

What Is Content Marketing?

Your How-To Guide





What's This Content Thing All About?

Content is one of life's essentials. It can be anything from the conversation you have with a friend, to important news you receive by email, to a blog post that helps you decide where to go on holiday. Content also has a big part to play in business. This can be Business to Consumer (connecting with people through positives like pleasure) or Business to Business (helping people to resolve their problems).

Connect, Create, Communicate

Content - in all its forms - is big. Social media networks are booming and blogs are part of the everyday online landscape. Recent research has found that consumers now pay more attention to online reviews than to traditional word of mouth when choosing a product or service (Source: *Eccomplished*).

Content may be big news right now, but there is something missing.

Why Use A Spear When You Can Use A Net?

The missing element is a clear content marketing strategy.

Content without a content marketing strategy is like fishing with a spear instead of a net. It is more time consuming, more demanding and more of a drain on your resources. But what exactly is content marketing?

Content marketing is the approach of fitting your content within a structured and measurable process to create better results in attracting leads and transforming them into customers - and increasing revenue.

How Content Marketing Grows Business Leaders

Done the right way, content management allows you to:

- ✓ **Maintain and engage with your prospect community more deeply and profitably than your competition**
- ✓ **Improve your pipeline of qualified prospects**
- ✓ **Reduce your marketing budget**
- ✓ **Measure your whole marketing spend**
- ✓ **Deliver more high quality leads for your sales teams**

How Content Marketing Puts The 'Market' Back Into Marketing

So how does a content marketing approach take marketing so much further? By allowing you to:

- ✓ Focus on developing your market - not just a campaign
- ✓ Deliver a consistent flow of new leads to your sales team
- ✓ Improve your ROI on marketing spend
- ✓ Remove the business "pains" created by outbound marketing

Making Sense Of It All

So what is the difference between content and content marketing? Here are just a few examples...



Guide your prospects

Content marketing allows companies to fit their content into a five step process which matches their customers' buying behaviour, creating a clearer and more consistent sales funnel. A recent survey showed that 66% of consumers surveyed indicated that "consistent and relevant communication provided by both sales and marketing organisations" is a key influence in choosing a solution provider (Source: Genius.com).



Tell a better story

Content marketing allows you to engage in advanced storytelling through behavioural communications, nurturing your prospect along the buying process. Nurtured leads have been found to be worth 9% on average more than a lead which isn't nurtured (Source: Market2Lead).



Gain real insight

Done the right way, content marketing allows you to see the impact of your marketing activity as it's happening. With an effective content marketing strategy, you can see exactly how much revenue your marketing content has generated - right down to the individual customer.

Sounds great. But how does it actually work?

Five Steps To Content Marketing Heaven

A great content marketing approach follows five clear steps. It also takes full advantage of the right technology to measure the impact of your marketing activities, including smart marketing automation technology that allows you to automate the content you distribute to individual leads according to their level of interest. It's like the difference between watching your favourite film on an old black and white TV and viewing it on a flat screen 3D TV with surround-sound.





Step 1. Listening

Listening lies at the heart of every successful content marketing strategy - actively listening to the demand for your particular product or service, as it's happening.

Think of it like buying a car

Think of what you do when you're planning to buy a car. Most people will ask for ideas and opinions from friends and family, checking the internet for reviews, even joining one or two forums. This is exactly how your potential customers are behaving right now.

Instead of sending out untargeted, generic content, a content marketing strategy allows you to manage and track the progress of your prospects through the three key buying stages: **Awareness, Consideration** and **Decision**.

Three Listening resources no business should be without:

01. Your marketing personas

Your marketing personas are your customer archetypes or profiles of your ideal type of client. Aim to create a range of personas, based on your knowledge of your clients and your market research, covering areas such as:

- › Client's age group
- › Role in the company
- › Specific job frustrations
- › Specific business goals
- › Specific business pains
- › Any other reasons for a need for your service (this could be the hidden or latent business pain)?
- › Where do they spend time when they are online, i.e. do they visit blogs, social media or specialist forums?

