



Overcoming Your Content Challenges

How to create engaging content for your marketing campaigns



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Coming up with content for marketing campaigns is one of the biggest marketing challenges facing small businesses today.

But what most people don't realize is that there are great sources of content all around you.

With the right plan and a little bit of help you could soon be on your way to creating content that engages your audience and brings new customers, members, or volunteers to your business or organization.

This guide is packed with helpful resources and advice to help you overcome your content challenges and take your marketing campaigns to the next level.

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Common Challenges to Overcome

Before you throw in the towel and give up on the idea of creating great content completely, let's take a look at some common content challenges and how you can overcome them.

"I can't create great content, I'm a horrible writer!"

Great content is all about answering the questions of your audience.

So whether you're writing about products, services, events and promotions, or just sharing your expertise about your industry — you already have those answers. Now all you need is a strategy for turning those answers into great content.

"I have a business to run, I can't spend time creating content!"

Whether you're snapping pictures, shooting videos, recording audio or taking notes, business owners have never had access to a more valuable resource.

And with the convenience of a mobile device, you can create engaging content without disrupting your schedule or taking away from your business.

"I'm only one person, I can't come up with enough content ideas!"

One of the biggest misconceptions about creating content is that you're responsible for writing every single thing.

While it's important to share your own expertise, it's valuable to open your content to outside resources. Later in this guide, we outlined fifteen places you can turn to for great content ideas. These are places you're probably visiting on a daily basis and just haven't thought to tap for inspiration.

"I don't know what I'll be doing next week, how could I possibly plan my content!"

The first step to changing the way you think about content is changing the way you plan it.

Don't wait until the last minute to come up with content ideas. Instead, develop an editorial calendar that makes sense for your business.



Common Challenges to Overcome (cont.)

“I’m just a small business, I can’t compete with the big guys!”

You can create content as well (and in many cases better) than your biggest competitors. Don’t believe it? Join the email list of your biggest competitor and see how well their emails connect with you as a consumer.

Chances are you’ll receive plenty of content, but not much that connects with you personally.

That’s because big businesses can’t come close to providing the type of personalized content that customers actually want. On the contrary, you’re writing to a customer base you see on a daily basis, people whose questions you’ve answered and whose orders you’ve likely processed yourself.

“Content is only valuable to me if it gets people to buy!”

Not everything you create is going to lead people to immediately buy from you.

Writing with a sales mentality is a sure-fire way to undermine your content marketing. The real value of content is that it gives your audience the opportunity to get to know, like, and trust you over time.

People enjoy receiving content that speaks to their interests and enables them to overcome a challenge, achieve a goal, or learn something new.

That doesn’t mean you can’t talk about yourself or your products. Just keep in mind that people are much more interested in what your product will do for them than what selling it will do for you.



Content tip: Use the channels of communication you have available to get your content in front of your target audience and don’t think you always need to start from scratch. Don’t be afraid to reuse, repurpose, or recycle content you’ve already created.



6 Rules to Create Great Content

The best way to overcome your content challenges is to come up with a plan that works for you. The most important step in creating this plan will be paying attention to what your audience is most interested in.

But there are also certain rules you'll need to keep in mind:

1

Be a curator.

You don't have to create all your own content, you can offer your point of view on other people's articles, videos, events, etc. and give a link to the originals.

2

Keep it focused.

Your blog posts, email content, Facebook updates, and other marketing messages should be concise and to the point.

3

Pick the right medium.

Use a variety of content types — audio, video, photos, etc. And when you find a medium that works for you — go with it!

4

Plan ahead.

Create a marketing calendar that incorporates your different marketing channels, and plan your content ahead of time.

5

Repeat and reimagine.

Don't think you have to create new things all the time. You can share the same content across different channels, and repurpose existing assets into different formats.

6

Invite help.

If you have a blog or email newsletter, don't be afraid to invite other relevant professionals to create guest articles.



How to Create Content People Will Share

When your content resonates, people engage with it, and people share it with their own network.

This applies to all types of content — an offer or promotion, a blog post, images, videos, or other supporting materials for your marketing campaigns.

How are six examples of how you can create share-worthy content:

1. Make it helpful

People love to be seen as a resource for their friends. If you can provide tips and information that will help them do that (even if it's as simple as tips for managing the stress of the holidays, ways to be a better party host, or great parking locations near your place of business), then they will pass it along to their own networks.

