



9 REASONS

Why Your Content Marketing
Strategy isn't Working

9 REASONS WHY YOUR CONTENT MARKETING STRATEGY ISN'T WORKING

Many marketers have chosen to make content the centerpiece of their strategy. Yet, when it comes to results, not everyone is able to claim the same success. Content marketing can look deceptively simple. After all, you just need to create something and put it out there, right?

In fact, this couldn't be further from the truth.

In content marketing, the most effective approach is called the "**Strategy** – **Execution** – **Analysis**" Framework. It allows you to keep an eye on the big picture while keeping all aspects of your content marketing effort under control.



In the **Strategy** phase, you are setting your goals for content marketing and making choices about the best means to pursue them.

Execution is when you'll implement the plan you created in the strategy phase. In this stage, it is important to keep an eye on the quality of the content you're producing and on implementing the specific tactics you chose in the strategy stage to the greatest benefit.

In the **Analysis** stage of the cycle, you need to spend time analyzing the performance of the content you created. Find out what works well, identify what makes sense but needs to be improved, and determine what should be slashed altogether. The analysis stage allows you to go back to step 1 of the framework and begin strategizing again, armed with more reliable (i.e., data-backed) information.

The most important issue when it comes to planning your strategy is actually creating one, and that step should include writing it down. Think through the most important aspects of your strategy, and then sit down to document your master plan. Whether you're working alone or as part of a team, a written strategy will help you keep yourself and your team accountable.

Here are some of the most common aspects marketers tend to get wrong:

1. NO AGREEMENT ON GOALS AND CORE THEMES

When engaging in content marketing, the impulse can be to produce as much content as possible, regardless of the topic. Though it might feel appealing, this approach is more likely to harm you in the long term.

Instead of simply hitting the ground running and churning out as much as you can, start by thinking about the target of your content marketing: what topics you need to cover to reach the people in your target audience, how you'll track success, and your KPIs.

Marketing personas are an invaluable tool and can help you decide how best to reach your target audience. Use them to draw a picture of your target audience. Who's your customer? What are they influenced by? What does their buying cycle look like? How can you convert them from a visitor into a lead and ultimately a customer? Take time to answer all of these questions.

Start formulating KPIs by focusing on your end-goal—increased brand awareness, leads, or improved sales. Success would look different for each of these, so this will be your measurement for determining if you're on track.



For example, you might be getting hundreds of thousands of page views on your blog posts, but if none of your visitors are leaving their email addresses, and your goal is to harvest leads, is your content strategy really working?



2. TACTICS AREN'T ALIGNED WITH STRATEGY

Content marketing comes in many forms: blogs, whitepapers, eBooks, podcasts, videos, infographics, etc.

Again, go back to your marketing personas and decide which are most likely to attract and convert your target visitor. Maybe your clientele is busy and doesn't have time to read lengthy blog posts? Maybe they live in a big city and have a long commute, which can be utilized for listening to podcasts? Whatever the case, the more targeted you can be, the faster you can accomplish your goals.



3. STRATEGY ISN'T ALIGNED WITH BUDGET

Various opinions exist on the optimal schedule for publishing and distributing content, but you can look to your industry peers and to experts for a rule of thumb.

As with any aspect of marketing, your schedule should be guided by your chosen field. If your goal is to increase brand awareness, you should aim to promote yourself and your brand as many times as possible. This will necessitate the creation of more content. On the other hand, if you want to establish authority, you'd probably choose to produce less often, instead producing longer, more authoritative content that covers your chosen topics in greater detail.

Your budget for content marketing is another constraint you'll have to take into account when deciding on your calendar. Whether you're doing everything in-house (not recommended) or you hire someone to do it for you, content marketing is often an expensive exercise.

Producing and distributing content is probably the most cumbersome part of content marketing. It's time-consuming, and there's often a fine line between success and failure. Outsourcing content will save you hours and money in the long run.



