

Build Trust with an Engagement Marketing Content Strategy:

Spotlight on Financial Services



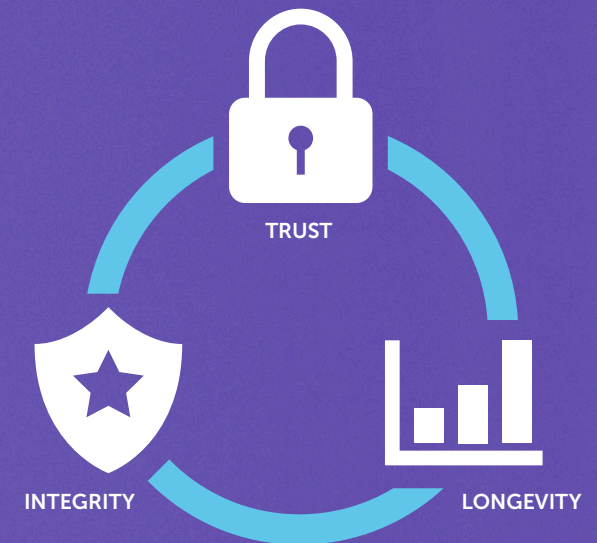
Trust. Integrity. Longevity.

These are the things that all marketers, especially those in the financial services industry, focus on building and expanding with each new quarter. These words are more than just themes; they're the hallmarks of an engagement marketing strategy.

Today's customer is more empowered than ever, and providing a positive, trusted, and engaging customer experience is a powerful way to differentiate your brand. Many brands are making the shift toward engagement marketing—a marketing philosophy that engages your customer where they are, over time, and with relevant content.

As the financial services industry strives to build customer trust, they are turning to engagement marketing, specifically deployed through content, to help them accelerate the buyer lifecycle and build trust.

This ebook will walk you through how an engagement marketing strategy helps address the challenges the financial services industry faces, why content is imperative for success, and how financial services marketers can create a strong content strategy to build trust and loyalty among their customers.



The Empowered Customer

THE CHANGING CUSTOMER

Empowered customers have changed the buying journey and their own lifecycle, and so we, as marketers, need to adapt how we market to them. But first, let's understand how the customer has changed—today's customer is empowered by self-choice, follows a primarily self-directed buyer journey, and is able to switch financial solutions very quickly and with ease.

Customers today can research their options and seek answers to their questions online without ever directly contacting a brand. When it comes to finances, people and businesses are looking for actionable advice, and they're doing it independently—whether it is on your website or a news outlet. As a result, brands need to anticipate their customer needs and prepare to accompany them on their journey, providing relevant marketing materials to inform the customer and build trust.



Guide the Buyer Journey with Engagement Marketing

An engagement marketing strategy focuses on reaching out and communicating with people as individuals, based on who they are, and wherever they are in their journey to purchase. Implementing this strategy requires understanding your customer personas, how they move through the purchase funnel, and the most effective ways to engage them at each stage of their journey. And to do this effectively, you need targeted marketing content.

Implementing a strategy that addresses the customer with relevant content throughout their journey offers financial services companies the opportunity to realize significant growth. As it stands today, they see a 10% website conversion rate, the highest of any industry. With a coordinated strategy, targeted content, and consistent messaging, financial services companies can further capitalize on their conversion rates by building a stronger relationship with customers, providing them with a seamless user experience, and accelerating them toward purchase.



Q.

What is the website conversion rate of financial services companies' engagement marketing strategy?

A.

10%

It's the highest of any industry

BUYER PERSONAS

Start by mapping out your personas. Enterprise companies target an average of six different audiences with their content marketing. By understanding your audiences—how they differ and what unique challenges they face—you can more deeply engage prospects on topics that align with the value proposition of your business.

Once you have identified your personas, consider the questions and concerns they have as they move from awareness to consideration to purchase. Keep in mind that customers at each stage have different educational, entertainment,

and informational needs. For example, at the top of the funnel, they may be more influenced by social media or a blog article. In the middle of the funnel, email or third-party reports may play a key role in moving them toward purchase. By understanding customer needs at each stage, and how customers consume information differently in these stages, marketers can map content that is truly relevant and engaging and moves customers closer to purchase or increases brand loyalty.

