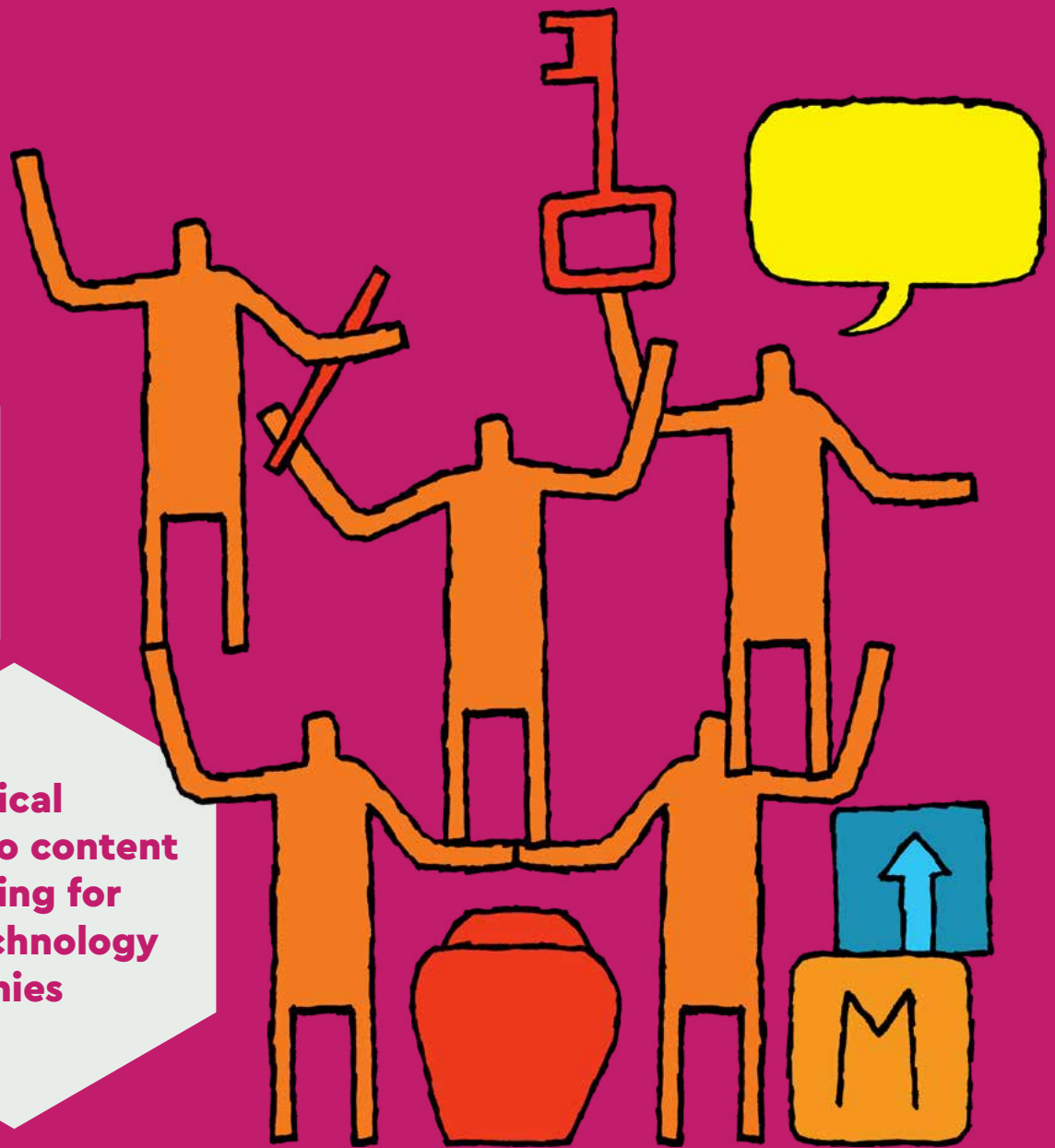


**A practical  
guide to content  
marketing for  
B2B technology  
companies**



**happendigital**

# Introduction

**C**ontent marketing is as important for B2B companies as B2C ones, if not more so.

B2B buyers are much more rigorous in their decision-making than the typical consumer. They want to be certain that what they're buying will do the job and give them maximum return for their investment. This is particularly true for the technology sector, where goods and services are by their nature complex.

Despite this, we are often surprised by how B2B technology companies struggle with content marketing. We produce content

for companies and provide editorial consultancy and training. This means we work with clients at all stages of the content journey. What each has in common is a need to explain themselves and their products and services to their potential customers: that is marketing 1.0.

We therefore thought we would produce a guide to getting the best out of online content. We find most companies prefer to produce written content in-house and video out-of-house, so we have focused on how to develop and implement a content strategy and commission key video formats.

