

A GUIDE TO

Content Marketing

Creating a Connection
with Your Customers



Thank you for taking the time to download this eBook. An NJ Advance Media representative would be happy to answer any questions you might have about it. Contact us at 1-800-501-2100 or marketing@njadvancemedia.com. Learn more at njadvancemedia.com.

Content marketing is a proven marketing strategy that brings in new customers and keeps them coming back. Here's a guide for understanding content marketing and putting it into practice.



Have you been hearing a lot about content marketing lately? If so, you're not alone.

If you've been thinking that content needs to be part of your marketing strategy but don't really know where to begin, we're here to help. We've gathered some resources and information to get you started, no matter what your goals or budget.

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WHAT IS CONTENT MARKETING?

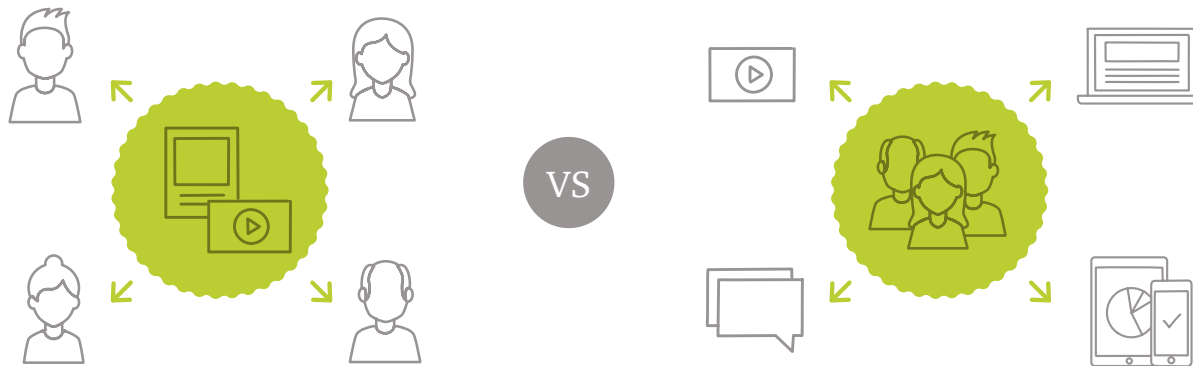
At its most basic, content marketing is just what the name suggests: marketing built around content.

But it can't be just any content: To be effective, content must be smart, useful and entertaining. It must draw in prospective and current customers and keep them engaged. In short, it must be content people want to consume, whether it's delivered in the form of blog posts, social media updates, videos or buying guides on your own website or social media platforms, or through high-value sponsored articles on trusted, third-party publisher sites.

BRING CUSTOMERS TO YOU

Traditional advertising is focused outward, meaning it tries to put your business in front of the customer by reaching out through commercials and print ads.

Content marketing is a type of inbound marketing: It's designed to bring customers to you.



When people come to you, rather than vice versa, they're a lot more likely to stick around. That connection leads to real, lasting relationships—and ultimately to higher sales.

“ We know that people are fast-forwarding past commercials, tuning out banners and hitting ‘skip ad’ as soon as the option appears. But people seem to have an unlimited thirst for smart content: things that entertain them, inform them and enrich their lives. ”

Liz Buffa
VP, Headline Studio at
Advance Local

MARKETING THAT DELIVERS REAL RESULTS



82%

82% of consumers feel more positive about a company after reading custom content.¹



6x

Content marketing adopters see a 6x higher website conversion rate than nonadopters.²



41%

41% see an increase in the number and/or quality of their sales-ready leads.³

A TOOL FOR EVERYONE

You don't have to be a multinational corporation to excel at content marketing. In fact, it can be an especially effective way for small and medium-sized businesses to connect with customers. Consider that 71% of companies with fewer than 200 employees say content marketing is their main marketing strategy.⁴

Reap big benefits from even small efforts. Here are some key ways content marketing can help your company.



Build your brand.

Thoughtful and engaging content on websites, social media, mobile and other platforms draws attention to the positive qualities of your company.



Improve loyalty.

Content marketing creates opportunities for meaningful, sustained interaction with your customers. Creating useful and entertaining content builds trust, which ultimately helps retain your customers' business.



Increase visibility.

Search brings more people to company websites than all other avenues combined.⁵ Content like white papers, blog posts and videos improves search rankings and gives customers a reason to visit your website.⁶



Generate sales.

