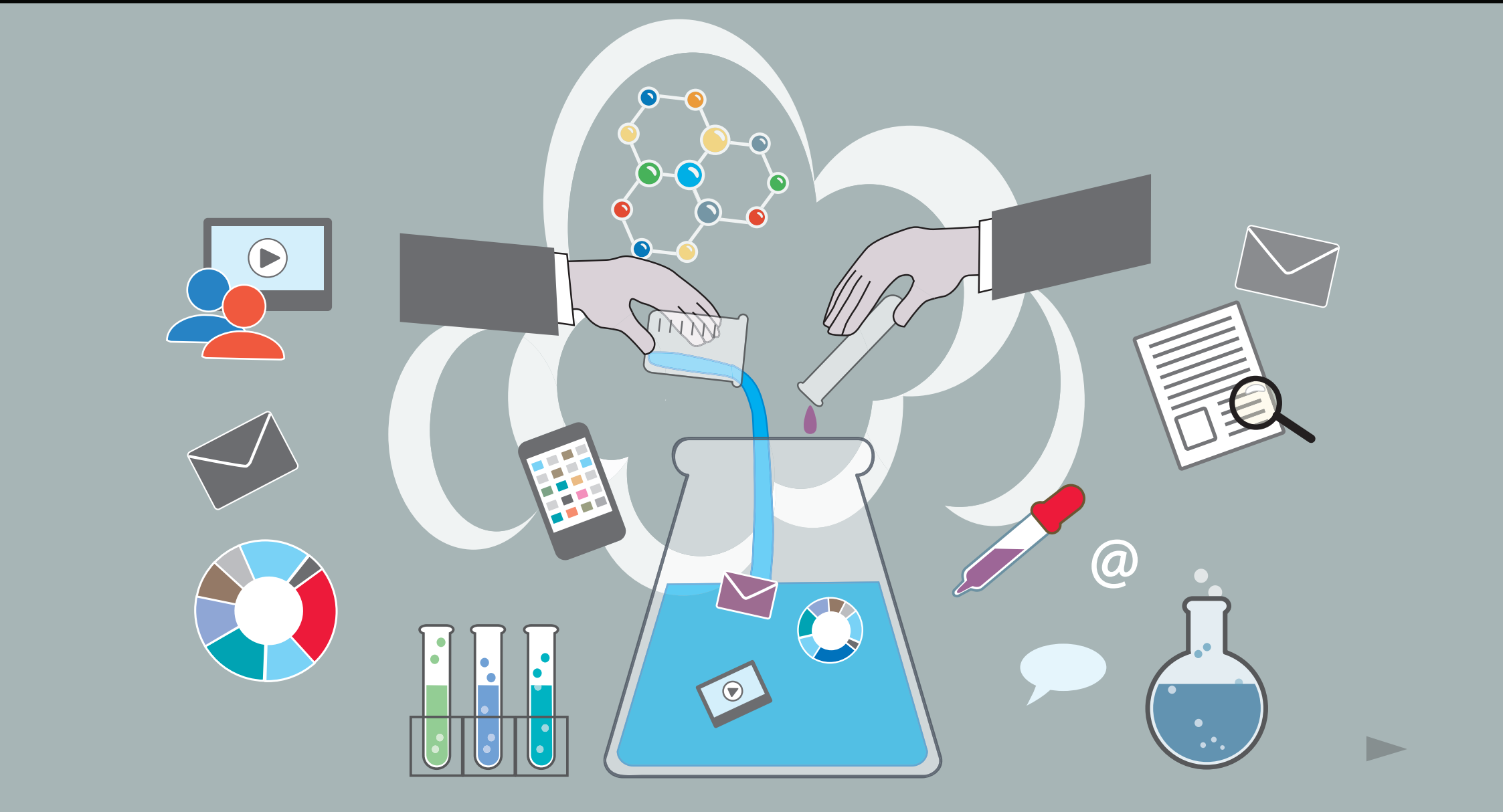
emedia's best practice series

Content Marketing

emedia



Agenda

What is content marketing?	3
The benefits of content marketing	4
How to plan your content marketing strategy	5
Creating content	8
How to create quality content	12
Are you content with your content?	13
Content promotion	15
The importance of industry influencers	17
Conclusion	18

