Content is a cornerstone of effective marketing. And when you combine your content marketing efforts with the utility of marketing automation, a lot of good things can happen.

But, before you go creating content without any real idea of how it matters or where to use it, think about your customers and your ideal audience. The better you know them, the better you're able to create the right kinds of content, content that's personalized and tailored to their needs.

I'll walk you through the only guide you'll ever need for creating content, including the types of content you should be creating and why.

What is Content Creation?

The primary goal of content creation is to attract new audiences and engage returning buyers.

Content creation spans the following process:

- Researching what to create
- Generating content ideas from research results
- Developing content ideas into valuable content pieces that appeal to the target audience
- Distributing content pieces to the proper channels
- Promoting developed content pieces to the right audience

Why is Content Important for Your Marketing Strategy?

Content is the pillar on which any marketing strategy rests. Without content, there would be nothing you would use to market your business, products, or services to the ideal audience.

Below are some reasons why content is essential for your small business marketing strategy.

• Audience Loyalty

Creating valuable and actionable content across different touchpoints for your audience is a great way to build audience loyalty. Once your content remains valuable and actionable to your ideal audience, they will stick around long enough and remain loyal to your brand.

• Industry Leader and Authority

Including content as part of your marketing strategy makes you stand out. High-quality content presents you as the industry leader and authority in your field. With consistency, your target audience will regard your brand as the go-to for all of the questions they need answers to, and ultimately purchase your solutions in the process.

- ## Trust and Credibility

Besides positioning your business as the industry leader in your field, great content increases your target audience's trust for your brand, products, and services, which in turn boosts your brand credibility.

- ## Improved Social Traffic

In marketing, audiences engage with content they find insightful and valuable. Part of engagement is that your target audience likes your posts, comments on them, tags their friends, and shares in their circle.

When your target audience engages with your content, the result is improved traffic on your social pages.

- ## Qualified Leads

Generating leads for your business is good, but qualified leads are great. With content as part of your marketing strategy, you generate leads from prospects interested in your products or service offerings.

The Benefits of Content Marketing

Businesses today have chosen to adopt a creative marketing strategy that involves creating valuable and informative content on specific topics relevant to their business field. Often, it's more than just text but includes images and videos too.

But just what are the benefits of content marketing?

Controlling the Narrative: Creating a Story That Works for You

In today's business climate, it's more important than ever to control the narrative around your brand. That means creating a story that works for you and resonates with your audience. A positive narrative can help attract new customers and maintain loyalty among existing ones. A well-crafted story can also help you stand out from the competition.

Content marketing is the perfect tool to help you do just that. By creating and distributing high-quality content, you can shape how people see your brand and ensure your message is always front and center.

To control the narrative, you need to understand what your customers want and need. What are their pain points? What are their goals? Once you understand your audience well, you can start creating content that addresses their needs and speaks to their interests.

It's also important to be aware of the different channels through which you can reach your audience. Where do they spend most of their time online? What kind of content do they consume? Answering these questions will help you determine where to focus your content marketing efforts for maximum impact.

Lead Generation

Creating informative and engaging content can attract potential customers to your website or blog, leading to sales or conversions. Content marketing can help you generate leads in a number of ways.

First, by providing valuable information that solves your target audience's problems, you can establish trust and credibility with them. This will make them more likely to do business with you when they're ready to buy.

Another way content marketing helps with lead generation is by driving traffic to your website or blog. The more people see your content, the more likely it is that some of them will become leads.

Once you have their attention, you can use effective CTAs to encourage them to take further action, such as signing up for your email list or contacting you for a consultation. You can boost your sales and grow your business by creating quality content and using it to attract and nurture leads.

Stand Out in the Crowd: The Industry Expert

In a world where businesses are constantly vying for attention, ensuring you stand out from the crowd is more important than ever. One way to do this is by positioning yourself as the industry expert through content creation.

By creating quality content that is both engaging and valuable, you can show potential customers that you know what you're talking about. You also establish that you're the go-to source for information in your field and attract clients looking for trusted experts to help them make decisions.