2. Create a connection

Post content that will get people to form a more personal connection with your business or organization.

Fairy Dog Parents, a Massachusetts-based nonprofit that helps families get the money they need to care for – and keep – their pets, has a built-in advantage given that so many people love dogs. They capitalize on that by posting news and photos of dogs, and watch as that content gets spread far and wide.

3. Entertain

No one wants to watch or share boring content. Look for opportunities to create and share content that will make a more emotional connection with your audience. It's okay to have some fun with your content; just make sure you're staying true to your brand.



How to Create Content People Will Share (cont.)

4. Get people talking

One of the best ways to get people to share your content is to ask questions. When you do that on Facebook and someone posts a reply, it's possible for that action to be seen by that person's connection, exposing your content to a new audience. And chances are good that a tweeted reply will be seen by lots of other people too.

Remember: It's called social media. The goal is to get people engaging and interacting — with you, and with each other.

5. Provide an incentive

If your content is a special deal, you can incent people to share it with their social networks. Just add a little something extra — an additional discount or gift certificate, for example — that sweetens the pot for your customers who pass it along.

6. Ask people to share

It's often as simple as this: Sometimes, people need to be told what to do. When you say "Please share this," your fans often will. For example, you can post a piece of content (a status message, article, or whatever) and tell your fans "Share this if you agree."



Bottom Line:

When you ask any small business or organization what their biggest driver of new business is, the answer is almost always word-of-mouth referrals.

By creating share-worthy content, you have a chance to capitalize on a new form of word-of-mouth, where people share ideas and information from trusted sources.

This will allow you to extend the reach of the content, while also introducing your business to a whole new audience.



4 Ways to Get More from Your Content

By re-purposing the great content you already have and delivering it in new ways, you can get more out of the content you are already creating.

Not only will you save time, but can help create brand consistency, build authority, and raise awareness in a whole new way.

Here are four things you can do to get more from your marketing content:

1. Share it

Every piece of content you create can be shared on your various social media channels. This is a great way for your content to maximize its reach.

By understanding the context of the different networks, and presenting the content in a way that's unique to each individual channel, you are able to get more from content and present it to a wider audience.

Consider these tips for each of the top networks:



Twitter

Twitter is a high volume network; posting multiple links to the same content is encouraged! Just make sure to switch up the language each time you tweet.



Facebook

Try combining images and text to make your update more visually appealing in the crowded news feed.



Pinterest

Pinterest is the most visual of the social networks, so be sure to pin all of your content's visual elements.



LinkedIn

For LinkedIn's professional audience, highlight the more formal or technical aspect of your content within your post.



4 Ways to Get More from Your Content (cont.)

2. Redesign it

Every piece of written content you create can be redesigned and presented in a way that's visually appealing to your online audience.

Content with lists, tips, facts, or quotes are great for creating word images. You can use one of these images as your next graphic post on Facebook, or use a series of images within tweets spread over a long period of time. Get creative and organize your images according to themes or events that you've recently had, and showcase them on a Pinterest board or Facebook album.

3. Package it

Packaging your content not only allows you to get more from the great work you're already doing, but also allows you to create an incredibly valuable resource that your audience will thank you for.

One of the most effective ways to package your content is to create an email newsletter.

Another way, you can package your content is to create an eBook. This may sound intimidating, but it doesn't have to be when you are combining existing content.

4. Discuss it

Consider turning a written piece of content into a podcast or video. While this may seem complicated, creating professional-looking videos or quality audio recording is a lot easier than you think.

For most business owners, a smartphone will be the only piece of equipment you need to create content your audience will love.

Remember that the quality of the content is what's most important to your audience. Don't worry if your video isn't a big budget production.



Now, it's time to find your inspiration...

In the final section of this guide, we will take a look at 15 places you can turn for content inspiration.



A Cheat Sheet for Finding Content Ideas

The content you need is closer than you think. Here are 15 places you can look to get the creative juices flowing:

1. Internet research

What topics might interest your customers? They don't have to have anything to do with your industry, you can just share some helpful facts, too.

2. Marketing materials

Browse through flyers, brochures, sales sheets, or newsletters for bite-sized pieces of information. Curate some of this content and put it to work.