In the end, sales are what you're after—and according to research from the Content Marketing Institute, more than half of content marketing consumers say content has a positive impact on their purchase decisions.⁷

A TOOL FOR FINANCE

The fact is that 80% of people choose one financial institution based on trustworthiness—and 76% want to be sure that the institution is well-managed.⁸ High-quality, educational content is the linchpin for success. The competition is fierce and brands are investing heavily in producing content that will win them customers, increase loyalty and create brand advocates.



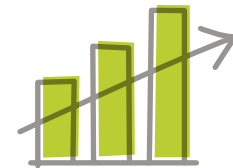
Financial services firms' presence on social media saw a 31% YOY growth.⁹



38% of financial services respondents outsource content.¹⁰



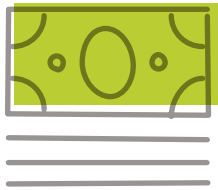
74% of people with bank accounts use online services to access finances.¹¹



88% of financial services firms expected to see growth in their content marketing efforts.¹²

A TOOL FOR B2B

A whopping 88% of B2B marketers use content marketing as part of their overall strategy. And 76% are creating more content than one year ago. 42% of these marketers are publishing content daily or several times a week. Yet only 32% have a documented content strategy, despite research consistently showing those with a documented strategy are more effective.¹³



51% of B2B marketers plan to increase their budget for content in the coming year.¹⁴



B2B marketers use an average of 13 content-marketing tactics.¹⁵



Lead generation is the number one goal in B2B content marketing.¹⁶



72% cite creating more engaging content as their top marketing priority.¹⁷

A TOOL FOR TRAVEL

People who want to travel do research online, which is why it's key for tourism-related companies to create high-quality, journalistic travel content. According to David Beebe, head of Marriott International's Content Studio, "We're shifting to speaking with [consumers] using attention-grabbing content that adds value to consumer lives by providing them with information and entertainment at the right time and in the right context."



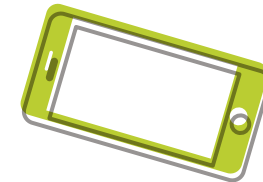
44% of travel companies outsource content.¹⁸



According to Google, travelers visit 22 different sites over an average of 9.5 sessions before booking.¹⁹



71% of travel industry marketers are using social media to promote content.²⁰



34% of travelers have changed travel plans after seeing social media posts.²¹

A TOOL FOR ENERGY

Eight in ten households receive efficiency tips throughout the year, and most of that information comes from their utility companies.²² Utility companies have unique challenges that also present a great opportunity—potential deregulation, electric cars, looming environmental regulations, a new generation of consumers who are keenly interested in renewable resources. To keep customers loyal and happy, utility companies must make it clear that they understand their customers' needs and are helping them save money, energy and the environment.



90% of top 100 oil and gas companies are active on LinkedIn.²³



60% of consumers are considering buying an electric vehicle.²⁴



6 in 10 consumers say they can foresee a connected home in the next 5 years.²⁵



58% of utility customers want personalized tips about reducing energy use.²⁶

A TOOL FOR HEALTHCARE

Many national healthcare systems have substantial, full-time teams dedicated to producing content—and they still need help! They need content that will establish credibility, highlight their particular expertise and satisfy consumers. Audiences are hungry for information and looking to get questions about their health answered with authority.



Brand awareness is the main concern in healthcare marketing: 81%.²⁷



The customer journey of trust includes: symptom, diagnosis, treatment, use, renewal.²⁸



63% of healthcare marketers outsource their content.²⁹



72% of U.S. adults have looked online for health information.³⁰

CREATING CONTENT THAT CONNECTS

Whether you're a store owner, an accountant, a healthcare provider or any other type of business professional, you can generate good content.

Here's how...



THINK ABOUT WHAT YOUR AUDIENCE WANTS

If you're a small business owner, you're in a great position to create content, because you probably already know your local market better than anyone else. "The best content happens when a company really thinks about its customers' interests first," says VP of Headline Studio, Liz Buffa.

Use your knowledge to find new ways to engage your customer base.



- Create a blog to give advice related to your industry.
- Make a video offering a behind-the-scenes look at your business.
- Post regular updates on the social media platform most used by your target demographics.
- Run a series of sponsored articles on popular local websites.

Tricks of the Trade

These tools make creating, managing and delivering content easy.

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| WordPress | Use themes to create a blog or website. |
| Canva | Design graphics using ready-made templates. |
| Buffer | Schedule and manage social media posts across platforms. |
| MailChimp | Create and manage email newsletters and more. |
| Unsplash | Access free, high-resolution photos you can use with your content. |

DEMONSTRATE YOUR EXPERTISE

One of the best ways to create valuable content is to share your insider knowledge with consumers. No one knows your business or region better than you, so make your insights available to others. “Establish yourself as the go-to source of good information and people will reward you with their business and loyalty,” Buffa says.

