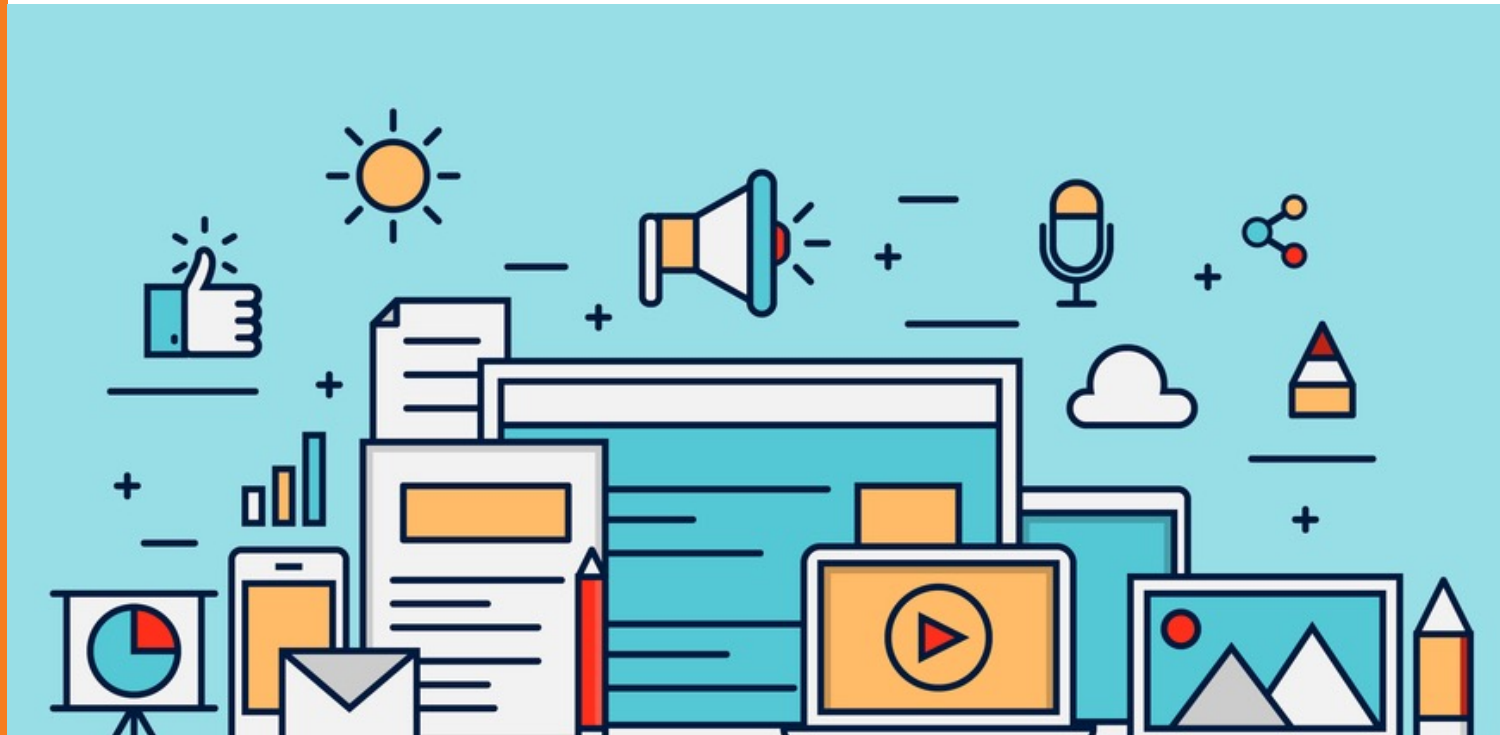




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The Essential Guide to B2B Content Marketing



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INTRODUCTION

Start marketing your knowledge

To effectively market your B2B products and services, you need to market your specialized knowledge. This helps you demonstrate to prospects and customers that you are an expert in your field. It is the most essential piece of your online marketing program.

The bad news is that content marketing takes a lot of effort. But the good news is that manufacturers, distributors and B2B service providers already have the keys to doing it effectively: expertise and personality. This guide helps you translate your knowledge and spirit into web-ready content.

This guide will provide you with a step-by-step plan to:

- Develop a content marketing strategy with a goal in mind
- Brainstorm great content ideas
- Map your content to the stages of the buyer's journey
- Create impactful content
- Share your content and track performance

Let's get started!



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WHAT IS CONTENT MARKETING?

Become a content marketer

B2B content marketing involves creating and distributing relevant and valuable content to attract, acquire, and engage clearly defined target audiences with the goal of driving action. Content marketing needs to serve as the cornerstone of your online marketing strategy. Create educational items that are interesting and useful to your target audience and turn your website into a resource center. While this is a time-intensive endeavor, the benefits will far outweigh the cost.

The following are proven content marketing vehicles that should form the backbone of your content marketing efforts.

