10 REASONS

WHY YOUR CONTENT MARKETING STRATEGY IS NOT WORKING

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Content has been a hot topic in the last few years and all trends show it's here to stay. In fact, more and more marketers, from a rising number of industries, choose to resort to content in their strategy. Yet, when it comes to results, not everyone can claim the same success. As with any strategy, there are ways to get it right or wrong. That's why I'd like to show you the 10 things people are most likely to get wrong when engaging in content marketing.



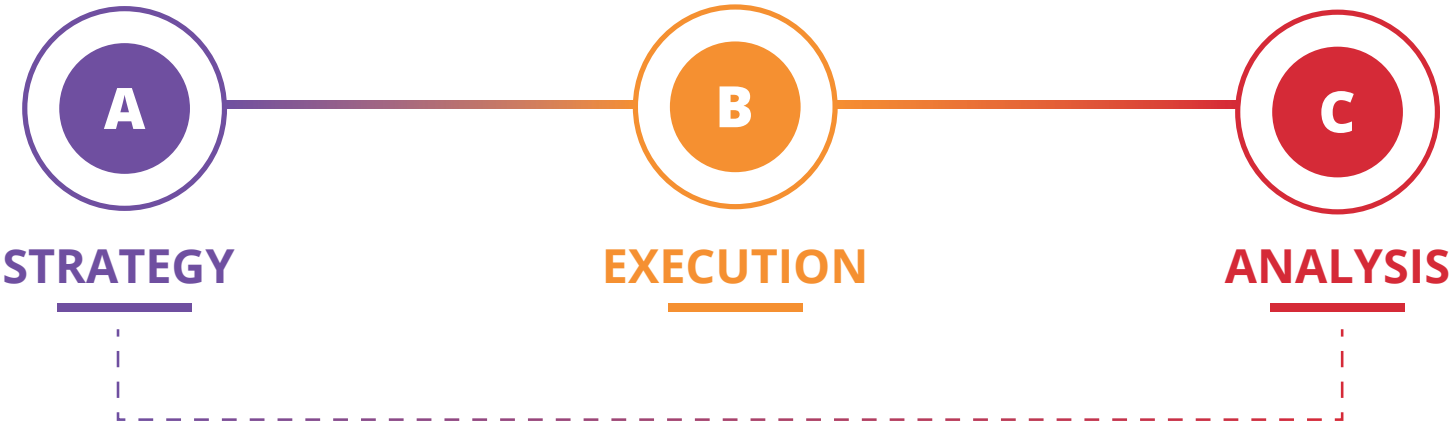
Let's start with something that's essential to your entire effort:

1. YOUR APPROACH IS UNFOCUSED AND UNSTRUCTURED

Content marketing looks deceivingly simple – you just need to create some content and put it out there, right? This couldn't be further from the truth.

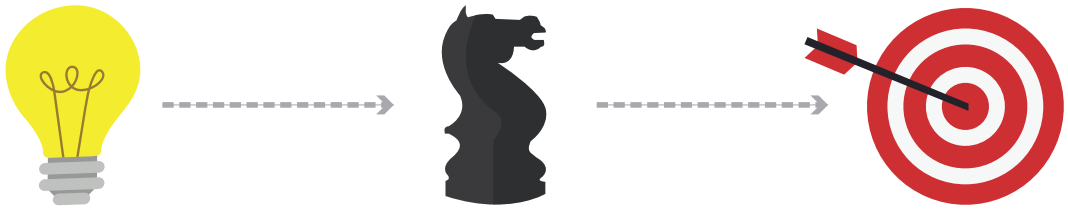
Having a structured and carefully planned approach yields the best chance of success. In content marketing, I call this approach the "Strategy – Execution – Analysis" framework. It allows you to keep an eye on the big picture and keep all aspects of your content marketing effort under control.