While it won't happen overnight, eventually, you will become seen as an industry expert. And, when you become known as an expert in your field, people will be more likely to do business with you. They'll see that they can rely on you for accurate information and sound advice, leading to increased sales and repeat customers.

Increased Conversions and Sales

Conversions and sales are the lifeblood of any business, so it's no surprise that content marketing can have a big impact on these metrics. By creating high-quality, targeted content, you can attract more leads and convert them into customers.

With targeted, valuable, and personalized content, you establish a relationship with your leads and target audience, which is essential for driving conversions and sales. Furthermore, informative content can help educate your audience about your product or service, making them more likely to purchase from you.

Content marketing can also help you close sales by assisting prospects in understanding why your product or service is the best solution to their problem. By creating compelling case studies, demo videos, and other types of content highlighting the results of using your product or service, you can increase the likelihood that prospects will take the next step and become paying customers.

Deep Customer Connection

Content marketing is all about creating a relationship with your audience. Creating content relevant to their interests and needs can build rapport and create a deep connection. This connection allows you to build trust and credibility, which are essential for any successful business.

When you have a deep connection with your customers, they are more likely to be loyal to your brand and stick with you through thick and thin. They will also be more likely to recommend your business to others, which can help you attract even more customers.

So if you're looking to build a strong relationship with your target audience, content marketing is the way to go. It's an effective and affordable way to reach out to your customers and create a lasting connection.

The Guide to Content Creation

Step 1: Set Your Goals

Every strategy needs to begin with a goal. Otherwise, how will you track how effective it is? Before you put finger to keyboard, you have to list the goals you're hoping to achieve with your content. Some goals could include:

- Provide better material for lead nurturing
- Have go-to material your sales team can use
- Spread your brand's knowledge and thought leadership in your industry
- Get more brand exposure
- Generate more quality leads
- Increase SEO

Step 2: Audience Personas

You probably have a pretty good idea of who your ideal customer is. But that doesn't mean you should forgo putting together audience or buyer personas.

Personas encourage you to think deeply about who your audience is and what might make them motivated to use your services. When you put together your personas, you should try to answer the following questions:

What is my ideal customer's…

- biggest struggle?
- job title?
- boss or direct support?
- customer?

- industry?
- day-to-day tasks and duties?

Also, take into consideration demographics, region, company size, etc. By addressing all these areas, you'll be able to create a profile of the type of person you're looking to target your content to, which will, in turn, inform the messaging you put together and the types of content you create.

Step 3: Conduct a Content Audit

Content audits are great for identifying content gaps – content that can be improved upon or evergreen content that can be converted to other formats or repurposed for other marketing needs.

Content audit refers to taking stock of all your business's content. The audit process involves content analysis to expose strengths, weaknesses, and how they have impacted your content and marketing strategy.

To do a content audit, start by,

- Defining your business goals and the benefits of the audit to your overall marketing strategy.
- Taking stock of all the content in your content inventory. You can do this by listing all the URLs of all published content and segmenting them into categories for easy organization.

- Analyzing data associated with each content. You can do this manually or automatically using a content audit tool.
- Create an action plan based on defined business goals. Your action plan can improve some of the content, keep some as they are, or delete some if they do not align with your business goals.

Step 4: Establish Your Internal Subject Matter Experts

You'll want to identify your company's designated subject matter experts. These are the people who will author your content and be the face and name tied to your brand. Most often, it's a company's CEO or president. But it can also include sales reps, your marketing team members, or anyone else who has valuable knowledge to share that delivers your strategy.

If you have more than one subject matter expert, make sure you identify the areas they'll be the experts of. For example, your president or CEO could help push messages centered on the core of your business, but they could also share leadership tips and content on business growth strategies.

Step 5: Designate a Content Creation Team

Once the internal subject matter experts have been identified, the next step is to put together a content creation team that will oversee the content creation process for your business.