- **Blog posts:** Blog posts are insightful and timely web content that highlight important news, observations, tips and other useful information. Readers of your posts are encouraged to comment and share on social media allowing for a conversations on and off-site. Blog posts offer a great opportunity to keep your website current and relevant through short 250-to 500-word posts.
- **Articles:** By creating 500- to 1,000-word educational articles that demonstrate a best practice or little-known insight, you can showcase your expertise and highlight that you understand customer needs in your field.
- **Whitepapers:** Whitepapers are topical, educational reports or guides oriented toward a particular industry challenge, opportunity or best practice. Generally, whitepapers are 5 to 15 pages in length and help you demonstrate thought leadership on issues that are important to your customers.
- **E-books:** E-books are lengthier than whitepapers, generally ranging from 55 to 100 pages in length, and present complex information in a compelling way.

- **Videos:** If a picture is worth a thousand words, a video is worth a million. Use online video to demonstrate a product, illustrate a best practice, allow customers to see your company behind the scenes, etc. Online videos do not have to be professionally produced – an inexpensive digital camera will work well. The key is to film content your customers will find useful and actionable or that will bolster their sense of who you are to help build a relationship with them.
- **Presentations:** PowerPoint or similar software can be used to create educational presentations oriented toward a particular challenge, opportunity or best practice. Presentations can be 5 to 50 pages in length – whatever it takes to make your point.
- **Webinars:** A webinar is a seminar that is conducted over the web that participants can easily view from their office or home – either live or on-demand. Most webinars include a visual slide presentation as well as an audio broadcast that is accessed either over the computer or phone.
- **Testimonials and case studies:** Use the words and experiences of current and past customers to demonstrate value to prospective customers. There is no better way to prove your worth as a company and make people feel good about doing business with you—you just have to ask the right questions.

I know what you're thinking "Bob, you're out of your mind! There is no possible way for me to create this much content. I'm too busy running my business." I hear this all the time when I present this concept. The good news is that it's not that difficult. First, you don't need to create the content yourself. You can find many talented and reasonably priced writers on [Upwork](#) to help you. Second, you can product many content items easily by embracing the concept of repurposing. If you can come up with one good idea that your customers will find valuable, you can create multiple content types based on that idea and/or content and reuse it across several marketing vehicles.

Here's an example of repurposing content from my business. A number of years ago, search engine marketing became a hot topic that business leaders wanted to embrace, but it was overly confusing. I knew there was a proven, 7 step process for search engine marketing success so I wrote a 750-word article, "7 Steps to Search Engine Marketing Success for B2B Companies," which I published on my website, as well as association newsletters and industry publications. It was very successful, so I also wrote a "how to" guide. The content is the same only presented with more details. I also created how-to videos, webinars and live presentations based on the same idea.

All you need to you is come up with one good idea per month and you can create 5 content items based on that topic. At the end of the year, you'll have 60 valuable content pieces in your content marketing arsenal.

DEFINE AN EFFECTIVE STRATEGY

Begin with the end in mind

When someone reads your articles or watches your video, what do you want the end result to be? Good content isn't enough anymore. You need **great** content that solves problems and is delivered consistently. To make sure that you are successful with content marketing, take a step back and identify the key elements of your strategy. The following steps will walk you through the process of defining that strategy.

Define your content marketing goals

Content is what makes the B2B world go-round. Think about the goals and objectives of your website and your content marketing efforts. Everything you write should be designed to support these goals.

Possible goals include:

- ☐ **Build brand or company awareness.** Prospects learn about what you do and your expertise in the industry.
- ☐ **Build a marketing database.** Prospects and customers request to receive future online and offline communication from you.
- ☐ **Generate leads or inquiries.** Prospects submit questions or quote requests via your website.
- ☐ **Sell products online.** Customers purchase products on your website.
- ☐ **Sell products or services offline.** Customers research your products and services online and purchase at your physical location, over the phone or through a distributor.

Define your target audience

If you don't know who you're trying to reach, you won't be able to figure out what to write about. Begin by brainstorming and determining your target audiences.

Consider the following when defining your target audience.

- ✓ What specific industries and/or market segments do you serve?
- ✓ Describe a typical company in each industry and/or market segment you serve.
- ✓ Where are your target customers located geographically?
- ✓ Who will be going online to search for your products and services? What is their role within the company? Are they the end-user of the products and services?
- ✓ What product or service categories are they interested in?
- ✓ What information will they be searching for?

Define a measurement strategy

How will you know if your content marketing strategy is a success?

Identify specific success metrics from the list below that will allow you to measure the impact your content marketing strategy will have on your business. Be clear about what you want to achieve and make sure your goals are attainable.

Some common goals include:

- ☐ Increase your email list by X%.
- ☐ Increase conversions from X to Y or by X%.
- ☐ Increase visits from X to Y or by X%.
- ☐ Increase time on site from X to Y or by X%.
- ☐ Increase website ranking for target keyword phrase from X to Y.

BRAINSTORM GREAT CONTENT IDEAS

Figure out what you are going to write about

The first, if not the most difficult, step in content marketing is figuring out what you're going to write about. If you've ever tried to write anything, I'm sure you've had episodes of writer's block – staring at the blank page for what seems like an eternity hoping for creative inspiration. Successful content marketers don't have this problem because they are always on the lookout for new and innovative content ideas. Put these tips into action and you won't have this problem either.