We have drawn on our background in journalism – we worked at the BBC, Channel 4 and the Guardian – to offer lessons on how news organisations organise themselves. And we have also examined what has helped make two of our clients successful. Slack has experienced phenomenal growth with its communications platform, while Zoopla has transformed the property industry through its digital services. We believe they provide lessons for others in the tech sector. ●



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## 71%

of B2B buyers begin their searches online, typically enquiring about a product first not a supplier

## 12

B2B buyers average 12 online searches before direct content is made with a supplier



## 70%

70% of B2B buyers watch video as part of their research, including product explainers and case studies

## 7.2X

B2B buyers are also more social than your average person online. They are 7.2x more connected than the typical LinkedIn member, and 9.2x more likely to share content

Source: Google



# Foundations

## for an effective content strategy

**A**n effective content strategy depends on four things: understanding your objective, understanding your target audience, understanding what will interest them at each stage of their customer journey, and having the means to measure how successful you are at meeting your objectives.

The first foundation is an obvious one: knowing your strategic priorities and making sure your marketing helps you meet them. The second is again basic marketing: identifying what your customers and prospective customers struggle with and what you can help them overcome. It is always

worth creating customer profiles to do this, detailing their roles, challenges and opportunities.

Your focus is then on how you can help them in a unique way – do not try to be everything to everybody, make sure you stand out. The sweet spot is where your expertise intersects with their interests. Your content should reveal something about you, but also be helpful to your customers and prospective customers.

It should particularly help your target audience at each stage of its customer journey. Make them aware of your products and services through content about issues they are interested in, discoverable via search

and social. Provide them with information about your products and services while they research what to buy (case study and explainer videos work here). Information about getting the best out of your products and services when they are customers, as well as helpful information about future challenges and trends to demonstrate how you are doing everything to help them.

Even if you already have a content strategy it is always worth auditing your output. To do that you need clear KPIs and the means to measure how you are performing against them. You should always be publishing, measuring, reviewing and revising your approach. ●

### The customer journey

#### 1 Awareness

**Content** Online adverts and 'thought leadership' such as blog posts, infographics, videos, podcasts, white papers  
**Channels** Search, AdWords, LinkedIn, Twitter, iTunes

#### 2 Research and reassurance

**Content** Explainer animations, case study films, product guides  
**Channels** Website, email, PowerPoint

#### 3 Post-purchase

**Content** Guides, courses and 'thought leadership' such as blog posts, infographics, videos, podcasts, white papers  
**Channels** Website, email, LinkedIn, Twitter, iTunes



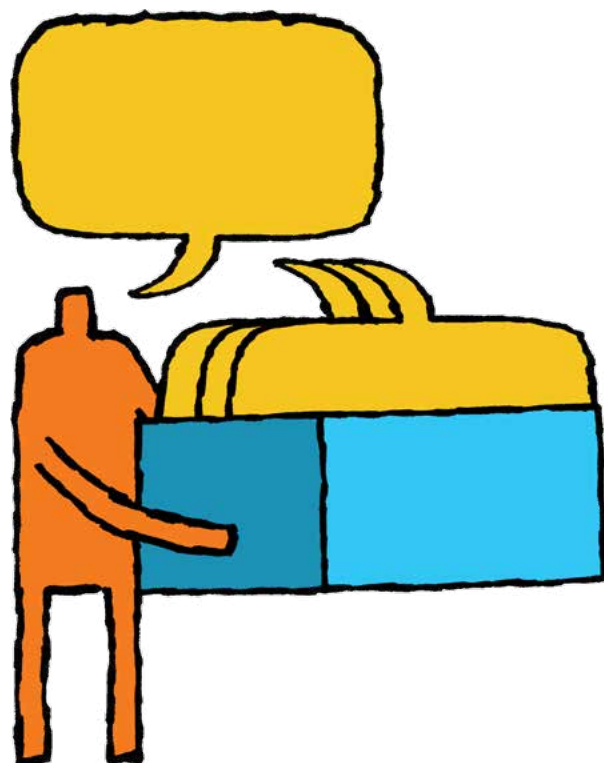


# Learning from the newsroom

Want to know how best to implement your content strategy? Think like a journalist

**S**uccessful media brands know their audiences, publish clear, concise, engaging content with a point, and are agile reacting to events and learning from their analytics. Here is what the Happen team learned working for the Guardian, BBC Ten O'clock News and Channel 4 News.

**Know who you are**  
Have an editorial mandate that your whole team understands. Successful magazines,



newspaper and television programmes all have a clear sense of what they stand for and who their audience is. One car magazine understands how it differs from another car magazine – something most of its readers would find hard to articulate other than knowing they prefer one to the other. This finds concrete form in their style guide but is also apparent in their voice, what they cover and their overall approach.

## Know the top line

When discussing a possible story with a reporter, a news editor will often ask: "what's the top line?" Traditional news stories are structured like an inverted pyramid, with the most interesting, newsworthy information at the top, or in the first paragraph. Then come the most important details, with the less important, background information at the bottom. This isn't always the case – sometimes a story might start with an anecdote – but the editor always wants to know what is interesting and relevant for the readers. Making sure something is interesting and helpful is a good place to start for all content marketing.

## Be accountable

Newsrooms also have clear processes which marketers could learn a lot from. They have hard deadlines and clear lines of accountability: everyone knows who has to sign off content, and what needs signing off by whom, as some things might need to be checked by more people. There is also process in place should

a story become a problem – if there are complaints or it encounters a hostile reaction on social media.

