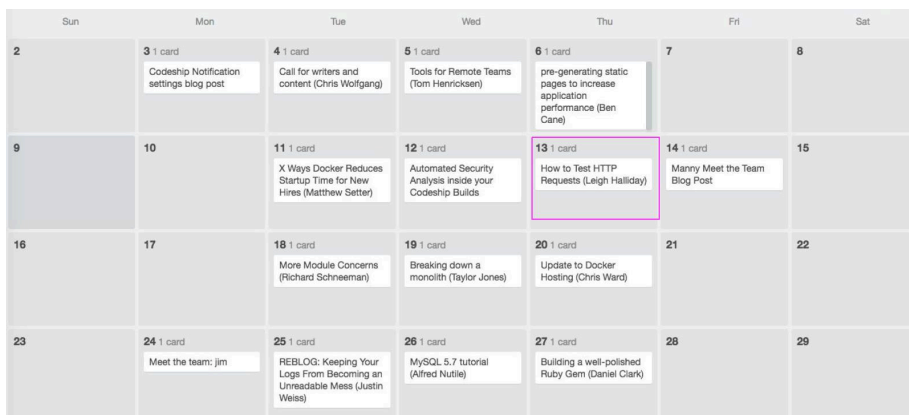
Final Result:

You know when new content will be published and you have a healthy backlog of content that is ready to publish.

Why you need a content calendar

As a content marketer, your goal is to create a steady stream of new content that leads to a predictable number of fresh leads in your database each month. You also need to be able to report your activities and plans to the business.

We recommend creating a content calendar that shows (planned) publishing dates in a simple calendar view. You can use [Trello](#) (with the [Calendar Power-Up](#)), [Airtable](#), [Asana](#), or a simple spreadsheet for it.



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
2	3 1 card Codeship Notification settings blog post	4 1 card Call for writers and content (Chris Wolfgang)	5 1 card Tools for Remote Teams (Tom Hennricksen)	6 1 card pre-generating static pages to increase application performance (Ben Cane)	7	8
9	10	11 1 card X Ways Docker Reduces Startup Time for New Hires (Matthew Setter)	12 1 card Automated Security Analysis inside your Codeship Builds	13 1 card How to Test HTTP Requests (Leigh Halliday)	14 1 card Manny Meet the Team Blog Post	15
16	17	18 1 card More Module Concerns (Richard Schneeman)	19 1 card Breaking down a monolith (Taylor Jones)	20 1 card Update to Docker Hosting (Chris Ward)	21	22
23	24 1 card Meet the team: jim	25 1 card REBLOG: Keeping Your Logs From Becoming an Unreadable Mess (Justin Weiss)	26 1 card MySQL 5.7 tutorial (Alfred Nuttle)	27 1 card Building a well-polished Ruby Gem (Daniel Clark)	28	29

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Not every piece of content will be delivered on time, so your publishing dates can be somewhat fluid, especially at the beginning. That is okay, but over time, you'll want to decrease the number of articles that are delivered (and published) late.

The goal is to create **predictability** in knowing “what is coming up.” This predictability allows you to plan ahead, orchestrate distribution waves to promote your content, be strategic about what you do with every piece, and transparently report your activities to the business.

A content calendar also dissuades you from the “inspiration strikes, let's write and publish this article now!” approach. Rather, you will build up a healthy buffer of content that is ready to publish at predetermined times. One piece per week over the course of a month is better than four pieces in a week with nothing published the rest of the month.

Additionally, you could set up reminders for content refresh cycles. Technical content that ranks well or receives significant AI citations **should be systematically updated** every 90-120 days to maintain its relevance and authority. Establish a "living content" approach for your most valuable technical resources, treating them as products rather than one-time publications.

Create your calendar before you lock in topics

Even before you have your first topics ready, you can use your content calendar to put placeholders for each piece of content you want to produce in the upcoming year. If you're starting with one piece of content every two weeks, you've got roughly 25 pieces to create over the next year. It doesn't sound that bad when you think about it that way!

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Publish blog content at least once every two weeks

Having a consistent frequency helps set expectations with your readers and improves search engine performance. As you become more efficient with topic discovery and content production, your publishing cadence should increase.

Search algorithms and AI systems both **prioritize regularly updated sources**, and technical audiences expect continual evolution. However, with reduced direct traffic from informational queries, focus on higher-quality technical resources rather than high volume. For many technical B2B companies, 3-4 comprehensive technical resources per month (1200+ words) with proper code examples, visuals, and interactive elements outperform higher volumes of thinner content.

Should you and your team not have the capacity to publish an article every two weeks, start by creating multiple articles (which you won't publish immediately), so you have enough at your disposal. This allows you to buy

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yourself the time to create more articles while the ones from your “content buffer” are being published.

Consider partnering with specialized technical content services like [Draft.dev](#) that understand both the technical requirements and AI-era optimization needs. Technical content requires particular expertise, and the investment in high-quality, authoritative resources pays even greater dividends in the AI era where content quality is a primary factor in citation likelihood.

Once you know your team’s output capacity, look at your content calendar and start re-ordering the publishing dates of your placeholder slots. This will allow you to quickly see how many pieces you have in your content pipeline and exactly which ones will be published on which date. It might sound simple, but a content calendar is a very powerful tool.

We have a dedicated eBook around which types of content to create and why in our Resources section on our [Draft.dev](#) website. Head over there to check it out!

An example of a content calendar in action

Let’s say you want to publish one article every other week or roughly two articles per month.

Right now, you only have the capacity to create one article per month, so you should wait to start publishing until you have at least six articles ready.

These six articles buy you three months of time, and in those three months, you can work on finding additional writers, be it internal or external contributors, that allow you to ramp up content production. This will allow you to reach your goal of publishing two articles per month consistently.

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In short, try to figure out your current capacity and reverse engineer how many content pieces need to be produced in advance to allow for a content buffer.

This gives you time to work on topic discovery and content production *before* your content buffer runs dry.

Conclusion

You now have the requisite tools and tracking in place to run your content engine. Check out our other resources on [Draft.dev](https://draft.dev) to learn about the content funnel, different funnel stages and their purposes, and **how to create a productive content mix**. Your content output and having the right content mix is a great tool to let prospects self-select into their correct spot in the buyer's journey. In our other eBooks you will learn how to create Evergreen content vs. spiky content (and why your approach should include both of these content types) as well as how you can nudge your audience further down the content funnel towards your product funnel.

In the AI era, technical content marketers face both new challenges and opportunities. While AI Overviews and zero-click searches may reduce direct traffic from informational queries, they also create powerful citation opportunities that can build brand awareness and authority at unprecedented scale. By adapting your content structure, measurement framework, and strategic approach to this new reality, your technical content can thrive – reaching more developers, establishing greater technical authority, and driving qualified conversions despite changed traffic patterns.

Remember that **the fundamental value of content marketing remains unchanged: providing expertise that helps technical audiences solve real problems**. What's changed is the delivery mechanism and measurement

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framework. By implementing the AI-era adaptations outlined in this guide while maintaining a commitment to technical quality and audience value, you'll build a content engine that performs well in both traditional and AI-mediated discovery contexts.

Ready to elevate your developer marketing strategy? At [Draft.dev](https://draft.dev), we specialize in creating high-quality technical content that resonates with developer audiences and drives measurable growth for technical companies.

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