- **Follow industry news.** The key to creating timely, relevant content is to be plugged into the latest news and trends in your industry. Get in the habit of reading online publications and blogs related to your field. [Google Alerts](#) can help automate this process by emailing you whenever relevant industry news is published.
- **Monitor social conversations.** What are people tweeting about on Twitter, posting on Facebook or discussing on LinkedIn? These social conversations can be a great source for content ideas. Follow LinkedIn groups, Twitter feeds and Facebook pages related to your industry. You can automate this process using services like [Hootsuite](#) or [Sprout Social](#) to monitor social conversations.
- **Ask your sales and service people.** Your sales people and customer service people are interacting with your customers on a daily basis and know their needs, challenges and opportunities. There's a treasure trove of content ideas there. These people do not need to be great writers; ask them for the raw meat of each content idea. A talented copywriter can turn their details into a brilliantly written piece.
- **Ask your customers.** To be effective, your content needs to be customer-focused. When brainstorming content ideas, why not ask your best customers for input? Conduct an online survey asking your customers to let you know their top challenges and questions. You are sure to get some great content ideas.

- **Conduct original research.** By conducting original research, you'll have content that is uniquely yours. Create a brief, focused survey on a topic your customers find important. Once you compile your results, analyze them and look for trends and insights. This valuable data can be used for many blog posts and articles. You can also publish a study of all the results as a whitepaper.
- **Eavesdrop on email conversations with customers.** Now this may seem too Big Brother for some, but it is an effective way to understand the questions your customers have about your products, services and solutions. By setting up your email system to automatically BCC (blind carbon copy – yes, an old-fashioned term that's been repurposed on the internet) your salespeople's messages, you will be able to see the questions that your customers are asking, as well as the valuable answers your salespeople provide. By mining the information in these conversations, you will come up with countless content ideas.
- **Repurpose great content.** As mentioned earlier, this is one of my favorite ways of coming up with content ideas. Did you write an article that got great feedback? Write a 10-page whitepaper on the same subject. Film a short video blog. Create a webinar. Each good idea you come up with can be leveraged to create multiple content types.

- **Consider evergreen content.** Evergreen content is content that stays useful for years with little or no need for upkeep. It can be referenced long after it was first created and still provides great value to the reader. What information or topics could you write about that will always be in your season?

The topic test

After you've brainstormed a list of topics, evaluate each one by asking yourself this question:

"Does this topic have real value to my customers in relation to my company?"

If your customers would not find your topic idea interesting, relevant, and valuable, ditch it.

If the idea fits those criteria but does not tie back to the business somehow, it's not worth your time.

But remember, the angle at which you approach a topic can make all the difference. While you're not trying to "hard sell" with content marketing, you need to write with your online marketing and business-building goals in mind.

MAP CONTENT TO THE BUYING PROCESS

Put everything to work through the buyer's journey

Now that you have all of these great content ideas, it's time to map your content to your sales funnel. Not only can this content be a great resource to help generate leads on your website, but your salespeople can leverage this content to nurture relationships with prospects and convert leads into sales.

There are three primary steps in the buying process, and your marketing and sales teams can strategically lead prospects through the process by sharing appropriate content at each step:



- **Stage 1 – Awareness:** The buyer realizes they have a problem or potential opportunity.
- **Stage 2 – Consideration:** After the prospect realizes they have the need, they begin to research possible solutions. They commit to change and begin looking for possible providers.
- **Stage 3 – Decision:** The content used to nurture prospects through the first two stages should have your business landing on the short list. Now it's time to use your content to demonstrate to prospects that you are the best choice to fill their needs.

Stage 1 - Awareness stage

During the awareness stage, the buyer identifies a challenge they want to resolve or an opportunity they want to pursue. They may not know what is needed to resolve or satisfy it. When they go online to find a solution, their search consists of using vague phrases that describe their symptoms, including the pain or the relief they are seeking.

To fully understand the awareness stage for your buyer, you must understand:

- ✓ How do buyers describe their challenges or goals?
- ✓ How do buyers educate themselves on their challenges or goals?
- ✓ What are the consequences of inaction by the buyer?
- ✓ What common misconceptions do buyers have about addressing the challenge or goal?
- ✓ How do buyers decide whether the goal or challenge should be prioritized?

The best educational content to answer these questions at this stage are blog posts, articles, email newsletters and social posts. This content should educate readers about the problem, why it might be happening and potential solutions.

Since this is high-level content, you want to mention your company's products or services lightly, if at all. Their value as a lead is low because there is no guarantee that they will contact you or buy from you right away but if they find your content helpful, they will most likely journey through the sales funnel and end up converting later on.

Generally, awareness stage buyers use long-tail questions or phrases when searching for content resource that will lead to the answers they need. To help identify the potential search phrases awareness stage buyers are likely to use, the following questions should be considered:

- ✓ What questions did buyers have before they fully understood what their problem was?
- ✓ What symptoms did buyers have and what kind of inconveniences and frustrations were they experiencing?
- ✓ What questions emerged from those experiences and frustrations?
- ✓ How does this problem affect their day-to-day business?
- ✓ What interruptions and financial impacts are occurring?

