Lean

CONTENT MARKETING

How to Create Content on a Budget
Introduction

Content is king. If you’re a modern marketer, you know why—it is the fuel for your lead generation and nurturing programs, driving leads through your funnel to become customers.

But getting your content machine up and running is tough, and the idea of regularly creating quality content can make marketers break into a cold sweat. Why? Because many marketers, in both large organizations and small, lack the budget, resources, and time to implement a content strategy that can truly drive leads through all stages of the funnel.

Luckily, by learning to leverage the resources you already have and doing more with less, even marketers with limited resources can start to create the content needed to fuel demand.

This ebook goes through tried and true strategies for lean content marketing—so you can extend the value of all your thought leadership.
A Short Explanation

In the interest of saving time, we’ll spare you the long and drawn out explanation of why content is so important. But, for the sake of being thorough, we do want to give you a quick breakdown.

Today’s buyer is different. A pitch from the sales team is no longer the first contact a buyer has with your company. Instead, due to the abundance of information on the internet, your buyers will do their own research first. In fact, 66–90% of the buyer’s journey is complete before he or she even reaches out to a sales person. So, it is your job as a marketer to help your customers self-educate through their buying journey. High quality, educational content marketing helps you become a trusted resource for your buyer. It helps your brand stand out from the noise, and it also reduces risk for the buyer because you are creating a lasting relationship.

But as we’ve said, many marketers worry that creating great content is an uphill battle. Where do you even start?

66% to 90% of the buyer’s journey is complete before he or she even reaches out to a sales person.
Crafting the Perfect Content Team

First you need to craft the perfect team—the people or person who will project manage, create, curate, and distribute your content to the rest of your marketing department.

Ideally, you would have at least one person to own the function of content marketing. Why? There is a lot of strategy, project management, and creative skill that goes into making sure your content is consistent, on brand, and on schedule. In our experience, teams that don’t have content owners tend to fall short.

However, we know that many companies don’t have the budget or resources for dedicated headcount. If you find yourself in this situation, make sure that you at least have a member on your team who takes responsibility for your content. It is important that whoever owns content creation be a content consumer, a great communicator, and an excellent project manager.
Chief Content Officer

This person has many titles. Some companies have embraced content marketing enough to have their own C-level title—Chief Content Officer. Other companies might have a Director of Content. And some companies will make their content strategy part of Product Marketing, Corporate Marketing, or Demand Generation.

Your CCO’s responsibilities could include:

- Owning the story of the business
- Content final approval
- Audience development and influencer relationships
- Measurement and business accountability

Managing Editor

This is a critical role for content management. We advise that you hire someone solely devoted to content if you really want strategic consistency. However, if your budget is tight and you don’t have the headcount, these responsibilities should at least be part of a Campaign Manager or Program Manager role.

Your Managing Editor’s responsibilities could include:

- Content strategy and creation
- Vendor coordination
- Content production
- Content calendaring
- Consistency in messaging
- SEO
- Content publishing
- Blog Management
In addition to your CCO and Managing Editor, who else is creating content for your organization? You want content creation to become part of your organizational culture. The more people you have helping to create content, the better and more informed your content assets can be. You can also leverage outside vendors as extensions of your content team. The more you leverage those within and without your organization, the easier it will be to create a robust content strategy with a lean team.
Crafting the Perfect Content Team

When looking for additional content creators, consider the following:

Team Members:
Content creation and writing should be an important skillset for your marketing hires. Leverage other team members’ expertise and hold them accountable for creating content. Consider including content creation in your team’s job descriptions.

Outsourced Writers:
You may need to outsource some of your writing if you don’t have the internal bandwidth. There are many content marketing agencies that can write copy for you; if you are on a limited budget, you can explore a service such as Scripted, which connects you with low-cost writers who bid on your projects.

Internal Subject Matter Experts (SMEs):
You need to create content about various aspects of your organization and business expertise, and you simply can’t be an expert on everything. That’s why it is critical that you leverage members of your organization who are experts—your Subject Matter Experts.

Note that your SMEs don’t necessarily need to be writers. Your goal as a content marketer is simply to soak up their knowledge. The best way to work with SMEs? Set up an information sharing session (or “brain dump) for between 30 minutes and an hour, in which you or another writer can jot down thoughts and record the SME’s particular knowledge.
Internal and Outsourced Design Agencies:
Your content needs to be designed, even if only at a very basic level. If you are lucky enough to have an internal design resource, take advantage of his or her expertise. To save time, your design team can simply create and reuse a template. Alternatively, you can supplement your team with outsourced design firms. Much like outsourcing writers, you can use sites like 99designs to access low-cost design resources. Also consider hiring on an intern who is interested in learning more about content design.

