

Marketing With Content >>



10 Ways to
Energize Your
Conversation

 **Pennypacker**
& ASSOCIATES

CONTENT CREATION

Editing · Editorial Management · Writing · Research
White Papers · Magazines · Newsletters · Books ...

Energy = value + compelling content



Relevant and compelling content increases the likelihood of generating a qualified lead by 50%.

— Marketing Sherpa

en•er•gize

–verb (used with object)

1. to give energy to; rouse into activity: to energize the spirit with brave words.

Source: dictionary.com

Build awareness of your brand with compelling content and convert that awareness into leads. Nurture those leads until they're ready to make purchase decisions and, bam, you've converted those leads to customers. Engage with your customers over time and, yes, now you've got repeat business.

What is content? It's the white papers, newsletters, websites, magazines, case studies, books, blog posts and assorted information that you share with your audience of potential prospects, customers, and influencers. Of course, having content is only one step in the marketing process. The key to successful marketing is to make sure your audience pays attention to your content, actually reads or listens to it, finds it energizing, and engages with you because of it.

Unfortunately, the competition for your audience's time and attention is fierce. And as more companies understand the value of content it's going to get worse. How can you rise above the clutter of humdrum content? How do you keep your audience coming back for more? And, most importantly, how do you guide them through the buying cycle — how do you get them to act?

» Your content must have value

Your audience is actively looking for something: information, insight, or solutions to their problems. To deliver value, your content must address their need. And it must be relevant, specific, timely, useful, clear, contextual, thoughtful, authentic, and, yes, energized. Note that your content's value is determined solely by your audience, how well it meets their needs, and not by you.

» Your content must be compelling

Compelling content results in an "Aha!" moment. That's when your audience has truly grasped that what you're saying speaks directly to their needs and shows them exactly what their next action should be.

Inspire your audience to act



strategy

You're not engaging in content marketing for the fun of it (although it can be fun). You're in business, and you have business goals to meet. You think that using content will help you meet those goals — like making money — but how? In addition to a marketing strategy you need a clearly defined content strategy. Strategic clarity will guide you in meeting your goals. Without clarity, your content activities become scattershot and vague. They lack energy because they lack focus.

» Focus on your content marketing goals

Why are you engaging in content marketing? To increase sales of course, but how? By generating awareness, by better understanding your customers' needs, by building credibility through word of mouth, by generating leads, by engaging with your customers and fostering their loyalty. Whatever your goals, you need to clearly understand them and focus your content on helping you reach those goals. Always ask yourself, what action do we need our audience to take to help us meet our goals?

» Match your content to your audience

Who is your audience? Right now. In the particular marketing channel that you're using. Are they people who don't know you? Show them that you have insights about industry trends. Offer original research, link to other highly regarded sources of information. Are they prospects who know your brand but don't know that you have a solution to their problem? Use customer stories that demonstrate that you've solved similar problems for others. Are they almost ready to buy but aren't sure who to buy from? Use content that compares you to your competitors or content that implies a recommendation. Include case studies and examples of how your ideas were applied successfully.

» Make it clear — it's not about you!

When considering your content, your audience is asking themselves one question: Why should I care? They are only engaging with you because they believe there's something in it for them. You need to make it clear that you appreciate that, and that your content has been created specifically because it has something in it for them.

B2B Content Marketing Usage

(Percentage of marketers)

- 81% Web Articles
- 80% eNewsletters
- 73% Case studies
- 64% White papers
- 44% Research Reports
- 35% Print Magazines
- 34% eBooks
- 30% Books
- 27% Digital Magazines

Source: *B2B Content Marketing: 2014 Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends—North America*, Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs

Be authentic — it's all about trust



content

Content is the heart and soul of your marketing activities. It's what gives marketing life. It's with content that you earn trust and build credibility and recognition. But you have to make sure that your content is focused on your audience's needs, not yours. Talking too much about your company, your product features and benefits, or your exceptional services and awards is guaranteed to drive your audience away. Deliver authentic content to keep them coming back for more.

Resist the temptation to try to use dazzling style to conceal weakness of substance.