Having a designated content creation team ensures that the content creation process is not interrupted by business activities or the availability of subject matter experts. Hence, the team keeps the content creation process running for the business.

While no two content creation teams for different businesses are the same, below are the core roles that every content creation team must seek to fulfill.

- **Chief Content Officer** – lives and breathes the entire content creation for your business. Takes care of coming up with topic suggestions, aligning content topics with business goals, and content prioritization.
- **Content Manager/Project Manager –** takes care of managing and organizing all content and marketing assets. Manages the team and the process so that each piece stays on track.
- **Content Strategist –** brainstorms topic ideas and provide research, so topics are on-message
- **Content Writer/Freelancer –** Conducts research and crafts valuable content pieces that align with your brand guidelines, outlines, and ensure they speak to your business goals.
- **Content Editor –** reviews content for tone, accuracy, flow, and grammatical errors.
- **Designer –** creates any visual elements needed for developed content.
- **Content Distributor –** shares content out so as many people see it as possible

Step 6: Develop an SEO Strategy

Developing an effective SEO strategy is crucial for improving your website's visibility in search engine results and driving organic traffic. Here are some tips to help you develop a successful SEO strategy:

- **Keyword Research**: Conduct thorough keyword research to identify relevant keywords and phrases that align with your target audience's search intent. Use keyword research tools to explore search volumes, competition levels, and long-tail keyword opportunities. Focus on both high-volume keywords and long-tail keywords that are specific and less competitive

- **Create Supporting Content**: This is the act of creating a cluster of content that revolves around a central topic. This strategy helps rank better for specific keywords and improves your overall authority on the topic. Here's how it works:

  - **Identify Your Main Keyword:** Start with a primary keyword or topic that you want to rank for. This is usually a broad, high-volume keyword central to your business or content strategy.

  - **Create a Pillar Page:** Develop a comprehensive piece of content around this main keyword. This is known as a "pillar page." It covers the topic in-depth and serves as the cornerstone of your content cluster. The pillar page should be long-form, detailed, and provide significant value to readers.

  - **Research Supporting Keywords:** Use keyword research tools to find related keywords or long-tail variations of your main keyword. These are more specific, lower-volume keywords that relate to the main topic. I also recommend doing a site search on your competitors to see what kind of supporting content they're creating for the keyword you're focusing on.

- ○ **Create Supporting Content:** Write separate articles or blog posts around these supporting keywords. Each piece should address a specific aspect or subtopic of your main keyword. For example, if your main keyword is "email marketing," supporting content could cover "email list building," "email design tips," "email deliverability best practices," etc.

- ○ **Interlink Your Content:** Link each supporting content piece back to the pillar page and vice versa. This creates a content cluster where the pillar page acts as the hub, and the supporting content pieces are spokes. This internal linking structure signals to search engines that your website has comprehensive coverage on the topic, boosting the topical relevance of your pillar page.

- ● **On-Page Optimization**: Optimize your web pages to improve their visibility to search engines. This includes optimizing page titles, meta descriptions, headings, URLs, and image alt tags. Incorporate your target keywords naturally into your content, but avoid keyword stuffing. Ensure your website's structure is user-friendly and easily crawlable by search engines.

- ● **Link Building**: Earn high-quality backlinks from authoritative and relevant websites. Focus on natural link-building strategies such as creating valuable content that others want to link to, reaching out to industry influencers for collaborations or guest posting opportunities, and participating in relevant online communities or forums.

- ● **Mobile-Friendly Optimization**: Ensure that your website is optimized for mobile devices, as mobile-friendliness is a crucial ranking factor. Use responsive design, optimize page load speed, and ensure a seamless user experience across different screen sizes.

- **User Experience (UX)**: Provide a positive user experience on your website. Ensure easy navigation, clear calls-to-action, fast page load times, and a visually appealing design. Create a website structure that is intuitive and organized, making it easy for users and search engines to navigate and understand your content.