Common awareness words included in the buyer's search are: troubleshoot, issue, resolve, risks, upgrade, improve, optimize and prevent.

Stage 2 - Consideration stage

During the consideration stage, the buyer has clearly defined the challenges or goals and has committed to addressing them. They evaluate the different methods or approaches available to solve their problem and are comparing the different solutions. The vast majority of buyers in this stage are simply searching for information related to available solutions.

To fully understand the consideration stage for our buyer, we must understand:

- ✓ What types of solutions do buyers investigate?
- ✓ How do buyers educate themselves on the various solution types?
- ✓ How do buyers perceive the pros and cons of each type of solution?
- ✓ How do buyers decide which solution category is right for them?

Content that will help your prospects increase the awareness of their need includes: how-to guides, webinars, whitepapers and how-to/demonstration videos.

When creating consideration stage content, you want to show why your product or service is the best fit without promoting it too

much. You want to build trust and demonstrate that you are a thought leader in the field.

Search terms for the buyers in the consideration level are often more specific, but not too specific to rank for. Consider the desired solution for each symptom and apply these questions to identify potential keyword phrases:

- ✓ What products are available to achieve (the desired solution)?
- ✓ Who are the suppliers of (the desired solution)?
- ✓ Where can I find reviews of different (solution providers)?
- ✓ What are potential options for (the desired solution)?
- ✓ What software is available to help (the problem)?

The following relevant terms should be paired with problem or opportunity terms to generate high-value keyword phrases: solution, provider, service, supplier, tool, device, software, appliance.

Stage 2 – Decision stage

After significant research, the buyer has decided on the best possible solution and they are trying to decide on the best vendor to provide the solution. In this phase, the buyers are comparing vendors and the value they provide. They want to fully understand the components within each of the available and they are ready to make a decision.

In order to fully understand the decision stage for your buyers, you must understand:

- ✓ What criteria do buyers use to evaluate the available offerings?
- ✓ When buyers investigate your company's offering, what do they like about it compared to alternatives? What concerns do they have with your offering?
- ✓ Who needs to be involved in the decision? For each person involved, how does their perspective on the decision differ?
- ✓ Do buyers have expectations around trying the offering before they purchase it?
- ✓ Outside of purchasing, do buyers need to make additional preparations, such as implementation plans or training strategies?

Content that will help your prospects increase the awareness of their need includes: case studies, written and video testimonials, ROI articles and calculators, and animated or video demonstrations.

The content should steer the buyer towards purchasing from you. In this stage, buyers want to fully understand the components within their chosen solution. Their mindset is focused on future preparation. Buyers in the Decision phase are thinking:

- ✓ What will this solution cost?
- ✓ What is the expected timeline before I see results?
- ✓ How long will it take to implement the solution?
- ✓ Are results guaranteed?
- ✓ What customer support do these vendors offer?

They are also comparing you to competitors and the products/services they offer. They are looking for the information:

- ✓ Why are you different?
- ✓ Compare the services and products you offer and provide relevant content about your brand.

- ✓ Explain how your company is different from others.
- ✓ Why should they choose you?
- ✓ Will your solution provide greater outcomes on their behalf (and how will it do that)?
- ✓ How long will your solution take to solve their problem?
- ✓ How long before your applied solution produces results?
- ✓ How do you quantify the resulting value? Do you help us do this?
- ✓ What will your services cost?
- ✓ How are these services guaranteed to yield results?
- ✓ How does your solution create competitive advantage for the customer?
- ✓ What can they expect from you regarding customer service and problem resolution?

should be paired with solution terms: compare, vs., versus, comparison, pros and cons, benchmarks, review, test.

When thinking of the keywords your buyer is searching for, consider the words and phrases they have in their head when they are in this phase. The following relevant terms

CREATE AN EDITORIAL CALENDAR

Think like a publisher

Content marketing may seem like a daunting task, especially since you need to run several other aspects of your business. The good news is that you can make this process manageable by thinking like a publisher and establishing an editorial calendar.

Publishers of magazines don't sit down each month and say: "Hmmm, what should we write about this month?" They plan 12 to 24 months in advance. This allows them to efficiently manage the content creation process and provides plenty of lead time. I recommend you leverage this same proven process.

After you have brainstormed content ideas with your team and mapped them out against the buyers journey, plan when each content piece should be written. When mapping out the calendar, take into account seasonal aspects of your business, holidays or major events. Then, delegate content creation responsibilities well in advance so there is plenty of time to create great content your customers will love.

As you get more sophisticated with your content marketing, you can make your editorial calendar more targeted, focusing on content marketing tactics that should be performed daily, weekly, monthly and quarterly.

You have specialized and valuable knowledge and insights about your products, services, industry and more. Creating content to engage, inform and build relationships with your customers in places and ways that are meaningful to them doesn't have to be rocket science. The less tech-savvy you are, the more you might rely on the skills of those in your company who can do this stuff in their sleep. If your customers are getting younger, chances are your employees are too.