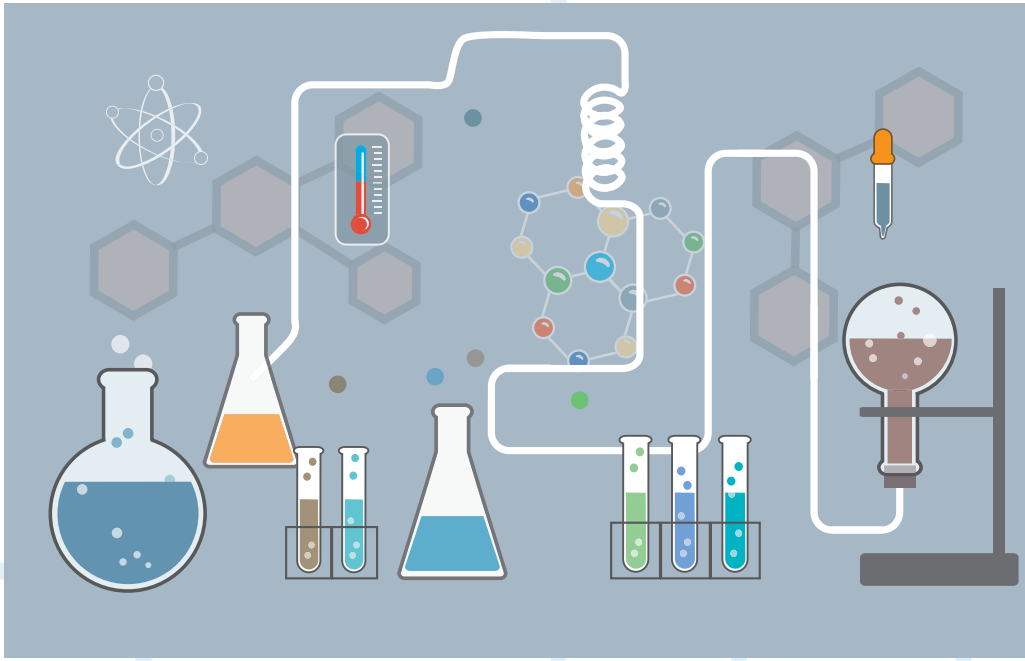


What is content marketing?

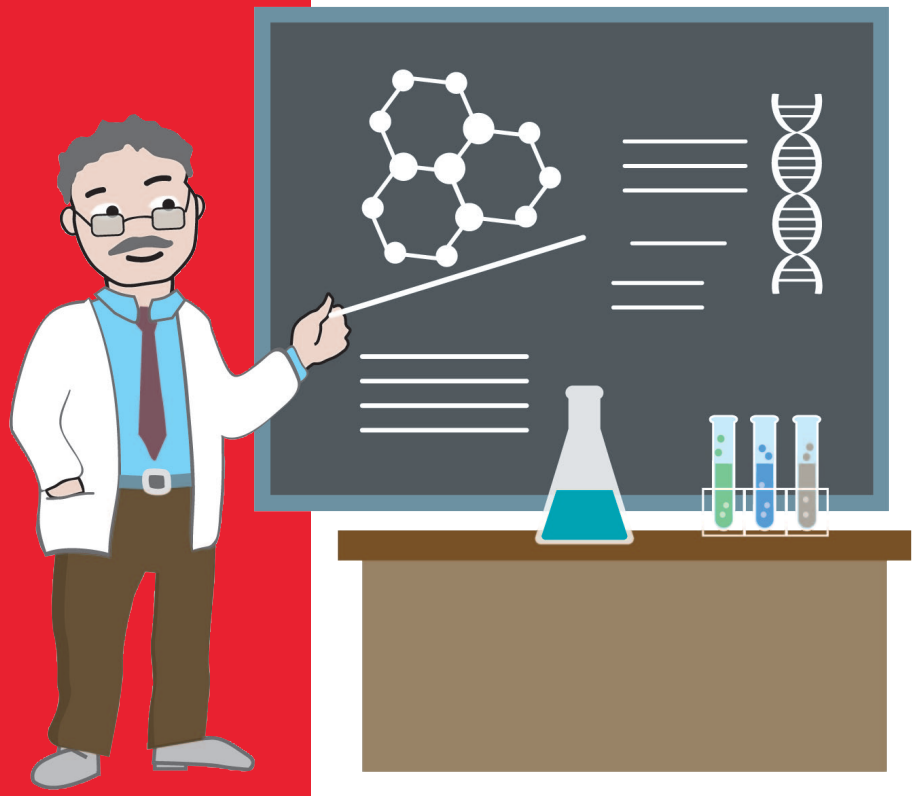
Content marketing is not a new concept. Storytelling is one of the most innate forms of communications, and for hundreds of years brands have been telling their stories to audiences. Businesses have been creating content for their audience for a long time, however what's changed is the technology and channels we now use to distribute it.