There are endless ways to capitalize on your area of expertise.



If you're a financial services company, have your experts offer advice about retirement planning.



If you're a caterer, create a list of tips for hosting the perfect dinner party.



If you own a bed and breakfast, make a video of local tourist attractions.



If you're in healthcare, send out healthy recipes in your email newsletter.

Content Marketing in Action



REGIONAL CANCER CARE ASSOCIATES

Regional Cancer Care Associates LLC (RCCA), among the largest oncology physician networks in the United States, is transforming oncology care by ensuring that cancer patients have access to the highest-quality, most-comprehensive, cutting-edge treatments.

Part of its success comes from NJ Advance Media's content marketing program, which has positioned RCCA physicians as leaders in their field through a digital and print campaign on NJ.com and in The Star-Ledger, delivered directly to readers through computers and mobile devices.

Content for RCCA includes a series of digital articles supported by a print campaign in which doctors discuss personalized care, cutting-edge procedures, and give advice that can enhance the treatment and quality of life of those who are being treated for, and recovering from, cancer.

“We have more resources to prevent, diagnose, and treat cancer than ever before, which is a wonderful thing, but the very breadth of those resources creates communication challenges,” said Andrew L. Pecora, MD, FACP, CPE, co-founder of Regional Cancer Care Associates. “Our content marketing program with NJ Advance Media gives us the platform to communicate more complex messaging.”

RCCA has a robust online and social media presence, and with help from NJ Advance Media's content marketing program, it has increased its reach and strengthened its position as a leader in the industry.

PROVIDE A MIX OF CONTENT

Many kinds of content can enhance your brand.
Employ a mix to keep your audience interested.



Written content

White papers are authoritative reports on an issue relevant to your industry.

Case studies show how a product or service works and how it might benefit potential customers.

How-to guides offer step-by-step solutions to problems customers might be facing.

Sponsored articles on trusted, third-party publisher websites are a great way to educate and inform customers when they are receptive to new information.



Visual material

Infographics present information in a fun, visually compelling format, allowing viewers to easily digest data that relates to your industry or company.

Videos allow you to get creative with your content and are great for consumers too busy to read through a big block of text. You can hire a professional to make a video or do it yourself.



Social media posts

Social media sites—like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram—offer a wide range of opportunities to engage with potential and current customers. Social media updates can range from posting a photograph with a caption to giving a more in-depth update on your business.

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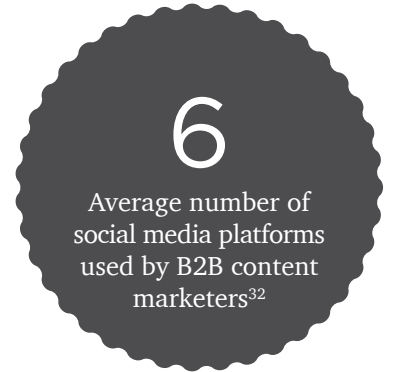
START SMALL—AND GET HELP.

Content marketing doesn't have to require a huge amount of time and money. Start small—with a blog, sponsored content on a local website or an active presence on a social media channel—and build from there.

Find someone in your company who's interested in content and let that person get creative. You can also look outside your company for help. You may even outsource all of your content creation to agencies, who can also distribute it for you. Alternatively, you can hire freelancers for specific projects.

