



Want to Attract Visitors to Your Site? Use Content Marketing.

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Randy Sly



What is Content Marketing?

Some new terms have been gaining popularity in the marketing communications field for the past few years, including the terms *content marketing*, *content management* and *content strategies*. These expressions describe a process that has been around a long time but, due to the Internet, which makes large amounts of data available, is now a critical component of your marketing strategy.

The Content Marketing Institute describes content marketing as *a marketing technique of creating and distributing relevant and valuable content to attract, acquire, and engage a clearly defined and understood target audience - with the objective of driving profitable customer action.*

In other words, it is a way of communicating with the clients and prospects that does not involve trying to sell them something, but, instead, offers material to help make them a more informed intelligent and savvy individual.

***Creative Content Marketing
is Critical for Your
Online Presence***





Content marketing is based on the confident belief that if we are able to regularly provide quality information to buyers, they will, in return, give us their business.

This information can be presented through websites, blogs, podcasts, videos and webinars, as well as in print. Today's virtual marketplace make the delivery of content so easy that people spend a lot of time online looking for information that will make them better in business.

Content marketing is based on the confident belief that if we are able to regularly provide quality information to buyers, they will, in return, give us their business. To be honest this white paper is a part of the content marketing strategy for the Katalyst Creative Group. We want to share the expertise we have accumulated over the years with our clients and prospective clients. In turn, we hope you will think of us when considering a new website or other communications project!

Creative Content Marketing is Critical for Your Online Presence

Right now many marketers are spending around 26% of their budget in the creation and distribution of content and the numbers are forecast to grow larger. With this trend toward putting more emphasis on content development, now is a good time to learn more about it.

The main purpose of this white paper is to explore the types of content that will really attract visitors to your site and keep them coming back for more.

Every Business Possesses Content Marketing Treasure

No matter what industry you represent or what clientele you serve, you have a treasury of information you can share. Content marketing is important whether you are in the business-to-consumer or business-to-business arena. You possess a new type of currency to invest in your company's marketing campaign.

By sharing what you know with others – especially when you are offering quality content that is well written and well presented – you can place yourself among the leading subject matter experts in your field.

While you may not want to give away the recipe to your “secret sauce,” there are plenty of other informational pieces that you may be able to share.

Choosing the Best Kind of Content

Now that you know a little more about content development and content management, it's time to move on and see what kind of content you should include on your site to maximize your benefit.



While your clients don't necessarily want you to look in your crystal ball and predict the future, they are interested in what you see going on in your industry - or business in general - with regard to current trends.

I. Industry Trends: Let Readers Know You Have a Good Grasp of Business

Content can be presented in a number of ways – basic website content, white papers, press releases, blog entries, video and/or audio clips, etc. Selecting the best medium will be the subject of a future series of articles. For now, we would encourage you to think about these articles as good material for your blog or news page, which needs fresh material all the time.

While your clients don't necessarily want you to look in your crystal ball and predict the future, they are interested in what you see going on in your industry - or business in general - with regard to current trends. The closer you can come to addressing the areas of business where the majority of your current and future clients "live" the better.

Addressing Industry Trends

Content that addresses industry trends will increase readership of your site as clients - and future clients - are interested in learning what you know about the problems, opportunities, the direction things seem to be heading, as well as any tendencies or swings in business that you are seeing coming in the future. They are especially eager to see if you have picked up on something they have not yet heard or considered.

A Practical Approach to Writing an Industry Trends Article

1. Introduce the trend and offer enough description so your reader knows exactly what you are talking about.

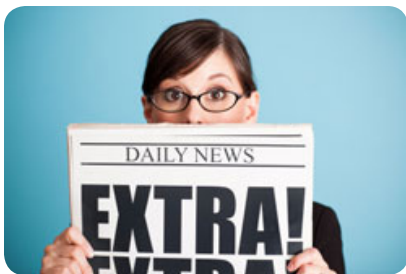
- Make sure your terms are clear and understandable.
- If necessary, use an illustration or brief example to explain it.
- You really want to "hook" your reader with an introduction that pulls them into the piece.
- Don't just state a fact; make sure that it is framed on the basis of how it affects the reader.

It will also help you underscore the fact that you can be a creative source for solutions that can address the particular situation faced by a client.

