

A JOURNEY TO CONTENT MARKETING MASTERY

Brand Affairs 2023





“Content is the reason search
began in the first place.”

LEE ODDEN

Content marketing is a powerful strategy for reaching and engaging your target audience. By creating and sharing valuable, relevant, and consistent content, you can better attract and retain your target audience, ultimately impacting your bottom line. A properly thought-through content marketing strategy is no longer limited to the online space but takes on a much more holistic definition, effectively shaping and impacting multiple brand touchpoints.

Content mastery, on the other hand, goes far beyond the creation and dissemination of relevant content. This notion adds efficiency to the dimensions of content marketing. Given the plethora of (digital) marketing communication channels and the need to continuously optimize content for action (conversion), the complexity for businesses to achieve content mastery is huge. It has perhaps never been more important than to think of content marketing more as an interdisciplinary craft, rather than a specific segment within the communications mix. So, how do you master content marketing?

TOOLS FOR ALL

We are living in an age where the technology and tools used to build and manage content are increasingly democratized, accessible to all, for free or at very low cost. Many of the resources previously limited to huge corporations with large teams and deep pockets are now available to SMEs and solopreneurs.

For example, one does no longer have to know HTML coding to design an attractive and professional website. One doesn't have to have an expensive video camera to shoot promotional films, ads, documentaries and interviews. The movie 'Tangerine', presented at the Sundance Film Festival, was entirely shot using an iPhone 5S, which went largely unnoticed by the audience.

Organizations can now be their own publisher, their own think-tank, their own press office and even their own little 'Hollywood'. Everything they need to produce content and build key relationships is at their fingertips.

A GROWING FUNCTION

Content marketing is not just a ‘good to have’ but a ‘must-have’ for both small and medium-sized organizations. Why? Content-consumption is on the rise, with no end in sight. For example, during Covid-19 the content industry thrived even further. *The Subscription Impact Report: Covid-19 Edition*¹ provides insights into the trend of how the pandemic influenced the growth of content subscription businesses, ranging from big players such as Netflix to community-driven content.

For content marketing to be successful, investment and effort flows towards content creation, content distribution, content activation, measurement etc. Choosing the right types of content for the right segments and audience at the right time requires strategic and on-brand decision-making. Which one is most relevant for your organization? An infographic? A podcast? A Vlog? User-generated content? An e-book? The list goes on. There are more than 50 different types of content to choose from. A content format that is right for one kind of organization is irrelevant for another.

Some great examples of content formats are Christie’s ed-tech project, Harvard Business Review magazine by Harvard University, explanatory videos by the WEF (World Economic Forum) and the renowned holistic media emporium of Red Bull, called the Red Bull Media House. The energy drink’s media team produces games, apps, TV, musical podcasts, movies, sports events videos and magazine through creative collaborations and a global network of correspondents in some 160 countries.

But content is not only king in the digital world or on social media. Print is far from dead when it comes to brand content development. John Deere has its print magazine called *The Furrow*. Net-a-porter has Porter. Benetton has *Colors*. Bentley has its award-winning magazine – *the Bentley Magazine*.

“These days, people want to learn before they buy, be educated instead of pitched.”

BRIAN CLARK

¹ “Subscription Impact Report: Covid-19.” Zuora, 29 Jan. 2021, www.zuora.com/guides/subscription-impact-report-covid-19-edition/

ON-BRAND CONTENT

It is of paramount importance to start with the overarching objective of your content marketing strategy. Why are you doing it, what exactly are you hoping to achieve? The answer to these questions will bring clarity and strategically guide all decision-making regarding your content marketing. Purpose-oriented content is always strategic and on-brand content.

“Content is anything that adds value to the reader’s life.”

AVINASH KAUSHIK

Ultimately, it’s been said that by the time as one becomes familiar with a new technology, it becomes outdated as a newer version has already been released. Thus, it is important to create content that outlasts Google or other search engines’ algorithm updates. There are areas where software and tools are not as developed or ineffective. These are the areas where human intelligence (HUMINT) is needed. Especially when it comes to emotionalizing and personalizing, there is still no replacement for that human touch - at least not yet. Bridging and connecting value propositions with emotion and authenticity is not yet a feature ChatGPT masters. For such aspects of content marketing, it is best to hire professionals, insiders and experts deeply familiar with the topic.

“The key ingredient to better content is separating the single from the stream.”

