You need a better content strategy

A how-to guide for writing original content that works

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JUL 31, 2024

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👋 *Hi, it's* *Kyle Poyar* *and welcome to* *Growth Unhinged* *where I explore the unexpect behind the fastest-growing startups.*

Look, I've been hesitant to dive much into content marketing here. It's not exactly *unexpected*. But what seems to be unexpected is ***actually good content*** *from softw companies.* *George Chasiotis* *founded content agency* *Minuttia* *with that in mind — c he comes highly recommended by other readers. Today he's sharing his super tactical framework for writing content that works; you might want to bookmark it.*

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Let's face it, SaaS content marketing is having a moment:

- Organic search is under massive scrutiny.

- Organic reach on platforms like LinkedIn and Twitter is down.

- Paid search and social platforms keep taking away targeting options.

- Budgets are getting slashed.

- Content marketing teams are under immense pressure.

- AI tools are being (mis)used to write more and more content that never gets re

After all that, you might be surprised when I say the following: **SaaS companies can still grow through content marketing.**

How? With original content.

Original content refers to any content type that: (a) **is unique**, (b) **demonstrates out-of-the-box thinking**, and (c) **provides additional value**, whether through new information, a different perspective, a detailed analysis, or something else entirely.

A great example: Backlinko, a media site acquired by Semrush, wrote a data study analyzing 11.8 million Google search results. The piece has been shared more than 14,000 times; great original content can still cut through the noise.

Many SaaS businesses I talk to equate content with lead generation. Sure, that's part the equation. But original content does more than that. It fosters trust with users, positions the brand as an industry thought leader, and becomes the foundation for distribution across all other channels.

Simply put, original content helps you step away from the sea of SEO sameness that SaaS content marketing has entrenched itself in in the past decade.

The hard part is how to do it. Original content can mean data studies, survey repo contrarian content, first-person narratives, invented concepts, and (a lot) more.

Your framework for original content

For simplicity, let's examine three dimensions of a content marketing strategy and h original content fits into each of them: stage, objectives, and distribution.

Stage

Each stage of growth has a differ[...]
different original content formats [...]

- **Early stage:** Your goal is bra[...]
  person (founder) narratives, [...]

- **Product-market fit:** Now th[...]
  use cases for your product, y[...]
  might consider adding data [...]
  creative analogies, or trends.[...]

- **Growth stage:** This is all abc[...]
  and differentiate from comp[...]
  studies, invented concepts, n[...]

Objectives

A piece of content can serve one [...]

- **Increase brand value** – asso[...]

- **Educate & support** – helping the target audience solve a specific problem or overcome an issue.

- **Generate revenue** – generating pipeline, sign-ups, demo requests, etc.

- **Thought leadership** – demonstrating the brand's authority in the industry/nich[...]