Partners, Customers, and Thought Leaders:
We encourage you to think outside of the box when it comes to content creation and leverage resources within your community. At Marketo, we frequently use partners, customers, and thought leaders to help create additional content. Just remember, it usually is a give and take—one party writes, the other designs, both edit, etc. Make sure you come up with some guidelines before engaging with a third party.
Another powerful technique for getting more content is to incentivize contribution to your blog, ebooks, or other types of content. At Marketo, we set up a formal internal blog program including tiered prizes.

The more blog posts an employee writes, the more prizes they are eligible for. If you have some budget, it’s a great idea to put some high-value incentives to this program—i.e. giftcards, ipads, beats headphones, or whatever you think your colleagues would like. However, you don’t need a big budget to make it fun! Think about giving away company swag items—branded water bottles, t-shirts, blankets etc. Or give away a day off, a group pizza party, etc. The key here is to get creative and gamify your content contribution.
Content Planning

You have a team, now you need to plan. What are you going to create? What are your themes? When will you launch each asset? And so on. By creating a baseline plan, you can more easily allocate your resources to the best projects, instead of engaging in “random acts of content.”

Buyer Persona and Buyer Journey Creation

The first step to planning out your content is creating buyer personas and buyer journeys. A buyer persona is a fictional profile of your customer. Most companies will have more than one persona. A buyer journey consists of the steps that your persona takes before he or she makes a purchase decision. This usually maps to your sales funnel.

The best way to create your buyer personas and journeys is to set up informational interviews with the following people:

- Current customers (both happy and unhappy)
- Prospects
- Former customers
- Your sales teams
- Your customer service teams
Content Planning

And you want to ask questions that address the following:

**Background:** basic details about your ideal customer and his or her company

**Job Details:** key job responsibilities, likes and dislikes about job

**Goals:** persona’s primary goals

**Challenges/Pain Points:** your persona’s challenges and the emotions that accompany them

Once you have all of those details, you can create your personas and your buyer journey. Your buyer journey might look like this example below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not in the market</th>
<th>Stimulated</th>
<th>Problem Definition</th>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Preferred Recommendation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observe Market Trends</td>
<td>Event Occurs</td>
<td>Identify and involve stakeholders</td>
<td>Explore promising options</td>
<td>Conduct detailed evaluation of short listed options</td>
<td>Finalize contractual and commercial terms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Track Competitive Activity</td>
<td>Problem Surfaces</td>
<td>Research possible options</td>
<td>Narrow down the list of options</td>
<td>Secure stakeholder consensus and preferred option</td>
<td>Check references</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Problem Studied</td>
<td>Establish functional requirements</td>
<td>Reconfirm functional requirements</td>
<td></td>
<td>Reconfirm decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consequences of Problem</td>
<td>Draft ROI</td>
<td>Reline the business case</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identified is it worth solving</td>
<td>What Options are Available</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can it be solved</td>
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**Preferred Content Medium:** how your persona consumes content, and what sort of content he or she consumes

**Objections:** the objections you anticipate from your persona during the sales process

**Quotes and Ideal Marketing Messages:** bring your persona to life with actual quotes and make sure to craft messaging that resonates with him or her
Generating ideas on a consistent basis is reportedly one of the biggest content marketing challenges. Luckily, understanding your persona and walking in his or her shoes throughout the buying journey gives you a leg up when determining what topics to write about.

To get you brainstorming about your next content piece, here are our suggestions:

- **Engage** your organization and ask them what the hot topics in your industry are
- **Listen** on social channels to see what your network is talking about
- **Interview** customers to find out what they want to hear from you
- **Send** out a survey to your database to determine what is top-of-mind
- **Do** some research to determine the hot topics and trends
- **Create** content that maps to your SEO priorities and keywords

**Content Arcs and Themes**

A good way to organize your content is to work with business stakeholders to create quarterly or bi-yearly themes, or “content arcs”. Each arc has its own messaging and is assigned a set of assets over a period of time. For instance, if we were planning a social marketing content arc at Marketo, we would make sure we had messaging baked and a solid plan for delivering social marketing content over a period of time. This helps us drive home our corporate initiatives.
Your buyer journey outlines the process your buyers go through when making a purchase decision. Typically, this maps well to your sales funnel, which you can typically break up into early, mid, and late stage content.

Early stage content should be purely educational—no mention of your product, just thought leadership. Mid stage content should also be educational, but it can include some product-specific information, as long as it is helping to solve a pain point. And late stage content shows true buying intent—this is content that talks about the benefits of your product or solution.
Our early stage assets are purely educational and/or trend related. You can see in the example that we have an ebook about sharing contagious content on Facebook, and our big marketing activity book. Neither asset is tied closely to marketing automation, but the assets each speak to our persona as a whole.