<p>Daily content marketing tactics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Respond to comments on your blog ▪ Post LinkedIn status updates featuring the previous article ▪ Tweet a link to a previous whitepaper on your Twitter feed ▪ Post a Facebook page update featuring a previous video 	<p>Weekly content marketing tactics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create a new blog post ▪ Write a new how-to article ▪ Post an update in LinkedIn Groups featuring a previous article ▪ Respond to social media status updates
<p>Monthly content marketing tactics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Record a new how-to video ▪ Send an email newsletter featuring your newest content this month ▪ Write a new case study ▪ Write a new how-to guide 	<p>Quarterly content marketing tactics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Publish a new whitepaper ▪ Record customer testimonials videos ▪ Produce a webinar ▪ Create an e-book

CREATE VALUABLE CONTENT

Become the go-to resource for business building ideas

Customers are looking for solutions, not just products. In order to be a thought-leader in your space, continually create and market remarkable content. Just because you are in the B2B space doesn't mean that your content needs to be dull. Businesses have people running them and those people like to be engaged and entertained too.

Keys to remember for best results when producing content for your website:

- ✓ **Offer a lot of content options.** Don't focus all of your content creation on one type of content. While some of your customers might prefer articles, others may prefer videos. Also, different types of content are important for leading your prospects down the sales funnel. While a blog post is really good for prospects in the awareness stage, case studies are better for prospects in the decision stage.
- ✓ **Keep it simple.** There is no reason to include lots of jargon or technical terms in your content. Use easy-to-understand language.
- ✓ **Proofread.** Make sure that your content does not have any grammatical errors or misspellings before you make it live. I always ask someone on my team to review the content I write with fresh-eyes to make sure nothing got passed me during my review.
- ✓ **Make sure your content is SEO-friendly.** Include natural use of keywords in your content pieces, especially in their titles and subheadings (about 1% density). This will help both your customers and Google know what your content is about, and relate it to the products and services you offer.

- ✓ **Include visuals.** Include graphics in your content pieces to improve a person's understanding of the content.
- ✓ **Include calls to action.** As discussed, content marketing is not “hard sell” marketing. At the same time, you'd be foolish not to give yourself an opportunity to reap benefits from your hard work. Include calls to action and contact methods within each content piece you produce. If you do a good job of demonstrating value to your customer and indirectly tying that value back to your products and services, subtle prompts to get in touch will be all it takes to generate a lead.

Content marketing is not easy because it takes effort to produce worthwhile pieces consistently. If you don't have room on your plate, use outside resources to help with the research and writing.

Just use this formula: ***Idea + Expert + Writer = Content***

- **Take ownership of the idea stage.** If there is one place you want to spend your time, it's in the idea stage of content marketing. A good idea can set the tone for a successful piece, and if you follow the strategies outlined earlier in this guide, a little bit of dedicated brainstorming time can go a long way. It doesn't mean you have to be the source of every content idea for your company; it just means that time spent gathering and curating content ideas is time well spent.
- **Once you've decided on an idea, solicit help from an expert within your company to help with research.** If you're writing about a topic applicable to your customers, chances are that someone in your company has insider knowledge on it. Find that person, set up 30-60 minutes to talk with them, and record the conversation with your smartphone or other recording device (some phone systems have recording capabilities built-in). Ask questions like the following:
 - What type of customer would benefit most from a piece about this topic?
 - Can you give me some background information on this topic?
 - What are a few important points we should cover about this topic?
 - What should customers do as a result of reading this information?
 - How can our company help them do that?
- **Find a writer, and put them to work.** All a writer needs is a topic, guidelines and research to create a fantastic piece of content. Source someone on your team with a knack for writing, or hire a writer via freelance marketplaces like [Upwork](#). Provide directions with your topic as well as recorded expert interview content and set a deadline. Then, edit the finished product and publish it.

Whether you are writing content yourself or hiring someone, keep reading for an outline of the different content types and best practices for each.

Articles: create articles that get read

By creating a library of short, actionable “how-to” articles, you will add tremendous value to your website. These articles should help your customers do their jobs better while demonstrating your expertise. They do not have to be very lengthy – 500 to 1,000 words will do the trick.

While most marketers see the value in creating articles on a regular basis, some people have trouble getting started. If you fall into this camp, use the following process to make writing articles easier:

- **Chose a topic from those you’ve brainstormed.** For articles, choose one that is actionable and can be covered succinctly.
- **Know the WIIFM.** WIIFM means, “What’s in it for me?” In this case, “me” is your customer. What do they need to know to be more effective in their day-to-day lives? How can you help them make money or save money? That benefit is the main idea of your article, and it should be clear in every word you write.
- **Create a compelling title.** Once you have an idea and a WIIFM, begin by creating a great title that will capture the reader’s eye. The title is the most important element because people will read it first to decide if they will continue reading the rest of the article. You can have a fantastic article with a boring title, and it will not get read. Let the WIIFM guide your title, and let the title guide your writing.
- **Write the subheadings.** People scan information online before they read it in detail. So, make your article scannable by breaking it into sections with bold subheadings. By creating your subheadings before you write, you also make the writing process easier and ensure that your WIIFM flows consistently throughout the text of the article.
- **Write the summary.** The article summary will be placed at the top of the article below the title. The purpose of the summary is to succinctly tell people why your article is important (the WIIFM) and what they will learn. This will also help guide you during the writing process.
- **Write each paragraph with a purpose.** For each of your subheadings, write the paragraphs necessary to get your point across. If you find that you’re stuck, don’t try to force the words to come. Save the article and work on something else for a while. When inspiration strikes again, open the article and get back to work.
- **Read it out loud.** While you’re writing your article, and definitely after you’re finished, read it out loud. Does it sound natural, just as if you were speaking with someone? If not, go back and polish the rough edges. You want your article to sound conversational.