Target Persona's	1	2	3
Name	David Dobson	Paul Thompson	Jamie Bogg
Age	55	47	31
Gender	Male	Male	Male
Family Information	Married with children	Married with children	Married
Role in Company	Director	Financial Controller	Fleet Manager
Company Name	3D Haulage Ltd	Watts	Mark Group
Fleet Size	10 Articulated Lorries	100 Vehicles	1500 Vehicles
Number of employees	25	80	1200
Role Responsibility	Day to day running of the vehicles & on-set routes, P & L.	Managing the finance team, working with the owners on KPI's, evaluating opportunities, cost reduction & growth opportunities.	Looking after the whole fleet 1000+, fleet manager & two administrators, servicing MOT spares, servicing and managing, costs month on month, protecting company brand.
Spend	£20,000 per week	£725,000 per annum	£6 million per annum
Job Frustrations	Employment of people Leasing & servicing Sourcing parts Cost & sourcing Losses of vehicles Cost of tyres	People not paying IT infrastructure Misinformation on fuel bills & VAT Accuracy of information Credit facilities & options Lack of service	Driver behaviour Multiple fuel cards Educating drivers Network locations Fuel theft Vehicle tracking
Internet use?	Communication audit trail	LinkedIn Facebook Sourcing suppliers	Sourcing suppliers Price comparison Environmental role Waste streams
Benefits of FuelCard and KeyFuels network	Control of the options rather than a credit card Excellent reporting Cheaper fuel VAT return Fixed price	Price Data analysis Size of Keyfuels network Service Inclusion of Morrison and Tesco networks	£1 million saving in year one Reporting structures Service Price set cost per litre

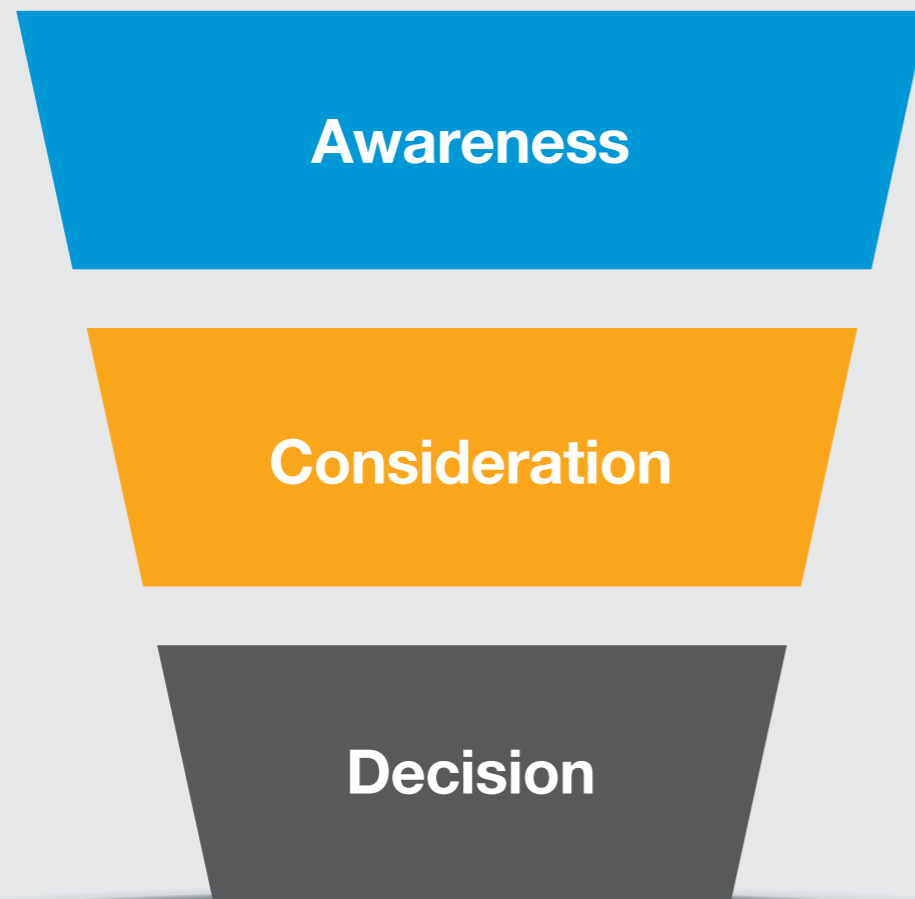
02. Your content plan: Mapping the buying process

