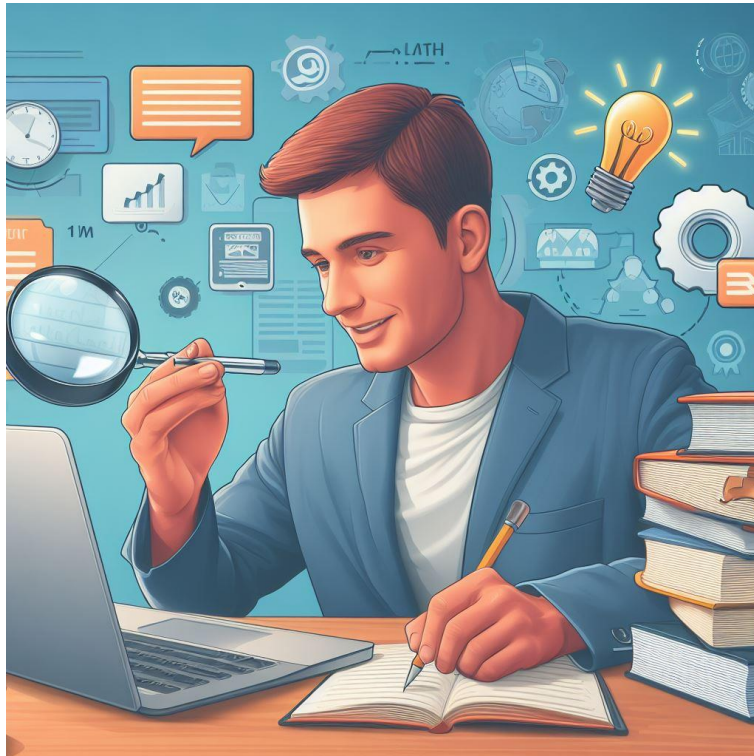


Understanding Content Marketing: The Six Most Important Things to Know



Small business owners have faced challenges in the past year and a half that have left a lot of them ready for a change.

Demanding clients, exhausting days, and never-ending responsibilities, not to mention a seemingly never-ending pandemic, lockdowns, and economic uncertainty, have made these once-happy visionaries feel more like weary hostages.

Many have decided to look for a simpler profession, and Content Marketing is becoming the career of choice.

After all, the appeal of working whenever you want, for the clients you want to work for, and having control of your career is an attractive alternative.

And there has never been a better time to enter the field of Content Marketing.

Why now?

The lesson we learned in the past year and a half is that the way business is done has changed ... probably forever.

The days of marketing with a simple website and sneaking a post on social media between cat videos are over.

With non-stop content bombarding us from every direction, today's consumer has learned to ignore anything that doesn't seem relevant to them.

And new businesses - as well as established businesses - are now forced to feature fresh, relative content on a regular basis if they want to reach (and ultimately sell to) potential customers.

The need for creators of this content has exploded – and it's creating opportunities for new writers at an unparalleled rate.

And with a little bit of understanding, any new writer can quickly become a part of this high-paying, in-demand field.

So what is Content Marketing?

Highly-respected (and sought-after) content marketer Russ Henneberry has described it this way:

“Content Marketing is the creation and promotion of text, video, audio, or image-based content that furthers business goals.”

And with more customers than ever doing their research and shopping online, marketers have been forced to study the buyer's journey and develop a better idea of the customer's needs in each stage of the process.

This allows them to attract more buyers with content that is designed to meet the customer's needs at every stage of the buying process.

And if you're intrigued by the exciting Content Marketing field, here are a few important things to know ...

1. Know the Players

Content Marketing requires an understanding of the needs and wants of the “players” involved in the process.

First there's you – the **Content Marketer**.

Your needs are usually pretty simple:

- To get more clients, and
- To get those clients what *they* want

Next, there's the **Client** – the company or business that you are marketing for. Their needs are a bit more complicated:

- They want increased awareness and engagement with potential customers
- They want more leads
- They would like more new customers
- They want to sell more to existing customers
- They would like more positive reviews
- They want more referrals

And finally, there's the **Customer** – the consumer of the content – who:

- Wants a solution to a problem, and
- Wants that solution now!

2. Know the “Intent” of the Customer

Marketers understand that the most important word to focus on when targeting a customer is the customer's “Intent”, and how it changes as the customer progresses through the buyer's journey.

After all, if your content is created for a customer who is in a different stage of the journey, the customer probably won't get any value from the content.

And if the customers don't benefit from the content, the client won't see any benefit, either.

It is the responsibility of the content marketer to anticipate the customer's intent, and then build content that satisfies that intent.