- **Amplification** – generating social media post shares, brand mentions, etc.
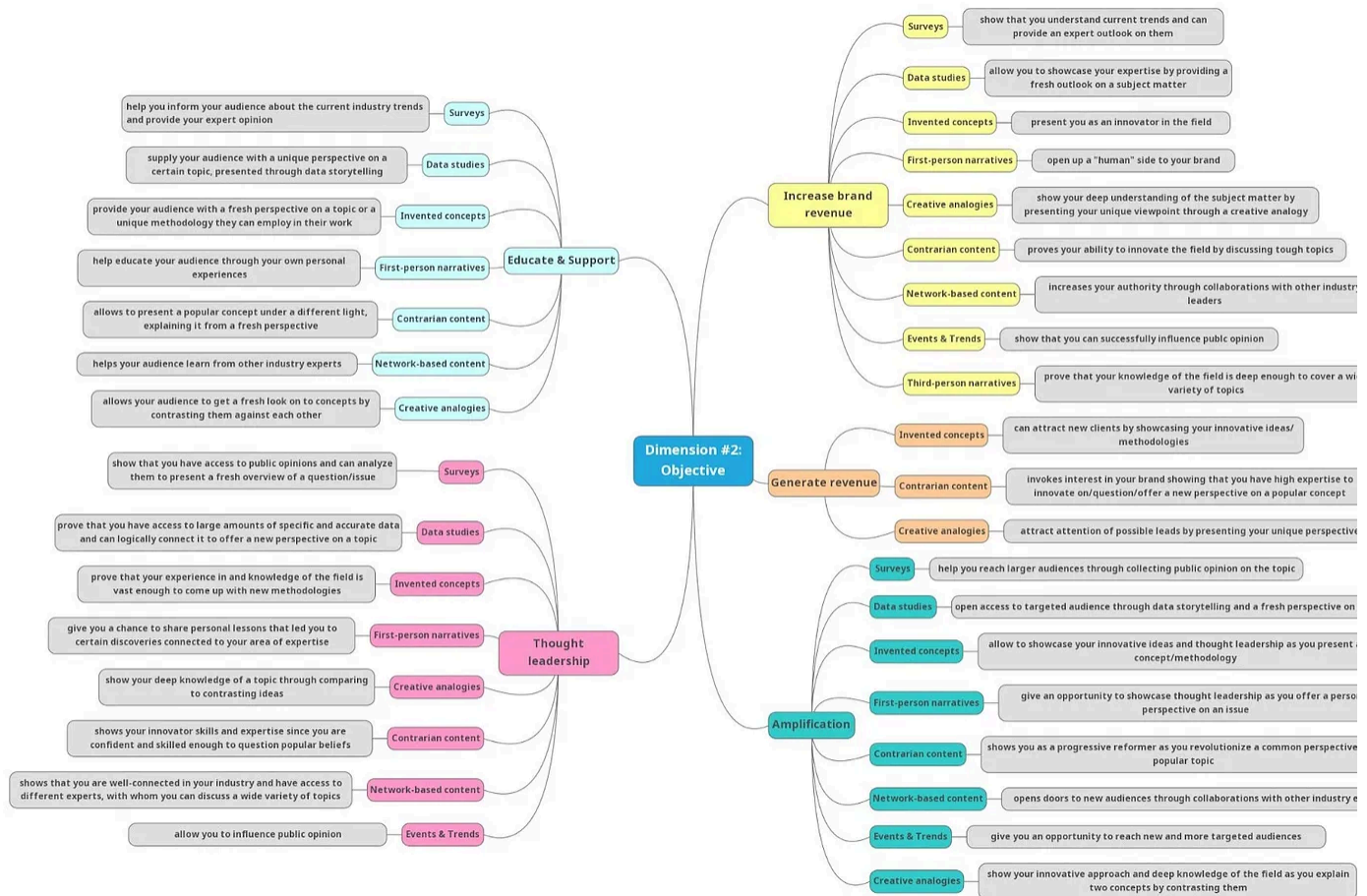
Some original content formats are better for specific objectives than others.

Take increasing brand value, for instance. When you want to increase the value of your brand, you aim to boost user trust in it, solidifying your market position.

What do SaaS users expect here? I'd say specifics and in-depth research, which you can achieve through data studies and surveys.

Distribution

Hard pill to swallow: without a well-thought-out distribution strategy, your original content likely won't achieve its objective(s).

This isn't a content piece written to rank high in Google (though it certainly can). It's not a blog post you can throw out on your website and forget about it, hoping it wi

start gathering clicks (and conversions).

However, the good news is that original content is highly distributable. A (small) selection of different channels you can promote it on or repurpose it for includes: organic search, outreach, social, communities, Reddit, newsletters, Indie Hackers, Hacker News, Medium, Quora, Slideshare, podcast episodes, YouTube, webinars.

The LinkedIn audience engages more with original content than product-focused content—and that is most likely true for other distribution channels as well.