Your content plan allows you to map your customer's buying process and connect up your entire approach to create a longer and more profitable sales cycle.

Creating a stronger sales cycle could follow, for example, the pattern of going from linking with a prospect via social media **(the Awareness stage)**, then taking them to a landing page to an offer of an eGuide **(the Consideration stage)**, then to automated lead nurturing messages to continue to warm up the contact - creating a potential customer who is interested in knowing more about your product or service in a more permission-based way **(the Decision stage)**.

The key to creating results is to plan your content precisely around your customer's buying process.

[Sales Funnel]



03. Your technical resources

Content marketing is nothing without the right technology. And the right kind of technology is the type that allows you to listen to the demand for your service or product. We use HubSpot's lead scoring dashboard for our clients because it gives us a 360 degree view of exactly what's happening across all their channels at the same time - in real time.

Listening isn't simply about waiting around, hoping for random feedback. It is about measuring and monitoring the level of interest in your content and your business and responding fast to new opportunities as they come up.

We use a number of resources, including:

Demand analysis:



Raven SEO Tools › Our clients like this because it integrates very detailed keyword research data from many different sources to allow us to create and distribute content for maximum business impact. It also allows us to identify competitors and analyse their online presence.

www.raventools.com



SearchMetrics › We use this resource because, not only does it let us see what is important to our customer's target market, it helps move our client's content more quickly up the search engine rankings.

www.searchmetrics.com



Google Insights for Search › This resource gives a complete overview of what is changing in the levels of demand for a company's product or service, by allowing us to compare search volume patterns across specific areas, categories and properties.

www.google.com/insights/search/

Opportunities analysis:



Radian6 ▶ Conversation creates all kinds of opportunities. That's why we use resources like Radian6 which allow us to closely monitor, analyse and engage in real time with our clients' prospects across all social media channels.

www.radian6.com



Hootsuite ▶ This resource lets us track and monitor the conversations that people are having about our client's products or services, all in one place – letting us respond to fresh opportunities in a timely way. You can also see exactly which groups and forums your contacts are linking into.

www.hootsuite.com



Buddy Media ▶ Content marketing depends on creating a positive relationship with each lead, so we use this resource to actively develop and strengthen the relationship between our clients and their prospects.

www.buddymedia.com

66% of consumers surveyed indicated that “consistent and relevant communication provided by both sales and marketing organisations” is a key influence in choosing a solution provider.

(Source: Genius.com)



Step 2. Creating

Stop selling! *Creating content in a powerful content marketing strategy is not about focusing on your selling cycle. Quite the opposite. It means creating a content map that matches your customer's buying cycle and creating content to support that structure. Welcome to behavioural targeted communications. This approach should follow three important stages:*



Awareness: At this stage you're aiming to get noticed by your prospects by targeting them with unique and compelling content. Because you've done your strategic listening, you know what your prospects are thinking about so you can create content that answers those needs.

Consideration: Now that your prospect has got to know you, what's going to turn them into people who value what you have to say? This is where you start to draw the needs of the prospect closer together with the value of your product or service.



Decision: At the Decision stage you are aiming to convert people from prospects into customers. Now that they trust you and value your expertise, you can demonstrate the value of your service and product. And because you can track and view exactly who is looking at which content on your website and social media networks, you can pass the hot leads straight on to your sales team.