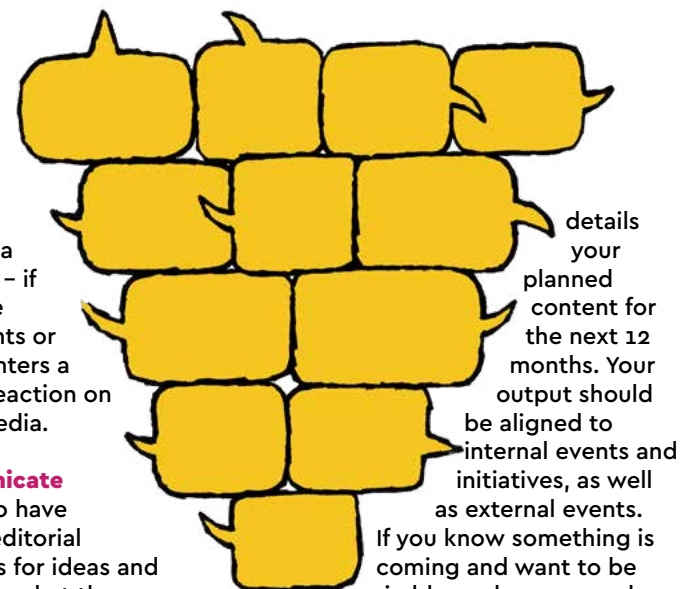
## Communicate

They also have regular editorial meetings for ideas and to review what they are planning and have published. The Guardian's morning conference is a remarkably open meeting, where anyone can raise an issue and different views are aired. Its specialists will often be questioned about a news story, which frequently influences what is commissioned that day.

We're often struck by clients' belief that they have no content, when their teams have so much untapped expertise. All that is needed is for someone to identify that knowledge and work out the best way to share it with their customers. This can be via something written by the staff member or more easily produced out of an interview – on camera or off.

## Plan ahead

Newsrooms also plan what they're going to publish and how they'll react to scheduled events, such as an election or budget. It is definitely worth having a content calendar that



details your planned content for the next 12 months. Your output should be aligned to internal events and initiatives, as well as external events.

If you know something is coming and want to be nimble, make sure you have your team or agency ready to go as many big brands do during the Super Bowl in the States.

## Know your channels

Media brands understand that different platforms require different types of content. What works on LinkedIn is unlikely to work on Twitter – though it might have the same content at its heart. Editors will therefore include the different content they'll be pushing out to their different channels in their planning. This might be a piece of content repackaged for different platforms rather than necessarily something completely different.

## Use freelancers

Despite all the talent in the Channel 4 News and Guardian newsrooms, both organisations use freelancers and independent production companies. They tend to have long-term



When discussing a possible story with a reporter, a news editor will often ask: 'what's the top line?' – what is relevant to readers

relationships with agencies that understand their brands and audiences. They're also very clear about what they're looking for out of house and what they're confident producing in-house. Happen often complements the content our clients are producing in-house by producing video and providing advice and training.

## Train your staff

With the media landscape so transformed over the last few years, most newsrooms have invested heavily in training – making sure their editorial staff have the skills to deliver their journalism across the web. The Guardian provided a huge amount of training to help its reporters adapt to writing for the web, promoting their content across social media and working in audio and video. Even if you're commissioning most of your video out of house, it may still be worth equipping your staff with the skills to produce simple but elegant videos.

## Look back

Alongside regular planning meetings, media brands regularly examine both successes and what hasn't worked. Most display what is being read, watched and shared on large screens in their newsroom. They also have daily look back meetings. They interrogate what has worked well and what lessons can be learned about format and issues their readers are interested in. ●