Original content examples

Let's explore some examples and dive into specifics, tackling how long original cont takes to create, how much it costs, and what the best distribution channels for different content types are.

1. Surveys

Surveys collect public opinion to answer specific questions. They are arguably the m difficult original content format to create, largely because of the 'collecting public opinion' aspect.

In order to execute this well, you need access to an audience (e.g. customer pool) th is ready and willing to answer specific questions. Preferably, this audience should al be large enough to draw relevant conclusions from the survey.

For example, *The Anatomy of Work* survey is an annual survey Asana has been runn since 2021. Asana got the most visibility for this survey through promotions it ran o popular media, including an article on Fortune written by Asana's CEO and an affilia piece on Euronews. Earlier versions of the survey also appeared in niche HR publications, helping Asana connect with targeted audiences.

- **Top distribution channels:** (1) Organic social, (2) newsletter, (3) influencer outreach

- **How long does a survey take to create?** ~1–6 months.

- **How much does it cost?** $5,000–$20,000, depending on the seniority of the respondents, whether you'll be using a tool to help you run the survey, and oth factors, like the complexity of the design of the page where the survey will live online.

2. Data studies

A data study leverages either third-party or proprietary data to cover a specific topi and make complex information more digestible.

It's perhaps a given that data studies are particularly well-suited for SaaS businesses that can tap into data sources from their own platforms and expertly spin them into relevant studies for their target audience.

Of course, it is also possible to create a unique, valuable data study by gathering an analyzing third-party data, either through partnerships – such as in the example bel – or solo data collection.

This [study by SparkToro and Datos](#) explores ChatGPT user behavior. The catch with content piece is that it attempts to answer a topical and thorny issue: has AI already replaced other sources of finding and learning new information? I believe it's one reason it collected 792 backlinks from 162 domains, some of which are quite reputable.

As for the distribution, this piece did well, thanks to promotions from notable indus players like [Eric Enge](#) (the author of *The Art of SEO*), [Aleyda Solis](#), and [Barry Schwart](#) also sparked a discussion on [Hacker News](#).

- **Top distribution channels:** (1) Organic social, (2) newsletter, (3) influencer outreach
- **How long does a data study take to create?** ~1–6 months.
- **How much does it cost?** $2,000–$10,000, depending on the accessibility of the dataset (e.g., proprietary data vs. curated dataset) and whether you'll need a da scientist to help you understand the data.

3. Invented concepts

An invented concept is typically something your brand has created and battle-teste
which is now ready to be shared with the world, such as a methodology, framework
process, model, or heuristic.

In order to be successful, an invented concept must:

- Have a unique, memorable name.

- Solve a specific problem.

- Include clear, actionable insights that anyone in the same industry/niche can ap
  to their work.

- Be adaptable and scalable.