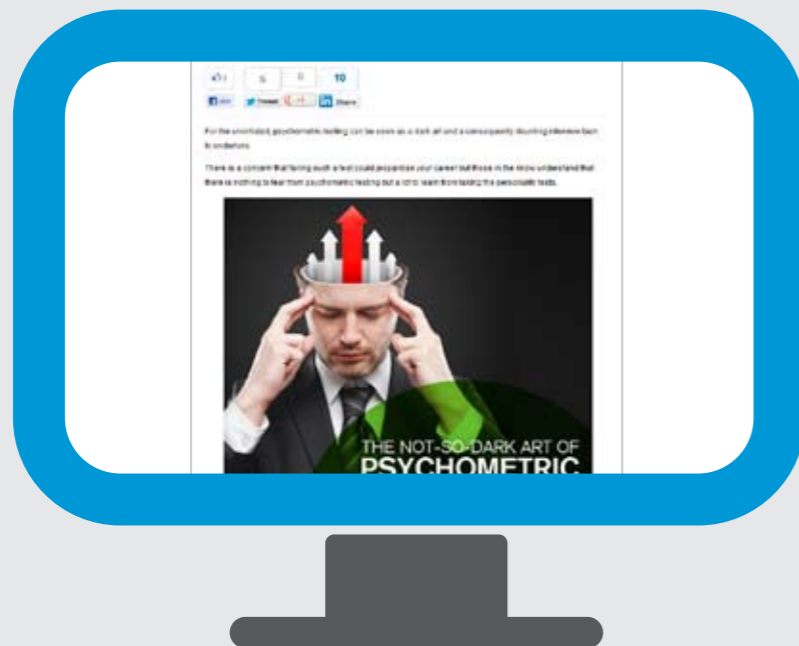
Your content menu:

To get your prospects salivating at every stage of the content management process, you need to work from a varied, but cleverly targeted menu of content, which can include:

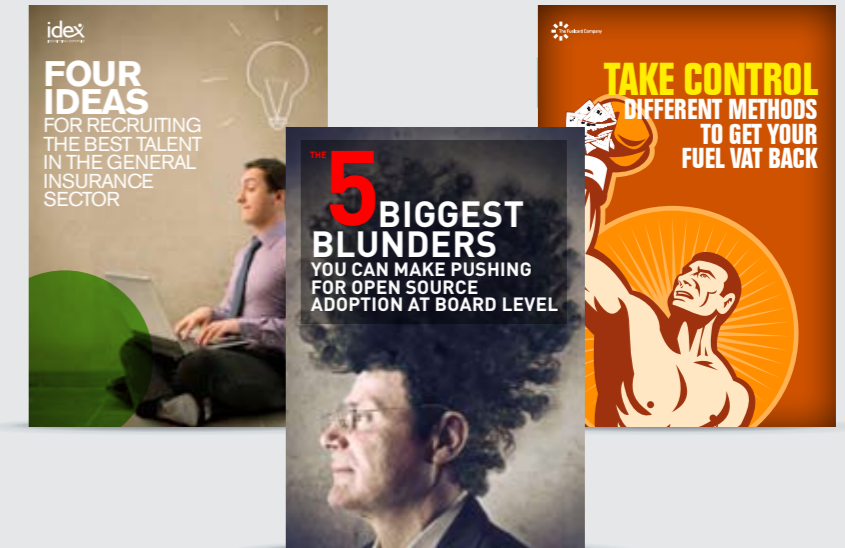
Emails: Interesting, engaging emails which answer your prospect's business pains and build rapport and trust.



Articles: Creating punchy and engaging articles to post in your blog and relevant business forums which offer a clear value to the reader is an excellent way of attracting attention from the right people.



eGuides: eGuides or white papers are a key part of your content management strategy. By using keyword and other research, you can create content that taps right into the interests and concerns of your target audience.



