

# Social Media Content »

10 Ways to  
Energize Your  
Thought Leadership  
Conversation

 **Pennypacker**  
& ASSOCIATES | THOUGHT  
LEADERSHIP  
MARKETING

# Energy = value + compelling content

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## 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*

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

— Marketing  
Sherpa

Social media is a tool for thought leadership marketing. Build awareness of your brand with compelling social media content, and convert that awareness into a lead. Nurture that lead until it's ripe, ready to make a purchase decision and, bam, you've converted the lead to a customer. Engage with your customer over time and, yes, now you've got repeat business.

What is social media content? It's blog posts, and Twitter tweets, online community chats, and YouTube videos; but it's also the white papers, websites, case studies, e-books, and assorted information that you share with your audience of potential prospects, customers, and influencers. Of course, just having content is only the one step in the thought leadership marketing process. The key 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 use social media 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 funnel — how do you get them to “rouse into activity?”

### » Your content must have value

Your audience is actively looking for something: information, insight, 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 are 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 social media activities 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 social media will help you meet those goals — like making money — but how. In addition to a thought leadership marketing strategy you need a clearly defined social media strategy. Strategic clarity will guide you in meeting your goals. Without clarity, your social media activities become scattershot and vague. They lack energy because they lack focus.

### » Focus on your social media goals

Why are you engaging in social media? To position your company as a thought leader of course, but how. To generate awareness, to better understand your customers' needs, to build credibility through word of mouth, to generate leads, to engage with your customers and foster 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 social media channel 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.

## Benefits of Social Media Marketing

*(Percentage of marketers)*

- 85%** generated exposure for my business
- 63%** Increased my traffic/subscribers/opt-in list
- 56%** Resulted in new business partnerships
- 54%** Helps us rise in the search rankings
- 52%** Generated qualified leads
- 48%** Helped me sell products & services/close business
- 48%** Reduced my overall marketing expenses

Source: 2010 Social Media Marketing Industry Report, SocialMediaExaminer.com

# Be authentic — it's all about trust

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## content

Content is the heart and soul of your social media activities. It's what gives social media 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, 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 or speaking with 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 blog posts to stimulate conversation. Pass along content others have posted 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 are 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.

# Social media is more than just words



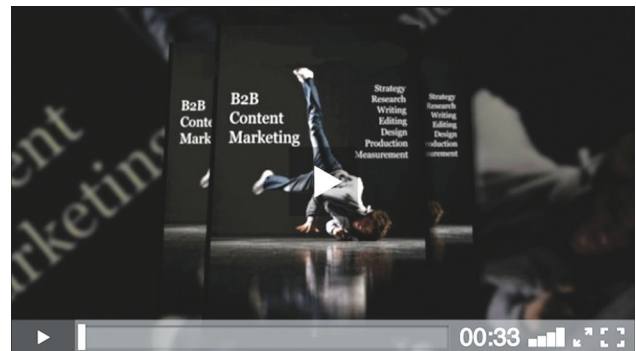
## form

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 video and audio

The use of videos on the web is skyrocketing. A MarketingSherpa study reveals that 78% of viewers feel that videos make online content more compelling. They make your content dynamic and add a visual element that engages audiences quickly.

Combining videos with text and information graphics works great for educating and persuading audiences. These video white papers add personality to your content. They enhance your authority and help you build your audience relationships.



Audio can be just as compelling. Audiences can download podcasts and listen to them at their convenience — a valuable resource for those on-the-go.

### » Design for clarity and engagement

Most social media 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 social media tools start with. Lazy is not simple. Clear and simple take a lot of effort.

When you publish for the web, 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.

Social media 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

Social media is really just a set of tools for distributing your content. Creating compelling content is necessary for social media 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 social media comes in.

### Various Social Media Channels



Source: Forrester Research

#### » Mix your media, but have a home

Social media is 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 social 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 out in front of your target audience every chance you get.

# Learn from others who do it well



## case-in-point: unisys

Unisys is a global information technology company with 24,000 employees. They provide outsourcing, systems integration and consulting, infrastructure, and maintenance services and high-end server technology. They engage in considerable social media marketing, especially to position themselves as a thought leader in cloud computing. Unisys has a strong presence on Facebook, a channel on YouTube, and they're very active on Twitter and LinkedIn. There are conversations going on about Unisys and cloud computing across the social Web.

### » Facebook

Unisys Facebook pages are highly engaging. Their wall is extremely active, with tons of links to assorted content, including point of view papers, videos, blogs, webinars, and newsletters. They feature a tab specifically on cloud computing — great graphics, a featured slideshow, a video and links to other videos on YouTube, links to other collateral, and links to other social networks.

### » YouTube

Unisys has its own YouTube channel with its own brand, Cloud TV. In less than a year their videos have had more than 10,000 views. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, all drive audiences to videos on their YouTube channel.

### » Twitter and LinkedIn

Unisys offers featured tweets from three thought leaders. Tweets are done daily, and reference all sorts of industry content, from outside the company as well as Unisys-created content. They're new to Twitter and already have 675 followers. Unisys also uses Twitter and LinkedIn (including over 30 Unisys groups) extensively for recruiting, with great success.

### » Unisys Website

The Unisys website actively promotes audiences to join Unisys in its social media conversations: “become a fan on Facebook,” “see the latest episode of Unisys Cloud TV on YouTube,” “follow us on Twitter,” “see the latest Unisys presentations at the Cloud Computing Conference & Expo,” “listen to Sam Gross discuss Unisys cloud computing strategy...”



Explore [www.unisys.com](http://www.unisys.com) and feel the energy!

# Energize your social media content

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After only a few months and with as few as 6 hours a week, more than half of marketers have generated qualified leads with social media marketing.

— 2010 Social Media Marketing Industry Report

## 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.

- » Focus on your social media 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 video and audio
- » Design for clarity and engagement
- » Mix your media, but have a home
- » Repurpose and syndicate your content



Pennypacker & Associates is a thought leadership marketing consulting company. We help position our clients as thought leaders in their markets.

To be successful you need to continually engage your audience with valuable content that addresses their needs. You use this content to move them through the buying cycle: build awareness, then turn interest into qualified leads. Nurture leads until the time is right to buy, then convert the leads into customers. And continue to use content to strengthen your customer relationships. That will lead to repeat business. We can show you how.

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