

15 Content Nuggets

Create content worth looking for with this collection of golden tips from the experts

Content marketing – creating, publishing and promoting helpful content for prospects and customers - can earn you incredible reach, influence and revenue.

There's never been a better time to become a content marketer. At the same time as advertising is losing effectiveness, search engines and social networks are making it easier and easier for audiences to find information for themselves.

By publishing content that your audience needs and values, you can attract everyone you need to reach - customers, prospects, journalists, influencers, bloggers and more. With as little as a blog, a website and a Twitter account, a PR pro can earn as large a following as the New York Times, while a small business can become as influential as a news channel.

Of course, you need to do it right – which is where our experts come in.

Five reasons why content marketing done well is worth its weight in gold...

Trust People don't necessarily trust adverts and they frequently resent the advertiser for interrupting their day. Publishing helpful content achieves the opposite effect. People can find it and explore it when they're looking for information. Instead of being a pest, you become a trusted resource.

Word of mouth It takes just seconds for readers to share a link to a piece of content they like. After some good initial promotion, an original, creative piece of content can quickly take on a life of its own as readers share it with their friends and contacts.

Visibility By optimizing the keywords in your content, you can use it to get your company on the front page of search engines in front of customers looking for information or journalists researching stories.

Voice As the publisher of your own content, you get more say in what people hear about you. You can't control how people react to your content, but you can decide what you put out there.

Cost The cost of publishing content starts at zero. Although you can pay out for elaborate graphics or production, creating a blog is free and videos can be made for the cost of a cheap camera.

Our Gold Miners!



Joe Chernov

VP of Content Marketing
Eloqua



Ann Handley

Chief Content Officer
MarketingProfs



Scott Stratten

President
UnMarketing



Adam Singer

Editor
TheFutureBuzz.com



1: Content should help people.

Create something interesting that is a prescription to help people do their jobs better. You should try to create content that helps people become proficient in an area of their lives (hopefully related to your business) that they knew little about before engaging with your content.

Don't let your content suffer from the 'IBU' dilemma: interesting but useless; don't create a "The History of Some Nonsensical Business Issue" infographic that a few people pay attention to and fewer still forward along. Hold your content to a standard that makes it more than interesting, and offer practical advice or teach people something they didn't already know. **JC**

2: Make your content about customers.

Don't be too brand-centric with your content. Many marketers and PR pros think about the brand first and, their messaging and their talking points – and that's great when you're making a media pitch or doing an interview with the media where they will tell your story. But when you tell your story yourself, make sure you do it in a customer-centric way. Customers need to understand the relevance to themselves of what you're saying. **AS**

3: Writing for your readers first and foremost earns trust.

Always think about the audience first – that's the golden rule. If you're writing content that is all about yourself, not only will that one piece of content suffer: all of the content that you're going to publish thereon after is going to suffer because you will lose the reader's trust. Take the long-term view and write for the reader first and your marketing purposes second. Think of your goal as being to zero out your brand; you'll never achieve it, but you need to be the counterbalance to those who live to "make the logo bigger". **JC**

4: Pictures can be better than words.

Infographics, videos and highly visual presentations allow a large amount of information to be consumed in a blink. They are a limited time commitment and they're immensely shareable. At Eloqua, we've doubled down on infographics because they are immensely spreadable. When we host them on our blog, those particular blog posts are far and away our most heavily trafficked posts. People like them. **JC**

5: Give your whole team the freedom to get involved.

I think it's everybody's job to create awesome content – so create an environment where they feel able to do that. Make it top-down driven: explain that you buy into the idea and you want them to buy into it too. You need to give your colleagues or employees the leeway to create or they won't feel able to do it. If they feel your thumb pressing down on them the entire time, they're not going to do it. **SS**

6: Get creative: you can make awesome content around anything.

I don't know what company can't make good content. I worked for two years as a national sales training manager for a bubble wrap company, flying around the country for two-day training classes on how to be awesome and sell bubble wrap. I can make bubble wrap awesome, you can make awesome content too. Blendtech is a great example. Blenders – how boring a domestic product can you get? And then they came out with 'Will it Blend' and started making videos of themselves blending iPhones and brooms and anything else. They made awesome content. **SS**

7: Don't shy away from being personal – it builds trust.

Stories are very compelling. We all love stories; however, many companies think story-telling is a squishy, kind of amorphous thing, like fairy tales or literature. But it's not about that. It's really a chance to express the soul of your brand. Who are you? Tell stories about what's unique about your employees. Show pictures of what the after-party looks like – that kind of stuff builds empathy and trust and it's what story is about. **AH**

8: Learn to find stories to tell.