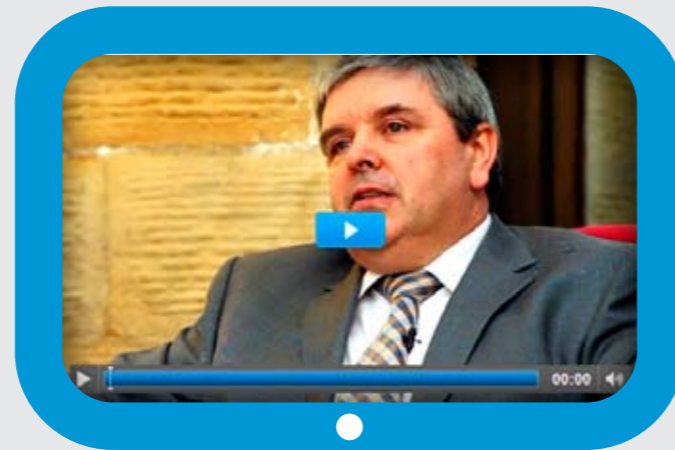
Infographics:

Infographics are a powerful way to convey your expertise. They are visually eye-catching and a great way to communicate numbers, facts and other bite sized information; they also lend themselves to social sharing especially on sites like Pinterest.

Webcasts: It may be called content marketing, but content doesn't - and shouldn't - always mean the written word. People have different ways of engaging with information and webcasts are a popular way to gain a quick insight into a subject.

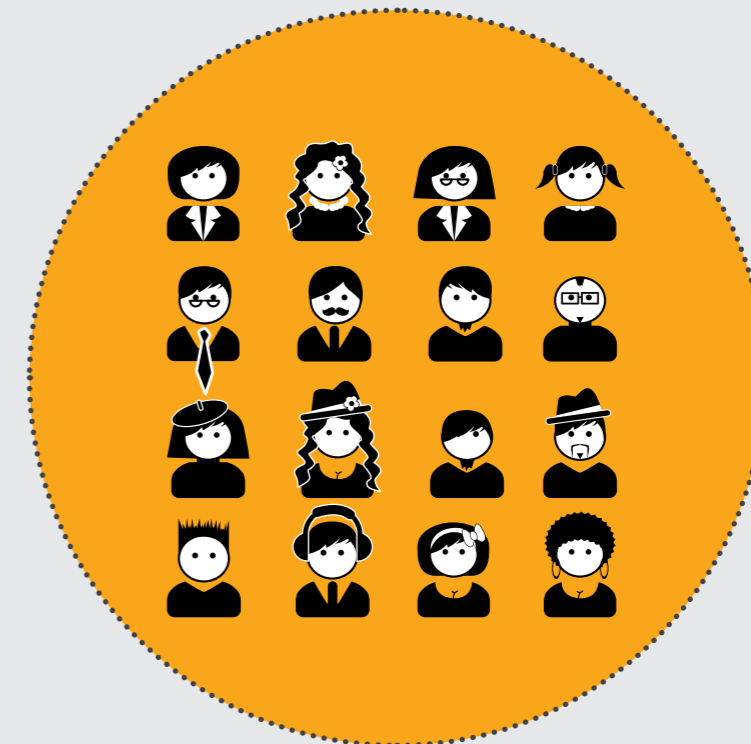


Videos: Video grabs people's attention far more quickly and effectively than text or photographs and research has shown that you are 53 times more likely to get on the first page of Google's search results if you have video on your page (source: Forrester Research). Therefore including this as part of your content strategy is a must!