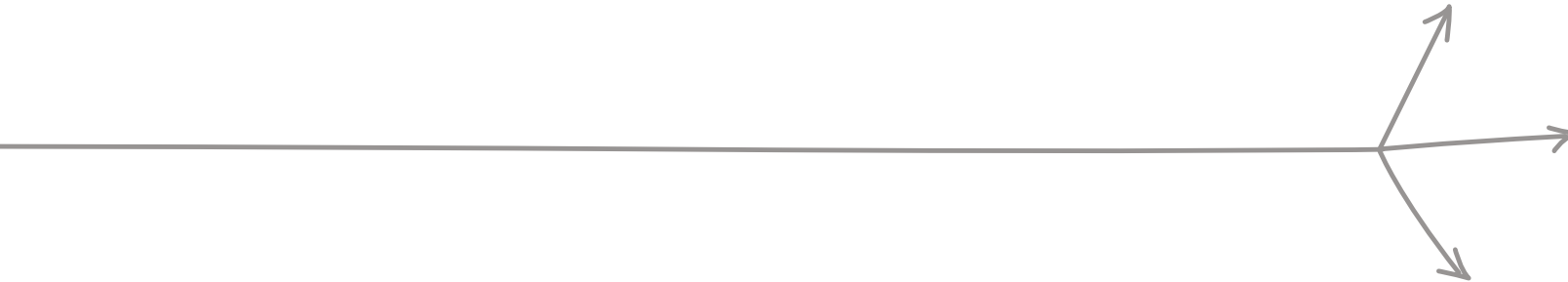
50%

of companies outsource some content creation, with writing and design being the biggest needs.³¹



Next Steps

DISTRIBUTION AND MONITORING



DISTRIBUTING YOUR CONTENT

Once you've created compelling content, the next step is to get it out to your audience. "You may be writing terrific blog posts," says Liz Buffa, "but if they're buried on your site, no one will find them."

Here are some of the best ways to distribute your content.

Link from your homepage. Don't rely on visitors to your website to find new material themselves. Highlight new and popular content in a prominent place on your homepage.

Create an email newsletter. People who have already signed up to receive emails from you are more likely than any other group to check out new content. Create a regular email newsletter, include links to new content in your emails and ask subscribers to spread the word.

Consider sponsored content. Think about websites your customers are likely to frequent, and consider paying to sponsor content on those sites. People are more likely to read sponsored content than to click on more traditional ads.

Use social media. Link to new content from social media, so that all your followers are aware of it. Tag people or companies who might bring attention to your post, and encourage them to share the content with their followers as well. Respond to comments as quickly as possible to make your audience feel appreciated.

Repurpose what you make. Design content that can be used in several different formats so that you get the most for your efforts. Take bits and pieces of blog posts and distribute them on social media, or collect several posts as the basis for an ebook.

Content Marketing
in Action

GREATER

NEWARK HOLIDAY FUND



The Greater Newark Holiday Fund has used content marketing to expand its reach, increase awareness of its mission and the plight its recipients face. In 2015, sponsor content features included daily stories about neighbors who are in need, and who are receiving help from social service groups being aided by the Fund. These stories were featured on NJ.com and in The Star-Ledger. The effort helped the non-profit organization raise more than \$355,000.

During our annual campaign, we put NJ Advance Media's content marketing programs to work for us," said Fern Dickey, administrative director, Newark Holiday Fund. "The opportunity to continually tell our story, supported by appeals for donations is a major factor in our success."

The 2015 campaign included 45 features that profiled individuals and families directly affected by groups supported by the Greater Newark Holiday Fund. The sponsor content features on NJ.com put these stories in front of millions of New Jerseyans on their digital devices. The initiative was bolstered by a newspaper pull-out section designed to raise awareness of the fund and its success stories.

"We are proud to be associated with a communitycentered media company that truly cares about the quality of life in their coverage area," Dickey said.

The Greater Newark Holiday Fund began in 1937 when a group of business men were inspired to provide Christmas presents to children on the streets of Newark. Since then, the Fund has raised and distributed nearly \$12 million to assist thousands of people in northern New Jersey through social service agencies.

MONITOR YOUR EFFORTS

You want to make sure your content is doing what you intend. There are many easy-to-use tools available—often for free, such as Google Analytics and bit.ly—to help you monitor your content marketing performance.

These are some key metrics to watch.



Reach

monitors the number of people who view your content and where they come from. Metrics in this category include page views, unique visitors and the geographical location of visitors.



Engagement

measures whether your audience takes action after viewing your content and in what ways. This category includes click-throughs and comments.



Conversion

reveals if the people who view your content are converted into prospects or paying customers. Included in this category are unique visitor conversion, return visitor conversion and cost per conversion.



Sharing

shows who is sharing what, with whom and where. This metric is especially useful for social media like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn.

CONTENT MARKETING DO'S AND DON'TS

Content marketing can be a powerful tool for your company—but only if you use it strategically.

Do

- ✓ Produce original content that informs and entertains.
- ✓ Highlight your expertise in your industry and region.
- ✓ Use a variety of distribution channels.
- ✓ Start small and find help.
- ✓ Monitor what's working.

Don't

- ✗ Assume traditional marketing strategies are enough.
- ✗ Think content marketing is only for bigger companies.
- ✗ Forget who your audience is.
- ✗ Bury your content on your website.
- ✗ Say things you'll regret on social media.