Blog posts: what you should blog about

Blogs are online journals that are maintained by individuals with regular entries of facts, opinions and ideas with text descriptions, graphics and videos. Most blogs allow readers to post comments and interact with the author.

A successful blog can be a valuable marketing tool, positioning you and your company as a thought leader in your industry. If you're not sure if you should blog, consider this statistic from HubSpot: *B2B companies that blog generate 67% more leads than companies that don't.*

You can create a blog through hosted services like [Blogger](#), or integrate a blog within your website through open-source software like [WordPress](#). Personally, I recommend working with WordPress because of its flexibility, ease of use and search engine optimization benefits.

Your blog posts do not have to be very lengthy – 250 to 500 word posts will work nicely (but they can be longer if needed). In addition, your blog should be updated regularly.

Your brainstormed content ideas are perfect fodder for your blog. But, the less formal nature of blogs allows for a bit more elbow room to showcase your company's personality.

Consider these ideas for your posts:

- **Comment on an industry news story.** If you keep up on

the latest industry news, that can be great content for your blog. Write a brief summary of the news item, add your own take on why it's important, and link out to the third-party website with the full piece.

- **Post an answer to a customer's question.** Use your blog to post answers to questions that are commonly asked by your customers. Source your customer service and sales representatives for question ideas, because they are sure to have the inside scoop on frequently asked questions.
- **Tell people about a useful resource on your website.** Did you just post a useful "how to" guide, checklist or video to your website? Let your customers know by writing a blog post about why it's useful. Include a link directly to it.
- **Announce a new product or service you added.** Your blog is also a great place to let customers know how you are evolving to better serve them. As you add new product and service offerings, write blog posts to let customers know why they are important and how you can help.
- **Vlog.** Video blogs, or vlogs, can help you showcase the people behind the business. Record yourself or a colleague talking about an important industry trend. Take an inexpensive video camera around your facility for a "behind the scenes" tour. Interview an employee on their 25th anniversary with your company. These vlogs can create true human interest and help customers relate to you.

Whitepapers and e-books: tips for success

Whitepapers and e-books are lengthier forms of content you can leverage to showcase your knowledge and expertise. Generally, whitepapers are 5 to 15 pages in length while, e-books are 15 to 50 pages in length (or more). Both can be offered on your website and as downloadable PDFs.

I highly recommend creating several whitepapers and e-books because they have great lead generation power. Just add a brief registration form to your website that a customer has to complete if they want to download the content. But know this: if you want people to give up their valuable contact information, your content needs to be worth their while. The following tips will help you create meaty whitepapers and e-books that generate leads.

- **Pick a topic your customers will want to read about.** Successful white papers and e-books help your customers solve a problem. The fact that your product or service meets the demands of the proposed solution is secondary to solving the problem at hand. When choosing a topic for your white paper, look at how the product or service solves your client's problem. Focus on the process as opposed to the product or service.
- **Don't forget about that problem-solving process as you plan and write.** Once you have the purpose for your whitepaper or e-book, stay on topic. Resist the urge to sell only, and focus on providing value.

- **Create a compelling title.** Titles make or break whitepapers and e-books. The title is your first impression. It's the only tool you can use to catch the visitor's attention and compel them to read more. Also, keep the title as short as possible without diluting its impact. Resources with shorter titles are downloaded more often than those with long titles.
- **Do your homework.** You want your whitepaper or e-book to be authoritative. Therefore, you must become the authority on your subject. Research your topic thoroughly, so you can gather all points of view on the topic and write in an informed manner.
- **Create your outline.** Before you begin writing your whitepaper or e-book, you need to create an outline. Your outline acts as a skeleton for your document that you will flesh out with ideas, facts, statistics and anecdotes. Once you've drafted an outline, review it to work out any kinks in the messaging. It's much easier to make a major change in direction during the outline stage than it is once you've written a draft.
- **Write the first draft.** Keep your sentences and paragraphs short and to the point. Resist the urge to be overly verbose. Group short paragraphs under subheadings to make your document scannable and easy to read. As you're writing, make sure you are always taking an educational approach. This is no time to be writing sales copy.

- **Review and revise as needed.** Once you've completed your first draft, put it aside for a couple of days. Then, review it with fresh eyes and make revisions as necessary. It is recommended that you have a trusted colleague review the document to suggest edits.
- **Publish as a PDF and possibly print it.** Once it is completed, your whitepaper or e-book should be published as on-site content and as a PDF document, so it can be downloaded from your website with a lead generation form. In addition, you may want to have it professionally printed, so you can give it to customers and prospects when you see them.