4. BAD CONTENT

“Create great content” is a catchphrase those of us in the marketing space have heard countless times. Unfortunately, we rarely hear what great content really is. The most obvious answer to this question would be, “It depends.” Yet some common principles will put almost any content producer on the right track:

➤ **Produce content that is helpful to your audience.**

No matter what product or service you're offering, you'll want to help your customers address a pain point they may have. When it comes to creating content, if it's not helping your audience, then why are you producing it?

➤ **Do not put out a sales pitch.**

While we're on the topic, make sure your content is not too self-centered. Remember, people come to your website to learn how to solve a problem. If you decide to mention your product/service, it should always be in relation to how it can help your audience. Never simply pitch for the sake of pitching.

➤ **Use the attention you already have.**

Don't let the eyeballs you already have go to waste. Engage your current audience. Depending on your chosen medium, the first step could be as simple as having a “Please leave a comment” call to action on your website or blog. You could also urge your visitors to leave their emails to get updates from you (converting them into leads) or explore a topic in more detail (by downloading a whitepaper from your website).

➤ **Keep it simple and easy to understand.**

Unnecessarily complicated words and long sentences don't make you sound smart, but can alienate readers and lose their attention. Use all available tools to make your content as easily digestible possible.

5. SEO IS BEING NEGLECTED

Ultimately, you're producing content for humans, but keep in mind that a large proportion of your “audience” will be the SEO bots that crawl your site. Fortunately, search algorithms are becoming better at identifying and promoting the types of content that a human audience finds valuable.

Satisfy your SEO needs by optimizing all technical aspects of your website: performance speed, metadata, keyword targeting, page matching, and other critical elements. Don't forget that social media platforms will also be impacted by SEO. How you implement page data determines how your information is displayed.

Remember to use text structure like headings and content length to your advantage. The majority of your visitors are still likely to come to your website as a result of a search, so perform keyword research and make sure to optimize the content you produce for the keywords you want to address. Know what your potential customers are looking for, and use keywords that will help ensure their search leads to you.

6. INSUFFICIENT PROMOTION

“Write it, and they will come” is the worst piece of advice you can follow in content marketing. Yes, you should focus on producing good content, but the effort that you put into distributing it should be on par with the effort you put into creating it.

Successfully promoting your content is a question of finding the right mix of channels. There are many potentially successful approaches to take, but they vary in terms of effectiveness and cost.

➤ Content Syndication

Content Syndication is the process of re-publishing your content on other websites. This method is very valuable for building your top-of-funnel audience and can get your content in front of a sizable new audience. The challenge with this approach is that the same content can appear in more than one location, but having duplicate content doesn't necessarily result in a negative impact.

➤ Pay Per Click (PPC) Advertising

Pay Per Click (PPC) Advertising may feel like a counter-intuitive approach when you're considering content marketing, but it has great potential to guide and improve your related marketing efforts. PPC for content can be exceedingly useful on newer platforms such as the big social media networks. While traditional PPC is geared towards audiences who are already in the research and decision-making stage of the buyer's cycle, social advertising allows you to reach people who are looking for both information and distraction. This connects directly to the core purpose of content marketing. Social media sites allow for granular targeting based on demographic criteria. They make it easier to reach your target personas directly, without having to “burn” money on audiences who are not the right fit for your offering. PPC gives you a wealth of data, which you can use to learn more about your potential customers and how to serve them better. One related approach to consider is remarketing—targeting those who have already visited your website or interacted with you online. Not only will you be increasing your visibility with your targeted potential customers, but you'll also get to “follow” them around the web and learn more about their browsing habits and interests.

➤ Social Media and Email

Social Media and Email are direct and free (or very cheap) channels that shouldn't be overlooked or underestimated. Both can work with any chosen strategy. Delve into the details of each tactic and find out what works best for your content and your business.