There has always been a drive to produce marketing pieces, however we've shifted from creating large quantities of content, to focus on the 'less is more' approach; creating smaller volumes of high quality content specific for the user and their needs.

Content marketing is a strategy in which marketers focus on ways to engage their audience. Using relevant and valuable content, the aim is to attract and retain buyers ultimately to drive profitable customer action (i.e. a sale).



The benefits of content marketing



Delivering consistent, relevant and high quality content that engages with buyers at various stages of the sales cycle can help to:

- **Position your business as an industry expert** and go-to source for your chosen topic, which will help build authority and credibility therefore solidifying your position in the market.
- **Drive traffic to your website** and increase your brand awareness which can help generate leads.
- **Build and maintain a solid customer relationship,** which will create a loyal community of customers who will continue to return for new and engaging content, and will be more likely to move through the purchase decision quicker.

How to plan your content marketing strategy

A content marketing strategy is designed to be integrated into your broader, overall marketing strategy. It will help to understand the ways in which content marketing can be used across the buyer's journey, how it provides value and engages with your audience, whilst achieving your goals. Here are five steps you will need to take to craft a smart and strong content marketing strategy:



1. Define your content goals

The most common B2B short term and long term content marketing goals are to:

- Increase brand awareness
- Generate sales leads
- Improve client acquisition/retention
- Drive traffic to website
- Strengthen SEO ranking



2. Research your audience

- **Define your buyers' personas -** You can then design targeted content relating to the pain points felt by the buyer personas and map the content accordingly to each stage of the buying cycle.
- **Consider how your audiences' needs will change as they go through your sales cycle -** Build a high level view of your audience and evaluate what content you have that meets their requirements.



3. Perform audit

- **Perform an internal audit on your content** by rating and grading any content you have. Keep the good stuff, tweak the ones that need TLC and bin the bits that are irrelevant and don't fulfil your objectives.
- **Carry out an external audit on your competitors** by evaluating their content marketing efforts, which will help you benchmark your content against theirs to see what activities, strategies and tactics are working for others in the industry.



4. Coordinate your content plans

- Who will be leading the content marketing campaigns?
- How much of your content will be produced in house or assigned to an external agency?
- What tools and technology do you already have or need to acquire to carry out your content marketing plans?
- Will you be using a content management system?



5. Specify performance metrics

- **Consumption metrics –** e.g. page views on website, un-gated downloads of a whitepaper via an email campaign.
- **Sharing metrics –** e.g. how many times has your content been liked, shared, tweeted and forwarded?
- **Lead generation and sales metrics –** e.g. form completions to access gated content, email subscription and conversion rates from prospects to leads to closed accounts.

Once your content marketing plan has been initiated, you can now begin to focus on content creation and promotion which are covered in depth in the next two sections.

Creating Content

What content should I create?

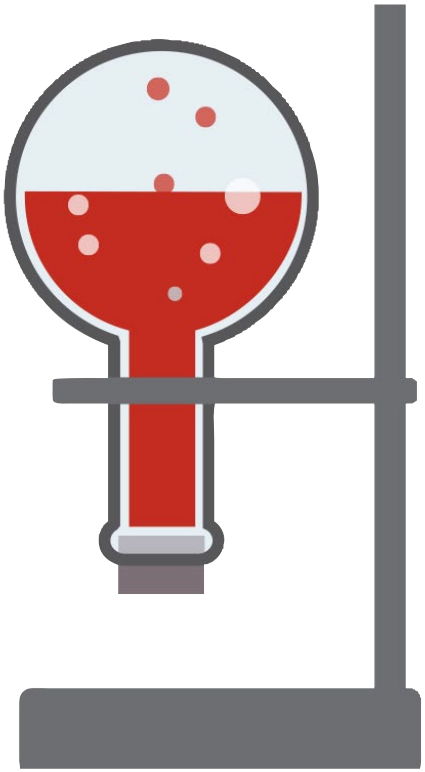
With a suite of innovative digital content products available, it can be daunting knowing how to align your content with the sales/marketing funnel. The following stages will help you decide when to create what type of content to achieve your goals.



