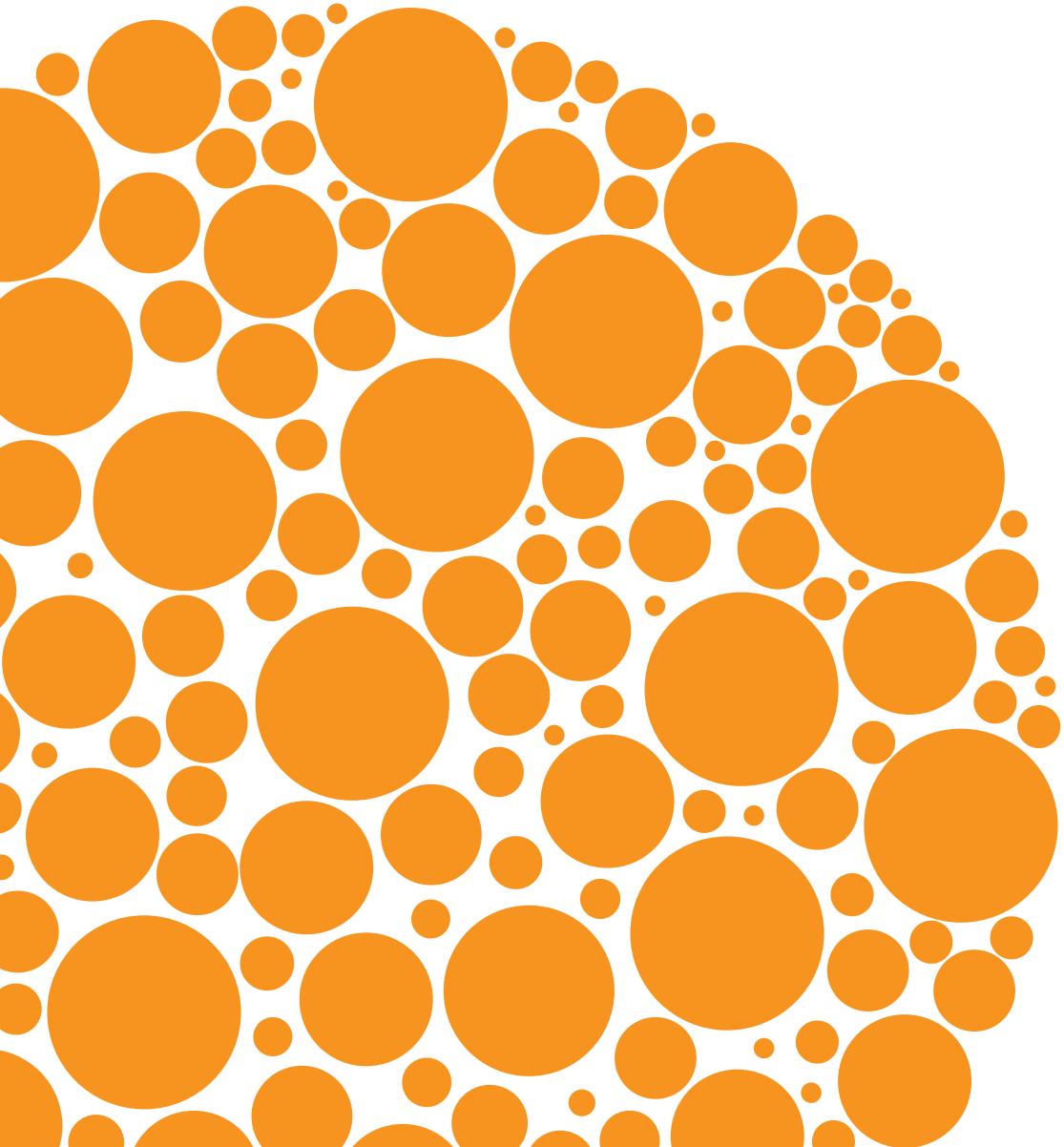
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Website content optimisation

A B2B Marketing Whitepaper

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B2B Marketing

In association with:

DECIBEL INSIGHT

The great content calamity

When a print company buys a new printing press it ensures its employees use its full functionality, it lets customers know about the company's new capabilities, and it pushes as much work as possible through the new press.

