



CONTENT MARKETING

A tailored content strategy is critical to engaging prospects while retaining existing consumers.

RAVEN⁵
Unique as your customers.

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Introduction to Content Marketing

Are you reaching your target market? Your brand's voice needs to speak to its audience in the right tone in all media it produces. Brands need to develop a custom tailored content strategy that attracts & engages prospective consumers, while retaining current customers.

A great way to ensure engagement is utilizing a contest marketing program to increase emails, social followers and increase brand awareness. Incentivized programs allow you to gather more consumer data, and act as a mechanism to distribute coupons that drive traffic online and in-store. IT also provides content, relevant content for prospects and customers.

A few key considerations for brands to stay relevant and continue to grow are:

Define a Target Audience: Keep on hand a target market persona visible and nearby. Include demographics, psychographics, interests, media consumption habits, social behaviours, and motivation for purchase of your product/service.

Develop Content Marketing Objectives: Create a content marketing mission statement that describes your audience, what types of content will be delivered to your audience, and why this content is valuable to them.

Optimize Distribution Methodology: Decide which channels will work best to publish and broadcast your content. Your decision will ultimately depend on your target audience's media consumption habits and analytics that reveal which channels captivate your audience's attention.

Establish a Content Creation and Monitoring Strategy: Delegate responsibility for your companies' media channels (web, social, email, mobile, etc.). Define a focus for blogs/postings, and set standards and processes for writing, proofing and publishing.

Publish Valuable and Engaging Content: Demonstrate the B2C or B2B values for each piece of content you set out to produce – don't just post because you can? Give your brand authenticity by putting out useful, entertaining content that shows your passion & expertise in your industry.

Measure Your Success, Analyze, and Adjust: Generate and analyze regular metrics reports to evaluate the success of your content strategies, and make adjustments where necessary.

Blogging For Business

It's not only one of the most valuable marketing tools available to businesses, but it's also a chance for your brand to make an impact. Hubspot's previous analysis of 1,500 small business customers found that companies with blogs attracted 55% more visitors to their sites than those that did not.

It's also worth noting that those that blogged had a 434% increase of pages indexed in search engines. Hubspot also found that businesses with websites greater than 400 pages, got 6x more leads than those with 51-100 pages. Realize that your blog can only be as effective as its functionality, appearance and quality of its content.

Infotainment

Keeping your content informative first, entertaining second, and always relevant is crucial to your blog's success. A good example is the Zillow blog, which can be attributed to the quality and relevance of the content. The site covers real estate topics such as home improvement, market trends and celebrity real estate news. They most recently covered actor Jake Gyllenhaal's home up for sale. These types of posts are not only relevant to the overall subject matter, but also attract readers interested in the actor and not necessarily real estate.

Diversification

Some companies hire ghostwriters to create content, then put the name of company employees on them as the author. This strategy is only effective if the writer is familiar with your industry and company culture. Services like Elance, oDesk and WriterAccess are three popular websites to find freelance writers.



Ensure that you get a sample article first or links to other published work of the writer to gauge the fit. Those with SEO and news experience make the best writers for a business blog. Another option would be to hire a freelance editor to proofread content crafted internally. Spelling and grammar errors are a definitive way to lose credibility and even potential customers.

Visual Storytelling

Using visual assets to market your brand is undeniable. Consumers expect high quality visual entertainment every time they use a connected device. Keep in mind that 90% of the information sent to the brain is visual, and visuals are processed 60,000x faster than text. Have a look at these stats from **Marktwired**:

- One minute of video communicates the equivalent of roughly 1.8 million words
- Videos are shared 12x more than links and text combined across all social networks
- Photos are shared 2x more than text updates
- Instagram now boasts a 300 million active user base and 70 million photos uploaded per day
- On average, Pinterest users follow more brands than Facebook or Twitter users
- Snapchat has over 150 million people using it daily with more than 8 billion views per day

Despite these numbers, countless businesses neglect the visual storytelling arm of their marketing mix. Below are some tips to help your business's visual storytelling journey:

- 1. Determine Desired Impact of Visual Content.** Your visual story needs to be relevant to both your target audience and business objectives. Be sure to answer these questions: "Why will my audience care about my brand's visual content?" and "What specific value will my visual content provide my followers and potential customers?"
- 2. Optimize Processes of Creating and Publishing Professional Quality Visual Content.** Pick and manage a team in-house or an agency of professionals to create, publish, and promote your brand's visual story.
- 3. Keep Videos Short on Facebook.** Videos that are organically uploaded to Facebook typically generate a better reach than links to videos on external platforms like YouTube or Vimeo. That being said, Facebook users typically desire to view "snippets" when scrolling through their feeds, so keep videos on Facebook short. We recommend posting videos that are 1 minute or less to Facebook, and uploading longer videos to YouTube – a channel that users browse with the goal and mindset of watching videos.