Quick Tips for Persona Development

- **Get to know your customers and prospects.** Look into the demographics of your current customers and target accounts to find patterns across fields such as title, industry, or company revenue.
- **Dig into the data.** Track the online behavior of your target audience, and learn which actions (clicks, email opens, ebooks, downloads, subscriptions, meeting requests) lead to new business.
- **Make personas memorable.** When building out your personas, give them names, pictures, interests, fears, and goals. Make this information readily available to everyone in marketing, so your target audience remains top of mind.
- **Don't forget to evolve.** Check in annually with marketing and sales to ensure your personas remain accurate and your messaging stays relevant.



The Content Component: A Content Strategy to Drive Engagement

Financial services companies seek to drive people to their website who are a good fit for their products and services. But how do you engage with a customer once they land on your website?

The best way to reach customers, build awareness, and establish trust is with online content. Providing relevant content based on specific needs and challenges allows financial services brands to create a deeper relationship with the customer by offering him valuable information that is both relevant and useful to him.

NECESSARY ELEMENTS FOR SUCCESS: COORDINATION & CONSISTENCY

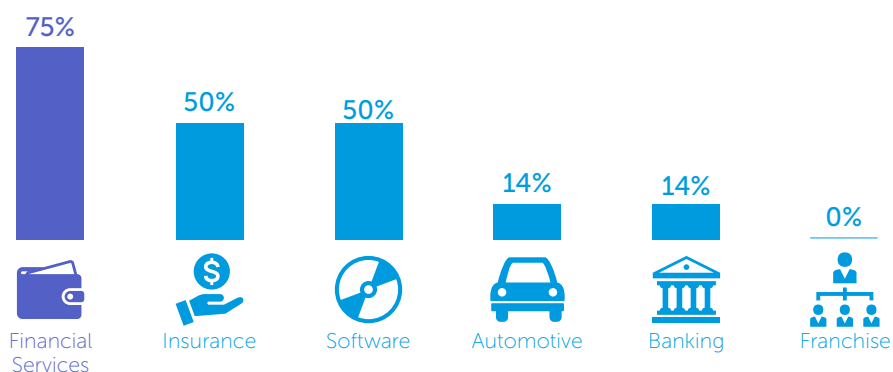
Producing and sharing content across digital channels isn't enough to drive revenue. Marketers need to prioritize the customer, ensure they deliver consistent messaging, and coordinate goals across channels.

However, financial services marketers, in particular, often operate in silos, creating content for channels without alignment or visibility into what is happening across the entire organization. In fact, according to a survey by IMN, 75% of financial services marketers had separate content strategies in place for each marketing channel, the highest percentage of all industries polled.

According to a recent Editions Financial survey, financial services content marketers report that their biggest challenge is producing sufficiently engaging content, followed by a lack of strategy and the ability to report on return on investment. This issue is rooted in knowing what matters to prospects and customers. If you don't know—or can't incorporate what you know—about your audience, creating content that resonates is more luck than strategy.

Percentage of marketers that have a separate content marketing strategy for each marketing channel

Source: IMN



NECESSARY ELEMENTS FOR SUCCESS: COORDINATION & CONSISTENCY

While many marketers have social listening tools and marketing technologies to monitor and gain insight into customer demographics and behavior, overarching messaging strategies often come from the top down, versus through a customer feedback and response approach. This leads to a disconnect between what the customer cares about and the content companies create.

In addition to misalignment with the customer, financial services marketers also experience misalignment within the organization. Content is deployed in a fragmented fashion, lacking a coherent narrative or connecting purpose. Different groups or business units have little insight into the assets created by their counterparts, and try to fill their own content needs on a one-off basis. Not only are content efforts then duplicated across business units, but the resulting content lacks consistency in perspective and, in some cases, can actually contradict content created and shared by another group.

THE CONTENT PILLAR APPROACH

But where should financial services marketers begin? How can they go about creating a strategy that both engages their audience and works for their business?

A “content pillar” is a substantive piece of content on a specific topic or theme that can be broken out into many derivative assets. These smaller pieces then drive traffic back to the bigger asset, which can be downloaded in exchange for contact information. When done well, it’s a win-win: marketing generates contacts to nurture and data about customer interests and demographics; the customer gets valuable and useful information.