Videos: what you should film

People love watching online videos. YouTube has grown to be the 2nd largest search engine, because people prefer to find videos that answer their questions rather than searching pages and pages of text.

As a B2B marketer, you should love videos too. Studies show that marketers that use online video have higher search rankings, higher email click-through rates and higher lead conversions. In fact, visitors that view product videos are 85% more likely to buy than visitors that do not. So, if you're not producing online videos to market your products and services, it's time to get started.

Online videos are very easy to produce. There is no need for

a professional video production company. An inexpensive digital camera will work well to help you film short videos. The key is finding viable video ideas that your customers will find valuable.

The following tips will help you get started:

- **Demonstrate a product or service.** When you meet with customers face-to-face, you can showcase the value of your product or service through a quick demonstration. Let your website do the demo for you by posting online videos highlighting your products' features and capabilities.
- **Demonstrate a best practice.** It's helpful to read a "how-to" article to learn about a best practice. It's much more helpful to watch a trained professional demonstrate this best practice. Give your customers this experience by filming short videos where your top employees are the teachers.
- **Interview key customers for video testimonials.** Testimonials are a fantastic marketing tool. They're even more powerful on video. Positive comments from real life customers provide social proof that you are worthy of their business. Rather than just asking for a written testimonial, film your customers speaking your company's praises.

- **Answer customers' questions.** Your customers have questions. You have answers. Begin by soliciting questions from your customers on a regular basis. Then, film short video segments where key members of your team answer each question. These video Q&A sessions will also make great content for your blog.
- **Provide a “behind the scenes” tour of your operation.** If your customers do not visit your company on a regular basis, you can provide them with a personalized tour through online video.
- **Film an important event in your industry.** Trade shows can be a great opportunity to create compelling video content. With so many industry experts under one roof, you have many opportunities to conduct useful interviews. Plus, when the experts link back to their video interviews on your website, you get more traffic and a backlink to your site.
- **Interview key members of your team.** Most likely, your company is a success because you have great people on your team. Introduce your customers to these great people by conducting short video interviews.

Presentations: breathe life into PowerPoint

PowerPoint is no longer just for conference rooms. Successful companies are using presentations as a valuable content marketing tool to educate customers about

particular industry challenges, opportunities and best practices. If you are not leveraging presentations in your marketing, it's time to start.

The following tips will help you create presentations that deliver a marketing punch:

- **Use compelling images to illustrate key points.** Wherever possible, try to get your point across using compelling graphics such as photos, charts, and images instead of just plain text. Graphics are memorable and interesting, so use compelling images to enhance the way you make the key points in your presentation.
- **Recognize that online is different than in person.** When giving a live presentation, you are doing the communicating. Your presentation is only necessary to support your spoken words. Online, the presentation needs to stand alone. So, make sure your presentation is descriptive enough to get your key points across.
- **Make your presentation visually powerful.** Pay attention to the design of your presentation to make sure it has strong production value. Don't rely on PowerPoint's standard templates to create your online presentations. Hire a designer to create your presentation format to make sure they look professional and uniquely yours.

Webinars: what you should present

Webinars, both live and pre-recorded, are a fantastic content marketing tool. They allow you to speak directly to your customers and prospects to demonstrate your expertise, establish yourself as a thought leader and generate leads.

Live webinars, produced with services like [GoToWebinar](#), offer a cost-effective opportunity to hold a live event. Pre-recorded webinars add a new level of interactivity and educational value to your website. Webinars should be a big part of your content marketing mix; however, running a successful webinar campaign is not easy. The following tips will help ensure your webinar program is a success:

- **Forget your sales pitch.** To be successful your webinar needs to be educational. You want to use it to directly demonstrate your expertise in your field, so you can indirectly sell your products or services. As with all content discussed in this section, focus on ideas and strategies that will help your customers be more effective.
- **60-90 minutes is best for live webinars.** Most successful live webinars are held in a 60-90 minute block. If you will be taking questions at the end (strongly encouraged), I recommend holding 90 minute Webinars. If not, a 60 minute webinar format will be fine.
- **Pick the best day and time for live webinars.** When scheduling your live webinar, you want to pick a day and time that is most convenient for your target audience. According to research, people prefer to watch webinars on Tuesday, followed by Wednesday and Friday. As for the most popular time, 1:00pm ET will satisfy people in all US time zones.
- **For promotion, focus on 30 – 7 – 1 – 0.** In order for your live webinar to be a success, you need to effectively promote it to create awareness. In my experience, I find the 30-7-1-0 webinar promotion formula works best. This is how it works:
 - **30:** One month before the webinar, send a registration invitation email to your list of customers and prospects. Ideally, the invitation email will allow them to register and add an appointment to their calendar to remind them on the day of the event. In addition, I like to send an inexpensive postcard to the list as well. This contrarian snail-mail technique will help ensure your webinar invitation gets in front of your entire list. Even the most successful email campaign will only get in front of 30% of your list.
 - **7:** One week before the webinar, send another email and postcard invitation to people that did not register after the first invitation.