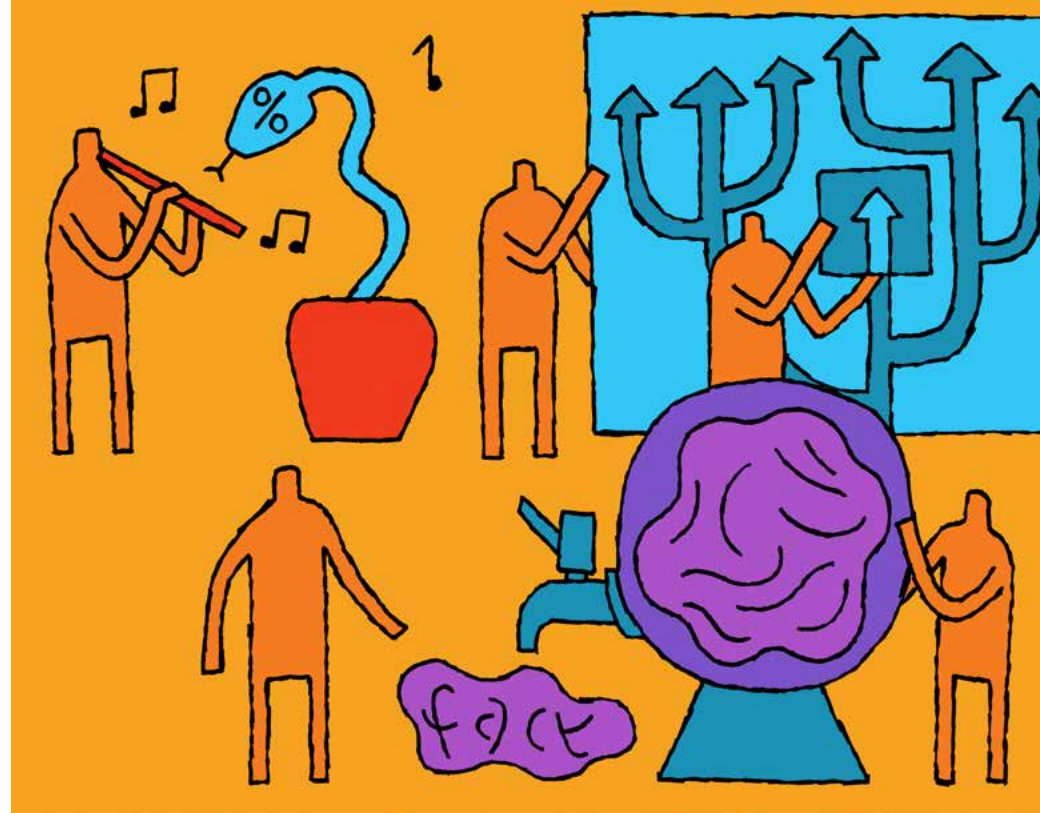


**E**xplanation is at the heart of Zoopla's B2B marketing. Its websites connect estate and letting agents with home-movers and property investors and its services help agents better meet their customers' needs. Zoopla's ability to explain to its customers persuasively how it does these things has made it one of Britain's most successful technology companies.

Happen started working with Zoopla soon after it lost nearly a quarter of its customers to a new property portal. OnTheMarket was offering estate and letting agents preferential deals if they would sign exclusively with it and only one other portal. As the number two in the market – behind market leader Right-Move – Zoopla was hardest hit by this tactic. It responded by re-examining its B2B marketing and making sure its existing and potential customers fully understood the benefits of Zoopla's services.

Since then we have made over fifty short animations and films for Zoopla – as well as providing consultancy and training for its staff. It has subsequently won back approximately 600 estate agents from OnTheMarket. Its last full-year results saw its revenue rising from property services by 9%, to £87m. It is therefore definitely worth commissioning an explainer video, and keep the following lessons in mind:

# Lessons from Zoopla



## Explain how your product or service will help your customers

A good explainer video should explain what your product or service actually does and demonstrate how easy it is to use. It should also explain what impact it has on your customers' businesses – this seems an obvious point but it is one that too much content misses. Ideally you should also include some evidence: statistics or numbers that help make your case – for example, our first Zoopla animation started with the fact that over 90% of property searches start online. Remember to think like a customer and focus on the bottom line. How do you make their job easier?

## Keep things simple

Although B2B customers spend more time researching things ahead of a purchase than a typical consumer, they are still very busy people. Sales teams often want to include every tiny detail about a product in its marketing; this should be resisted. Keep things short, simple and to the point. Zoopla looks for the simplest way to get its point across in its B2B marketing; commissioning short animations and vox pops. Our typical videos for Zoopla are around one and a half minutes long.

## Entertain

A good test for any piece of content marketing is to ask if it is interesting. Something might put you top of Google but if it is tedious few people will actually finish reading it. Happen used animation to make Zoopla's explainers charming and fun; developing a cast of characters, including David, who first appeared in our animation about its remarketing service, AdReach. Witty illustrations, music and sound effects can make something a pleasure to watch.

## Don't assume, demystify

Not everyone is an expert about technology. Never assume that what is obvious to you is obvious to everyone. This is particularly true if you cater to different sizes of customer. Zoopla's customer

Although B2B customers spend more time researching things ahead of a purchase than a typical consumer, they are still very busy people

base ranges from single branch estate agents to national chains. Remember your aim is to explain what your service or product does, how it works, and how it benefits the end user.

## Give the bigger picture

Explaining your business strategy will help you build long-term relationships with your customers. Over the last few years Zoopla has expanded its range of services through acquisitions. By integrating price comparison website uSwitch and cloud and desktop services from Property Software Group, it has been able to offer its customers new ways to make money through its MoveIT service. Zoopla has therefore focused its marketing message on how it helps market, manage and maximise its customers' businesses.

## Back up with facts

If your new product or service is based on market research, tell your customers about it, particularly if it is based on a previously unmet consumer need. Zoopla found out that 73% of vendors, renters and landlords wanted greater transparency from their agents. We therefore featured this at the beginning of its animation about the Property File app, which connects consumers with estate agents.

## Explain your expertise

Don't just explain your goods and services. Explaining your expertise through 'thought leadership' is a great way to reach new customers. Happen has produced simple, short video interviews with Zoopla's senior staff to show its customers the expertise that goes into building its services. ●







# How to produce effective animation

You can bring the driest subject to life with charm and humour

One of the best ways to explain your goods and services to potential customers is with an explainer animation, something Zoopla has had great success with. It is a more involved process than making a live action video, so here are a few things to bear in mind if you're commissioning an animation.

Animation is a great way to bring to life something that isn't particularly visual – for example, a complicated process or dry facts and figures. It can also add charm and humour to a subject. This means people are more likely to devote a few minutes to watching your video. They're also more likely to share it via social media.