As the name suggests, the framework has three stages:



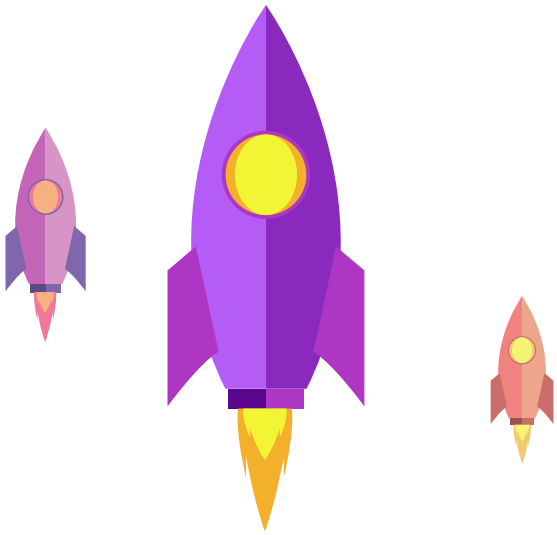
In the Strategy phase, you are setting your goals with content marketing and deciding on the best means to pursue them.

Execution is the part where you implement the plan you created in the Strategy phase. In this stage, it is important to keep an eye on the quality of the content you're producing and on implementing the tactics you chose in the planning stage to the greatest benefit.



In the final part of the cycle, you need to spend time analyzing the performance of the content you created – what works well, what makes sense but needs to be improved, and what should be slashed altogether. The Analysis stage allows you to go back to step 1 of the framework and begin strategizing again, armed with reliable (i.e. data-backed) information.
In the following sections, we will explore the most common mistakes in each stage.

3 STRATEGY



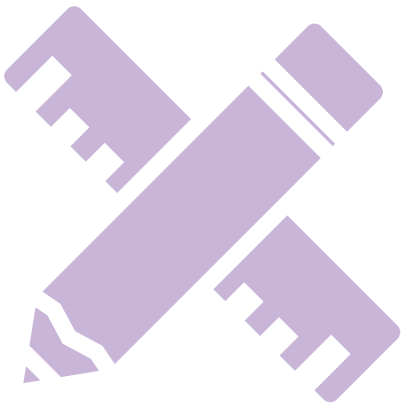
The most important issue when it comes to planning your strategy is to actually have one – and that includes writing it down. Think through the most important aspects and sit down to document your grand plan. Whether you're working alone or as part of a team (no matter how large) having a written strategy will help you keep yourself and your team accountable.

Here are some of the most common aspects people tend to get wrong:

2.YOU HAVEN'T DECIDED ON THE TOPIC (OR SET OF TOPICS) YOU ARE COVERING AND THE KPIs YOU ARE TRACKING

When engaging in content marketing the impulse to produce as much content as possible, regardless of the topic, is strong. This approach is more likely to harm you than lead you to success.

Instead, I recommend you start thinking about the target of your content marketing, what topics to cover to reach the people in your target audience, and how to track success, i.e. the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) you're after.



The Marketing Persona is an invaluable tool here, which will guide you and help you decide what's the best way to reach your target audience. Use it to draw a picture of your target audience – who is your customer, what is he influenced by, what does his buying cycle look like, how can you move him along the buying cycle and convert him from a visitor into a lead and ultimately into a customer.

Creating a robust set of KPIs is also important – this will be the metric system, that will tell you whether you're succeeding or not. Start with deciding what your general aim is – to increase brand awareness, generate leads, or improve sales? Success would look different for each of these.

You might be getting hundreds of thousands of page views on your blog posts, but if none of your visitors are leaving their email and you're after harvesting leads, is your content strategy really successful?

3. YOU HAVEN'T DECIDED ON TACTICS BASED ON YOUR CHOSEN STRATEGY

Once you have decided on who you're targeting with your content strategy and how you're going to measure success, think about the best means to reach your audience. Content marketing comes in many forms use to your advantage – blogs, whitepapers and e-books, podcasts, videos, infographics, etc.

Go back to your marketing personas and decide what means are most likely to attract and convert your target visitors. Maybe they're busy and don't have time to read lengthy blog posts. Maybe they live in a big city and have long commutes, which can be utilized for listening to podcasts.



4. YOU HAVEN'T DEVELOPED A CONTENT CALENDAR IN LINE WITH YOUR BUDGET

Another important part of your content marketing strategy is the Today content calendar. Various opinions exist on what the optimal schedule for publishing and distributing content is. Marketers are split in their opinion on whether you should produce as often as possible or only put out high-quality detailed content.