- Technical SEO: Pay attention to technical aspects that impact your website's performance and search visibility. Optimize your site's crawling and indexing, fix broken links, optimize site speed, utilize XML sitemaps, and implement schema markup to enhance search engine understanding of your content.

- **Monitor and Analyze**: Regularly monitor and analyze your SEO efforts using analytics tools. Track keyword rankings, organic traffic, user engagement metrics, and conversions. Identify areas for improvement and adjust your strategy accordingly.

- **Stay Updated**: Stay informed about the latest trends, algorithm updates, and best practices in SEO. Search engine algorithms evolve, so it's important to adapt your strategy to stay ahead of the curve.

You can also look into hiring an SEO agency for help; however, you can implement a strategy in-house.

Step 7: Create A Workflow

Mapping out exactly how you'll create your content is crucial, and you need to work from ideation through to distribution. Your editorial process will keep all your team members accountable and ensure you're on the same page regarding content.

A defined workflow will help you move quickly and efficiently from one piece of content to the next. It will also ensure that each piece of content meets your standards before it goes live.

So, what does a content creation workflow look like? This is an example of a workflow you can customize to your business:

- **Brainstorm topic ideas:** Brainstorming will help you come up with ideas that are both relevant to your niche and interesting to your audience.
- **Refine chosen topics:** Refining lets you narrow down the focus and the specific angles you want to take with each topic. When refining, consider the format and prioritize ideas based on the needs of your audience. Web scraping helps you track industry trends and popular topics, guiding you to create relevant content. Open-source frameworks like Selenium used for automating web browsers also automate web scraping, thus keeping you informed. Using a proxy with Selenium masks your IP and bypasses access restrictions for smooth scraping.
- **Develop your outlines:** Outlining helps you organize your thoughts and structure your pieces. Write out the key points you want to hit in your article and flesh out each with a few sentences or bullet points.
- **Establish links to include:** When selecting links to include in your pieces, be sure to choose high-quality sources that will add value for your readers.
- **Write:** Write out a rough draft of your article. Don't worry too much about perfection at this stage; just get your thoughts on paper (or screen).
- **Edit:** Before you start editing, it can be helpful to map out what changes you need to make. Spend some time away from your draft before you begin. This helps you approach with fresh eyes and catch errors you may have missed

before. If editors are on your team, an editorial guide will provide them with what to look for in each piece.

- **Review:** Reviewing helps you identify ways to improve the overall quality of your writing. Make sure the piece is free from error, flows from one idea to another, and is easy to understand.

- **Approve:** This final step ensures that the content meets the standards set by your organization. To approve, first read through it to check for any errors. Then, send it to someone else on your team for their review. If the piece ticks all the boxes, you can approve it.

- **Add to the editorial calendar:** After approval, the next step is to add the completed piece to your editorial calendar and schedule it for publishing. The calendar helps you keep track of all your completed pieces and when they'll be published.

- **Publish:** It's time to put the content in front of your audience. Decide on where you'll be publishing your content and format it appropriately.

- **Distribute:** Distribution helps you get your content in front of the right people. Identify your target audience and use the appropriate channels to get your content to them.

If you want your content to be seen by anyone other than yourself and a few close friends, then you need to ensure you optimize for search engines. Your content must be well-written and relevant to your target audience and needs to include keywords that people are likely to search for when looking for information on your topic.

SEO should be an integral part of your content creation workflow because it will ensure that your content is seen by as many people as possible. It can also help you attract new readers and followers who may not have found your site otherwise.

The easiest way to go about your content workflow is to designate someone from your marketing team to oversee the entire process. You'll also want to determine what tools and roles you'll need and if you'll be using freelance writers. Keep in mind that your subject matter experts might not have a ton of room on their plate for writing and creating content.

Step 8: Review the Buyer's Journey

At each stage of the buyer's journey, there are opportunities to use content to inch prospects further along and get them closer to a sale. This is why comprehending the three stages helps you identify the type of content you can use at each. And, the more you can tailor your content to a particular stage, the more you can nurture the prospects at that stage.