— Stanley Schmidt

» Engage in thoughtful conversations

Remember that you're writing for people. Get them involved. Invite them to participate in the conversation. Or join a conversation that's already ongoing. Ask questions. Show that you care. Listen, and then respond thoughtfully. Think long and hard about what your audience is saying — don't just quickly respond off the top of your head. Maybe do some research. Point to sources of information to support your response, maybe content you've created, or maybe content created by other highly regarded sources. Ask more questions. And on and on.

» Offer bursts of enlightenment

Keep your content short and sweet. Offer short how-to lists. Answer questions, briefly, with links to more information. Make direct comparisons to help folks make decisions. Offer brief reviews — of content, products/services, events. Highlight an industry best practice. Use online surveys and include the results in your content to stimulate conversation. Pass along content others have published with insightful commentary. Screen content for your audience and guide them to make good decisions, filtered through your expertise.

» Develop a strong, well-supported point of view

Show that you're an authority on some aspect of your audience's business. People trust experts. Establish authority by educating your audience about practices that lead to success. When you consistently deliver useful information, your authority grows. Take a strong position on your subject. And back up your position with research. That adds credibility. Your audience is now more likely to trust, and act on, your recommendations. And when they're ready to make a buying decision, they'll think of you as the best solution.

Communicate with more than just words



form

Get visual. What you say matters, but how it looks also matters. First impressions are critical — it takes only a few seconds for someone to decide that the appearance of your content is unprofessional and not worth pursuing. And images, graphics, hyperlinks, audio, and video can help bring your content to life.

» Add spice with graphics and videos

Most of us process information based on what we see (65 percent of us are visual learners, according to the Social Science Research Network). Graphics and videos make your content dynamic and add a visual element that engages audiences quickly.

Combining videos with text and information graphics is great for educating and persuading audiences. It adds personality to your content. It enhances your authority and helps you build relationships with your audience.



» Design for clarity and engagement

Many audiences scan content rather than read word-for-word. So make sure your information is presented in chunks. Use subheads and bulleted or numbered lists. Keep sentences and paragraphs short and to the point. Use plenty of white space. Keep your design clean and simple. Be unique. Don't settle for the default designs that many of the content tools start with. Lazy is not simple. Clear and simple take a lot of effort.

Think *engagement*. Your audience needs to be able to take one quick look at your content and tell what it's all about. That means you can't have distractions in the design that will draw their eyes away from your main point.

Audiences expect to be able to engage with you, so make sure your design makes it clear to them what actions they can take — comment on your content, join a community, click on links.... Your design needs to make it easy and appealing to do so.

Videos are 53 times more likely than text pages to appear on the first page of search results

— Forrester Research

Your audience surfs channels — so should you



distribution

Creating compelling content is necessary for marketing success. But your great content doesn't distribute itself. You need to find ways for people to see it, download it, discuss it, share it. Which is, of course, where the Internet comes in.

» Mix your online media channels, but have a home

Online media channels are not just the Big 4 (Blog, LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook). You need to develop strategies for engaging with your customers wherever they're hanging out online — niche blogs, industry forums, Google groups, content syndication sites.... There are lots of choices for distributing your content, and each has its pros and cons.

Remember that you can't necessarily do everything on your list, so you need to prioritize the value of each of these engagement opportunities. Make sure you pick one channel, though, as your home base. It's where you'll put in most of your effort. Where your original ideas will appear, to be repurposed and expanded upon for use in other channels. And it will probably be your blog.

» Repurpose and syndicate your content

Your overall content strategy must be focused on making an impact in all your marketing channels. The more exposure you have, the more your audience is predisposed to trust you, especially when they feel you're providing value. So look for opportunities to spin off your content in new ways.

Here's just one example. Your blog post should appear on your Facebook and LinkedIn pages and groups. Tweet about it as well. Expand on your post — create a presentation and/or white paper on the topic. Make sure links to them appear on the Big 4 and other online media channels as well. Be sure to syndicate the content on Slideshare and other syndication sites. Make a video of your presentation. Repost it on your blog, Facebook, and LinkedIn. Of course, tweet about it. And on and on. You get the point. Get in front of your target audience every chance you get.