3. New product literature

In the days leading up to a new product release, create content about the problem the product will help customers solve.

4. Press releases

What "big news" has your company released recently? Spread the word. Don't just copy and paste, be sure to make the news conversational and engaging.

5. Industry news

Are there things going on in your industry that affect your business? Let your customers know your point of view.

6. Competitor news

You should always keep tabs on your competitor. See what type of things they're offering and let your customers know how you're doing it better, faster, or smarter.

7. Community happenings

Help sponsor an event or offer a product or service that can help organizers. Talking about the experience can help connect you to customers.

8. National news

It's a big world out there. What's happening and how does it impact your business? Customers can appreciate your take on what's current.

9. Trade publications

Your customers might not have access to all of the trade publications you read. So if you find something interesting — share it.

10. Tradeshows

Let your customers know what you've learned at tradeshows, so they can use it to make more informed decisions.

11. Survey results

Ask customers what information they want to receive. Then you can create customized content for that need.

12. Employee profiles

Introduce your employees to your customers by profiling them. Your customers will feel like they know the team, which goes a long way in creating positive relationships.

13. Customer testimonials

Word-of-mouth is still one of the best forms of advertising and sharing these testimonials is like virtual word-of-mouth.

14. Customer questions

By focusing on the questions you're already being asked by the people who know your business, you'll be in the best possible position to create content your audience will love.

15. Social media comments

If you're on social media, look at what people are saying about you there. You can even start a conversation by asking a question.



To recap...

1. Face your content challenges. Engaging content is an essential part of any successful marketing campaign. Don't let any doubts or misconceptions about creating content stand in your way.

2. Learn the rules. Use these basic rules to help you save time and create a content plan. Over time, you will have the chance to develop new rules, that are unique to your business.

3. Make it share-worthy. Every time someone shares a piece of your content, you have the chance to reach your next great customer.

4. Get more from your content. Understanding how content fits in with your different marketing campaigns and how it can be shared across your different channels, allows you to get more from your content.

5. Find your inspiration. There are valuable sources of inspiration all around you. Find your content sources and put them to work.

Interested in learning more?

Our *Hints & Tips* newsletter delivers the practical, "how-to" advice you need to succeed.

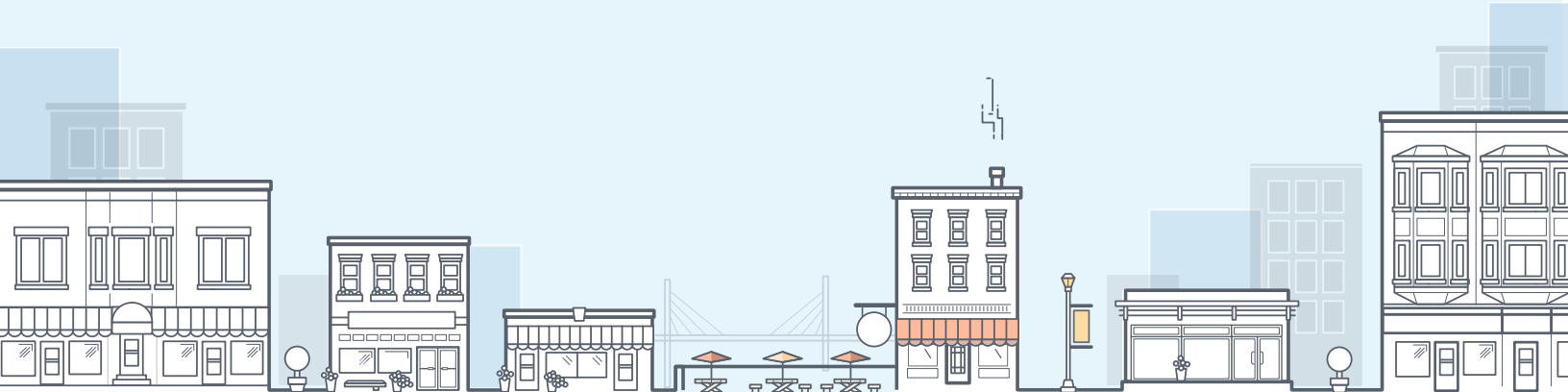
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