Content pillar: a substantive piece of content on a specific topic or theme that can be broken out into many derivative assets.



Content pillars have been shown to increase customer interest by

4X

Creating a high quality, customer-centric asset that can be broken down and shared across channels allows financial services professionals to address common collaboration and coordination issues. Because the derivative materials come from the same foundation, a content pillar approach allows financial services marketers to retain a cohesive voice across teams and channels. Additional benefits include cost- and time-savings and the ability to offer a variety of content formats versus a monotonous approach. A few examples of content pillars include guides, ebooks, and research reports.

A content pillar should closely align to the needs and interests of your customers, and should be a valuable resource that educates them about key topics. By creating an in-depth asset that addresses a specific need, your brand has the opportunity to help your customer, which ultimately builds trust. According to Kapost, when done well, content pillars have been shown to increase customer interest by 4x and new accounts 3x.

Often, customers are looking for help to make important decisions with their money—which can feel overwhelming. By providing useful and clarifying information, you give customers the confidence they need to make a decision, which in turn builds confidence in your brand, a key goal for financial service marketers.

The most effective content pillars are created with repurposing in mind. When planning your pillar, think about how you can break apart the asset into a series of smaller content pieces to share across channels and outlets. For example, are you including a lot of data points? Separate those from the pillar asset and turn them into an infographic, which can then be used on its own. Are you conducting interviews with experts? Videotape those interviews and create short videos to share on social and video channels.

By thinking about the best way to reuse content, you'll be able to share the full and derivative assets more widely, meeting the content demands of your organization while ensuring messaging remains consistent.

Example of a content pillar – Definitive Guide and subsequent content assets – an infographic and a blog



How to Create Your First Content Pillar, the Easy Way

- Start with current content. Review which current content assets, such as case studies or webinars, performed well and garnered engagement from your target audience.
- Think short and shareable. Starting with larger assets gives you more material to work with to create smaller content assets, which can then be shared across channels. For example, pull out interesting data points for an infographic. Or list key quotes from experts in a blog post.

Creating Success through Efficiency, Scalability, and Distribution

To create an effective content generation engine and drive success, marketers need to be able to track projects, give stakeholders visibility into progress, and construct repeatable processes for the ideation, creation, distribution, and analysis of customer-focused content. This requires integration and consolidation across teams and technologies.

Streamlining processes can start before or in-line with the deployment of a tool to help you automate and centralize your content project management.

To start, identify and document the milestones a content project goes through on its path to completion. Then identify the stakeholders involved in each stage and the role they play. Once you have identified the steps to completion, stakeholders, and actions for a project, document it in a streamlined workflow, and circulate it among relevant stakeholders to gather feedback and build consensus.

You may need to develop multiple workflows for different types of projects based on specific milestones and stakeholders. For example, development of an infographic may require fewer drafts but more design time than a thorough, time-intensive piece like an ebook. Regardless of how many content marketing workflows you develop, it is vital to ensure that there is buy-in from the stakeholders, and that they have visibility into their roles.

Once you have completed your workflows, don't let them get lost in an email or spreadsheet. Make sure they're accessible to stakeholders by implementing these processes consistently or incorporating them into a platform. Then content projects will be executed according to agreed-upon project flows, and their progress will be visible to all stakeholders.

A List of Possible Stakeholders in an Approvals Process:

Requestors

- Subject Matter Experts
- Vertical Owners
- Demand Generation
- Public Relations
- Sales
- Customer Marketing
- Product Marketing
- Brand

Editorial Team

- Director of Content
- Content Manager
- Copyeditor

Approvers

- Executive Sponsor of Content Marketing
- CMO
- Legal

Design

- Creative Team Members



DISTRIBUTION

As you've learned in this ebook, creating content is critical to engaging prospects and customers. Another important aspect of successfully distributing your content is an engagement marketing platform that includes marketing automation. Including your content in communications based on data provided by your marketing automation system can help financial services marketers provide relevant, engaging content to the right person at the right time. A marketing automation platform will help you learn more about your customer based on their consumption and then record those preferences for future communication.