When a law firm invests in a new suite of computers for its staff it ensures those employees have full training on this new kit. It develops its internal processes to make the most of the new capabilities, and it expects to see an increase in the volume and quality of work going through their firm.

When a technology company makes a senior hire it extracts all the knowledge and contacts that person has for its own training and sales needs, and it makes sure that expensive member of staff is up and running, delivering results quickly.

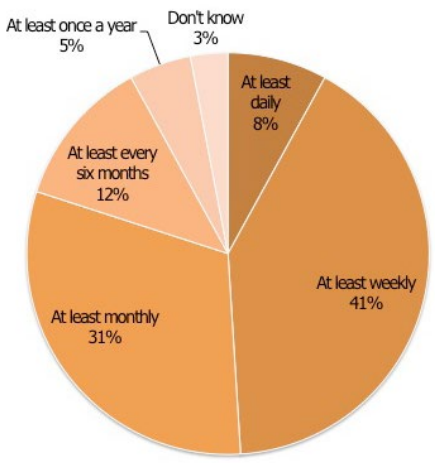
Getting a return on an investment is not a new concept in business. It is what successful companies do.

Yet why do so few B2B companies take the same approach to their website content – to the words, images, structure, appearance, and everything else that is actually on their site?

Why do they sign off five or six figure budgets for the design and development of their websites, spend similar sums on tactical campaigns driving prospects to those sites, and yet pay so little regard to the content on those sites?

"Why do so few B2B companies pay so little regard to the content on their sites?"

Figure 1. Content update frequency for B2B websites



Why do businesses spend money making their shops welcoming to passers-by and easy to explore, or their offices look impressive to visitors, and yet be prepared for a visitor to arrive on their website, and be quickly confused or bored?

Yet it happens remarkably often. B2B Marketing recently conducted research with Decibel Insight, a firm that provides visual analytics software that greatly optimises website performance. This research revealed around half of B2B marketers change the content on their website less than once a month. Around a quarter have no schedule for reviewing the structure and functionality of their sites.

It is a startling lack of attention to getting a return on investment on a website. Why does it happen?

Attracting visitors – then what?

It is not that B2B marketers see their websites as unimportant. Our research revealed 91 per cent of them regard it as 'critical' or 'important' to the business. More than half discuss website performance at board level.

The problem is they are discussing the wrong subject. The buzzword in the past two to three years has been content marketing – the production of content such as blog posts, whitepapers, news stories and so on, and its dissemination through social media. B2B marketers have become so excited by the possibilities offered by this new technique that they have forgotten that content marketing is, for the most part, only useful for attracting people to the site.

It has little effect on them once they are on the site, and of course the content visitors find there plays a critical role in keeping them there and guiding them down a sales path.

With the Google Panda update quality web content is increasingly essential, not only for retaining and developing leads on a site, but also for attracting them to the site. Google's algorithms will favour content visitors find useful. B2B marketers need to start addressing this issue urgently.

The importance of evaluation

The problem is that few of them know what content visitors to their sites find useful.

Robert Rose, chief strategist at the Content Marketing Institute, says: "B2B marketers don't understand what content works and what doesn't work on their websites very well. This is primarily because they judge content solely by the amount of traffic it creates, and not by what kind of traffic it creates. Many marketers simply try to bring in as many leads as possible believing if they spread the net as wide as possible, they are more likely to catch more fish."



ROBERT ROSE
CHIEF STRATEGIST
CONTENT MARKETING INSTITUTE

"B2B marketers don't understand what content works on their websites because they judge content solely by the amount of traffic, not by type of traffic"

He continues: "When you're trying to produce content that appeals to everyone, you inherently have to make it about the only thing they could possibly have in common: you. Especially in the B2B arena, sales messages that are solely about the vendor are rarely successful. This is why it's so important to understand not just which content brings in the most visitors, but which content moves the visitor to a lead, and which moves them to become an opportunity, and which moves them to be a customer, and a cross-sold customer and an evangelistic customer."