Discovery

At this top of the funnel stage, you will want to generate interest amongst a wide audience to boost brand awareness.

- **Blogs** can help direct traffic straight to your website and convert that traffic into leads.
- **Infographics** resonate well with readers as the majority of people absorb information better when presented in a visual format.
- **Videos** are especially easy to consume and share on social media, and can help to communicate information in a memorable, entertaining way.

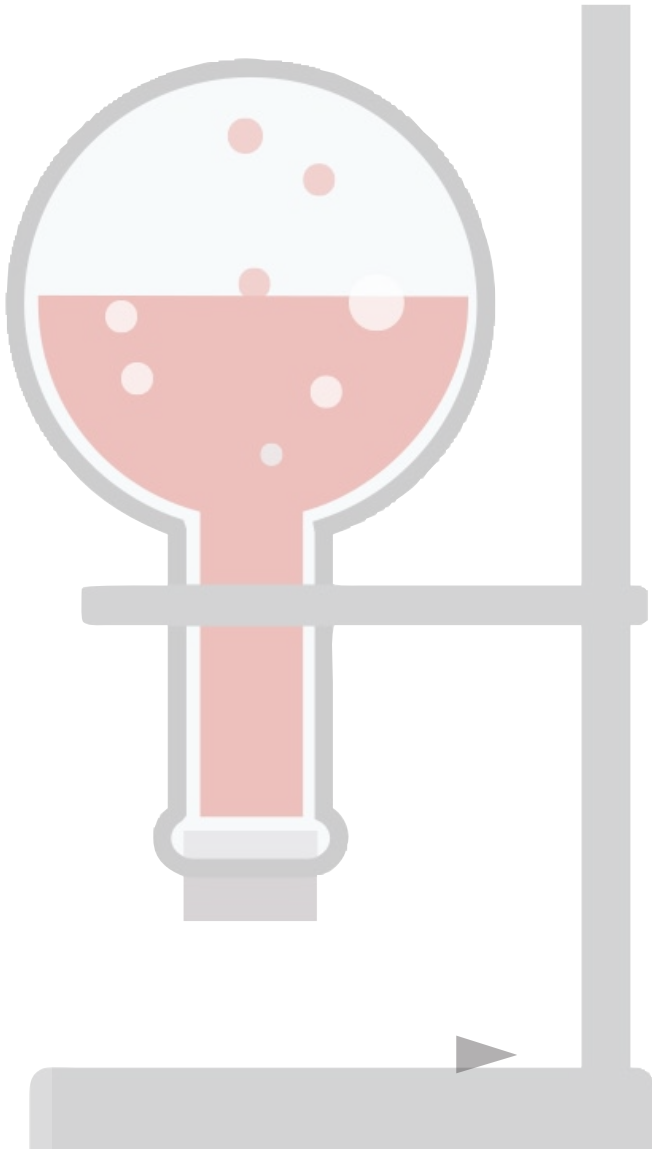




Learning and Consideration

During this middle of the funnel stage, you will want to provide content that helps a potential customer evaluate your products/services and understand what differentiates you from your competitors. Some of these in depth pieces of marketing collateral may subtly suggest that you have a greater degree of knowledge on a particular topic compared to a rival company.

- **Whitepapers** can help your target audience to easily digest a complex topic, solve a problem or aid their decision making process.
- **Webinars** can help give your business a voice and a face. Through audio and video webinars you can reach, engage and interact with a highly targeted audience.
- **Case studies/testimonials** are a tried and tested marketing staple which no longer need to be in a typical written or PDF format, they could even be in the form of short videos. If a well-known name is a client of yours, it lends your brand immeasurable credibility.





Try and Buy

The bottom of the funnel stage is where you want to convince them to purchase your product/service using sales material.

- **Presentations/Video/Product Demos** have recently become a vital ingredient in B2B marketing/selling since you can personalise the demo to each potential customer and make it as interactive as possible whilst continuing to focus on their needs and pain points.



Advocacy

At this stage beyond the funnel, you will want to retain existing clients, turn one-time buyers into repeat customers or upsell other products/services from your portfolio.