7. POOR MEASUREMENT

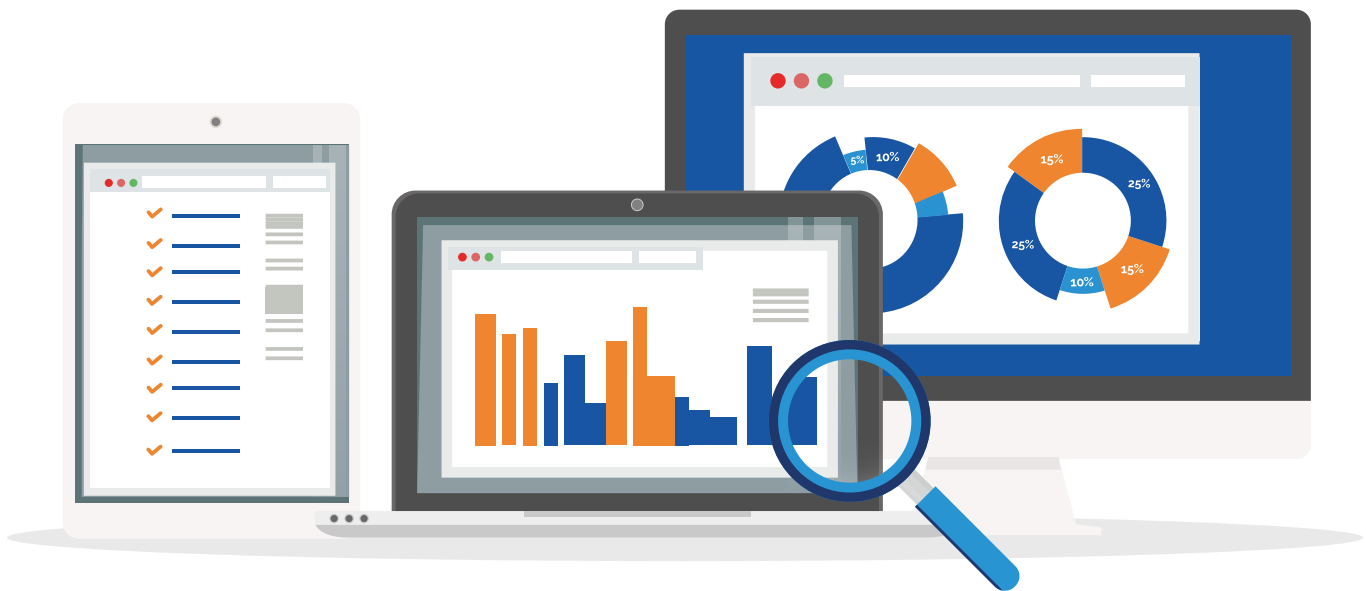
When it's time to measure your impact, look at the numbers that actually matter, even if the results aren't necessarily what you expected to see. Measuring vanity stats is just as bad as not measuring at all. If you have a clearly defined goal for content marketing, put the bulk of your time and money into tactics that support reaching that goal, and assess your progress bravely and mercilessly.

Looking for the right stats can also help you use your time more wisely. For example, if you're selling a product that has a lengthy buying cycle which requires working with a warm lead for a long time, then ask yourself: "What's the purpose of running a blog with thousands of readers, who are unlikely to convert to leads, but require my time and effort?"

8. INADEQUATE TESTING

Every aspect of your content marketing strategy should be open to experimentation and potential improvement. Try different forms of content. You may find that certain approaches are just begging to be tried.

Experiment with everything: test your titles, headings, and formatting to see when your visitors are most engaged. Experiment with day and time when publishing your content and track how that is reflected in the performance. Where is your audience, and when are they active?



9. TIME

Remember that content marketing is a marathon, not a sprint. If you're not ready to be in it for the long run, don't get into it at all. But if you're willing to invest time, some money, and sweat equity, remarkable things can be accomplished.

Working via a long-term strategy does not mean you should sit back and relax. Stay enthusiastic! Use each cycle of the Strategy – Execution – Analysis framework to find ways to tweak and improve your strategy. Redistribute your efforts and your budget into the initiatives that give you better results.

CONCLUSION

Even if you're not committing one of these "original sins" of content marketing, the Strategy – Execution – Analysis framework will allow you to identify and correct your mistakes. At the same time, the framework is simple enough to let you produce content without dealing with analysis paralysis.

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