2. Present the reasons and evidence why you believe this trend is taking place or is about to take place.
 - The more concrete your information, the better - offering dates, stories, measurable data, etc.
 - When you cite other materials, be sure to give them credit and link it to the original material, if it is found online.
3. Supplement the information with your own personal observations based on experience and observations.
 - Perhaps you have a personal story you can tell.
 - Often, describing where you have seen something similar take place is a good way to include your own experience.
4. Offer some ideas on the long-range result of this trend.
 - Be sure not to make any “promises” about where things are heading; use a disclaimer.
 - At the same time, based on what you have found through research and personal experience, describe where you see this trend going and what impact it can have.
5. Of greatest importance - conclude with some practical advice for your clients and other readers.
 - Share advice on how they can avoid any negative impact of a trend.
 - Let them know how they may be able to maximize the benefit they could receive.

An industry trends piece will help greatly in positioning you and your company as a subject-matter expert and the go-to place for cutting edge information. It will also help you underscore the fact that you can be a creative source for solutions that can address the particular situation faced by a client.





II: The News Flash: Become the Source of Cutting Edge Information

One of the best forms of content for building readership is the “News Flash.” This is an article based on some major event that just happened - whether it’s positive or negative. Think of some old movies where you saw the paper boys holding up the latest edition yelling, “Extra! Extra! Read all about it! Man bites dog!”

What is a News Flash?

News flashes come in all varieties - a new product or research breakthrough, a life-changing event, stock market performance, new legislation, a legal ruling, quote from a significant person, a new book, video, radio or TV program.

A news flash can come at any time, so you have to be poised and ready. Keep watch on your industry of business in general through email alerts, RSS feeds and news aggregation sites. You also have to be willing to stop what you are doing and write immediately. News flashes are popular but they have the shelf life of an apple without a peel. It doesn’t take long to spoil.

Finding News Flashes

Practically speaking, setting up Google Alerts is a good way to track breaking news for areas where you have an interest or an expertise. You can choose search terms and Google will email you immediately if any of those terms show up in the news or on the web. You can even use boolean search terms such as - “Social and Media or Networking or Networks or Communications.” This way you can pull breaking events or activities into your mail server at all times.

Writing the News Flash

When writing a news flash, there are several things you need to remember:

- Even though the news may be “hot,” don’t sacrifice accuracy for speed in publishing. Be sure you have all the facts.
- Speaking of facts, check more than one source before reporting on something.
- The headline of a news flash is particularly critical. While a clever title might sound cool, you need to stay with terms and phrases that people will use when they search.
- When describing the event, activity, etc. be sure to include background information and analysis.

News flashes come in all varieties - a new product or research break through, a life-changing event, stock market performance, new legislation, a legal ruling, quote from a significant person, a new book, video, radio or TV program.

News flash content can and should be distributed through a variety of media.

- In addition to the description, be sure to explain how this event or activity impacts your readers.
- If possible, offer your readers some next steps - what they need to do next, where they can find more information, etc.
- Be sure to include how you can help your clients and prospective clients. Explain what benefits you may bring to the table for them.
- Add a call to action to the end of the piece, giving clients and potential clients a reason to contact you
 - You can offer a consultation on whether this information will affect them.
 - You can also offer other services that may provide support they may need with regard to the information you presented.

The news flash accomplishes two distinct objectives:

1. The content itself is important to get out to your readers.
2. The content indicates that you are a person who is in touch with the pulse of the business world.

Making News Really Flash

When I worked in radio, we had a special intro - the sound of a teletype machine and a echoing voice booming “Bulletin, bulletin!” Then I would come on the air with, “This just in...” A news flash is just another story unless it is positioned differently. If on a blog or news site, make sure you add a descriptor, such as “Breaking” to the headline or use some other graphic to call attention to the piece. Colored fonts – particularly red – in the headline help to set off content as special.

News flash content can and should be distributed through a variety of media. It can be placed on your blog, tweeted with a link, added to your Facebook page, posted on a PR site, etc. The immediacy of the story will not only attract new readers but keep them coming back, hoping that you will continue to be a source of breaking news.



III: The How-to: Give Your Readers Some Practical Help

Go to any bookstore and you'll find huge sections devoted entirely to How-to, Self-Help and Do-It-Yourself. In addition you'll find "Dummies" books on any number of issues from Advertising to Zune mp3 players. Publishers know that people are always looking for information on how to get things done and done well.

Practical Articles - The Gold Mine in Marketing Currency

When it comes to content, the how-to article is a gold mine in marketing currency. If you can help someone accomplish a goal, whether it involves their business or personally, you can gain a friend and a potential client.

These articles let you become the subject matter expert in areas where you have proficiency. They are not time-sensitive, like the News Flash or Trend pieces, so they can be written at any time. They are also easier to write because you are dealing with a familiar subject.

Before Beginning the Article

Never jump quickly into developing a how-to article. Since you are so familiar with these subjects, it is very easy to put your energy in the wrong direction.