- **Special offers** can evoke the sense of being valued and increase the customer's trust and loyalty in your brand and product/service offerings.
- **Referral incentives** can motivate satisfied customers to introduce people they know who could use your product/service.
- **Sneak previews** of new products/services can create a sense of exclusivity. Offering your current customers early access to next-gen products and trends provides them with a competitive advantage and insider information.



Repurposing Content

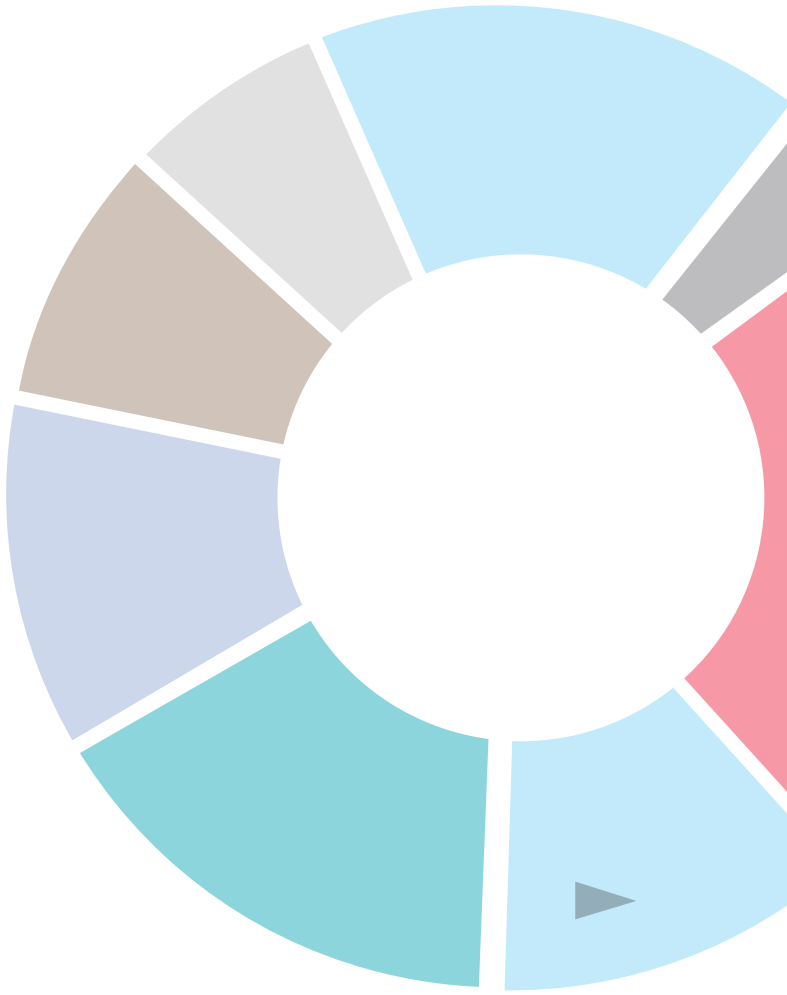
Once you've created a suite of marketing collateral, you can always slice and dice your content to put a new spin on it and revive it!

For example, if you created a whitepaper, why not turn it into a month's worth of blog posts, or a couple of infographics?

Presented a webinar? Use the transcript to create a series of blogs. If there's a working case study in there, why not create a visual PDF of the client testimonial?

When you repurpose content you benefit from:

- New traffic sources, since it offers offering your content in a range of formats increases your reach and appeal
- A chance to reinforce and enhance your message



How to create quality content

No one enjoys being sold to, so don't make promoting your products or services the obvious objective in your content. Instead, provide relevant and valuable content that helps position you as an industry expert, whilst building a relationship with your audience, gaining their trust and loyalty.

