

Develop a Content Marketing Strategy

Before creating your first piece of content you need to develop a content marketing strategy. Before we get into strategy lets discuss definitions.

Inbound Marketing: Marketing focussed on being found online through Search Engines, social sites, and other online properties.

Content Marketing: Creating informational, educational and entertaining content that is relevant to your targeted consumer (by consumer we mean the person that will consume your content). Depending upon your business objective your "Targeted Consumer" might be a prospect or a existing client/customer.

Using the above definitions our strategy is about using content targeted to prospects via search engines, social sites and other properties. In simpler terms, when a prospect searches a keyword relevant to our business we want them to find our content, consume it, then visit our site to learn more or take a conversion action.

(If your goal was improving customer service your content strategy would focus on content that you could direct to your customers such as email, direct mail and phone calls)

1. Business Objectives

What is the purpose of your marketing? Regardless of whether you are looking to generate leads, sales or donations, build subscribers, improve customer service, create customer loyalty, generate PR, etc. content marketing can help you achieve your objective.

You can choose one of these or all of them, but understand that each will need its own unique strategy.

One continuous objective we have in our strategy is for our content marketing to improve SEO. An individual post may be written to drive blog subscriptions, but we never forget about the SEO aspect.

2. Targeted Consumer

Based on your objective you should have an idea of who your content is targeting. You need to know as much as possible about your targeted consumer.

- A. What topics will capture their interest?
- B. What formats (written, video, audio, etc.) do they prefer content in?
- C. Are they looking for educational, informative, entertaining content?

- D. Where do they seek out content?
- E. What keywords do they use to search for content?

Understanding the answers to these questions will help you plan out the type of content you should be producing.

3. Content Resources

What types of content are you capable of or comfortable producing? Can you are someone at your business write? Can you produce videos or podcasts? If you are better at one than another start with that format. Later you can focus on repurposing content into other formats.

How frequently can you produce content? IF you can only commit to writing one blog post a quarter, content marketing is likely not a viable option. You need to be able to consistently produce new content to continue to engage your audience, and search engines.

4. Develop a Content Calendar

You need to plan your content or somewhere along the way business will intrude and your content marketing efforts will take a back seat. Also you need to know what content you're producing in advance. If you wait until the last minute to come up with a topic your overall strategy will suffer. Don't spend your creation time thinking about what to create.

You should create a content calendar at least a quarter in advance that plans out the topic, the format, who will create the content and where you will publish the content.

Schedule	Topic	Format	Author	Publish To
Week 1 July	Website Basics	Blog Post	John Smith	Blog
		Tweet	John Smith	Twitter
		Facebook	John Smith	Facebook
Week 2 July	Optimizing Blog Posts	Blog Post	John Smith	Blog
		Tweet	John Smith	Twitter
		Facebook	John Smith	Facebook
Week 3 July	Creating a Call to Action	Video	John Smith	YouTube
		Blog Post	John Smith	Blog
		Tweet	John Smith	Twitter
		Facebook	John Smith	Facebook

This is a basic calendar and for a quarter you would continue with the last week of July, August and September. You can customize your calendar as needed. You might include tracking information such as post visits, post shares, comments, click thrus to your post call to action, Likes, retweets and more.

If you are producing blogs, videos and podcasts on a weekly basis you might have a full calendar along with individual calendars for your blog, video and podcast schedule. The main point is, no matter how simple or complicated you calendar, that you calendar helps you content marketing efforts stay on track.

If you have been in business for a while you likely have content in one form or another that you have previously created. Review this content to see what is still relevant.

5. Track Results

Its important that you track your results so that you know what is or isn't working. What is important is that the metrics you track identify your progress towards achieving your business objectives.

Since SEO is a factor in all of our content we track keyword rankings to see what effect individual content publishes have on specific keyword rankings. As we're tracking our keywords we might choose to create an additional piece of content, or change our content calendar, based on a keyword that we feel needs a boost.

6. Always Be Optimizing

Tracking results without continuously revising the content you create would be a huge waste of time. What may have worked last month may not work this month. You need to continuously adjust based on what the data is telling you.

If blog posts are working but video isn't, you may want to devote time previously spent creating videos writing more blog posts. Or you might continue to tweak and try to improve your video results.

Conclusion

Follow the above 6 steps to launch your content marketing strategy. Be patient. It takes time to build up your distribution, to build credibility and to build authority from search engines.

This is a long term strategy that will produce some results in the short term but will improve with age. Just make sure that you produce quality content that is relevant to your targeted consumer.