You need to take time to plan your strategy.

1. Write down a list of processes, projects or work goals where you have familiarity and are relevant to your readership.
2. Prioritize the list on the basis of what you think most people care about.
3. Set up a schedule – when you want publish each article – and stick to it.



Often, as someone who is highly familiar with a process, you will be able to write and edit a how-to piece in an hour or two if you have planned ahead.

Writing The Basic How-to Article

How-to articles are just what they describe - how-to. You are simply explaining a process or providing instructions that will allow someone else to be able to accomplish something successfully.

Often, as someone who is highly familiar with a process, you will be able to write and edit a how-to piece in an hour or two if you have planned ahead. Here is a process that will make your article easier to write and clearer for the reader.

- Outline your article first, identifying the steps for the process or job and the details you really don't want to miss. If you can give examples or illustrations for further explanation, please note them before you begin to write.
- Your introduction should always describe what you are going to tell the person and the conclusion should re-tell it.
- Write the article using headers to separate the steps in the process. Be sure to make your points sequential and keep your language is clear and understandable. A how-to article is not the place to embellish with flowery language. Often, the best way to write a how-to involves just putting down on paper what you would say when explaining a process to someone face-to-face.
- Be sure to include a list of tools, equipment and supplies that are necessary to accomplish the task. If possible, let people know how long a process should actually take.
- The article should also describe problems that may be encountered. If you can include some troubleshooting hints for solving these problems, that increases the worth of your content.



How-to articles may generate some additional communications from people who have applied what you have written.

Using the How-to Content

Many how-to articles are what they call “evergreen.” You can use them for long periods of time and often they only require a small modification unless you are covering technology or other industries where information is more perishable. In addition to blog entries, you can turn them into white papers, web sections and other uses.

How-to articles may generate some additional communications from people who have applied what you have written. This must be viewed as an opportunity to build strong public relations and market placement not an interruption to your routine. You may end up helping with some trouble-shooting or hearing ways to make your article clearer. Your ability to follow-up with inquiries may be an indication to a potential client that you are someone who will really follow-through for them.

Keep Your Material Fresh

All articles, but how-to’s in particular, need to be viewed as a work in progress that can be tweaked through field testing of the process. Don’t afraid to update content or add insights. This will all contribute to the overall value of your content and tell search engines you are keeping things fresh.

How-to articles are easy to write, since you are familiar with the topic, and can be written at your leisure. Just be sure that the subject will be of interest to your readers.



Each link back to your site is like a vote, and some votes are more important than others.

IV: The Tips Piece: Special Information You Can Pass Along

You've seen this type of article a lot, I'm sure. *Readers Digest*, for example, is full of them. This is the "Five Essentials..." "Seven Secrets for..." or "Ten Tips About..." type of article that gives you some key points you need to remember about something.

A Tips piece is the kissing cousin to a How-to article. It provides some practical information that people can use in everyday life. Just like its cousin, the Tips Piece is normally not time sensitive and can be written at your leisure.

The Tips Piece – Putting Your Best Foot Forward

If you have been in business for even a few years, there are certain areas where you have built some expertise. Your increased capabilities can become some of your best marketing material by sharing some of your insights with your clients and potential clients.

Years ago, many of us were told never to share our expertise for free – this was your "secret sauce," something others may not have. This is just not the case. First, as the old adage goes, there is nothing new under the sun. Information and expertise are readily available; the important thing is how this content is positioned.

Actually, these insights may be your best tool for developing new business. Whether you are in the B2B or B2C world, the key is to become the "go-to" person in your profession or industry. The Tips piece can help bring this about.

Tips pieces make great content for website postings, blogs, white papers, newsletters and more.

Tips Basics

Here is a basic approach for writing a tips piece:

- Take some time to sit down and write out some topics where you can provide some insight or expertise on approaching a problem, tackling an issue or thinking about a situation. If you get on a roll in putting down some basic Tips ideas, remember you can “bank” them and run them on a schedule, which keeps your content fresh.
- For each item, list the major factors that are critical in bringing about a positive outcome.
- Then, list problems that people might face regarding the topic.
- Take both lists and combine them into a numbered sequence of memorable words, phrases or short sentences.
- For each of these, write a few short paragraphs, explaining each in more detail.

If you look above at the five reasons I listed, each of those can be expanded into a tips piece on “Five Reasons Why Tips Pieces Are Important to You Or Your Reader.”