Once you're clear about your objectives, find a good agency to work with. It should be committed to understanding what you're trying to achieve and making the process as straight-

forward and simple for you as possible. If they confuse you, go elsewhere.

Animation is a step-by-step process, so there are a number of sign off points along the way. You should be delighted by the end result but not surprised by it – because you should have been involved in each stage of production.

It's worth bearing in mind that going back and making changes after a stage has been signed off can add significantly to the cost and time it takes to complete an animation. To avoid delays and cost overruns make sure at every stage that each round of feedback is consolidated from everyone whose opinion matters before sending it on to your agency.

## Development

Once you've clarified your objective and key messages, you should agree with your agency



the look and feel you want. You might want to share some examples of animations that you've seen and enjoyed. Your agency should then present you with some different styles of illustration to choose from. Once that's decided the agency should draft a script: this will include voiceover (or the dialogue if it's interview-based) and a description of what's happening onscreen. You should be happy with this before proceeding. Don't be tempted to try and explain absolutely everything in your script. Of course the script must be accurate, but it also needs to flow and be lively. A good way to approach scripting is to see how much you can remove and still have it make sense.

## Preproduction

When you're happy with the script an illustrator will then take it and produce a storyboard of images that will make up the

Happen Digital's explainer animation for Zoopla



Once you've clarified your objective and key messages, you should agree with your agency the look and feel you want

final animation. This can be as complicated or as simple as you want. Something as lifelike as Frozen would cost a lot of money and would probably be overkill if you're not going to put substantial promotional spend behind it. Simple can be just as effective. Make sure you're happy with the storyboard before proceeding.

You should also cast your animation: someone to record your script as voiceover. Once you've decided what voices you prefer, you should be able to listen into the recording if you wish. You could also ask for an animatic, which is a basic version of the storyboard with simple animations, timed with the audio. This will add to the overall cost, but will also give you a better sense of what the final result will look like.

## Production

Once the storyboard and the

soundtrack are agreed, the animation begins. Production time depends on length, format and style, but you should be able to see a full-length version of the visuals before the audio is added.

## Postproduction

Once you've seen the rough cut of the animation it's time to add final polish: the voiceover will be mixed with sound effects and any music you've chosen. It can be surprising how much the addition of the sound mix can lift a project: often the sound can add clarity and focus to the pictures.

The final step is to render all the pictures and audio into one master file: this will vary depending on exactly how you want to use it but might typically be an HD-sized MP4 file ready to be uploaded to Vimeo, Youtube or Facebook. ●

# What Slack does well

How do you grow a \$5bn tech firm? With smart branding and a sense of fun

**H**ow has Slack grown into a company valued at over \$5bn? It has a great product, of course. But Slack is also brilliantly marketed, treating its marketing as a part of the customer experience, which it regards as key to its long-term growth. Slack is also intensely focused on its 'why' as a company: seeing its communication platform as a means to enable organisational transformation and greater productivity, creativity and fulfilment at work.

Slack has had excellent branding and a great tone of voice right from its beta launch in 2013. "Always get plenty of sleep, if you can," I was told when I opened my Slack app. It made me smile; something I rarely do when opening software. I can't, in fact, think of another technology company I would describe as charming. Its voice is playful, helpful and honest. Its branding is colourful, memorable and lively. Unlike other business software companies, it has also embraced fun features, such as emojis, on its platform.

## **B2B as B2C**

Slack's rapid growth was helped by the fame of its founders, who had been behind the photography-sharing site Flickr and received a lot of coverage in the tech media. But more important was the fact that anyone can use Slack for free. Pricing only kicks in if you want to unlock more features. This explains why it is a B2B company that acts in many ways like a B2C one in

its marketing. Teams can try it without their CTO signing off on the expense.

"All kinds of people, in all kinds of teams, use Slack to do amazing things." So said the company's first national TV ad campaign in the US two years ago. The advert (produced by Nexus) featured an animated team of animals who invent a flying umbrella after one of them gets caught in the rain on the way to work. In 60 seconds it demonstrates how the communication tool works but most importantly how it can increase productivity and innovation among a team of different personalities. The message is that Slack can transform your organisation. Its elegant, animated product explainer is blunter, and ends with the message: "more productive, more transparent, more efficient, no more emails."

Happen made Slack two case study videos focused on the big picture impact the platform had had on Ocado and Marks & Spencer, trying to dig a little deeper and go beyond its convenience and advantages over email. A common theme in both companies was how much employees enjoyed using the software, and how it helped foster relationships in teams by providing more informal lines of communication. That's no accident and is a great example of how closely the Slack brand is aligned with its product.



**Slack sees marketing as a part part of the customer experience, which it regards as key to its long-term growth**

Slack sees marketing as a key part of the customer experience, and is committed to a customer-focused strategy. Its original Chief Marketing Officer, Bill Macaitis, told Mashable: "Marketing teams need to understand their role is not simply to get customers to the front door, but rather to stay with them for their entire lifecycle. Content can play an extremely significant role in that lifecycle and marketing plays a key part in distributing that content throughout that lifecycle."