- **1:** The day before the webinar, send another email invitation to people that did not register yet.
- **0:** The morning of the webinar, send another email invitation.
- The 1 (day before) and 0 (morning of) email invitations are key. I normally pull in 50% to 75% of my registrations within 24 hours of the event because more people are able to predict their schedules at that time.
- **Create a library of pre-recorded webinars.** Each of your live webinars can also be repurposed on your website if you record them. Live webinar services like GoToWebinar make it easy for you to record your webinar audio and video as you are presenting. Also, you can use PowerPoint plugin software like [Camtasia](#) to edit your pre-recorded webinars.
- **Break pre-recorded webinars into chunks.** Not everyone has the time to sit through a 60-minute pre-recorded webinar. Try to break your full pre-recorded webinar into logical 5 to 15 minute segments. That way, your customers can watch each segment at their leisure without the long time commitment. You can also post these on YouTube in a series for added marketing power.

Testimonials and case studies

Testimonials and case studies are one of the most effective forms of content marketing because they allow you to prove your company's worth in clear, relatable terms. By showcasing the results you've produced for current and past customers, you can inspire confidence in prospective customers.

However, they're also some of the hardest content pieces to write because it can be hard to get material from customers to produce them. While you may produce great results for your clients — you may forget to ask for testimonials and case studies when customers are most likely to give them. Try these tips:

- **Find the right moment.** Did you just deliver something to a customer ahead of schedule? Did you just finish a project or contract under budget? Did a customer just send you a really nice email to thank you for your service? All of those opportunities are great times to ask for testimonials.
- **Ask the right questions.** Don't just ask for a testimonial. Have a conversation and ask questions that will solicit meaty answers without being too overbearing. For example:
 - Why did you choose us as a partner?
 - Why do you feel we have been successful?
 - What changed as a result of working with us?
 - What were the results of working with us?

- **Package for maximum impact.** Depending on the responses you get from your questions, you can determine the best way to include them in your content marketing efforts. Pull out the most poignant quotes for short testimonials to include on your website and within content pieces like articles and whitepapers. If there is enough raw material and a compelling statistic, write a case study of 500-1,000 words and put it in your website's resources section.

SHARE CONTENT & TRACK PERFORMANCE

Distribute your content strategically and track performance

Creating great B2B content isn't enough. You also have to get your content out to your audience. Use the content in your monthly email newsletter, share it on your company's social media profile, and get B2B influencers to share and promote it. If you provide true value, customers will welcome the opportunity to read it, share it and engage.

In order to make sure that your B2B content marketing strategy is successful, you must track your progress and ROI. Using tools like [Google Analytics](#), [Sprout Social](#), [Mailchimp](#), etc. for your various outreach actives will allow you to track performance for the goals outlined in step 1. This will also allow you to figure out what is working and what is not. Don't be afraid to experiment with what's working best for your organization.

TAKE ACTION!

Do something!

This guide defines a proven approach to B2B content marketing that will produce measurable results. By considering the steps and best practices detailed in this guide, you have now taken the crucial first step toward achieving your online marketing goals.

Now it's time to take action to profit from these principles. Assemble a team of talented writers and online marketing strategists to bring your content marketing strategy to life.

We hope this B2B content marketing guide has helped to simplify the process of creating remarkable content that drives leads and sales. The principles detailed in this guide are based on SVM's over 25 years of experience creating effective online marketing strategies that produce measurable business results for manufacturers, distributors and B2B service providers.

A great next step will be to [setup a free consultation with me](#), Bob DeStefano, to discuss your B2B online marketing strategy.

I guarantee I'll provide you with tips and ideas you can use immediately to boost your results.

Call me at **(877) 786-3249 x234** or click the link below to schedule your consultation.

[**SCHEDULE CONSULTATION**](#)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bob DeStefano, B2B Online Marketing Strategist & Speaker

Bob DeStefano is an internet marketing pioneer with over 25 years of experience helping B2B companies leverage online marketing to produce bottom-line results.

Through his speaking, writing and consulting, Bob makes online marketing understandable and empowers business leaders with actionable tips and strategies they can put to work immediately to:

- Increase sales & profits
- Generate new business leads
- Strengthen relationships with customers
- Boost marketing results on a limited budget
- Measure marketing ROI



Bob's online marketing career began during the birth of online marketing in the early 1990's serving as a strategic planner for Dean Witter, Discover & Co. At Dean Witter, Bob spearheaded the creation of the company's first Dean Witter and Discover Card websites.

As president of [SVM E-Marketing Solutions](#), a leading B2B online marketing agency, Bob has worked with a wide variety of companies, from Fortune 500 companies to small family-owned businesses, to help them leverage online marketing to produce bottom-line results.

Bob is the author of the [Old Dog, New Clicks: Online Industrial and B2B Marketing Know-How for the 21st Century](#), a step-by-step plan to transform your marketing practices from past decades to ensure your company's success for the next decade. In addition, Bob is a regular contributor to a variety of publications, including Modern Distribution Management, Contractor Supply and MarketingProfs, on the subject of actionable online marketing strategies.

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