The next row of examples illustrate our mid stage content. This is content that shows more buying intent because the subject matter is more closely related to marketing automation. In this example we have our marketing automation internal selling PowerPoint template (this is for marketing teams trying to get stakeholder buy-in for marketing automation throughout their organization), and we have an ROI calculator that helps marketers determine the ROI of marketing automation.

Lastly, we have our late stage content—content like customer testimonials, pricing sheets, and data sheets. When a prospect downloads one of these assets, this signals that the prospect is potentially ready to make a purchasing decision.

By mapping your content to the buyer journey and funnel stages, you can ensure that you are speaking to your persona at every stage, as he or she self-educates through the purchasing process.
Lean Content Creation

Once you have curated your content team, created your personas and journeys, and determined your organizational content themes or arcs, it’s time to get creating! And as a marketer on a budget, you’ll need to have lean content creation tactics in your back pocket if you want to get more out of less. And we assure you, it can be done!

Turkey Dinner Analogy

One of our favorite lean content analogies is “the turkey dinner” popularized by Rebecca Lieb from Altimeter group. Essentially, she recommends that marketers create one “big rock” piece of content and slice and dice it to create “leftovers”. The turkey is the time-consuming main course, but everyone can eat the leftovers for days!

The idea is that you have one large ebook or report, you can leverage it to create additional content. Simply break your large asset up into smaller chunks.
Slicing and Dicing

Everyone likes to consume content in different ways. You might like to read an ebook, while the person sitting next to you might want to watch a video. Slicing and dicing your content in the same way you’d slice up leftover turkey enables you to stretch your content and do way more with less. Just get creative!

Let’s take a look at one of Marketo’s Definitive Guides, The Definitive Guide to Lead Generation, as an example. This is one of our “big rock” pieces, in that it took a lot of time and internal effort to create. This particular guide is 160 pages long.
From this guide we created multiple ebooks, simply by slicing up chapters that we thought people would be interested in reading separately.

Each of these ebooks got separate social promotion, both organic and paid, and we included each of these ebooks in our demand generation mix.

We also create cheatsheets from our Definitive Guide content. These consist of smaller tidbits of information or any checklists we have included in the guide.

From there, we start to think about any visual assets, like a slide deck, activity book, video, or infographic we might be able to create.
Slicing and Dicing

From this asset, we created an infographic called “How to Define the Lead of Your Company’s Dreams”, again using content and stats taken directly from the guide. We also took content from the guide and created a workbook that readers could fill in.
Slicing and Dicing

And then we also made a music video called “Gotta Get Lead Generation” which was a lot of fun and entertaining for our audience. Again, using the same content from the guide.

Just a note—we know that videos can be expensive to create, however you can do them on a budget! This video was created using our office as the set and our marketing department as the actors. You can also consider making quick cell-phone videos or Vine videos.
We also create blog posts from Definitive Guide content. These can be taken directly from the copy of your initial asset. Just remember to link to your asset in the post to prompt downloads!
Repurposing, the technique of turning one type of content into another, is another great way to stretch the value of your already-created content.

Say your demand generation team is looking for an ebook to do a program send around lead nurturing. You look at your resources center and realize you don’t have any ebooks or reports about the topic. But you do have a blog post that you wrote a few weeks ago. Simply repurpose that blog post into an ebook. You’ll quickly have a downloadable piece of content to send out in demand gen programs.
Let’s take a look at an example:

First, we created a blog post, “Who, What, and Where Can You Personalize? Real-Time Personalization is Simpler than You’d Think”, to support Marketo’s Real-Time Personalization.

Next, we realized that we needed content around the same topic for some of our demand generation programs, so we took the exact content from this blog post and created an ebook!
Or what about repurposing a webinar into an ebook? Webinars are a fantastic resource for content. Don’t hesitate to take your webinar recording and create an ebook or a series of blog posts.

You can use the concept of repurposing for so many content types. Here is a quick list of ways to repurpose, to help get the gears moving:

- Blog to ebook
- Blog to slide deck
- Blog to infographic
- Webinar to ebook
- Webinar to podcast
- Podcast to ebook
- Infographic to slide deck
- Ebook to slide deck
- Ebook to infographic
- Ebook to blog post
- Ebook to video
- Ebook to cheatsheet
Conclusion

Content marketing is tough for any marketer, and it is even tougher when you have a small budget or constrained resources.

But that doesn’t mean that marketers without huge teams or budgets shouldn’t bother with content marketing—it just means those marketers need to do more with less. By assigning roles, mapping content to buyer personas and buying journeys, and becoming experts at repurposing your existing assets, you can master lean content marketing. You might be surprised by the difference a bit of strategy (along with creativity) can make.
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