Various Online Media Channels



Source: Forrester Research

Learn from others who do it well



case-in-point: pm solutions

PM Solutions is a project management consulting firm with about 75 employees. They provide consulting, staffing, and training services to Global 2000 organizations. For a small business, they engage in considerable content marketing to position themselves as a thought leader. They use numerous marketing channels for distributing their content as well as a means of engaging with their customers and prospects. PM Solutions has two active blogs (one for consulting and one for training), four LinkedIn groups, and a presence on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Slideshare. There are conversations going on about PM Solutions and project management across the Internet.

» PM Solutions Blogs

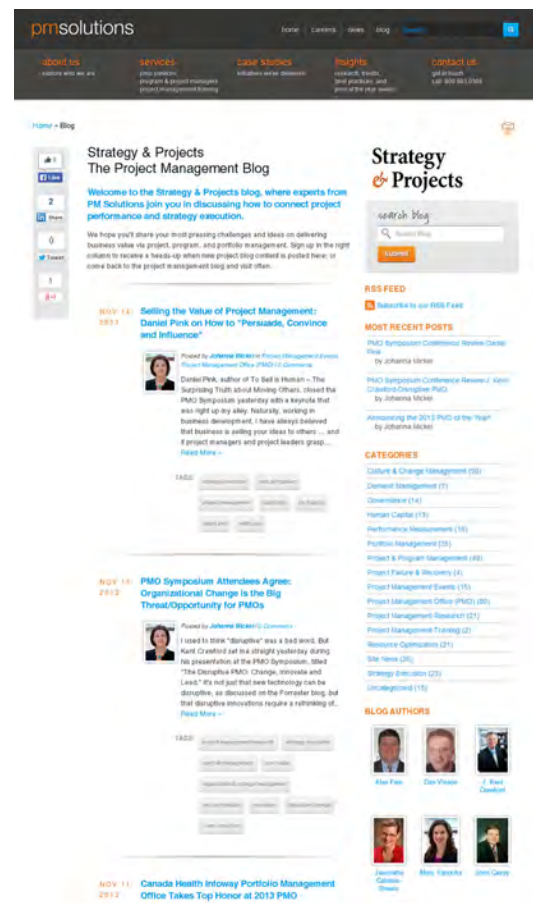
With 10,000 views a year, the PM Solutions blogs are focal points for the company's marketing activities. Their blogs are designed to easily share posts on other marketing channels. Their posts are filled with lots of links to assorted content — especially to their research, publications, and webinars. And their extensive blogrolls link readers to the best project management resources on the web. See for yourself — check out their blogs at pmsolutions.com/blog and pmcollege.com/blog.

» LinkedIn

PM Solutions uses four LinkedIn groups to discuss their extensive research and writing on a variety of project management issues as well as engage in conversations on those issues. They encourage their consulting and training customers to join the groups, fostering customer loyalty. The groups have more than 1,000 members and are growing at more than 400% a year.

» Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Slideshare

As a small business, PM Solutions has limited bandwidth for online media activity and focuses on blogging and LinkedIn because that's where their B2B prospects are most active. They do, however, have a presence on other media channels to broaden their reach. They use these channels primarily to broadcast links to their extensive collection of research, articles, white papers, books, videos, presentations, and webinars.



Explore pmsolutions.com and pmcollege.com and feel the energy!

Energize your marketing content



finale

Follow these 10 bits of advice and your audience will pay attention to your content, actually read or listen to it, find it energizing, and engage with you because of it.

64% of B2B marketers,
63% of B2C marketers,
and
57% of the most effective nonprofit professionals outsource some aspect of content creation

- » Focus on your content marketing goals
- » Match your content to your audience
- » Make it clear — it's not about you!
- » Engage in thoughtful conversations
- » Offer bursts of enlightenment
- » Develop a strong, well-supported point of view
- » Add spice with graphics and video
- » Design for clarity and engagement
- » Mix your online media channels, but have a home
- » Repurpose and syndicate your content

— *Content Marketing Institute 2013-2014 Research Reports*



Pennypacker & Associates helps businesses and associations create compelling content. Whatever your publishing needs — white papers, magazines, newsletters, books — we can help you create content that's engaging, thought-provoking, educational, persuasive, and meets your goals. We can assist you by enhancing content you've written in-house, or we can write content for you.

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