As with any aspect of marketing, I believe your schedule should be guided by your chosen strategy and tactics. For example, if your goal is to increase brand awareness, you should aim to present yourself as many times as possible, in front of as many people as possible. This would require you to create more content, even if it's less comprehensive. On the other hand, if you want to establish authority, you'd probably choose to produce less often, but create content which covers your chosen topic(s) in more detail.



Your budget for content marketing is another constraint you have to take into account when deciding on your calendar. Whether you do everything in-house (not recommended!) or hire someone to do it for you, content marketing is an expensive exercise.

B EXECUTION

Producing and distributing content is probably the most cumbersome part of content marketing. It's time-consuming and there's a thin line between success and failure.



Spending time on your content strategy will save you many hours and set you on the path to success in the execution stage. It will also allow you to focus on avoiding these common pitfalls:

5. YOU'RE PRODUCING BAD CONTENT

"Create great content" is an over-used catchphrase we've all heard. Unfortunately, we rarely hear what great content is. The most obvious answer to this question would be "It depends", yet there are some common principles that, if followed, will put you on the right track:

Produce content that is HELPFUL to your audience

This is by far the most important thing when engaging in content marketing. No matter what product or service you're offering, you want to help your customers relieve a problem they have. The same applies to the content you produce – if it's not helping your audience, why bother creating it?

Not a sales pitch!

While we're on the topic – make sure your content is not too self-centered. Remember, people come to your website to learn how to solve a problem they have, not to listen to a sales pitch. If you decide to mention your product/service, it should always be in relation to how it can help your audience.

Use the attention you have

Having people's attention shouldn't go to waste – use it to call people to some action. Depending on your chosen medium, it could be as simple as "please leave a comment", but you can also urge your visitors to leave their email to get updates from you (converting them into leads), explore a topic in more detail (by downloading a whitepaper from your website), or anything else that works with your strategy and business.

Keep it simple and understandable

Complicated words and long sentences don't make you sound smart; they help you lose the attention of your visitors. Do your best and use all available tools such as formatting, headlines, etc. to make your content as easily digestible as possible.



6. YOU'RE FORGETTING SEO

It's great if you're producing content for humans, but you shouldn't forget that robots still make a large proportion of your readers. Yes, I am talking about the search engine bots that crawl your website. The good news is that they're becoming more and more sophisticated, so it is possible to create content that satisfies both groups.



Start by optimizing (or hiring someone to do it for you) all technical aspects of your website – performance (speed), metadata, keyword targeting, page matching and other critical SEO elements. Don't forget this now applies not only to Google, but also to social media websites such as Facebook, Twitter – it determines how your information is displayed on those websites, social sharing, etc.

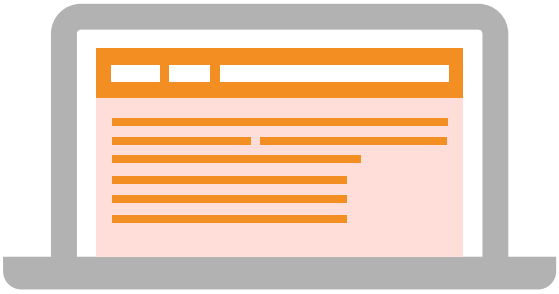


Remember to use text structure (headings) and length to your advantage with SEO. The majority of your visitors are still likely to come to your website as a result of a search, so perform keyword research and make sure to optimize the content you produce for the keywords you want to address (don't overdo it though – the search engine crawlers are smarter than you think).

7. YOU ARE NOT PROMOTING YOUR CONTENT

"Write it and they will come" is the worst piece of advice in content marketing. Yes, you should focus on producing good content, but working on distributing it should be at least on equal par with the effort you put in creating it.

Promoting your content is a question of finding the right mix of channels to use – and there are many that vary in terms of effectiveness and cost. It is up to you to experiment with the various ways and find the most effective ones. The following list is not extensive but will give you an idea of:



Content Syndication

Content Syndication is the process of re-publishing the content you created on different websites. This method is very valuable for building up your top-funnel audience. The main positive of engaging in this tactic is the opportunity to get your content in front of a new audience - sometimes one which had no idea about the existence of your own platform. Moreover, there are ways to avoid the negative effects of being identified as creating duplicate content.