## **Word of mouth**

Slack's key metric is Net Promoter Score: how willing its customers are to recommend it to others. Its team therefore devotes a huge amount of its time to producing "genuine and helpful" explanatory content to complement its excellent user experience. Slack customers can access an enormous range of articles, guides and playbooks to get the best out of the platform. All share the same serious yet informal style.

Along with TV advertising, Slack has invested in podcasting as part of its 'top of the funnel' marketing. It replaced its original podcast series 'Variety Pack', a humorous take on office culture, with 'Work in Progress' last year. The new series, produced by Pacific Content, is basically the award-winning radio show This American Life in the workplace; exploring the "meaning and identity we find in work" through individuals' stories.

Slack put a lot of time and effort into the series. They invested in a weekly schedule and promoted it on iTunes and other platforms around its release dates. And the series has done well. It is unusual as a piece of B2B content marketing in that it is aimed at a general audience, rather than a tight segment. The podcast also isn't seeking to impart specific knowledge that would be of particular use in the workplace, whether or not its listeners use Slack.

Unsurprisingly Slack is rigorous about testing: measuring brand, funnel and customer success metrics. Macaitis again told Mashable: "So much of what we do in marketing can be tested and quantified now; ads, homepage, content, positioning, pricing, etc. You have to check your ego at the door and let data help drive informed decisions."

## **The future**

As an innovator, Slack's growth went almost unchallenged during its first few years. It now faces big competitors, with Facebook's Workplace service and Microsoft's Teams product both aiming to win business users. When Teams was launched, Slack took out a full-page advert in the New York Times to welcome them (in a slightly passive aggressive manner) and offer them some advice. The tactic echoed Apple's full-page advert in the Wall Street Journal welcoming IBM to the personal computer market. Slack's challenge now is to follow Apple's success. ●



**C**ase study films are an effective way to show potential customers the benefits of your products or services. They can play a vital role in the customer journey: providing the reassurance people need ahead of a purchase. They work particularly well for new products and services or ones involving substantial expenditure or that are perceived as risky. People trust people without a vested interest to recommend things, as the popularity of TripAdvisor and Trustpilot proves. So a video featuring one or more of your clients explaining how you have helped their business is very persuasive.

Happen has made case study films for a number of organisations, including Slack, the communications app company; so here is what you need to bear in mind if you are commissioning one.

#### **Understand your customers, products and services**

Before you start, be clear about who you are trying to reach and how your product or service would help them. You should have an audience in mind before commissioning any piece of content, but it is particularly important when commissioning a case study, as its purpose is to illustrate how you can solve some of their business's problems. This of course requires you to understand how your products or services actually help your customers. That should be your focus. Don't only think about the company, think roles



# How to commission a case study

too: if you're targeting financial directors focus on cost efficiency and value. This sound obvious but too much marketing concentrates on a product or service's features rather than its benefits.

#### **Find a good agency**

A good agency should be curious about your product or services. It needs to understand how you help your customers, if it is going to capture that in video. It should therefore listen

but also offer advice; don't hire an agency that says yes to everything without questioning whether they are best for the film. Equally do not hire one that confuses things. You should expect to see examples of its work and a breakdown of its quoted costs.

With our background in journalism, Happen likes to spend time understanding a new client at the start of a project. We like to meet people across the or-

ganisation, either one-to-one or in a workshop, to get a clear picture of its culture and strategy and how its goods and services helps its customers.

#### **Cast carefully**

The effectiveness of your film will depend on how good the people are in it. If they are articulate, lively and passionate they will be persuasive. If they represent a company that your target audience admires, trusts and can relate to, their words will carry more weight. And if they work somewhere visually interesting, your film will be more watchable. It therefore pays to think carefully about who you cast in your case study. If people are proving reluctant to appear, explain that the film will promote their business as well as yours.

Consider casting more than one person from a company. A range of people will make your film more lively. It can also illustrate how your goods or services help s people working across a business. Our case study about how Slack helped Ocado Technology was only 90-seconds long but it still featured three interviewees; its chief operating officer, a department head and a team leader. You also need to decide whether someone from your company should appear in the film. Obviously this makes more sense if you are providing a professional service rather than a product. If you are, it can work to have one of your team how you approached your client's needs alongside its team explaining how great that has been. ▶

**A good agency should be curious about your product or services. It needs to learn how you help your customers**



### ► Be specific

Try to include specific examples of how your product or service has helped your customer in your film. Support its assertions with examples. In a case study about M&S Digital we made for Slack, one of the interviewees describes how she used its app to sort out a software problem she saw when she was out of the office visiting a Marks & Spencer call centre. She was able to report it back to her team, take and send a photo, and get it fixed while she was there. Her anecdote showed exactly how Slack made M&S Digital more agile.

Your film can also rebut any concerns that your would-be customers may have. We also made a case study for Consultant Connect, which enables GPs to speak directly to hospital consultants during consultations, thereby reducing the number of referrals. One worry it encounters is a fear among consultants that they will end up spending too much time on the phone. The film therefore featured a consultant explaining how little time he spends on the phone talking to GPs, and how it in fact saves him time in the long-term.

Being specific will also help your film tell a story. Most people are much more receptive to information if it is conveyed via a story. Stories also communicate positive change, which is something most companies want to argue that their products and services bring about.