Tips pieces make great content for website postings, blogs, white papers, newsletters and more. They also make fantastic links for social media, especially Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

Are you adventurous and ready for something new? Turn your tip into a video or audio presentation for posting on your site and use the written piece as a take-away. Be sure to keep your program to five minutes or less. YouTube and other sites like Vimeo make it easy to store your work online and link to it on your website.

Seeing Results

When your reader takes your advice - and it works - you have gained their confidence and this confidence can lead to new business. A lot of tips pieces also have a long shelf life and can be used for a very long time.

As with other articles, remember that getting the word out about this content is important. Simply posting it is never enough. If you are active in social networks, toot your own horn! The key is to get the word out; let as many people as possible know that this material is being offered and where to find it.



The key to writing a case study is to give the reader an insight they can use, an approach they can try or a principle they can apply.

V: The Case Study: Demonstrate Your Professionalism

The Case Study

The Merriam Webster Dictionary defines a case study as “an intensive analysis of an individual unit (as a person or a community – and, may I add, ‘thing’) stressing developmental factors in relation to environment.” In the world of marketing and content management, this simply means *a detailed analysis of a company, project or item that describes its earlier state, explains the factors that lead to failure or success and then documents the result.*

For business professionals, the Case Study is one of the best ways to really demonstrate for clients and potential clients that you know what you are doing. In today’s business climate, case studies are critical pieces that are very popular and eagerly devoured. That’s also why there are so many of them out there.

Writing a Case Study

The key to writing a case study is to give the reader an insight they can use, an approach they can try or a principle they can apply.

Many case studies today have a big problem. It’s not with their information but their style. The study can be so dry, lifeless and abstract that it holds little appeal in the competitive world of content development.

When composing a case study, you’re writing a story, not just presenting statistics and analytics. Think of developing a case study like you would follow a recipe.

Basic Ingredients for a Good Case Study

A good case study is a blend of a several essential ingredients including:

- Analysis – the actual figures, facts and metrics from before, during and after
- Personality – how you approached the project; your care, integrity, interaction, etc.
- Ingenuity – the resourcefulness and creativity used in the project
- Resources – the tools, skills and due diligence applied to the project

Instructions – How to Write the Study

They key to every Case Study is very simple: Tell the Story!

The challenge with most case studies is to do all of the above but keep the content short; normally try to hold them between 500 and 900 words.

- 1. Before:** Begin with the original situation (emphasizing pain, problems, obstacles, challenges, etc.) that your client faced. Use any analytics and other measurable data to provide further understanding or insight into the situation they faced. This is where you can talk about personality –you’re your company approached the project – as well as ingenuity – some of the creative ideas that you initially brought to the project.
- 2. During:** Next, describe the steps you followed in solving the problem. This is where you can really talk about your resourcefulness and creativity as well as documenting the resources you had available both in tools and skills. Be sure to document any smaller issues that developed or problems that were solved along the way. This also is a great place to describe how your company worked with their client during the process, which let’s readers know what they could expect.
- 3. After:** Now it’s time to document the results. Be sure to describe how the project looked when it was finally resolved and what the outcome looks like. This must involve analytics as well as a description.
- 4. After action report:** A case study isn’t complete until you summarize any lessons learned, any new approaches and why they worked plus other insights that might benefit the reader. Be sure to place a call to action at the end.

How Long?

The challenge with most case studies is to do all of the above but keep the content short; normally try to hold them between 500 and 900 words. If they are used for a portfolio section on a website, they need to be much shorter than that, no more than 150 to 200 words.

For Further Thought

For case studies, remember that everyone loves a good story. When you put some life in your case study, readers will stay with you and get the message. They will also respond.

Also, case studies have a long shelf life and can be expanded. You can always go back and add additional information showing the longevity of your solution and longer-term metrics.





Wrapping it all up

In the 1989 film “Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade” you may remember the scene where Indiana Jones and his captors encounter the Grail Knight. They find him in a hidden cavern after passing through a number of tests. In that cave they find the object for which they have all been searching - the Holy Grail - sits among the many other chalices on a stone shelf. The Knight merely says to them, “Choose wisely.”

These same words can be said regarding the types of content you can choose to place on your website, on your blog or other social media sites, and in print. Choose wisely!

When making your final decisions, here are a few things to consider.

1. Avoid the easy route.

Don't let time or difficulty become the deciding factor for the type of content you will provide. Some forms of content may be easier for you to generate but may not be what your clients, potential clients and other readers want. You may find yourself choosing poorly.

Now don't simply ignore the easy pieces; they may still have value. Go ahead and produce them if you think they have some value. The key is to be sure you don't merely limit your options based on the wrong criteria.