And a smart marketer knows that as the customer progresses through the process of solving their problem, their intent changes.

The stages of the buyer's journey have been divided into four segments by marketers, called the “Marketing Funnel”.

And these segments – or “Intent” stages – each require different types of content to satisfy the needs of the customer.

Full Funnel Content Marketing



When displayed in graphic form, the funnel displays a larger number of potential customers – along with types of content – at the beginning, or top of the funnel.

The customers at the top of the funnel are searching for solutions to their problem. They are in the “**Research**” phase of the buying cycle.

At this stage the customer needs content that informs them about the possible solutions for their problem.

Content for the Research stage is primarily focused on creating awareness for the solution offered by the client.

When the customer has become aware of potential solutions, they will move on to the “**Compare**” stage of the process. In this stage there will be fewer customers, and their content needs will be different.

The goal of the Content Marketer for these customers is to offer information that will allow the customer to feel confident when choosing one solution over another. A skilled Content Marketer can position the client's solution as the clear choice for the customer.

Once the customer is satisfied with the Compare stage, they will move forward to the **"Buy"** stage.

When the customer reaches the buying phase, there will be fewer customers, but they will be more focused on purchasing the client's product or service as the solution to their problem.

And finally, some of the customers who have purchased products or services from the client may need some extra support or information in order to benefit the most from the product or service, and to feel confident in recommending the client's product or service to a friend. We call this the **"Succeed"** intent, and it's a stage that is sometimes overlooked by marketers.

3. Starting at the Top of the Funnel (TOFU)

Customers who are beginning to search for the solution to their problem are in the "Research" stage, and smart marketers will supply them with Top of the Funnel content, designed to drive awareness and generate leads.

Some types of TOFU content can be used as a free gift in exchange for an email address or other contact information from the customer. This content is called "gated" content, and it becomes a "lead magnet" for the client to grow an email list or prospective customer database.

Some of the most popular and effective types of TOFU content are:

- Blog posts or articles to educate and engage the customer, and to keep the client's website fresh and updated
- Podcasts for easy-to-consume information
- Free videos
- Social media posts
- Web Pages
- Cheat Sheets
- White papers
- Free reports
- Mind Maps
- Templates
- Swipe Files

- Tools
- Webinars
- Email newsletters
- Ads for free content A
- Ads for gated content

4. Moving to the Middle of the Funnel (MOFU)

Once the customer has become aware of possible solutions to their problem, they will usually move into the Compare phase of the buyer's journey.

The customer may compare competing products, or they may want to compare different products offered by one company or business.

It's important for the marketer to anticipate what the customer may need to see in order to make a decision to purchase a solution.

Some typical types of content that are valuable during the compare stage are:

- Support pages on client's website
- FAQ Pages
- Product demonstrations
- Customer stories or Case Studies
- Comparison pages (competitors)
- Comparison pages (internal)

And if the MOFU content has answered the customer's questions, they should be ready to move to the next phase:

5. Bottom of the Funnel (BOFU) Content for the Customer Who's Ready to Buy

Once the customer has become aware of the client's solution to the problem, and questions and concerns have been addressed in the compare stage, the customer should be ready to enter the buying stage of the funnel.

Remember that Potential buyers want solutions NOW, so content that makes it easier to purchase the solution is key in this stage of the funnel:

- Sales letters that guide the customer through the buying process

- Video sales letters
- Product Pages to help the customer choose products or options
- Ads to an offer

Great content has filtered potential customers through the funnel, and those that are ready to purchase should be able to complete the purchase with no problem.

But the need for content doesn't stop there.

To make sure the customer is satisfied with the solution, and in order to help the client retain their customers, the post-purchase phase should offer content to help the customer succeed with the solution.

6. Post-Purchase Content (POFU)

Making sure the customer finds satisfaction with their purchase is key to customer retention and great reviews for the client.

Great marketers recognize this and create content that is geared toward helping the client achieve success with the purchase.

Content like:

- Support pages on the client's website
- FAQ pages
- Blog posts
- Podcasts
- Free videos that explain the product or service
- Email newsletters to keep the client in front of the customer

will help customers get the results they want from the client's products or services, and those happy customers are much more likely to give stellar reviews for the client and refer their friends to the client.

By anticipating the needs of the customer at each Intent stage - and providing relevant content that meets the customer's needs at that stage - the Content Marketer is providing a valuable service to the customer.

It's sort of like a "superpower" ...

Like taking the customer by the hand and leading them through the stages, so that they will arrive at the client's solution as their obvious choice.

And it's a skill that your clients will gladly pay you for ... over and over.