- Be a natural extension of your brand's values, mission, and overall message.
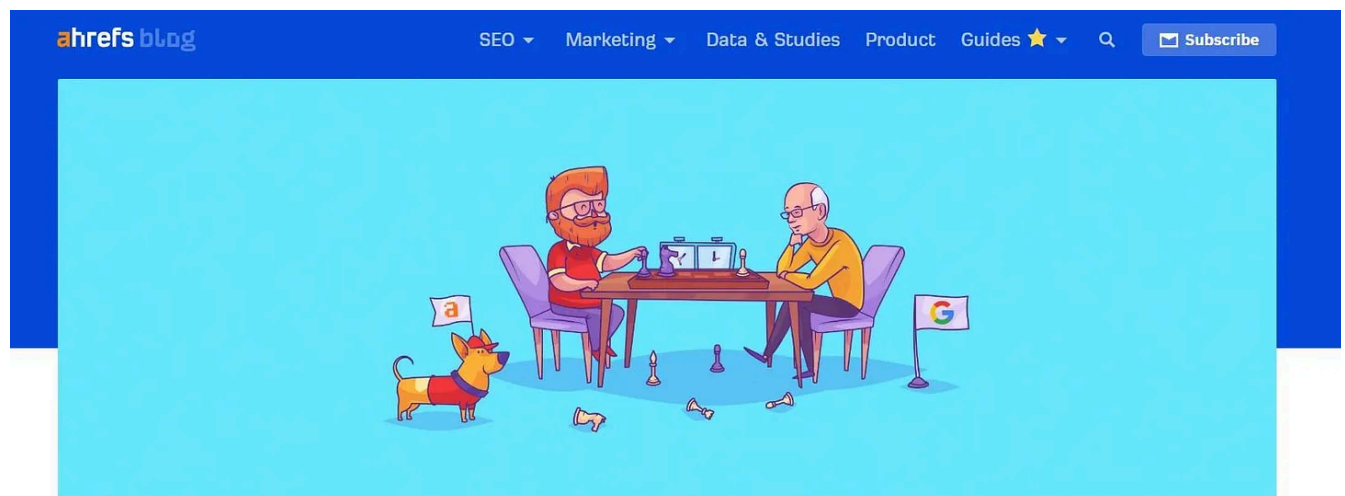
The 'Middleman' Method by Ahrefs, for instance, is a strategy for boosting traffic to
commercial pages. It uses informational content as a bridge between high-authority
sites and revenue-generating pages.

This content piece was published on Ahrefs's blog and distributed via a YouTube vic It also appeared in several conversations on Quora. And despite this article being published in 2019, the number of brand mentions keeps growing.

- **Top distribution channels:** (1) Organic social, (2) organic search, (3) webinar/podcast episode/YouTube

- **How long do invented pieces take to create?** ~1 week

- **How much does it cost?** $2,000–$3,000, depending on the concept's complexi and access to the tools with which to test it (if it's a process or a methodology).

4. Creative analogies

Creative analogies compare two seemingly unrelated and sometimes contrasting concepts to offer a new perspective. Out of all original content formats, this one is probably the most underutilized in the SaaS space (and broader, to be frank).

Which is a shame, because a good creative analogy can spark curiosity and drive engagement for the brand like few other content formats on this list (contrarian content is really the only other one that comes to mind).