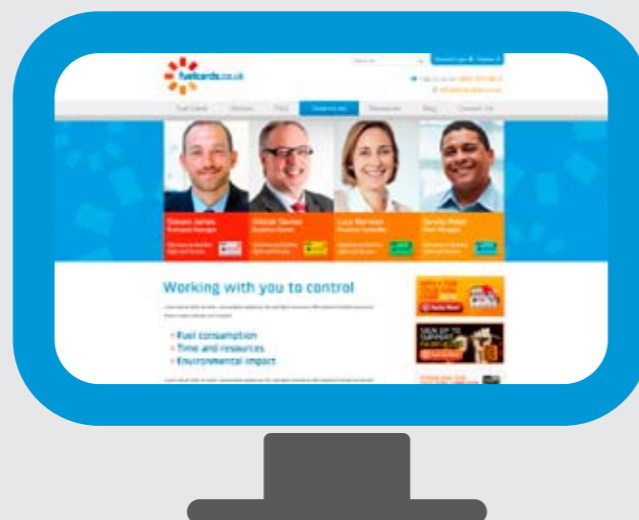
Behind every good content marketing strategy is a great team

It might sound cheesy, but your content isn't the only vital asset in your content marketing approach. Having the right skills within your team is too. We know this from experience, having developed a team of content management mavens, including:



Case studies: How do you encourage people to trust you? By showing them how much you've helped others. Case studies help your potential customers visualise how your product or service will meet their own requirement and is often the catalyst that drives them to purchase.

Website content: Why develop exceptional Awareness and Consideration content - only for your core website content to put the prospects off? Your website content is a major part of your Decision content.



Creative Director: What's the vision for your content marketing approach? The Creative Director is the person who develops and executes the ideas, the style and the brand to make your content stand tall.

Designers: The Designers put your vision into action to create content that will make your message irresistible to the right people.

Journalists and Copywriters: These are the content creators, the people who carefully craft the written word to match your prospect's buying cycle.

Community Manager: This is your social media ambassador, ready to create profitable conversations across all channels, whether it is on Facebook or a specialist forum.



Step 3. Engaging

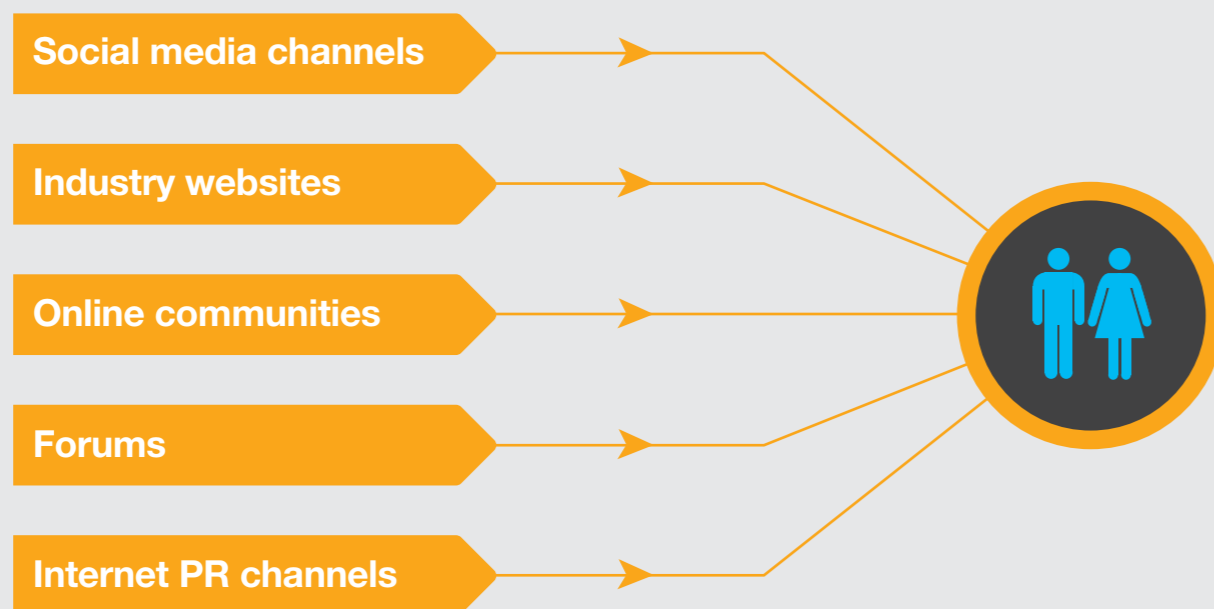
Without engaging effectively with your audience, your content marketing is just...content. The Engaging stage establishes a two-way relationship which helps to build knowledge of (and trust in) your products and/or services.