Pay Per Click Advertising

PPC may seem counter-intuitive when talking about content marketing, but actually it has great potential to guide and improve your efforts in distributing and improving your production.



PPC for content can be exceedingly useful on newer platforms such as those of the big social media networks. While traditional PPC is geared towards people who are already in the research and decision-making stage of the buyer's cycle, social advertising allows you to reach people who are looking for BOTH information AND distraction, which ties better with the purpose of content marketing in general.

Additionally, social media sites allow you much more granular targeting based on demographic factors, i.e. they make it easier to reach your target personas directly, without having to "burn" money on other people who are not the right fit for your offering. Finally, PPC gives you a wealth of data, which you can use to learn more about your potential customers and how to serve them better. One interesting tangent you might want to consider is remarketing – not only will you be increasing your visibility with your potential customers, but you'll also get to "follow" them around the web and learn more about their browsing habits and interests.

Social Media / Email / Etc.

There are many free or cheap channels that shouldn't be overlooked. Each of them has some sort of advantage over the others and some might work better with your chosen strategy. Delve into the details of each tactic and find out what works best for your content and your business – which social media networks give you the best engagement, how frequently you should email your audience, and so on.



C ANALYSIS

Different forms of content are the most basic and obvious things to try out, and even within them there are many details that beg to be changed around. Test your titles, headings, and formatting, to see when your visitors are most engaged.

8. YOU DON'T MEASURE OR YOU'RE NOT MEASURING CORRECTLY

Measuring vanity stats is just as bad as not measuring at all. If you have a clearly set goal with your content marketing you should put the bulk of your time and money on tactics that support this goal.

For example, if you're selling a product that has a lengthy buying cycle, which requires working with a warm lead for a long time, what's the purpose of running a blog with thousands of readers, who are unlikely to convert to leads, but require your time and effort anyway?

9. YOU ARE NOT TESTING ENOUGH

Testing and trying different aspects of your content has been a common theme throughout whitepaper, but just in case, here it goes again – every aspect of your content marketing strategy should be open to experimentation and improvement. Different forms of content are the most basic and obvious objects to try, and even within them there are many details that beg to be developed.

Test your titles, headings, and formatting, to see when your visitors are most engaged. Experiment with day and time when publishing your content and track how that is reflected in the performance.



10. YOU HAVEN'T WAITED LONG ENOUGH

So, you've been doing everything we talked about but you still don't see any results? Remember that content marketing is a marathon, not a sprint. If you're not ready to be in it for the long run, it would be better if you didn't get into it at all.

Of course, betting on a long-term strategy does not mean you should sit back and relax. Use each cycle of the "Strategy - execution - Analysis" framework to find ways to tweak and improve your strategy. Be bold enough to redistribute your efforts and your budget towards aspects that give you better results.

CONCLUSION

This list is a good starting point for your content marketing strategy and will save you from making some of the most common blunders. That's why I think it's so important to follow a structured approach such as the "Strategy - execution - Analysis" framework.

Even if you're not committing one of the original sins of content marketing (which I outlined above), using the framework will allow you to identify and correct your mistakes. At the same time, the framework is simple enough to let you produce content without paralyzing your mind with numerous details you have to consider.

So, how do you feel about your content marketing strategy now? Have you identified any of the mistakes we talked about? How did you deal with them? Have you hit any other major roadblock we haven't covered?

Email me at kesler@INFUSEmedia.com and let me know - we'd love to help you!



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Alexander is a visionary B2B digital marketer with over 15 years of experience. Focusing on solutions for B2B demand generation, digital marketing, ABM, Intent and AI driven lead generation, among others, Alexander embraces innovation and turns concepts and methodologies into products and marketing programs that drive ROI.

As Founder and President of INFUSEmedia, a data-driven B2B Demand Generation Network, Alexander leads a global team that executes campaigns across all industries and company sizes. He leverages his market knowledge and industry expertise to help his team deploy a suite of innovative programs and campaigns that deliver revenue growth for over 400 clients of INFUSEmedia.

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