Pairing the content pillar approach with automated nurture programs enables the financial services marketer to deliver consistent content to targeted audiences. A content pillar ensures you have enough interesting content in a variety of mediums to fill your nurture tracks. Then your marketing automation platform uses customer behavior to shape the flow of information and help you understand what topics and messages resonate with your customer audience.



A marketing automation platform will help you learn more about your customer based on their consumption and then record those preferences for future communication.

METRICS AND REPORTING

Finally, identify goals for each content project and report on your progress. Not only does this ensure the strategy is well-executed, but showing success and sharing early wins will help you establish deeper buy-in from the wider organization. Using complimentary, integrated tools helps you track your goals, and enables marketing teams to iterate and optimize projects based on past performance.

Key performance indicators (KPIs) differ by company, but here are a few of most valuable:

- Page views
- Sessions
- Conversion rates
- Leads generated
- Opportunities generated (passed to sales)
- Closed-won deals
- Revenue

Two Types of Metrics

You need to evaluate what metrics are right for your business, your goals, and your content. The table below illustrates the two types of metrics to help you define and track the most important information for you and your team.

Early-stage metrics	
GOAL	Measure the goals of your early-stage content—to build brand awareness, educate, entertain, and engage. They don't map directly to revenue.
TRACK	Traffic Views and downloads Links Social Shares (Facebook shares, Twitter retweets, etc.) Social Engagement (comments, Facebook "likes," @ mentions, etc.) Followers gained
Mid-and late-stage metrics	
GOAL	Measure the effects of content on new interest and revenue.
TRACK	Lead generation Pipeline and opportunity Revenue allocation Sales use



First-Touch and Multi-Touch Attribution

Using your marketing automation platform, you should be able to track First-Touch (FT) and Multi-Touch (MT) attribution. If a customer's first interaction with your marketing is to download a piece of content, and that customer purchases your product, the content gets First-Touch credit. But, content can influence a customer at any point in the buying cycle, which is why you should also measure Multi-Touch influence. This tracks the impact of your content on a customer if they view or download content at any time during the buying cycle.

In the example on the right, you can see how various content assets were the source for new opportunities (FT OPPS Created), or influenced the creation of opportunities (MT OPPS Influenced).

Additionally, you'll want to measure the performance of your content in your marketing programs and whether or not they helped the program reach its goal. This highlights whether or not content resonated with a specific audience.

Program Name	FT OPPS Created	MT OPPS Created
The Definitive Guide to Engaging Email Marketing	16.7	35.3
The Definitive Guide to Marketing Metrics and Marketing Analytics	10.2	30.8
Gartner Magic Quadrant for CRM Lead Management	11.8	33.7
The Definitive Guide to Marketing Automation	15.6	43.6
Contagious Content: What People Share on Facebook and Why	2.2	8.2
Defending Your Marketing Budget	1.1	8.2
20 Quick Tips for Improving Your Email Programs	0.1	0.8
The Definitive Guide to Lead Nurturing	2.6	39.6
Workbook: Graduating from Email to Engagement: Using Marketo	0.6	1.0
The Definitive Guide to Social Marketing	4.1	12.6

First-Touch and Multi-Touch attribution tracks the impact of your content on a customer if they view or download content at any time during the buying cycle.

Conclusion

Financial services marketers can take their marketing to the next level by creating engaging content for the whole organization to leverage. But in order to do this, marketers must incorporate the principles of an engagement marketing strategy into their plans. To face market challenges effectively, financial services marketers need to think comprehensively about the customer needs and their buyer journey—and then create content to support the customer at each stage. This content is a powerful engagement tool and has the power to serve the needs of a whole organization.

To create highly effective content, marketers must first evaluate their current state and look for opportunities to improve their communication, collaboration, and shared voice. Identifying these opportunities to synchronize will help financial services marketers address alignment issues that persist across their organization, and ultimately allow them to maximize their content investment.





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KapoSt™ helps enterprise brands grow revenue with content. Their content marketing software simplifies the creation, distribution, and analysis of content across a range of channels. Marketing teams of all sizes can collaborate on content, manage assets in one platform, organize campaigns, and establish a process-driven operation.

Hundreds of brands — including LinkedIn, Lenovo, and NetApp — use Kapost to scale their content operation, so they can focus on serving customers and growing their business.

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