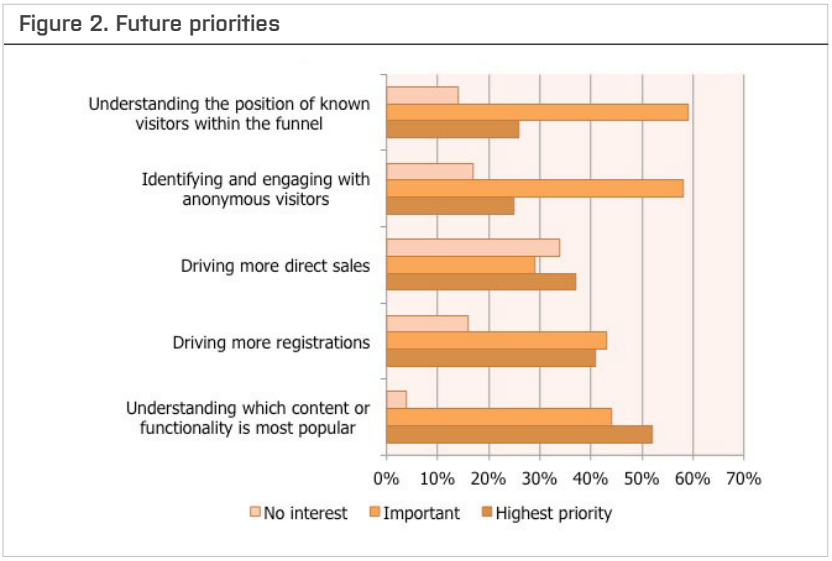
BEN HARRIS
FOUNDER AND CEO
DECIBEL INSIGHT

"Only one in five people use evidence of user experience and visitor journeys to back up their business case"

The lack of evaluation

Our research in conjunction with Decibel Insight confirmed a growing number of B2B marketers are recognising the importance and urgency of this issue. For the next 12 months, the most important issue for respondents' websites was 'understanding which content or functionality is most popular', with 52 per cent citing this as their top priority and 44 per cent citing it as important.

Figure 2. Future priorities



For most there is a long way to go before they are achieving these goals. Only 14 per cent of respondents actually track the success, or otherwise, of their content. When it comes to making changes to user experience, 15 per cent are still basing decisions on gut feel.

Ben Harris, founder and CEO at Decibel Insight points out that for those that achieve a clear understanding of the value of their website content, there are compound benefits. "Last year we undertook similar research, which established on average it took over a year to get board approval for a new website," he says. "What's interesting is this survey reveals why this might be – only one in five people use evidence of user experience and visitor journeys to back up their business case."

Google Analytics and marketing automation software

Given the potential benefits of evaluating website content it might seem surprising that so few B2B marketers are doing it well. Yet we should not be too hard on them. While it is true that few have focused on it, or thought profoundly about what they want their site content to achieve, more than anything else this has been because it has been impossible to gain useful insight into visitor activity.

Our survey with Decibel Insight showed that around 85 per cent of marketers rely on Google Analytics. Only 20 per cent use a marketing automation platform and just 13 per cent use visitor identification software.

Josh Soffe, technical delivery & support team leader at marketing automation consultancy CleverTouch comments: "Google Analytics holds a vast amount of data about website visits. This allows reporting at aggregated level across many criteria including language, location, and viewing technology. Path analysis can be carried out to identify the route people take through the website as well as common entry and exit pages. Traffic analysis can be used to attribute traffic back to campaigns originating from various sources."

He points out that marketing automation software can be a useful complement to Google Analytics: "Because marketing automation software records data at the individual level; all activity on the website, on landing pages and on email is stored, this gives a complete view which is available to sales staff. By combining profile data held on individuals along with web visit data, targeted segments can be built. This allows for sophisticated lead routing, entering contacts into the campaign which best suits their profile and current activity."

Yet, there is clearly a glaring omission in this picture. If Google Analytics tells you where visitors come from, where they go, and where they go next, and marketing automation allows you to gather this data on an individual level, surely the most pressing question for any marketer looking to make the most of their website is: 'Which parts of a certain page have produced a desired action?' We understand where visitors are going, but the question remains why they are going there."

New information

A range of solutions are emerging to help marketers answer this question. ClickTale, Crazy Egg, Adobe and Webtrends all offer some form of platform that enables marketers to understand where on a page visitors are clicking. The platform that Decibel Insight launched this year is unique in that it changes focus from where the visitor clicked to what content, element or asset within the page the vistor clicked. It then assigns a value to each of that content.