Paid Social Media Advertising

With Facebook's algorithm change this year, it forces brands that want to generate significant online reach to utilize paid campaigns. Simply put, if you want people to see your ad, you have to pay!

Deciding which social media channels to invest in for paid advertising depends on your brand's target audience and social media habits. Each platform has different targeting/market segmentation options that can help you deliver different degrees of personalized ads. They can be targeted to segments that are classified on interest, demographics, locations, and even browsing history.

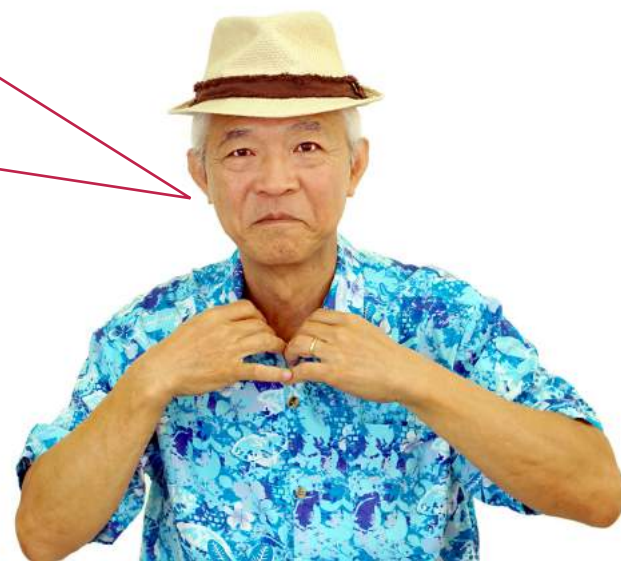
The following are general best practices for paid social across all channels:

Test multiple variations and combinations of images and copy for your ads. Evaluate their individual performance, and then factor the findings of your analysis into creation of content for future ads.

Keep it personal! Make the purpose of the ad transparent and specific to a need in your target audience. Ideally, you can articulate the value of your products/services to your prospects in a transparent, yet clever and attention-grabbing manner. Include your business's value proposition and a direct call-to-action that will motivate them to click on your ad.

Bid within the recommended PPC range for each social media platform and for each campaign. Pricing will vary across social media channels, as will the frequency of clicks your ads receive, should you choose to launch a multichannel paid social media advertising campaign. Factor this knowledge into your paid ad budget allocation processes. Evaluate the success of bidding within recommended ranges upon the start of your campaign, and then "boost" your most successful ads with a higher bid where you see fit.

Optimize landing pages for your ads. Ensure that the pages where your ads lead are relevant to both the ad content and target audience. Furthermore, ensure that various purchase pathways and calls to actions are prevalent on ad landing pages to provide prospects an easily navigable online experience.



Multi-Channel Social Media Marketing

If brands want to successfully market themselves across multiple social networks, they can no longer publish the same content on each channel at the same time. Without diverse content, there will be no incentive for fans to follow you on multiple channels. The primary goal of multichannel social media marketing should be to deliver unique value to followers on each social profile. Remain mindful of the unique personas and mind states of users of different social networks, and tailor your content and messaging “voice” accordingly.



Multi-Channel Social Media Marketing Cont'd

TED Talks, an organization dedicated to creating and capturing presentations on “ideas worth spreading” provides diverse, relevant content throughout its social media profiles.

Facebook

TED Talks uses Facebook to share and facilitate discussion around its vast library of presentation videos. The post lures you in with a quote, and if it captures your interest, you can watch a whole video on the subject! Be sure to consistently deliver valuable content of all formats – links, photos, and videos – that your audience will value.



Twitter

Here we see TED Talks post a photo relevant to a current controversial issue – protestors in action in response to the Ferguson/Michael Brown incident. Instead of taking a political stance on the issue, TED provides its followers with an article containing various videos of speakers discussing “smart ways to think about racism”. This tweet illustrates the importance of delivering socially relevant content in a timely manner for engaging twitter followers.



Multi-Channel Social Media Marketing Cont'd

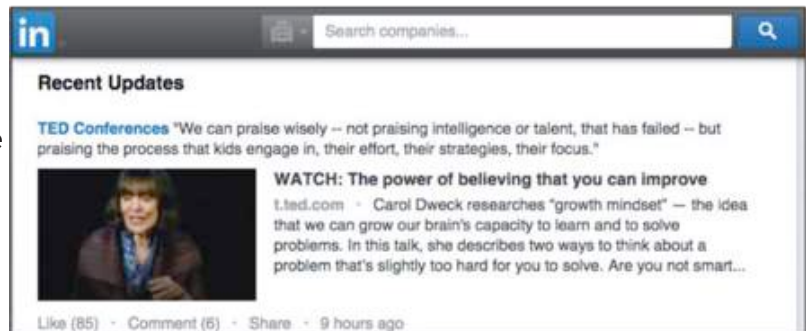
Instagram

We like to think of Instagram as a brand's "first person/in the field view." The focus of Instagram marketing should be delivering visually stunning photos using humanized perspective and voice in the caption. Posting promotional content on Instagram is a surefire way to lose followers. Instead, authentically tell your brand's visual story with Instagram! Again, TED Talks executes this effectively with imagery relevant to a cause discussed in one of their presentations.



