

Content marketing: a sustainable approach

Used appropriately, content marketing is a powerful tool that enables long-lasting customer relationships to be fostered in a cost-effective manner. Used inappropriately or without due consideration, however, it can leave you and your audience drowning under a flood of poorly integrated, expensive communications.

At Mason Zimbler, we advise marketing professionals approaching content marketing anew to do away with any ideas of short-termism and adopt a sustainable strategic approach that will serve you and your customers well for years to come.

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The business case

What benefits can your company expect to realise from adopting a considered long-term approach to content marketing? What business case can you offer to convince your board that now is the time to formalise your strategy? In their research report "Marketing Executive's Agenda for 2012, October 2011" industry analysts The Aberdeen Group present some incredibly convincing evidence in support of fast action.

For a start, companies with a best-in-class approach to content marketing enjoy a customer retention rate some 78% higher than industry laggards plus a significantly higher contribution from marketing to the sales-forecasted pipeline. Collectively, these two factors affect an average year-on-year increase of company revenue some 27% higher than laggard organisations.

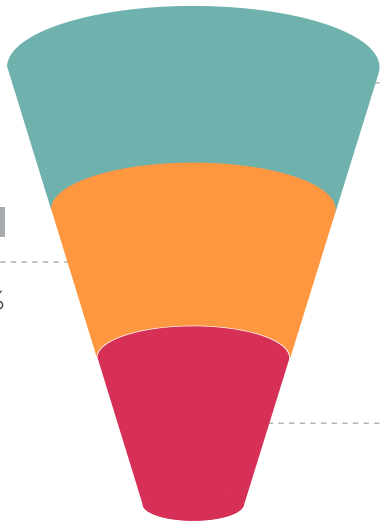
Also worth consideration is the competitive advantage companies can gain by striking while the iron is hot. Only 16% of organisations currently have a robust strategy for their content marketing. This opens the door for ambitious, agile marketing departments to rapidly strengthen their foothold in the marketplace.

Best practices

The majority of best-in-class companies audited by The Aberdeen Group assigned dedicated resource to content creation. Many have also implemented processes to analyse their content's effectiveness and map different messages, formats and channels to different buyer personas and levels of the funnel.

From this data you can draw a clear picture of how the most effective content marketing strategies are structured in relation to different levels of the marketing funnel.