To Engage means to get your content out to the right places and make it as easy and compelling as possible for your customers to connect with and respond to your content. This is why your content map is so essential.

Think of it as a travel guide to the best places to take your content on the internet, social media networks and other relevant channels.

Creating your distribution map

Build your own content travel guide by selecting exactly where your content needs to go from this wide range of channels:



Monday	monitor leads	monitor Raven	review page grader	update database
	monitor social media	monitor HubSpot	update link manager	monthly email comm
Tuesday	blog posts	guest blog	groups	add articles to bookmarking sites
	Google places post	forums	seo link building	LinkedIn invites to cold contacts
Wednesday	group post	LinkedIn poll	approve group comments	Tweet to cold contacts
	LinkedIn invites	LinkedIn answers	approve group invites	monitor social media
Thursday	blog post	guest blog	groups	email to cold contacts
	Google places post	forums	seo link building	add articles to bookmarking sites
Friday	monitor social media	update content schedule	set up lead nurturing	set up landing pages
	approve group comments	approve group invites	set up documents	set up behavioural comms

Your technical resources:

To get the right level of reach we use the following social media engagement resources:



Oktopost › Plan, execute and measure all your social media campaigns. www.oktopost.com



Hootsuite › Allows us to keep track and engage with our client's prospects. www.hootsuite.com



Crowd Control › Helps us manage client relationships and reputation. www.crowdcontrolhq.com



Wildfire › Increases the level to which we can monetise social media for our clients. www.wildfireapp.com

Your essential skills

It's not just about having the right technical resources. You also need the skills to execute your distribution plan to make it truly effective. So ensure that you have a good mix of up to date social media skills within your team.



Step 4. Transforming

If you think of content as your window display, content marketing is the experienced shopkeeper who expertly draws the window shopper inside, woos them, wins them over and makes the sale - time and time again.

The Transforming stage involves turning ongoing conversations into leads and leads into new customers by telling a compelling story to your prospect, whilst keeping your product or business firmly centre-stage.

But you can't achieve this without:



Lead management: Do you have the skills and resources in place to manage existing leads and handle new ones as they arrive?



Lead scoring: What technology do you use to rank leads in terms of value? We use HubSpot to score leads for our clients to identify which leads are the most engaged and the furthest down the buying process.



Lead nurturing: Our approach is to use HubSpot's lead nurturing technology which allows us to analyse, understand and nurture leads into customers by tracking their complete lifecycle, from initial contact to final conversion. Research has shown **34% of B2B organizations touch leads with lead nurturing on a monthly basis.** (Source: MarketingSherpa)

Your technical resources:

To get the right level of reach we use the following social media engagement resources:



HubSpot › HubSpot's Inbound Marketing Software gives us an integrated platform for tracking, analysing and improving marketing results for clients. www.hubspot.com



Eloqua › This is an important lead nurturing resource for our clients because it allows us to tap into social media channels with unique content, creating new conversation and measuring the exact impact of clients' social media and blogs on their web traffic. www.eloqua.com

Nurtured leads have been found to be worth 9% on average more than a lead which isn't nurtured.

(Source: Market2Lead).