This article from Sacra, a private market research firm, compares Calendly's influenc the scheduling market to DocuSign's in the e-signature sector. An interesting thing about this content piece is that it wasn't extensively distributed. It has a different gc This analysis serves as a lead magnet outside its informational role.
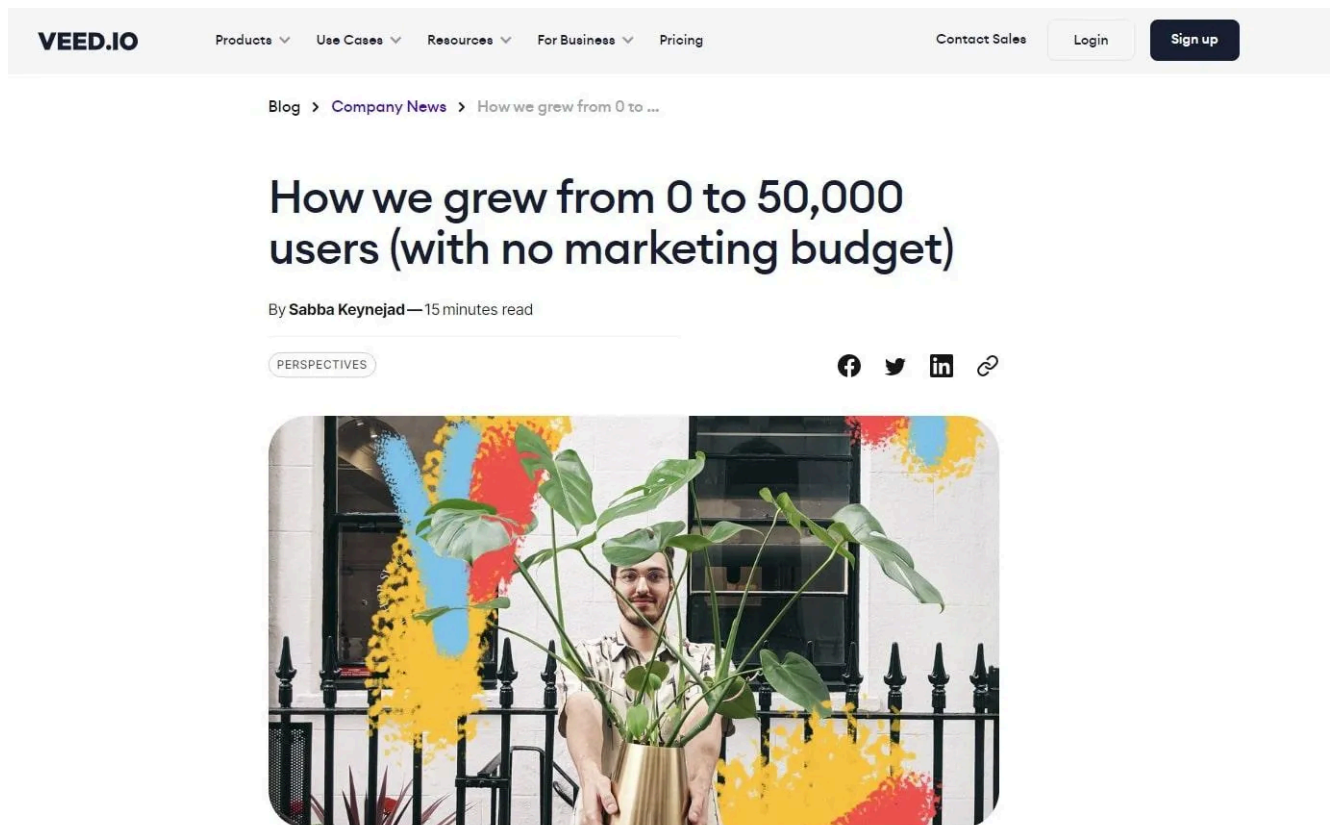
- **Top distribution channels:** (1) Organic social, (2) newsletter, (3) YouTube / podcast episode

- **How long do creative analogy pieces take to create?** ~1-2 weeks

- **How much does it cost?** $2,000–$3,000, depending on the depth of the expert needed to cover the topics.

5. First-person narratives

A first-person narrative allows you to showcase thought leadership and educate oth
through the experience of your brand (or someone representing the brand). It also
allows you to show a more human side.

A common pitfall narratives fall into is that they don't come to any conclusions or o
anything truly of value to the reader. A bad first-person narrative is one that simply
recounts the experience and does not highlight what the reader should take away
from it.

Always ask yourself: why should the reader care? What are you offering them, throu
your experience, that will both help their own journey and help them understand a
more about what your brand stands for?

This article from Sabba Keynejad, the CEO and Co-Founder of Veed.io, details how t
company grew from zero to 50k customers. But here, the objective is more to educa

and inform rather than drive visibility. Thus, Sabba focused on raising discussions around this content piece on the Entrepreneur subreddit (3.4M members) and Indie Hackers.

- **Top distribution channels:** (1) Organic social, (2) Medium, (3) YouTube / podcast episode / webinar, (4) Indie Hackers/ Reddit

- **How long do first-person narrative pieces take to create?** 1 week max

- **How much does it cost?** $1,500–$2,000. It can be an interview of the person whose story goes into the content piece if they aren't writing it themselves.

6. Third-person narratives

Third-person narratives cover an experience or a journey of a person or business unrelated to your brand.

Plenty of growth/marketing/content/SEO case study newsletters and blogs built their fame (and fortune) on writing third-person narratives, but it is a little bit different when they're part of a SaaS content marketing strategy.

