Tomorrow People
Public Relations

# Combine PR and content marketing to boost lead generation



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Combining public relations and content marketing - disciplines often thought of as separate – can deliver a huge plus: measurable lead generation metrics.

Ask your sales team what they want most from marketing and you'll hear: "Leads!" A fresh lead turns into a prospect then a customer. Lead generation is a sales metric. Conversely, Public Relations (PR) – communication of a positive brand image through trusted channels - isn't seen as leading to a sale. Nor is Content Marketing (CM): the creation of informative text and graphics. It's designed to provide answers, not sales.

But bringing these two disciplines together – combining PR and CM – can have a measurable effect on the sales funnel, giving you useful decision support at budget time. Here are seven steps to doing it.

## 1. Start with the SEO

Good SEO belongs at the heart of both PR and CM strategies. Why? Because its metrics are hard numbers. Rankings, placements, clickthroughs, shares and reblogs can be measured definitively. The framing questions to ask yourself are:

A. How do your customers see you now?

B. How do you want customers to see you?



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An SEO project can answer both. You may want to be seen as young and exciting, but your customers actually value you for being solid and dependable. The outputs of an SEO study can deliver the data for A: the words and concepts your customers use to describe you.

> An SEO project tells you where you are... so you can work out where you want to be.

The insights can be rich. What adjectives do customers use with your brand name? To what questions typed into a browser does your website give an answer? (It can be as simple as looking at the subject lines you've used in past email campaigns: response rates can give you a clue as to what appealed.)

That's how your customers see you now. What about how you want them to see you? It's very likely the answer is in your existing marketing. Do you have a customer persona? A brand statement? A strapline? What voice do you speak with on your website? You may find there's a surprising gap between A and B. And that's where you start.

## 2. Estimate the distance from A to B

If A and B have the same latitude and longitude, great. But few companies have exactly the image they want... and it can't be changed overnight. So the next step involves getting from A to B over a set time – perhaps the four quarters of your next annual plan. Combining PR with SEO is how you bridge the gap.

While demographic differences do matter, it's best to concentrate on psychographics. (If your customers are all affluents over 60 and you want women 26-40, it's a job for your media buyer as much as PR.)

So decide what the key ideas are that attract customers to you – your time in business? Your geographical coverage? The cool factor?

Don't search for what "segments" your ideal customers here. Look for what unites them, so you can speak to them with a unified voice. SEO can help again, by estimating the size of the online audience for those ideas. That's the market you could own.



## 3. Plan PR to hit point A

Step 3 starts to close that gap. It starts counterintuitively: your PR outreach stays the same. (This ensures you don't lose existing brand equity as you build a new positioning.) Whether you publish inhouse, use an agency, or approach a "lunch list" of bloggers and journalists interested in your topics, start with your existing strategy... but use a new Call to Action: an invitation to consume some new content at your website.




The goal is to attract your existing audience and bring them to content that introduces your new positioning. Gently changing their mindset by giving them some useful information – whether it's a fun infographic or an informative white paper. Of course, that metric – how many responded – is measurable.

## 4. Create content aiming for point B

Step 4 is where content marketing (CM) comes in. Your CM can deliver the new brand image, influencing people when they arrive at your site or download a document.

Perhaps it's a business case showing how customers of type 1 reduced costs 25% using your product. Or a white paper on how your technology halves their sales cycle. (Or a seven-step eGuide.)




While your PR outreach aimed at point A, your CM efforts focus on the customers at point B. (B being a bigger audience, greater sales volume, longer customer lifetime than A... whatever metric your growth strategy requires.)

Again, download rates and page dwell times deliver usable metrics.

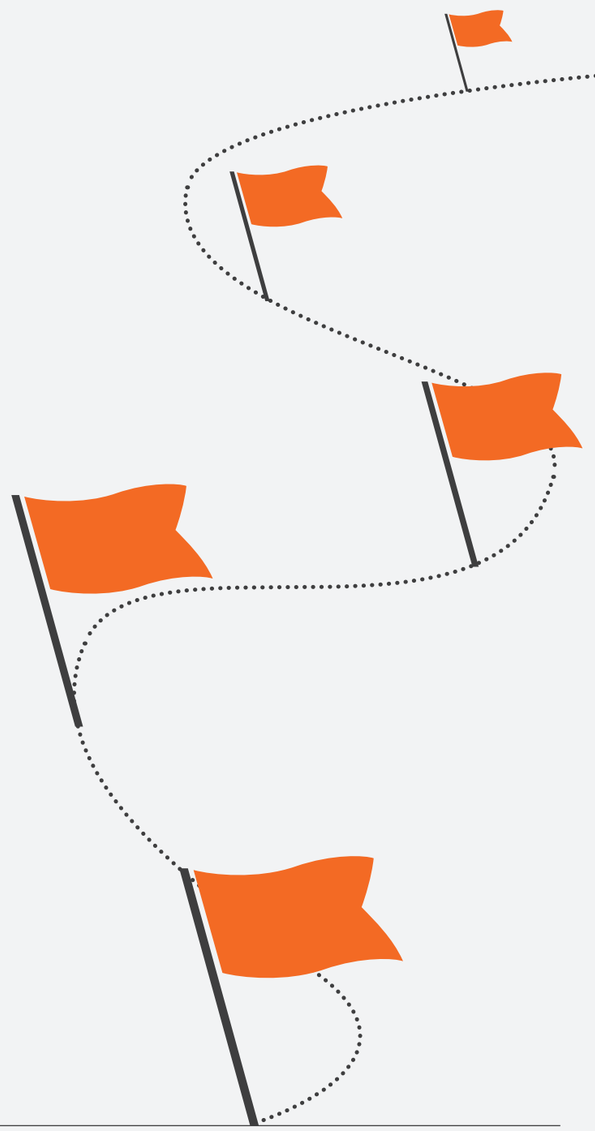
## 5. Now move PR towards B

In step 4, a proportion of your traditional audience absorbed the ideas of your new positioning. The next step – now your audience is warmed up – is to move your PR efforts towards point B, too.




At this stage – it may take several quarters – you've hit a milestone: your PR, your audience and your CM are all in sync. It's also a great opportunity to get ink: journalists and bloggers will find a strategic refresh more easy to write than a puff piece.

(It's perfectly ok to be overt about what you're doing. Honesty is always welcome and your customers aren't stupid.)



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# 6. Make a virtuous circle

In step 6 – with the model proven – you broaden your PR efforts and expand your CM portfolio to reach a new audience. Where?

Perhaps there are blogs with million-strong readerships in tune with your beliefs, whose authors you could bring into your PR orbit. Perhaps there's a common interest or hobby for a section of that audience you could organise an event around.




The point is that you only do this once the combined work of public relations and content marketing – both backed by solid SEO research – are in tune with each other. Because that's when your brand image will come across most strongly. Wash, rinse, repeat.

# 7. Measure the numbers

A cold name, attracted to your site by your PR, who downloaded a piece of CM. That's a warm prospect for your sales department – a lead.




And that lead can be measured as an outcome of your PR and CM work... two disciplines not usually thought of as strictly measurable. PR and CM have delivered solid lead generation in addition to their brand-building action. For your business, PR+CM is win-win.

Ensure your content marketing and PR are telling the same story:

How to tell your brand story in the changing media environment

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