MOST POPULAR CONTENT FOR BEST-IN-CLASS ORGANISATIONS SURVEYED IN THE ABERDEEN GROUP'S LEAD MANAGEMENT SURVEY 2012



Most popular formats BEST IN CLASS

Use recorded presentations (e.g. Slideshare)	83%

Most popular formats BEST IN CLASS

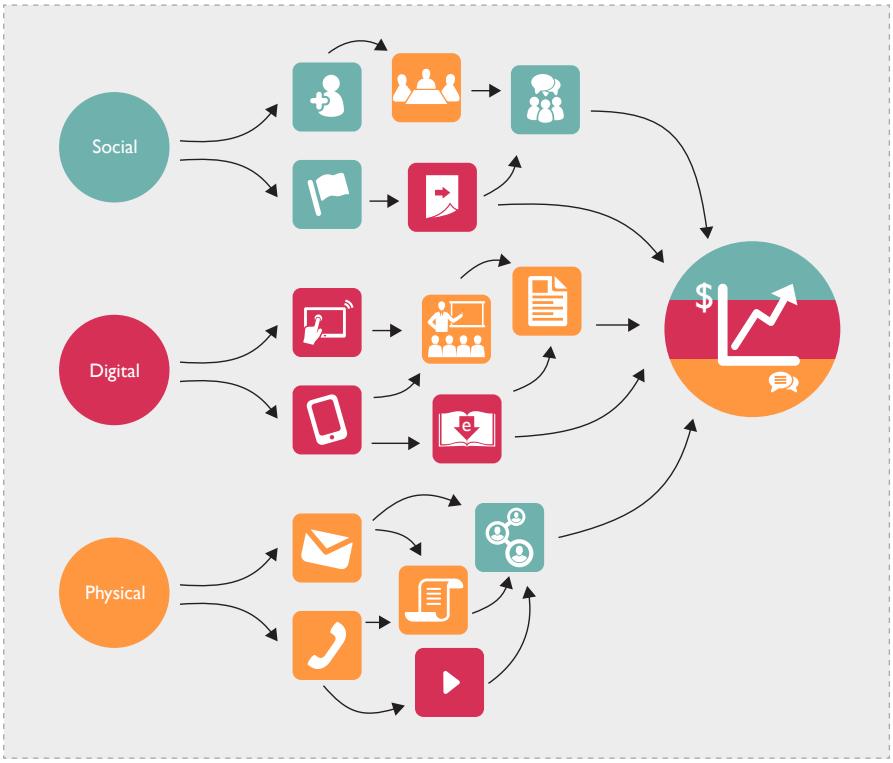
Whitepapers	87%
eBooks	89%

Most popular formats BEST IN CLASS

Whitepapers	80%
Recorded presentations	75%
eBooks	67%
Product-specific content	62%
Content portals	57%
Podcasts	57%
Asst. tools/ROI calculators	56%



Flexible storytelling



The Aberdeen Group's findings reveal a trend for adapting content formats to the lifestyles of your audience. But it doesn't show the importance of adapting the very content of your content around your customer as well.

What will they find valuable? What might they share socially? How do different audience groups actually differ?

These are the questions on which effective strategies are built. And at each level of customer engagement, you need to take into account a number of considerations that will enable you to map your content effectively to the buyer journey.

Theory into practice

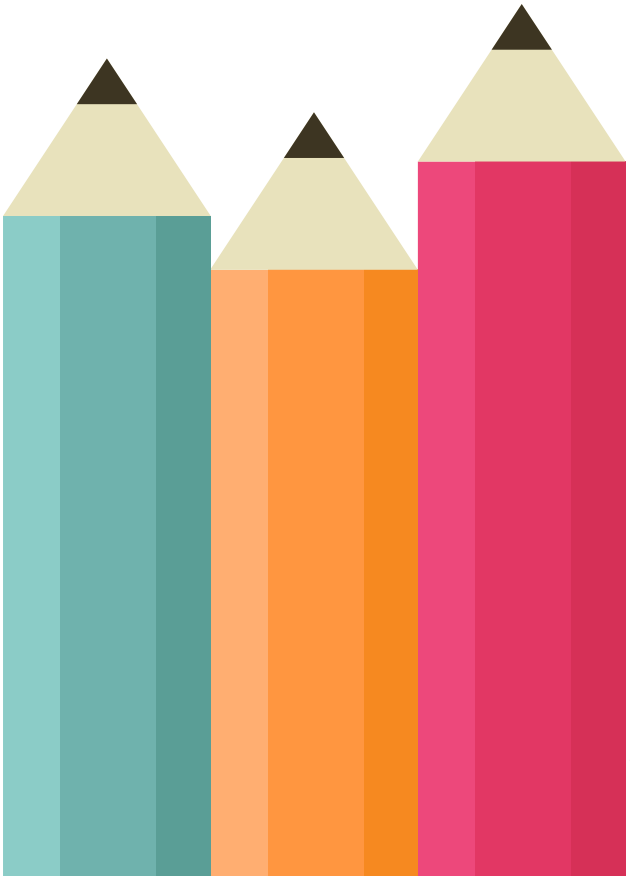
Knowing the theory behind effective content marketing is one thing. But being able to put it into practice is considerably more challenging. The best place to start is by identifying your organisation's starting point. At Mason Zimbler, we use the '4Ms' model to help companies categorise their current capablities, problems and required first actions.

	Today	Tomorrow
Muddle	Content created and distributed ad hoc. Poor visibility or content storage.	Get to grips with storage to make your investment wiser.
Monster	Huge amount of content generated. Often too much to manage.	Audit and analyse your existing content to deploy it more effectively.
Mini	Limited amount of content. Limited resource to create more.	Aggregate from external content sources and invest selectively in high-impact content.
Mono	Quality content. But lacking in diversity or ability to serve different customer needs.	Adapt existing assets to address specific audience needs and increase cut through.

Making the first step in the right direction, to overcome that initial inertia, is often half the challenge. Once your company begins to see the benefits, it rarely takes additional persuasion to continue down the content marketing road. And with the right support you can progress at an impressive speed.







Next steps

Finding a reputable agency to support, direct and optimise your content marketing strategy offers the simplest and often most cost-effective route to long-term success. Specialists such as Mason Zimbler offer a range of services to facilitate your content strategy, sourcing, creation, analysis and even recycling.

Working alongside experts in the field, with experience working for the likes of IBM, enables you to avoid any potential costly pitfalls, while also ensuring your knowledge grows just as fast as your revenue. Because ultimately, the only watertight strategy for sustainable success is a well-rounded education.

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