In order to write a successful third-person narrative, you need to choose your 'third person' wisely – the topic needs to be highly relevant and interesting for your target audience. If you can tie the narrative to your offer or brand values, all the better.

This [Moosend blog post](#), for instance, discusses the strategy Exploding Topics' newsletter used to reach 104k subscribers. Its goal is mainly to educate and inform readers about proven newsletter success strategies. It also aligns with Moosend's product (email marketing and automation).

- **Top distribution channels:** (1) Organic social, (2) newsletter, (3) YouTube / podcast episode / webinar, (4) Indie Hackers/ Reddit

- **How long do first-person narrative pieces take to create?** ~1-2 weeks

- **How much does it cost?** $2,000–$3,000, depending on the depth of research, t necessity to reach out to the target of research, availability of data sources.
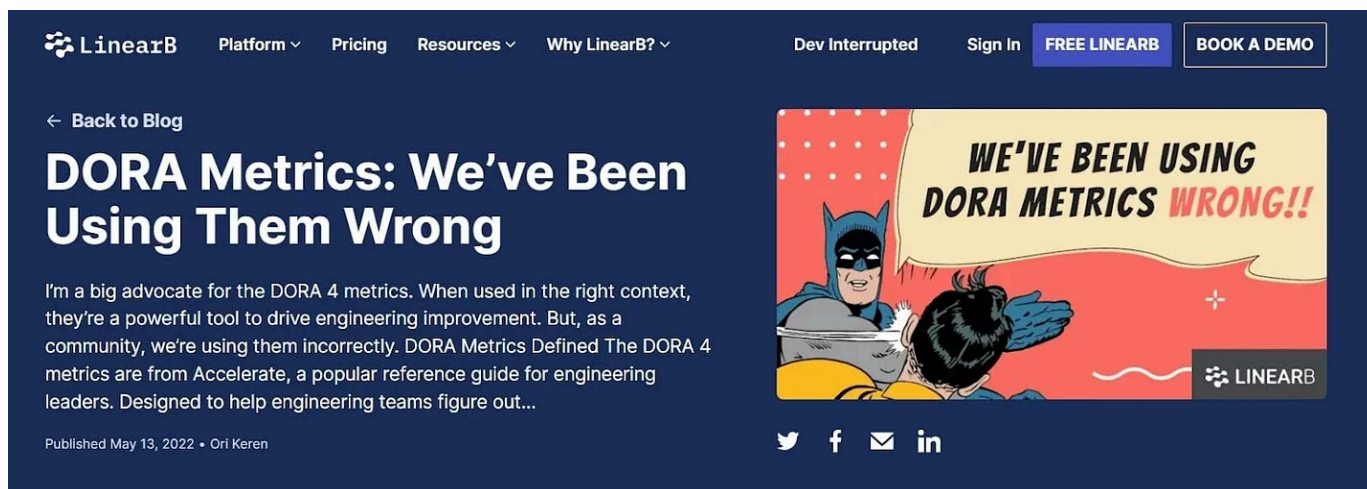
7. Contrarian content

Contrarian content offers a perspective that contrasts with popular belief or industry truisms. This content format requires deep expertise and knowledge of the subject matter and is the one most likely to gather a lot of engagement during distribution

Everyone loves a good 'hot take' or 'unpopular opinion'. The trick here is to express genuine hot take and not a 'mild take that has actually been regurgitated dozens, if not hundreds of times before'.

For example, opposite claims such as 'AI will replace content marketers entirely' and 'even when using AI, content marketing is nothing without human touch' have both been expressed time and again by various professionals.

A genuine hot take here would be something like: 'AI will be dead in less than a year and here's why'.

Of course, for your contrarian content to go a long way, you need to actually support your opinion with facts. Simply stating contraries for the purpose of being contrarian never works.

This contrarian content piece from LinearB discusses common misuses of DORA metrics in engineering organizations.