Educate

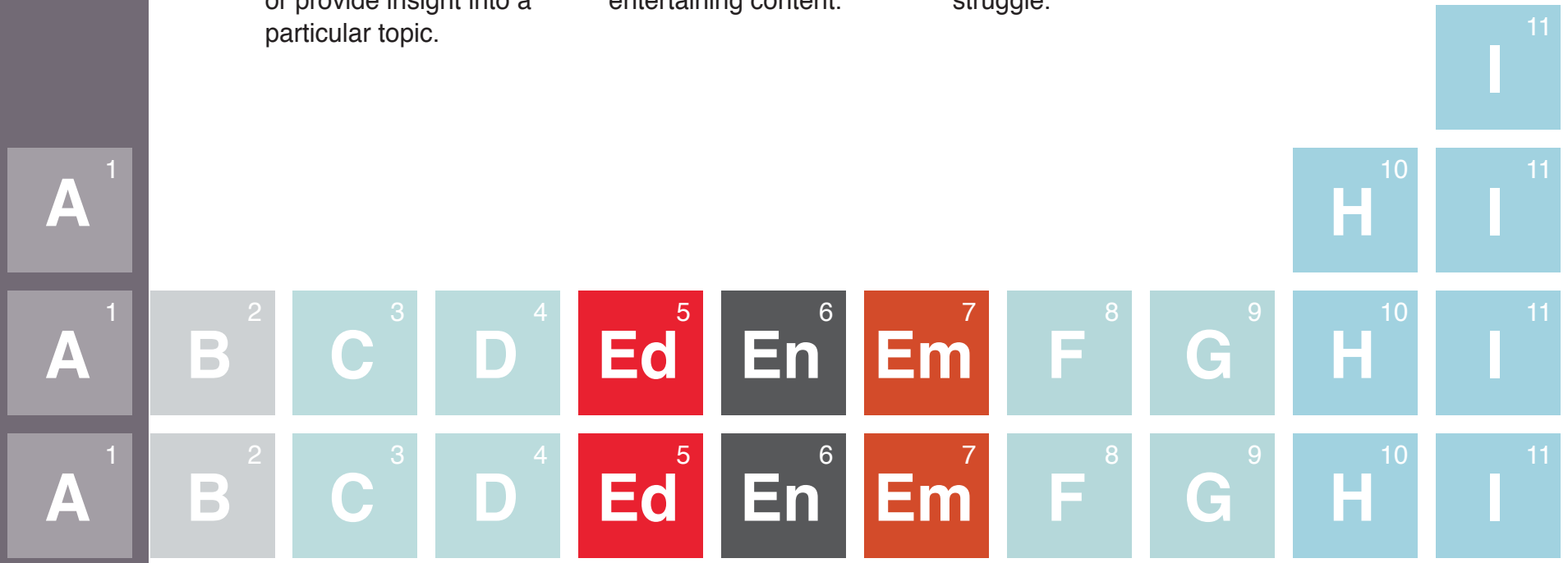
your audience through thought leadership pieces that help solve a problem, or provide insight into a particular topic.

Engage

with your prospects and customers through inspiring, informative and entertaining content.

Empathise

to demonstrate that you understand your audience's paint points or struggle.



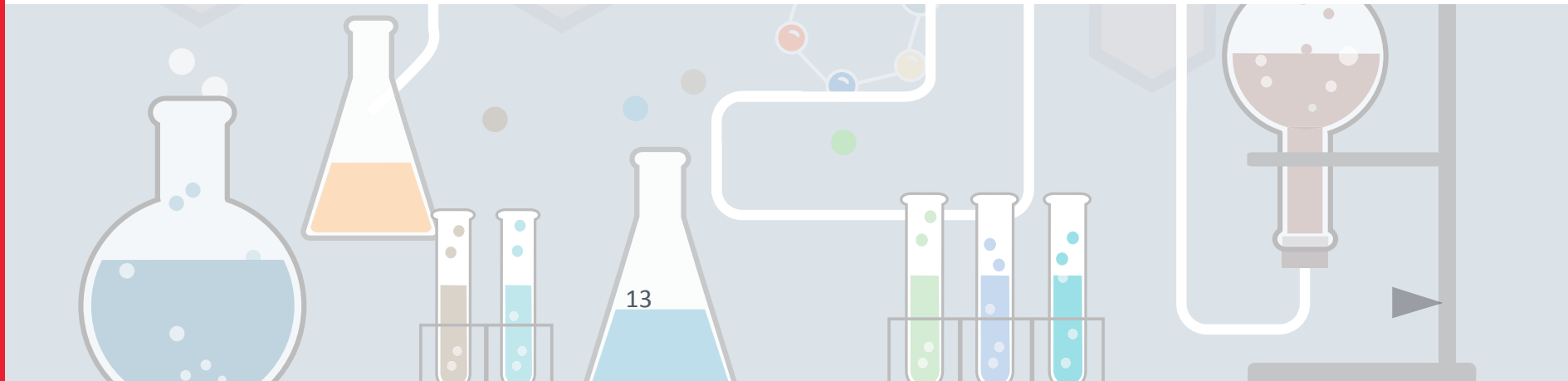
Are you content with your content?