JOSH SOFFE
TECHNICAL DELIVERY & SUPPORT TEAM LEADER CLEVERTOUCH

"By combining profile data held on individuals along with web visit data, targeted segments can be built"

"This allows B2B marketers to understand precisely what content is working on their site and what is not," argues Harris at Decibel Insight. "This arms them with the knowledge of what motivates visitors to move through the sales process. They know what to do more of and what to do less of, and what to prioritise and what to deprioritise so they can better concentrate their efforts on the things that really have the maximum impact."

He continues: "Already we're seeing clients make vital tweaks to their sites to remarkably good effect. For example, a well-known cosmetics multinational quickly discovered that potential buyers reacted to specific content and calls-to-action no matter where they appeared on the site, but the focus of the content wasn't appropriate for those types of buyers and so it was losing out to online retailers needlessly.

He adds: "A leading law firm, specialising in matrimonial law, has gained eye-opening insights into which of its library advice works to eventually convert customers. This means the team can prioritise content and focus its news, blogs and social media work around those subjects to attract more of the visitors it knows will convert. The firm is seeing exciting results."

It is early days for this type of on-site analytics, and our research indicates that Decibel Insight and its peers have much work to do to educate B2B marketers on the potential benefits of paid-for analytics software, but they will have been encouraged to discover that 43 per cent of respondents expect their investment in analytics to increase over the next year. The days of the unevaluated B2B website may soon be numbered.

"The days of the unevaluated B2B website may soon be numbered"

Six steps to improve your website content

1 **Build a strategy**

"Many B2B marketers fall into the trap of creating content on demand," says Ilona Hitel, co-founder and MD of content marketing agency The CommsCo. "Website content marketing needs to be part of an integrated communications approach, which starts by developing a position that stands out, and then building a compelling content programme from there. This will then cover all appropriate channels, and engage, both directly and indirectly, with influencers as well as with prospects and customers."

2 **Focus on 'good' customers**

Your website content strategy should be about showing real prospects the aspect of your products or services that are likely to engage and activate their interest. You can write about, or show, your products and services, but you must always bear in mind who your real prospects are and what they want from you and your website. "If roughly 98 per cent of visitors leave a site without making contact, you need to focus on understanding what was interesting to the two per cent," says Sarah Butler of New Brand Vision Group. She adds: "If you can establish which content works for them and improve it, better prioritise it, or create more of it, as well as inject the right headlines and calls-to-action in the right places, logic says you'll convert more of the 98 per cent. A one per cent difference is an increase of 50 per cent in customers."

3 **Understand the buyer journey**

Hitel at The CommsCo adds this advice: "Communication has evolved to the point where customer interaction with a brand is now a journey in which they choose when, where and how to engage. Therefore, the onus is on the company to be accessible and personal. It's no longer a corporate marketing job, but a priority to get the speed of response and tone right. This is a great challenge for both large and small organisations, for very different reasons."

4 **Focus on quality**

"Far too much website content is just popped out because people think they need to fill their sites," argues Rene Power, author of the *Content Marketing Handbook*. "The result is that websites all too often deter purchases rather than encourage them. B2B marketers need to understand what visitors want from their sites and then give them that. Focus less on production and more on evaluation."

5 **Bring in the pros**

Few B2B marketers would consider using a free designer, developer, copywriter or photographer for their websites. Yet many still rely on free Google Analytics for their evaluation of content. We are seeing a number of paid-for platforms arrive on the market. We expect to see take-up of these rise significantly through 2014. "Traditional analytics is great at reporting performance from one time period to the next, but you also need another layer of insight to know what changes to make to improve performance – without necessarily needing a statistics degree or days on end to find out. Together these create the right framework for website optimisation," says Harris at Decibel Insight.

6 **Update continually**

A company website is an expensive, critical investment. Like any asset, it requires continual attention and investment to extract the most value from it. The best websites are those that are frequently updated as owners establish a rapid, insightful and decisive feedback loop.

The conditions are now right for a critical mass of B2B marketers to achieve this virtuous circle. The end result will be more leads and sales through better quality and more insightful B2B websites, and of course the marginalisation of those who have failed to spot this new trend.

About B2B Marketing

B2B Marketing is the comprehensive information resource for B2B marketers. Its mission is to provide practitioners with the information they need to perform better and achieve more, whatever sector of the B2B space they are operating in.

Launched in 2004 as *B2B Marketing* magazine, it has since evolved into a multi-faceted resource, delivering a broad range of content in a variety of different forms and formats.