LinkedIn

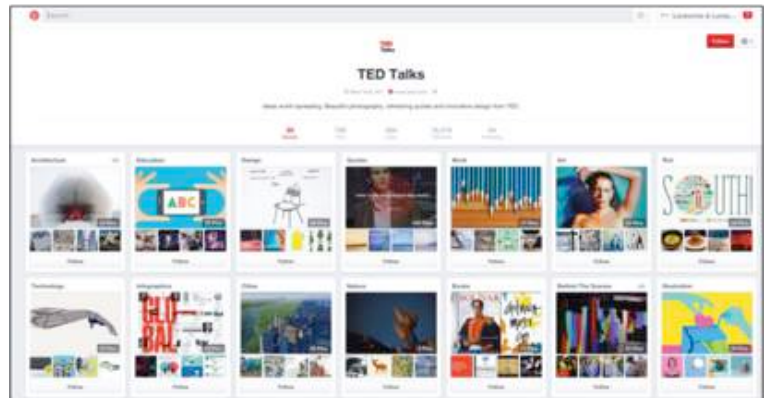
TED Talks posts a video about self-improvement on LinkedIn. A smart move, considering that a great deal of regular LinkedIn users continuously strive to improve themselves and their careers. Think of LinkedIn as a prime place to market your brand's professional and authoritative content that people in your industry will benefit from. Additionally, be sure to market your business on LinkedIn for recruitment purposes – ensuring that the culture, success, and industry authority is prominently visible.



Multi-Channel Social Media Marketing Cont'd

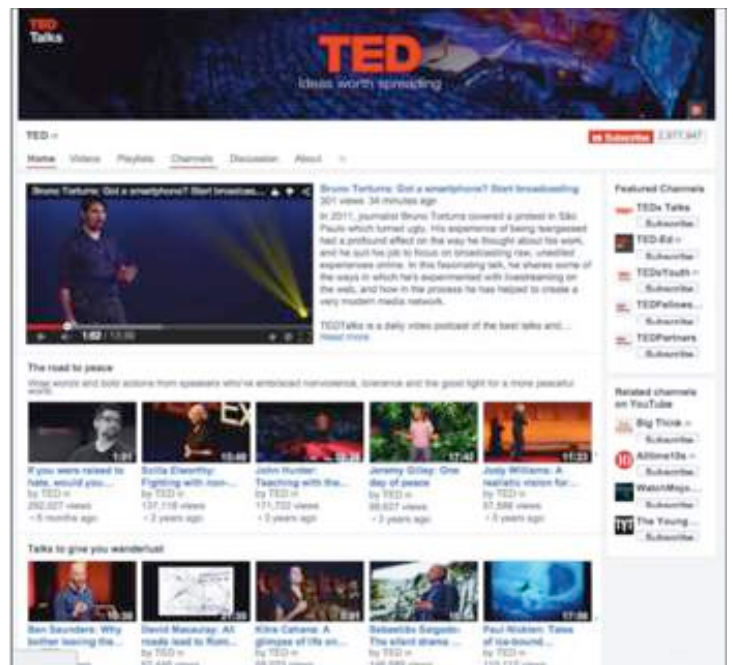
Pinterest

The TED Talk's Pinterest profile features a wide variety of boards that contain powerful images that are relevant to the various topics of discussion in their videos. Note both the diversity of subject matter and the precise focus of each board. Maintaining a variety of boards will give consumers the ability to follow aspects about your brand that they truly care about, and disregard those they don't. Giving your followers options on what types of content to follow humanizes your brand's identity and adds authenticity.