There are two main criteria for judging content: do your readers like it and does Google like it? If they are both met, it will help your site rank well and it will help you build your reputation as a reliable font of knowledge. Irrespective of your industry or target audience, ask yourself these questions when creating your content to ensure it is high quality:

Valuable



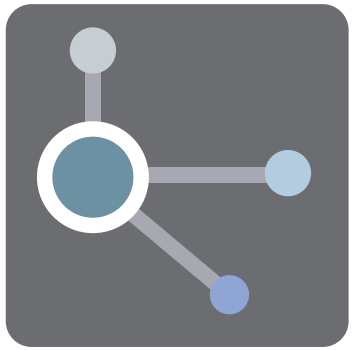
1. **Does the content provide value?** The piece may be offering an expert insight on a topic, solving a problem, answering a question or providing entertainment.
2. **Is it optimised?** Does the content address your strategic goals, e.g. driving people down the sales funnel or promoting a newly launched product?
3. **Is your content the appropriate type?** It needs to map to each stage of the buying cycle and align with the sales/marketing funnel.





Comprehensible

1. Is the language used appropriate for your intended audience?
2. Are you creating coherent content and using proper grammar and spelling?
3. Have you used aesthetically attractive, easy to read page and text formatting (on desktop, tablet and mobile)?
4. Should you be using images, video embeds or hyperlinks?



Shareable

1. **Does what it says on the tin?** Does it have a prominent call to action and social media sharing buttons, so the readers know what to do next?
2. **Is your content evergreen?** This will enable you to continue using it for the long term. On certain occasions, time specific marketing content can be very effective, i.e. targeting retailers during seasonal holidays or creating content around a specific marketing event.

Content promotion

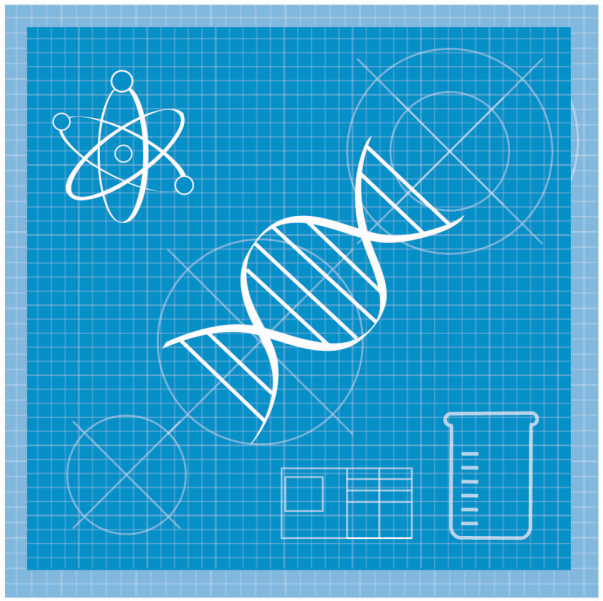
In the late 90's and early 2000's you could pretty much rest on your laurels knowing that people would find your website or newsletter, relying on the 'build it and they will come' strategy. However, with so much competition these days, you need to find unique ways to rise above the din, market your content and engage with your audience.