Awareness

Leads at this stage have established a problem that needs to be solved and, in their search for a solution, have just become aware of your brand. Since leads at this stage don't know a ton about you, you'll want to provide them with content that explains what you do and why you're a solution.

Types of Content:

- Social Media

- Press Mentions

- Guest-Contributed Articles

- Webinars

- Blog Posts

- eBooks

Some of these pieces will be published on your site, while others should be published on other sites and publications that your audience reads. This will help deepen your lead pool and build awareness through multiple channels at once.

Consideration

When a lead has made it to this point, they are considering using your company but are weighing you against competitors. Content at this stage will be primarily housed on your site and shared through various other marketing channels, including email and social media. Your content then needs to be geared toward deepening trust and proving that you're the right solution for their particular needs.

Types of Content:

- Blog Posts

- Case Studies

- Webinars

- Service and/or Product Pages

- Demos

- Customer Testimonials

- Email Newsletters and Drip Campaigns

- Guides and Whitepapers

Build on your previous efforts by using posts from the awareness stage to link to this content, which will help create pathways that guide your prospects in the direction you want them to go. Guides, resources, and other pieces of gated content will help you convert these individuals from website visitors to leads, and will also help you enroll them in your email nurture campaigns.

Decision

Leads at this stage are ready to make a decision and, hopefully, partner with you. By now, they're already enrolled in your email campaign and have received content personalized to their needs. Your content here needs to be focused on making a purchase decision.

Keep in mind that just because a lead has made it this far doesn't mean they're going to convert. Put just as high of a priority on content at the decision stage as you do at the awareness and consideration stages, and be sure to analyze your leads' behaviors to see if there's anything you can learn about how to tailor your content more.

Types of Content:

- Newsletters and Email Drip Campaigns

- Case Studies

- Demos
- Customer Testimonials
- Pricing and Package Information

Step 9: Employ AI-Content Generating Tools

AI-powered content generation tools can be valuable resources for creating content in various ways. Here's how you can leverage AI-content generating tools effectively:

- Idea Generation: AI tools can assist in generating content ideas based on keyword inputs or topic suggestions. These tools analyze vast amounts of data, trends, and user behavior to provide insights and generate ideas for blog posts, articles, videos, or social media content. They can help you identify popular topics, emerging trends, or gaps in existing content.
- Content Creation Assistance: AI tools can aid in the actual content creation process. They can generate drafts, outlines, or suggested paragraphs based on given prompts or keywords. These tools use natural language processing and machine learning algorithms to analyze patterns, syntax, and context, helping you generate content more efficiently.
- Content Enhancement: AI tools can help improve the quality and readability of your content. They can provide suggestions for sentence restructuring, grammar corrections, and vocabulary enhancements. These tools act as virtual writing assistants, ensuring your content is error-free and flows smoothly.
- Content Summarization and Curation: AI tools can automatically summarize lengthy articles or texts, condensing them into concise and digestible summaries. This can be useful for content curation purposes or providing quick insights to

your audience. AI-powered summarization tools can save time and effort in digesting and analyzing large amounts of information.

- Personalization and Optimization: AI tools like AI email generators can help personalize your content for specific target audiences. By analyzing user data, preferences, and behaviors, these tools can generate tailored content recommendations, headlines, or product suggestions. AI can optimize your content for SEO by analyzing keyword usage, readability, and search engine guidelines.

- Multilingual Content Generation: AI-powered language models can assist in generating content in multiple languages. These tools can provide translations, suggest alternative phrases, or help adapt content for different target markets or regions. They enable you to expand your content reach and engage with a global audience.

- Content Distribution and Promotion: AI tools can assist in content distribution and promotion by analyzing audience segments, social media trends, or historical engagement data. They can recommend optimal posting times, platforms, or content formats to maximize reach and engagement. These tools help you target the right audience with the right content at the right time.