### Think pictures

Good pictures will make your



film watchable, so think about what you can film as well as who you can interview. Try to not just shoot inside offices. You can be imaginative if you have no choice, using movement and interesting angles, but it is better if you can also film elsewhere. And give yourself time to film things, do not spend all your time on interviews. We made a 90-second case study for the charity Teach First and it included footage from four different locations; the exterior of an Oxford college, its library and dining hall, and an inner London school classroom.

If your options are limited ask



**Ideally, your film should start with amazing, attention-grabbing footage and include sequences of shots that illustrate a story**

your client if they have any footage you can use. You'll be surprised how many companies do, and your film about an oil company's data team will be a lot more interesting with footage of an oil rig. In our Slack case study about Ocado we used footage of its amazing automated warehouse. This allowed us to tell the story about how Slack helped connect the testing team in a new warehouse with the developers in the main office.

Ideally, your film should start with amazing, attention-grabbing footage and include sequences of shots illustrating a story. A good range of footage will also give you choices in the edit and the ability to cut up the interviews so they are as tight and to-the-point as possible.

### Get the best out of your interviewees

Make your interviews as relaxed as possible. Put people at their ease by explaining what you are trying to achieve and that your aim is not to grill them like a politician. You should be persuading them to repeat the things they told you during preproduction, not trying to get them to say things you think. Ask open questions, nod and smile during their answers. And do not be afraid about asking them how they feel. Emotion can make a film much more effective at getting a message across.

### Keep it short

People are busy. More of them will watch a short film than a long one. Ideally aim at a 90-second to 2-minute length. ●



# Sharing your expertise

It's great if your thoughts are innovative, but it's vital that they are helpful for your target audience

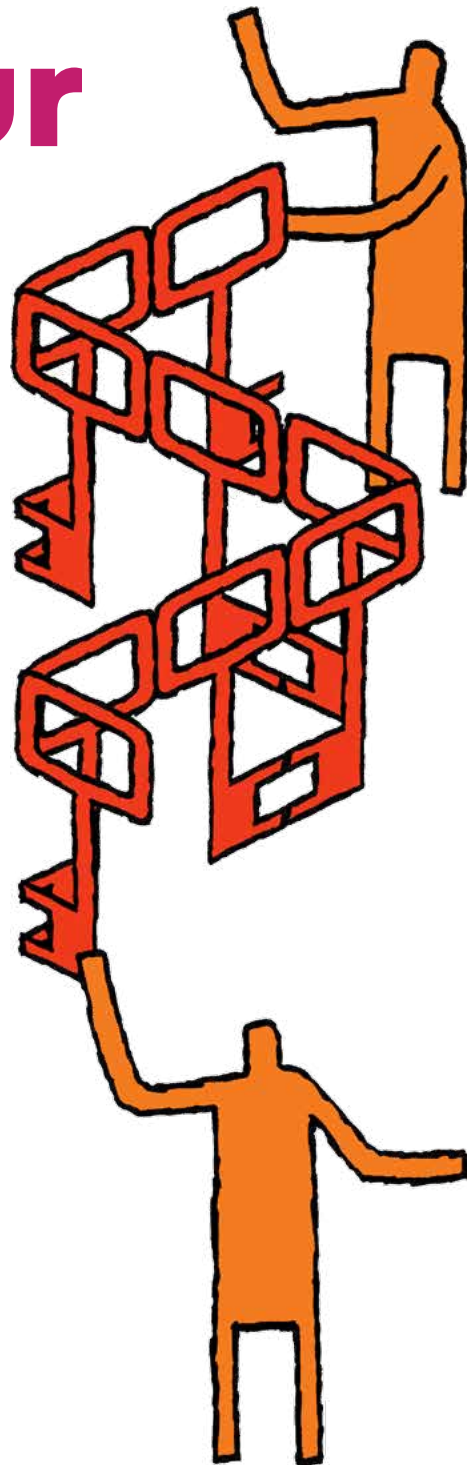
**S**haring your expertise online is a good way to reach new customers and retain existing ones, persuading them to use more of your products and services. The term 'thought leadership' can be off-putting though, suggesting everything you publish needs to push back the frontiers of human knowledge. It is great if your thoughts are innovative, but it is also important that they are appropriate for your target audience.

This white paper doesn't include anything enormously innovative, for instance. It is instead intended to be a useful guide to creating a content strategy and commissioning effective content based on our decades of experience. So here are some practical steps to developing a content plan using your expertise to build your business.

## Understand your audience

You need to understand what challenges your target audience face; what are their pain points? Ideally you will have answered these questions when you developed your personas, but it should also be something you are constantly thinking about. Think too about how your customers could get more out of your products and services and what is stopping them.

Keeping up with technology is something all businesses have to do. So you should be demonstrating how you are at the forefront of developments and reassuring people that they will not fall behind their competitors if they rely on you. If you imagine your expertise as a circle and your audiences' interests as another circle, where do the two intersect? That is your sweet spot.