Get Started

CAMPAIGN PLANNING TOOLS



Success will depend on how well you plan. The checklist below and the worksheets on the following pages will help you lay the groundwork for an effective content marketing strategy.

Know your competition.

How do you fit in and where can you stand out?

Understand the needs of your customers along the path to purchase.

What will help them move down the funnel and ultimately choose you?

Map out your communication platforms.

Where are you communicating now and where do you need to be?

Define your KPIs.

Understand and track the metrics that will help you determine if your campaign is working or not.

Create a library of content.

You'll need a variety of content that speaks to your multiple audiences and is suited for the different stages of the buying cycle.

Test, measure and test again.

Execute, learn and keep iterating.

COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS

Use this worksheet to document the strengths and weaknesses of your top competitors and keep track of their marketing activities. This information will help you identify what differentiates you in the marketplace and opportunities to influence customer opinion.



Competitor Name	Revenue	Profit	Market Share	Main Marketing Activities	Product Quality	Differentiator

AUDIENCE PERSONAS

Use this worksheet to define the different types of customers you are trying to reach and the unique questions and concerns you need to address for each of these audiences at each stage on their path to purchase.



Persona One

Path to Purchase	Question/Concern
Awareness	
Consideration	
Purchase	



Persona Two

Path to Purchase	Question/Concern
Awareness	
Consideration	
Purchase	

CONTENT ECOSYSTEM

Now that you understand your audience, competition and unique value in the marketplace, map out where your content will live and how it can move effectively from channel to channel to help you reach your goals. Examine your existing and planned channels, and decide on objectives for each channel.

		Desired Outcome	Strategy	Budget/Resources	Metrics to Measure
OWNED	Website				
	Email List				
	Social				
EARNED	Social Shares				
	Media Mentions				
	Reviews				
PAID	Paid Social				
	Sponsored Content				
	Paid Search				
	Retargeting				

KPIs


The final step in setting your content strategy is identifying how you are going to measure ROI. Depending on your goals, you'll want to look at a variety of KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) to measure the effectiveness of the content, such as: how content is being consumed, how people who consume it behave and its conversion rates. Use this worksheet to map out where you are today and where you want to be in the future.

*Tip: Average visitor-to-lead and lead-to-customer conversion rates can range from 2% to 12% depending on your business. Analyze your past growth rates and those of competitors to determine a realistic goal.

VISITS	Number of Monthly Visits	Page Views
Current		
Goal		
LEADS	Average Number of Monthly Visits	Visitor to Lead Conversion Rate^{*above}
Current		
Goal		
CUSTOMERS	Average Number of Monthly Leads	Lead to Customer Conversion Rate^{*above}
Current		
Goal		

CONTENT MESSAGING

Now that your content strategy is set, it's time to start collecting and creating content that will help you reach your goal. Use the previous worksheets to map out a messaging and editorial calendar to support your many initiatives and all of your marketing channels.

	Persona 	Question/Concern ?	Sources of Existing Content Do you have content useful to build out more materials?	New Content Needed What messages does your content library lack?	Message Brief overview of main message you want to express	Tone Authoritative, friendly, humorous?	Format Article, video, infographic?	Channel Website, social, email?
1								
2								
3								
4								

CONTACT NJ ADVANCE MEDIA TODAY

NJ Advance Media has a depth of marketing resources to help you. We are a team of brand strategists, dynamic writers, award-winning creative designers and media producers. We embrace the rapidly evolving digital landscape and are committed to developing new solutions across current and emerging media.

OUR SOLUTIONS

Audience Targeting

Search Engine Marketing

Content Marketing

Social Media Optimization

Digital and Print Advertising

Creative Services

Email Marketing

Data Analytics

Video Marketing

Learn more about our multi-channel marketing solutions by contacting your NJ Advance Media Marketing Solutions Specialist at 1-800-501-2100 or marketing@njadvancemedia.com.



About NJ Advance Media

Representing NJ.com, New Jersey's leading newspaper—*The Star-Ledger*—and additional daily and weekly newspapers in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, NJ Advance Media provides reach of more than 6.6 million people in the New Jersey market per month. In addition to flexible advertising opportunities with the local media, we offer integrated marketing solutions that leverage our first- and third- party data combined with tools such as search, social media, content marketing, video, mobile, and display to help you and your best audience. Through a continuous optimization cycle, we help deliver the right message, at the right time on whatever device, screen or publication your audiences are using at that moment.

As part of Advance Local, one of the largest media groups in the U.S., we're leaders in developing innovative and effective solutions for our customers.

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