2. Call for help.

OK, this may be a crass way to push our services but a professional writer can be your greatest ally! Many business professionals have a story to tell or a product to sell but they can suffer from what we call EPS – “empty page syndrome.”

You may know what to say but when it comes to putting words on a page, that's different. You can sit for hours staring at a blank page then finally give up and start playing Angry Birds until creativity starts to flow. Don't let this happen. Call for help. A professional writer can take your concepts and turn them from good ideas into marketing gold.

3. Place yourself on a schedule

Pace is important. When you begin to place content on a website, a blog, a social media page or in print, people expect that more will follow. One of the greatest marketing blunders a business can make is to begin something and then not follow through. The Internet is full of out-of-date blogs, old websites, and inactive social media pages. Whatever you do, keep doing it!

The Internet is full of out-of-date blogs, old websites, and inactive social media pages. Whatever you do, keep doing it!

Just remember that most of your content can have more than one way to reach your audience.

Also, remember that publishing is all about pace, not the generating of content. Don't flood your site with lots of content at once. If you are productive, you may be able to develop several pieces at once. Store them in a file; they can be scheduled for gradual release.

4. Stay away from bulk content

Don't fall into the trap of letting someone sell you a large number of articles based on your keywords. There are companies who will tell you that this is a guaranteed way of increasing your search engine ranking.

First, the quality of these articles will be suspect at best. You also don't know if they are plagiarized, simply re-worked other previously published articles or pure hogwash. Your clients and future clients deserve reliable information and a quality creation. One well-written piece outshines a dozen pieces of drivel

Second, the newest search engine algorithms are really smart! They don't "like" poorly written content and can tell the difference. They also know when content is simply being stuffed onto a site as a bid for higher ranking and will penalize a site for doing that.

5. Look for redundancy – using content in multiple ways

Repetition is a necessary part of marketing. Let me say that again, repetition is a necessary component of marketing.

When you are developing content, think of the various ways you can make use of the same material in multiple formats. Blog posts or other content using how-to's, tips, case studies, news flashes, etc. can become white papers, brochures and even video presentations. The only limitation is your creativity. Just remember that most of your content can have more than one way to reach your audience.

Whether you choose to produce trend articles, news flashes, how-to's, tips pieces or case studies, you will be providing your readers with something they can actually use while building your brand in the process.

In Conclusion

Content development has been a key part of all marketing strategies for a long time. In recent years, however, it has come into its own. This is due to two things.

First, the Internet has made it very easy to generate and distribute quality content without investing large sums of money on print and paper. Not only can this be more efficient, but also it is eco-friendly. Access has allowed information to become a form of marketing currency.

Second, we have moved from a “push” to a “pull” market. Again, with the advent of the digital marketplace and its abundant information, people pick and choose. They decide what they want to pull in. You are competing for their attention and need to find ways of getting noticed.

The approaches to content we’ve covered are not exhaustive but they are proven winners for gaining an audience and, ultimately, clients. Whether you choose to produce trend articles, news flashes, how-to’s, tips pieces or case studies, you will be providing your readers with something they can actually use while building your brand in the process.

Now that you are armed with an arsenal of new content development information, here is an assignment to get you started on building a content marketing strategy for your business.

- Take an hour or two away from your normal schedule and, for best results, get away from your office or business location.
- Settle down with a cup of coffee, tea or another beverage (simply a suggestion; the key is to be in a relaxing situation) and just think about your work.
- Make a list of things you know about your business and industry:
 - Basic information that may be of interest
 - Where you see things going in the future
 - Concerns you have about the current condition or direction of things
 - News or events that are happening with your business
 - Important projects completed or sales made that are worth reporting
 - Areas where you have some expertise that could be beneficial to others.
- Categorize them according to type
- Determine the best way to present the content: print, website, blog, press release, etc.
- Put them on a schedule to develop and deploy as content





I think you'll be surprised at what you find. Hold on to that list - this is valuable marketing currency you can invest in your future. Choose wisely and then begin the work!

Can We Help You?

And of course we would love to help you implement these strategies to achieve your business goals. Call us at **703-659-4416**.

*Our focus is to help you
better reach your ultimate
goals. Contact us today!
Virginia: 703-659-4416
Texas: 817-900-8787*

Katalyst Creative Group: About Us

At Katalyst Creative Group (KCG), we use a team approach to web development applying our core strengths in Graphic Design, Website Development, and Content Strategy. This way, through every step of our process, we develop a 3-dimensional view of your entire project from first idea to final delivery. When you work with KCG, you work directly with the principals, who are involved in every project to ensure that we maintain the highest quality and professionalism.



Building Online Visibility and Value