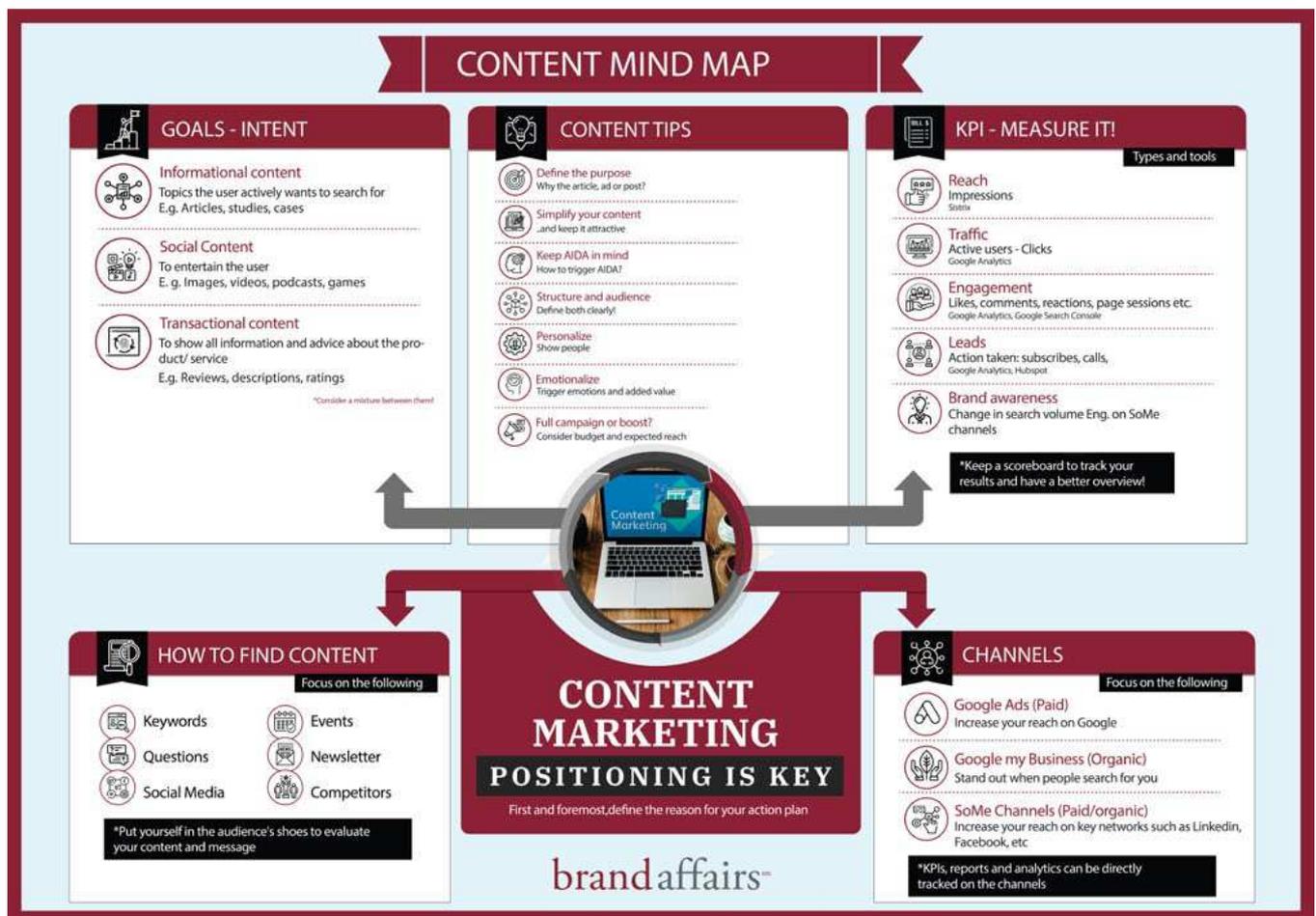
DAVID HAHN



MAKING A LASTING IMPRESSION WITH YOUR CONTENT

At Brand Affairs, we recognize both the importance of having specialized knowledge in content marketing and the value of presenting information in a clear and understandable manner. That is why we have created the ‘Content Mind Map’, which provides a comprehensive and instructional overview of the content marketing process. This tool includes important elements such as KPIs, Goals and Intent, Channels, Practical Tips, etc. and is perfectly suited to support introductory meetings or training sessions, ensuring that all relevant aspects of content marketing are considered.