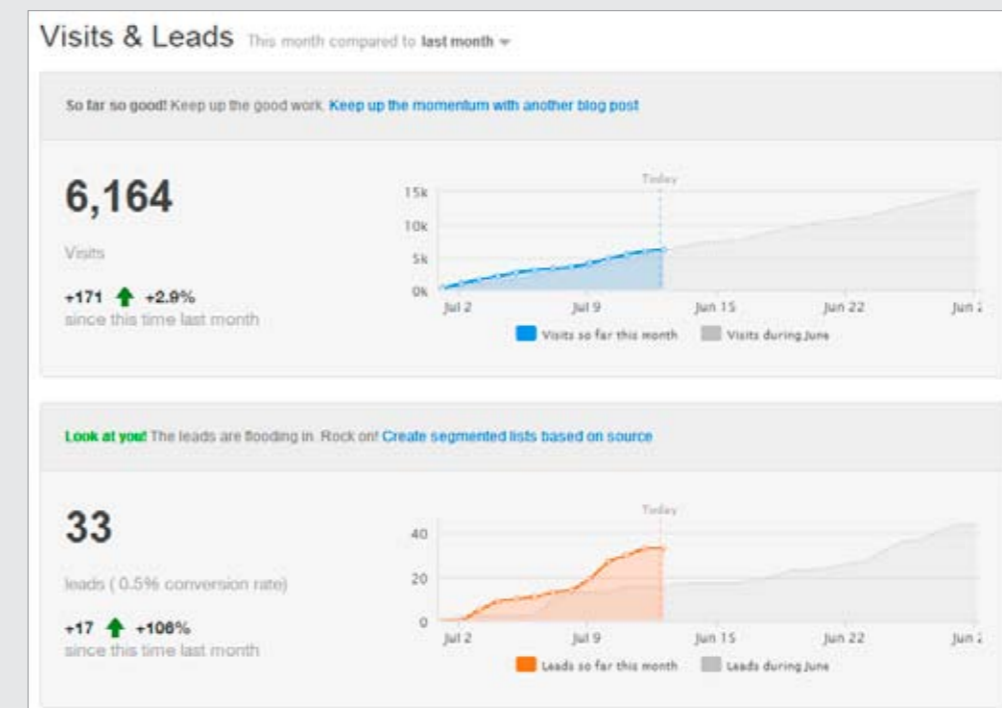


Step 5. Growing

If marketing with a bit of content is like buying a loaf of bread, marketing through content management is like buying and planting a field of wheat - and taking on a team of farmers and master bakers.

One works on a very limited basis while the other, done right, allows you to constantly and consistently update your reach, traffic, leads, sales, business growth and customer retention. The Growing stage lets you continuously track, improve and grow your results in a more complete way. But it can't be done without continually updating your content, message and brand using the right technology.

For example, through the Growing stage, we identified that the most popular channels for our client Fuel Cards industry had suddenly changed. Because we were monitoring for changes in real time, we were able to adapt their content strategy to ensure that they didn't miss out on leads.



By including a Growing stage in your content management process, you'll ensure that your customers come back for more, forming part of a well-established client-base that grows as your business does.

Want to net more business? Use content marketing

Traditional content approaches are like throwing a spear to catch a fish. But using a content marketing strategy is like throwing a net. **Here's why:**



Catch more business

By using a strategic content marketing approach, you catch many more of the right kind of customers, rather than relying on one-off, untargeted content to do the job.



Create a positive cycle

Traditional content approaches often work in a very linear way. You use a one-off approach which requires you to repeat your efforts over and over again. With an effective content marketing strategy you can create a cycle of content structured to match your prospect's buying cycle and improve on results as you go along.



Transform push into pull

Conventional marketing is all about the push - pushing content out to the web, pushing it out to contacts, pushing to get results... Content marketing allows you to transform all this effort from push into pull. That's because you're using real time insight and targeted content to actively draw in new leads.



Turn ballpark figures into business insight

Traditionally, content in marketing comes only with ballpark stats about who's responded, the level of revenue generated, who might be happy to be contacted by your sales team etc. By using content within a structured content marketing strategy, you can precisely measure its draw, impact and effect on your bottom line, while it's live.

To start creating your own Content Marketing approach get in touch now on [0121 753 4499](tel:01217534499) or join us on [Facebook](#) or [LinkedIn](#) for lot's more info.



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