What's "contrarian" about it? The common belief about DORA metrics is that they inherently improve business outcomes. The author, LinearB's co-founder and CEO, explains that it's not really so, and these metrics only deliver this result if connected with larger business goals. And people seem to agree. The piece collected 153

reactions on LinkedIn, 92 claps on Medium, and sparked quite a discussion in the A subreddit (64K members).

- **Top distribution channels:** (1) Organic social, (2) YouTube / podcast episode / webinar, (3) employee advocacy, (4) Reddit / Hacker News

- **How long do first-person narrative pieces take to create?** ~1 week

- **How much does it cost?** $2,000–$3,000, depending on the level of experience needed to cover the opposing side of a subject.

8. Network-based content

Network-based content is sourced from collaborations with other network/commur members. It is quite a popular form of original content because, if executed well, it represent a wealth of knowledge and insights for the users.

However, too many network-based content pieces talk about issues and questions t aren't high on the list of priorities of the brand's audience (even if they seem releva at first glance).

Before you reach out to your network contact, make sure to confirm that the topics you want to cover are what your (current and future) users want desperately to kno

This post on Growth Unhinged is a good example of network-based content (combined with a first-person narrative). In it, Gaurav Agarwal, the COO of ClickUp, shares insights on how the company successfully combines both product-led and sales-assist strategies to create a seamless customer experience and drive revenue.

This content piece serves its primary purpose as an educational piece for Growth Unhinged subscribers. However, it also serves to establish ClickUp's authority in from of a large, highly targeted audience that could be interested in their platform, thus increasing brand value.

- **Top distribution channels:** (1) Organic social, (2) newsletter, (3) webinar / YouTube / podcast episode, (4) employee advocacy

- **How long do first-person narrative pieces take to create?** ~1-4 weeks

- **How much does it cost?** $2,000–$3,000. It may be necessary to conduct an interview/reach out to the connection in question for further research.

9. Trends & events

Trends & events content focuses on the coverage of the latest news and trending topics in a given industry/niche. It's an original content format that most often flops, especially in SaaS content marketing.

Too many SaaS brands approach this like a media brand – start publishing an endless stream of news and current trends in the industry. When in fact, strategy and planning are key here.

Keep a close eye on trends. Evaluate how you can contribute to the conversation with a unique perspective. Combine the trends & events format with another original content format for maximum impact. Promote, promote, promote.

This content by Joe Thomas, CEO and co-founder of Loom, explains how Rippling raised $250 million using a memo and a demo video on Loom. Joe expands on the case study, speaking about what the Loom-Zoom-Room framework is.

It's important to note that Loom acted swiftly by publishing this blog post soon after Rippling raised money. Thus, if a trend or event directly involves your brand, it's best not to lag behind and react to it to gain as much clout as possible.

- **Top distribution channels:** (1) Organic social, (2) newsletter, (3) employee advocacy

- **How long do first-person narrative pieces take to create?** ~1-2 weeks

- **How much does it cost?** $1,500–2,000, depending on the level of expertise needed to expand on a specific trend/event.

Final Thoughts

The framework I shared with you can work as a hands-on guide on how to use origi content to achieve your content marketing goals, no matter your stage, objectives, distribution channels.

A major perk is that original content doesn't always need significant investment. Eve a small survey of 20 people can trigger growth amplification. Meaning you can set t framework in motion even today.

> *PS - George has compiled 200+ original content examples. Get inspired.*

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A guest post by

George Chasiotis

George Chasiotis runs Minuttia, a content marketing agency for SaaS companies, and GrowthWaves, a newsletter on B2B growth. His mission is to help companies and individuals grow through his products, services, and content.

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George Chasiotis Jul 31

Author

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"You might want to bookmark this" was the last like of the opening. No more than five paragrapl
later, I did so.

This is such a great distillation of content, its purpose and how to tie it to tangible & measurable
results. Thank you George for taking the time and effort to share these thoughts.

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