Regardless of the stage of content marketing your company is in, this Content Mind Map serves as a comprehensive outline of essential considerations for a successful implementation. Its purpose is to provide clarity of thought and processes efficiency.



“If you can't explain it simply, you don't understand it well enough.”

ALBERT EINSTEIN

The best way to get going is to start on the bottom left. To effectively identify relevant information, it is important to adopt the perspective of the intended audience. Consider the audience's characteristics, interests, and potential questions. Additionally, it is advisable to maintain awareness of market competitors.

The subsequent section outlines the goals, or the intended type of content and the aim behind it. It is possible to combine multiple objectives, for example, through a social media post that both entertains and reviews a client's experience with a product. In this manner, all three types of content outlined in the content map can be effectively utilized.

The section on content tips is of utmost importance as it pertains to the actual creation of content. It is imperative to first clearly define the objectives that drive your content, addressing the question of why it is being shared in the first place, as well as its significance.

Adhering to the concept of time-tested AIDA (Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action) framework is also helpful, as it aims to evoke a response from the target audience. The biggest challenge in creating content is to differentiate oneself from competitors. To achieve this, it is important to infuse creativity and provide added value through the content being shared. The principle of 'KISS' (Keep It Short and Simple) is also crucial, though it can prove to be a complex task as it demands a high level of creativity and simplification of complexity.

The evaluation of Key Performance Indicators (KPI) and the tools used to measure content performance begins with an assessment of reach. For this it is crucial to know how people aim to find your company e.g., the keywords they use. To assess the ranking of keywords, one can utilize tools such as Sistrix which are designed specifically to measure

keyword rankings and positions on Google pages. For instance, a bank should include keywords such as 'financial services', 'asset management', and 'finance', and evaluate their rankings to determine if they appear within the top 100 results.

Website traffic and engagement can also be monitored, including the amount of time users spend on the website, as well as their behavior, such as clicks, searches, form submissions or newsletter subscriptions. Subsequent content can then be targeted towards individuals who have demonstrated active engagement on your website.

Finally, brand awareness can be measured through social media tools, including the growth of followers and level of engagement, as well as your positioning relative to competitors. It is recommended to create a scorecard to keep track of all results and have a comprehensive overview in one location. We normally work with Google Analytics 4.0 and Google Dashboards to pull all data together in one place. Please do get in touch if you need a hand in creating your very own Marketing Dashboard (and content is one huge part of this!).

The final section deals with the channels through which content can be disseminated, including both paid and organic options. For example, using Google Ads or search engine advertising to improve visibility and increase the prominence of a website through paid channels. Another option is utilizing Google My Business, which provides basic information, such as a short description, operating hours, and images of your company, enabling easier discoverability when individuals search for your company or related keywords. Additionally, social media channels offer the opportunity to disseminate both paid and organic content. It is practical to keep track of the performance of these channels, as reports and analytics can be directly exported or received via email.

7 TIPS TO GET STARTED

The following tips are tailored specifically for SMEs, providing further guidance on how to effectively implement a content marketing strategy. The key is to find what works for your business and to keep experimenting and testing new ideas. By creating valuable, relevant content, and promoting it effectively, you can attract and retain a loyal audience to achieve your business goals.

1. **Define your target audience:** One of the most important things you can do for your content marketing strategy is to define your target audience. The more specific and detailed you can be, the better. Understand their pain points, their preferences, and where they consume their content. This will help you create content that is tailored to their needs and interests, which will make it more likely that they will engage with your brand.
2. **Keep it simple:** Content marketing doesn't have to be complicated. Start by creating a small number of high-quality pieces of content, and gradually increase the volume over time. Focus on creating content that is easy to consume, share, and understand.
3. **Use visual elements:** People are more likely to engage with content that includes visual elements such as images and videos. These types of content are also more likely to be shared on social media.
4. **Be consistent:** Consistency is key when it comes to content marketing. Your audience needs to see your content frequently enough to

“Simplicity is the keynote of all true elegance.”

COCO CHANEL

- remember you, but not so often that it becomes overwhelming. Determine the optimal posting frequency for your brand and stick to it.
5. **Repurpose your content:** Content creation can be time-consuming and expensive, but you don't have to create new content every time. Consider repurposing existing content to reach new audiences and maximize your investment.
6. **Partner with influencers:** Partnering with influencers in your niche can help you reach a larger audience, and gain credibility. Look for influencers with a large following and good engagement rates and consider ways to collaborate on content that would be mutually beneficial.
7. **Leverage User-generated content:** Encourage your customers to create content, such as reviews, testimonials and social media posts, about your brand. User-generated content is often more trustworthy and persuasive than content created by your brand, and it's a great way to increase social proof and build trust with your target audience.