Step 10: Create Your Editorial Calendar

Your editorial calendar is your go-to resource for scheduling and planning your entire content strategy. It helps you keep track of each piece's progress so you can maintain deadlines and adjust things as needed. I recommend planning this for at least a month out, but do what works best for your team.

What it should include:

- Specific days you'll be publishing your blog content
- Your guest-contributed content and when you plan to pitch it to online publications
- Tags or categories each scheduled piece is tied to
- The current status of the content

Your editorial calendar can also include your monthly newsletters and any one-off or specialty content you're creating, like whitepapers, case studies, webinars, and guides.

Step 11: Distribution

This step often doesn't get as much love as it should. After you spend all that time putting together a creation process, an editorial calendar, brainstorming, writing, and tweaking, you need to make sure the right people see all your hard work. Create a distribution plan that includes sharing your content on social media, in your email nurture, and with sales prospects.

Below are important channels you should consider for content distribution and promotion.

- ## Social Media and Social Media Groups

Over 3.6 billion people use social media worldwide, making it one of the best content promotion and distribution channels.

While it's primarily a tool for interpersonal communication and building intimate relationships, it is also an excellent tool for getting your content in front of its ideal audience. The key is to find a balance between creating posts that are entertaining, valuable, and salesy.

• Email Newsletters

Sharing new content with your email subscribers as part of your email marketing efforts is a great way to promote and distribute your content. Your email subscribers decided to hear from you, and you are sure that the newsletter you send across will get to them. Create segments in your email lists and send relevant content to them for better results.

• Paid Promotion

Paid promotion involves paying other channels or platforms to promote and distribute your content to their audiences. Paid content promotions include Pay-per-click (PPC) adverts, sponsored content, influencer marketing, paid social media ads, amongst others.

• Content Syndication

Content syndication is publishing the same content on other websites or platforms. The content piece can be a video, blog post, or infographic that you know other audiences will find valuable.

Content syndication does not only help you distribute new content and get them in front of fresh eyes, but it also helps boost your backlinks which impacts your SEO positively.

How Marketing Automation Ensures You Put Content to Use

If you're like most businesses, you create a lot of content. But what good is all that content if you don't put it to use?

By automating your content distribution and promotion, you can ensure that your content reaches the right people at the right time. Additionally, a good marketing automation tool will allow you to track and analyze your results so that you can constantly improve your content strategy.

The following are ways marketing automation can help make the most of the content you create:

Follow-ups and Drip Campaigns

To keep your customers coming back, you need to nurture them continuously. You can do this by providing them with relevant and targeted content that is of interest to them and by following up on your leads with valuable content that aids their progression through the funnel.

With marketing automation, you can segment your list into different groups based on interests, behavior, or other criteria and deliver content tailored to their needs. You can also track the engagement of each customer and prospect, so you can see what content is resonating and adjust your strategy accordingly.

Gated Content to Increase Leads/Email List

Most marketing automation tools also help you generate leads with landing pages and online forms. You can use your content to attract new leads, customers, and subscribers by gating it, then directing traffic to the gated content's landing page. You can also create pop-ups that entice site visitors to download certain high-priority content pieces, allowing you to capture leads and add them to your CRM. Once they're in the system, you can use your automated emails and workflows to nurture them until they're ready to buy.

Targeted and Personalized Content

As your leads move through the buyer's journey, they will be tagged in your CRM according to their interactions with your brand using different data points and signals. This helps you match them with the right content to keep them moving forward.

As a result, the content you deliver to them is personalized and relevant to where they are in the buyer's journey. By matching the right content to each lead, you can keep them engaged throughout the entire process and increase the likelihood of conversion.

Content Analytics

With a CRM and marketing automation tool, you can see which types of content are performing the best so you can create more of what works. Most marketing automation tools come with robust analytics capabilities that help you focus your efforts on creating more content your audience loves and less of the stuff they don't.

Be smart with your content creation. Make sure that you focus on the right kinds of content based on where your prospects are in the buyer's journey and that you're using that content in the right way.