There are a million stories in your company – all you have to do is pull them out and bring them to life. I talk to B-to-B companies all the time, for example, who say, "we have a really boring product and it's really hard to explain what it is." And I talk to other companies that tell me they have nothing to talk about. But there's always a story to tell! Look at what you're all about. Start by going back and looking at your marketing to see what you have been talking about already. You may find stuff in there that sparks some inspiration right away. **AH**

9: Learn to tell a story bit by bit.

Your challenge is not just to be interesting. It's to be consistently interesting. I know that's asking a lot but you have to realize it's no longer about working for three months on a campaign, issuing it and being done. You need to build a narrative over time and be agile with Web publishing so you can tell your story bit by bit.

I tell a lot of clients: your news is important and we're not going to stop telling people about your news – but it's equally important to tell your audience all the stuff that happens in between your news. When you do that with your content, it resonates more and humanizes your brand. Where your competitors only talk when they have big news or are releasing a product, you're positioning yourself differently. **AS**

10: Use your blog as a hub.

If you're not blogging yet, start. For Eloqua, the blog is without question the hub of our content wheel. Make your blog the starting point for all your content; if it's housed there, you can give your content life, context and edginess. **JC**

11: When choosing your channels, focus on the 'why' to determine the 'where'.

You really have to think about why you're doing what you're doing first. A lot of time, the tendency is to go toward the tools. We need a blog. We need to be on Facebook. We need a Twitter stream. But you really don't. What you really need to do is say, "why are we doing this?" and then let that strategy question and its answers drive what channels and tools you are going to use and what you are going to do. **AH**

12: Give yourself the first bite of your content.

Don't spend the majority of your time on other people's platforms. Facebook and Twitter aren't your platforms – they're platforms run by other businesses. There is definitely value there for your business, but your content should be published first on a channel owned by your company. I call it the Right of First Publish. When you really have good content, publish it on your own channels first, then syndicate it to other channels while linking back later. **AS**

13: Don't over-commercialize your content when you publish.

With awesome content, what you leave out is as important as what you put in. Minimize the commercial messages and the branding statements and don't trademark something every time you speak. I saw a blog post once where they mentioned their company name and that they were award-winning, and then they trademarked it with a little symbol seven times in one post. It's like... stop it. **SS**

14: Don't go straight for the kill (or the lead form).

Don't always go for the kill right away. Don't produce an awesome piece of content and then automatically hide it behind a registration page. That's not necessarily the best way to do it. Try building a relationship over time through content, then maybe asking for just a little bit of information, and then a little bit more over time. It's not about going in for the kill right away – it's about slowly building on your relationships with good content. **AH**

15: Stay committed – it pays off!

You've got to be able to sustain this long term. Content isn't a one-and-done thing; it's a long-term commitment. A lot of the time, companies say, "yeah, let's get a blog!" And they get it running, and then a month or two down the road, it's like: "This blog is such a drag and no one is coming. Let's just abandon it." It's a bit like having a baby. It's really awesome but it's long-term. It really does pay back, but at the same time, it's a commitment that you've got to keep, and whatever you do has to be substantial. **AH**



About our Experts

Joe Chernov is Vice President of Content Marketing at marketing automation SaaS company, Eloqua. He is responsible for imagining, creating, distributing and measuring content that increases awareness and drives demand. Since Joe's arrival, Eloqua has won more awards for its content marketing than any other company in its category.

Ann Handley is Chief Content Officer of MarketingProfs, a rich and trusted resource that helps businesses market their products and services smarter and better. Ann is also co-author of the best-selling, Content Rules: How to Create Killer Blogs, Podcasts, Videos, Ebooks, Webinars (and More) That Engage Customers and Ignite Your Business (Wiley, 2011).

Adam Singer is Social Media Practice Director for LEWIS PR, and a marketing industry speaker and blogger. When not providing online marketing and social media PR strategy to top B2B and B2C brands, he edits TheFutureBuzz, rated one of the top 150 blogs by AdAge.com and one of the top ten blogs by Social Media Examiner.

Scott Stratten is the President of Un-Marketing, the place companies like PepsiCo, Red Cross and Fidelity Investments come to when they need help guiding their way through the viral/social media and relationship marketing landscape. His book UnMarketing: Stop Marketing. Start Engaging became a national best-seller before it was released, and more than 100,000 people follow his content on Twitter.

About Vocus

Vocus is a leading provider of cloud-based marketing and PR software that helps organizations reach and influence buyers across social networks, online and through the media. Vocus provides a suite of software for online marketing, social media and PR that makes it easy for organizations to generate online visibility, build their social networks and attract new customers in today's new customer-led buying cycle. Vocus is used by more than 40,000 organizations worldwide and is available in seven languages. (NASDAQ: VOCS)

To find out more, visit www.vocus.com.