Its key products are:

Magazine: The essential monthly guide to B2B marketing, with a key focus on best practice guidance, plus monthly features looking at current trends, regular research and profiles.

Awards: The showpiece event for brands and practitioners, attracting over 700 people. Former winners include a host of top-tier B2B brands, including Amex, Barclays, Cisco, Dell, Fujitsu, IBM, KPMG, Nokia, O2, Oracle, Orange, SAP, Thomson Reuters, Vauxhall UK, and many more.

Research and reports: A library housing the best in B2B practice, in-depth practical guidance and research into specific channels or industry issues.

Training: Comprehensive, integrated and flexible training programme enabling client-side and agency marketers to boost their skillsets and confidence, improve their effectiveness and increase impact on their brand.

Events: Quarterly headline events providing essential learning and networking opportunities, including the B2B Summit, the Annual B2B Conference, the B2B Leaders Forum.

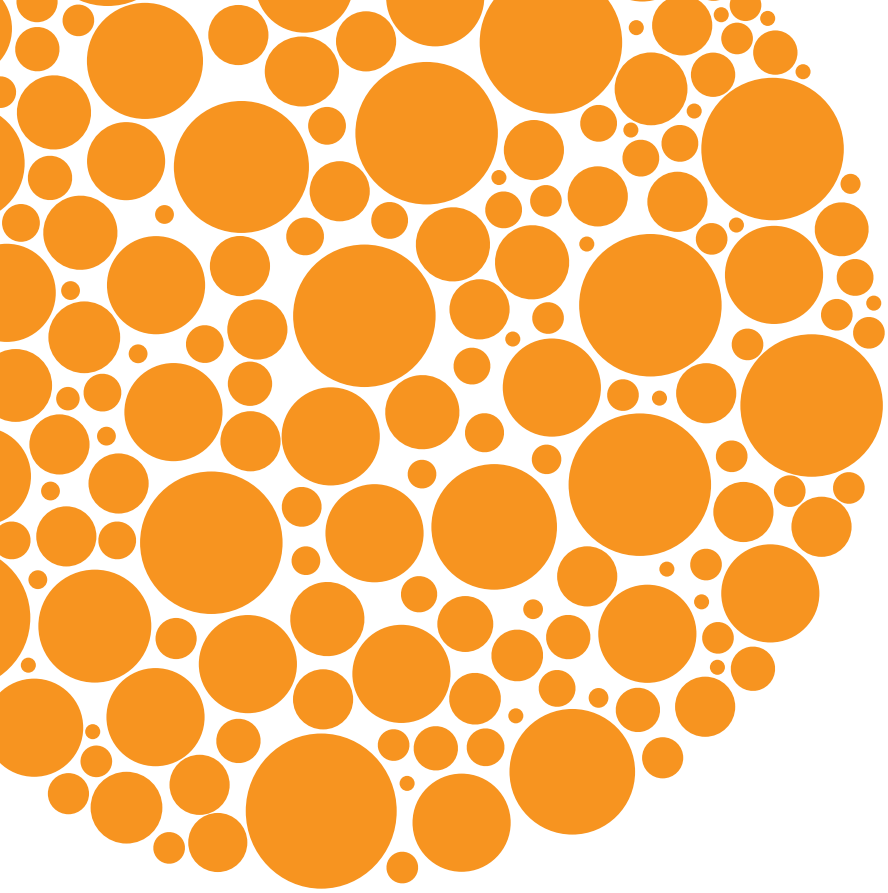
Membership: Become a member and receive all research and reports for free. You will also receive exclusive invites to members-only networking events, get discounts on training seminars, workshops and conferences and receive a subscription to the monthly magazine. There are different levels of membership available. Please call +44 (0) 20 7269 6592 to find out more.

For more information on any of these products or services go to b2bmarketing.net or call +44 (0) 20 7438 1370

About Decibel Insight

Decibel Insight is ground-breaking visual analytics software that greatly optimises website conversion to generate more leads and sales. Moving way beyond traditional analytics that only provide website statistics and data, Decibel Insight introduces unique data visualisation techniques which enable you to value every asset on your website, across devices. As an enterprise-grade solution, our robust yet easy-to-use software delivers actionable intelligence that helps improve website performance, usability and conversion rates.

For further information, please visit decibelinsight.com



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