PROCESS AND STRUCTURE: THE KEY TO WINNING

As with almost everything, brand building and creating the demand requires frequency and consistency for the magic sauce to taste good. Systematic approaches and technology can help here and there are several ways to develop a content plan that follows a clear structure. Among the tools available, there are few that are specifically designed for this purpose. Moving away from traditional Excel files, Google Sheets or shared calendars, we currently work with Mondays, collaborative marketing management tool that allows you to manage all projects bundled in one tool. It helps to create workflows and offers a variety of templates that can be used and customized – from content calendars to marketing and social media planners. Each individual project can be shared for viewing or editing by selected users and/or clients.

Furthermore, as a content brief for text production, we often ask our clients to think deeply about what they want to achieve and by this, help them (and us) to make the process of content creation more efficient. A simple Google Form and corresponding flow allows for a guided way of structuring content input. Please [contact us](#) if you would like to use a structured way of thinking through objectives, target audience, content formats, tonality etc. and we'll be happy to provide input.

	Channel	Publish date	Category	Design	Designer	Copywriting	Writer	Status
Monday								
Post 1: The oldest ice cream maker alive...	facebook	Aug 6	Stories	Done	[Avatar]	Done	[Avatar]	Published
Post 2: Pros and cons of eating ice cream...	Twitter	Aug 6	Tips and tricks	Done	[Avatar]	Done	[Avatar]	Published
Post 3: Top 10 ice cream spots in town	Twitter	Aug 6	Guides	Done	[Avatar]	Done	[Avatar]	Published
Post 4: Beginner's guide to homemade ice cream...	Facebook group	Aug 6	Guides	Done	[Avatar]	Done	[Avatar]	Scheduled
Post 5: 100 days of eating nothing but ice cream...	Blog	Aug 6	Stories	Done	[Avatar]	Done	[Avatar]	Pending review
+ Create a New Pulse								
Tuesday								
Post 1: How to resist eating ice cream	Pinterest	Aug 7	Tips and tricks	Done	[Avatar]	Done	[Avatar]	Pending review
Post 2: Ice cream around the world	Instagram	Aug 7	Stories	Done	[Avatar]	Working on it	[Avatar]	
Post 3: If ice cream didn't exist, would w...	facebook	Aug 7	What if?	Up next	[Avatar]		[Avatar]	
Post 4: What type of ice cream are you?	Twitter	Aug 7	Quiz	Up next	[Avatar]		[Avatar]	
+ Create a New Pulse								

TYING IT ALL TOGETHER

The importance, relevance and the complexity of good content marketing cannot be emphasized enough. It requires a significant commitment, investment of time, personnel, and capital. In fact, for many small to medium-sized organizations, content marketing may necessitate at least one dedicated full-time role, or a significant budget allocated to support a proper functioning and consequential success.

At Brand Affairs, we have the privilege of helping clients from different industries and backgrounds to think through and activate content marketing strategies. Our roots as storytellers and creators drive our passion for architecting and guiding our clients through the complex landscape of content marketing and unlock the full potential of their content marketing initiatives.

However small your first content marketing step is, our advice is to take one step at the time and making sure you learn how to walk before you run.

“I have been impressed with the urgency of doing. Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Being willing is not enough; we must do.”

LEONARDO DA VINCI





Markus Kramer is Managing Partner at Brand Affairs, a consultancy specializing in pinpoint brand positioning and visibility. He advises boards, executives and operational teams on all aspects of purpose, strategic positioning, reputation and brand Management. The brands Markus works with include Harley-Davidson, Aston Martin, Ferrari, DHL, Luxury Goods, Financial Services Firms, Technology Brands, Governments, NGOs, Startups and many more. Markus is a Visiting Professor in Strategic Brand Management at Bayes Business School (formerly Cass) London and holds degrees from the University of California (USA), Oxford (UK), MIT (USA). He is the author of The Guiding Purpose Strategy© and runs The Brand Marketing Booster™ program.

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For more depth and detail, please refer to 'The Guiding Purpose Strategy, A Navigational Code for Growth, #Brands #Businesses #People' by Markus Kramer, Clink Street Publishing, London/New York, originally published in 2017, Extended Edition 2020.

Also available as Audiobook on Amazon and Audible.

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