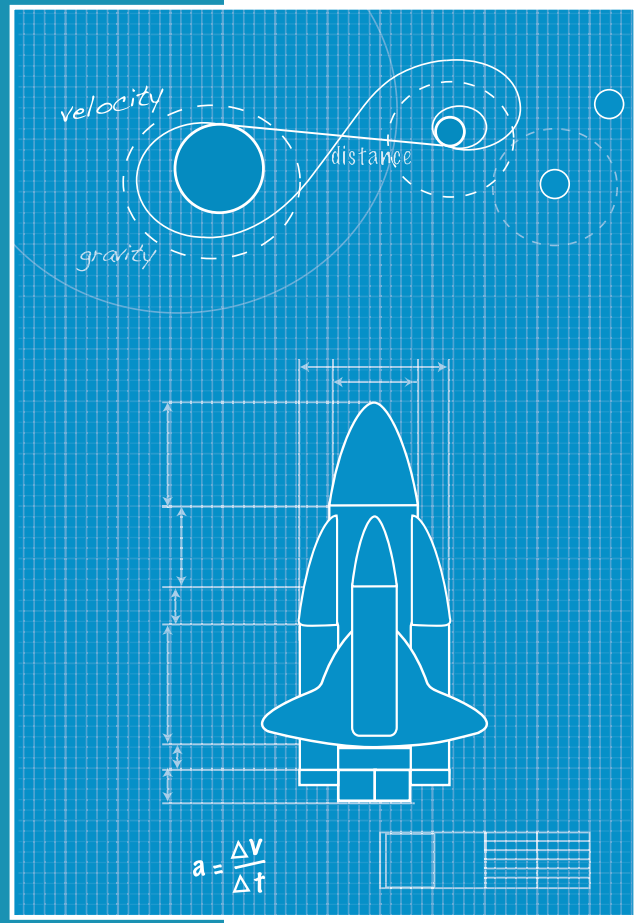
Content is only as good as your ability to promote it. Having a comprehensive content library is all well and good, but you can't expect your audience to engage with your content if you haven't effectively promoted it.

Here is our best practice game plan to ensure you get as much traction from your content as possible:

Planning Stage

- **Segment your audience –** keeping in mind your buyer persona; you can segment your database, create separate audience lists and then match your content to each list.
- **Plan your promotion –** create a content promotion calendar to keep track of when each piece is scheduled to go out and via which channels.





Promotion Stage

To begin with, publish your content through owned channels and then launch earned and paid efforts to amplify your exposure.

Owned media – This is a cost efficient channel where you can control the message and user experience through your website, emails, blogs, newsletters and social media channels.

Earned media – Content promoted by third party publishers can help to endorse and add credibility to your brand message, since they are perceived as trusted and authoritative sources by your audience.

Paid media – Is beneficial when seeking to highly target your audience via guaranteed paid media efforts.

The importance of industry influencers

Why are they important?

- Since they are an expert who isn't affiliated with your organisation, they can provide instant credibility when endorsing your product or brand.
- They usually have a loyal fan base, people who have slowly instilled their trust in them, giving you access to an established and engaged audience.
- They often have powerful relationships with top tier media and have a large social media following, all which give you greater exposure.



How can you contact them?

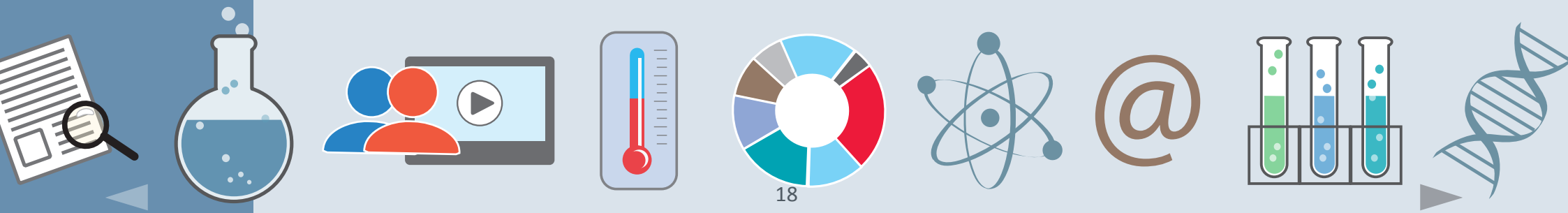
- Identifying, connecting and building relationships with industry influencers can take time.
- Once you identify influencers through tools such as **Buzz Sumo** and **Viral Content Bee**, you could connect with them, follow them, mention them, reference something they have tweeted, or submit your content to them, explaining why they would benefit from sharing your content with their audience.
- If it's difficult to submit directly to the influencer themselves, you could post your content on a community or group on LinkedIn that the influencer is a member or leader of.
- Ask to collaborate with them on content creation pieces such as reports and webinars. Highlight the benefits to them: it can bring your audience right to their digital doorstep.

Conclusion

Content marketing should be highly regarded as one of the key elements in your overall marketing plan.

When employing a content marketing strategy the idea is not to expect overnight success, instead you should be ready to play the long game; done well, your audience will keep coming back to you for your dependable, fresh content, and you will continually attract new prospects to engage with your brand.

Be patient. It takes preparation and persistence to attract, guide and nurture your audience so that they ultimately progress from audience member to customer.



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