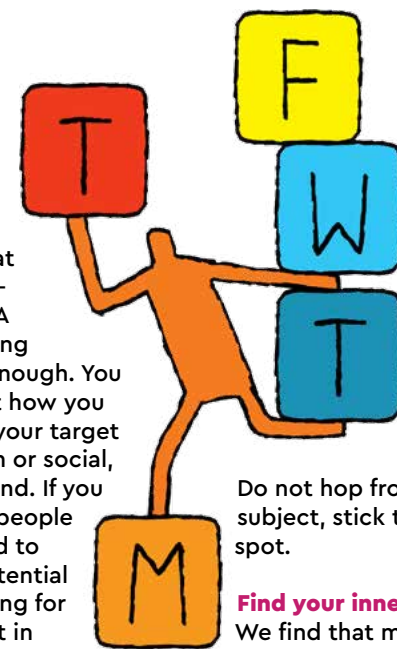
## Think about how people will find your content

"If you build it, he will come," Kevin Costner is told in *Field of Dreams*. That is not true with content unfortunately. A good idea, a sparkling bit of prose is not enough. You need to think about how you are going to reach your target audience: via search or social, with or without spend. If you are trying to reach people via search, you need to know what your potential customers are looking for online, and to invest in your SEO so people can find your content. If you are putting money behind your content on Google and social media, you need to be analysing what is working for you and adjusting your strategy accordingly.

Think too about converting your audience into followers. Encourage people to follow you on social media and capture email addresses so you can send them regular newsletters. This obviously applies to your customers too. Everyone wants to feel they are valued, so stay in touch.

## Be consistent

Turning someone into a follower requires consistency. People need to know that they will receive something useful to subscribe to your email. They need to know that you will regularly post on LinkedIn to follow your company. So draw up a content calendar and be disciplined about what you publish about.



Do not hop from subject to subject, stick to your sweet spot.

## Find your inner experts

We find that many marketers are shocked, or at least pleasantly surprised, by the amount of expertise in their business. People are busy; there are no cross-department editorial ideas meetings, unlike at the Guardian. But truly great content often comes from a thorough interrogation of what people know internally. We have organised 'discovery days' for clients who believe they have no content: business versions of 'show and tells' for people from across the company.

Make it easy for people to share their expertise. Not everyone is a great writer, not everyone has time to write a blog post. Think about how you can help them. Try interviewing your colleagues and publishing a Q&A or a 'listicle' featuring 10 things you need to know about a topic. Happen produced a series of short video interviews with some of the senior staff at Zoop-



A good idea, a sparkling bit of prose, is not enough. You need to think about how you are going to reach your target audience

la about their areas of expertise. Each video offered estate agents helpful tips on improving their business's digital marketing.

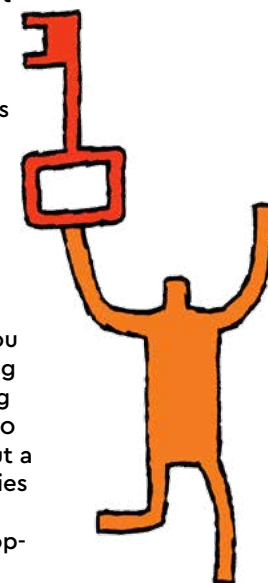
## Be agile

Organise yourself so you can respond to events. Your content can then be relevant to whatever is at the front of people's minds. This is about planning and process. If the budget is coming up and you sell financial software, it might be worth getting ready to publish something that day about what it means for your clients. If you want to respond to less expected events, make sure your processes are such that you can turn things around quickly. This can require comprehensive guidelines for your team, clarity about your editorial mandate and a simple sign off process.

## Think format and reformat

Consider what formats work on what channels, and think about how a piece of content can be reformatted for publication across a number of channels. Potential customers are likely to be interested in infographics, short videos, LinkedIn and blog posts, white papers and even regular emails, while existing customers might also want guides and courses. Think too about your audience journey: an infographic can lead to a blog post, which can lead to a white paper.

Remember too that your existing customers might well be interested at guides, explainers and courses if they are aimed at them. Google's Digital Garage is, for example, an excellent ▶





► way to get its existing customers to use even more of its services.

### Challenge preconceptions

Good 'thought leadership' content is also an effective way to change people's preconceptions of your business. This may persuade potential customers to think again about using your services, or help you upsell to your existing customers.

Publicise something amazing you have done, or do something out of the ordinary to show off your expertise. I recently saw the Royal Shakespeare Company's amazing production of the *Tempest*, which featured live projections of the actor playing Ariel, brought to the stage by Intel and Andy Serkis's performance capture studio. The story behind the two-year collaboration told you an enormous amount about the brilliance of the team at Intel. But you do not have to have the RSC on speed dial to do this. You could equally well help a charity or social enterprise with your expertise.

An easier route is to associate your company with someone or something amazing. A good example of this is UBS's Nobel perspective series, which features a number of economic Nobel Laureates 'debating the questions that can't be Googled.'

### Don't be boring

True for all content. ●



# How we can help

Happen Digital creates engaging content, provides editorial consultancy and delivers effective training. We specialise in working for organisations using technology to change the world and have helped such big names as Zoopla and Slack.

We have decades of experience in some of the world's leading news organisations. Our founder, Tom Happold, worked on the BBC 10 O'clock News and Channel 4 News before spending 10 years at the Guardian, where he edited its website and established its multimedia department.

We would love to know how we can help you. To start the conversation, email us at

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# happendigital

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