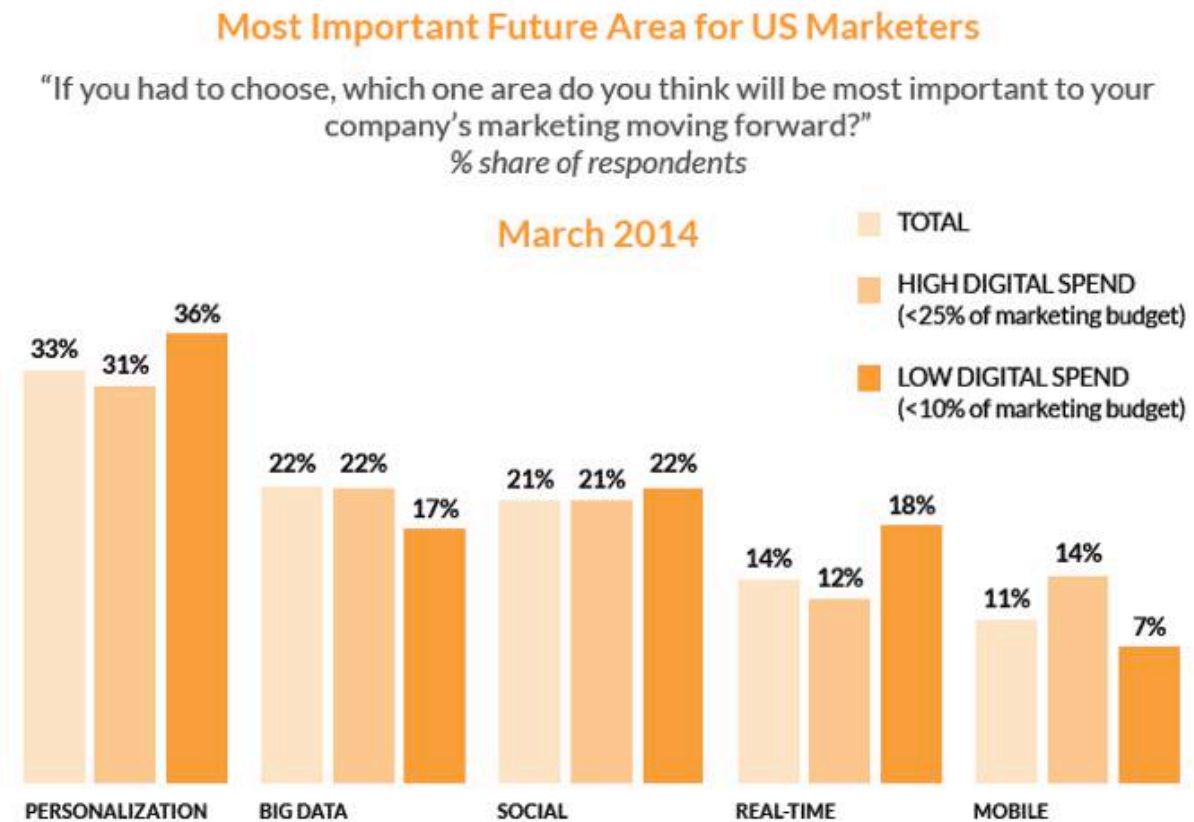
YouTube

TED Talk's YouTube page, like Pinterest, is a highly organized library of categorized content – providing users quick and easy access to videos that will give them inspiration on a desired category. If your brand relies heavily on video content, be sure to organize its YouTube channel, and post quality videos that deliver unique value and/or branded entertainment to your audience.



Personalization

We all know the 4 P's of Marketing- Product, Place, Price, and Promotion. We are adding a fifth P into the mix due to its vital importance in the evolving digital marketing world- **Personalization**. Marketing has changed from company-based to client-based, and if you want your business to maintain relevancy, personalizing your brand's online experience is essential for digital marketing success. In a recent survey conducted by Adobe, US marketers placed personalization at the top of their most important future marketing needs.



Source: Adobe

How you personalize your marketing efforts will rely heavily on your brand and target audience persona. Below are some necessities for effective usage:

- Monitor trends and popular topics of conversation for your target market
- Utilize your brand's personality when creating content and engaging with social media users
- Create web and mobile friendly purchase pathways that deliver information relevant to prospects' interests or browsing history
- Utilize a retargeting service like AdRoll to try and convert past web visitors
- Segment your Email Marketing list to deliver custom emails to prospects that have indicated specific interests


Staying Relevant and Real Time Engagement

Ensure that your marketing content is relevant by monitoring newsfeeds, hashtags, and social conversation about topics relevant to your brand. A fantastic example of real-time creative social engagement came from a fan on Audi's behalf during the 2014 Winter Olympics:



In response to the 5th Olympic ring failing to open during the opening ceremony, this Audi fan quickly produced and published the above ad. The ad (primarily broadcasted across Audi's social media channels) is a classic example of delivering timely, engaging, clever, branded content that is relevant to current events. Audi gained significant exposure from this specific piece of user-generated content - illustrating the effectiveness of creatively contributing to relevant social issues. Below is a list of tactics to help you brand stay relevant in social conversation:

- Follow trending hashtags and topics, and (if possible) create unique, branded content that is relevant – deliver in a timely manner.
- Proactively research conversations relevant to your brand across all social channels, and engage! Offer unique opinions, provide a unique perspective, and link to pertinent online resources – this will help establish brand authenticity and add more of a human voice to a marketing channel.
- Don't be afraid to post edgy and novel creative content & responses – just be sure to remain politically correct, and avoid topics such as politics or religion.



Not sure what's trending? Visit [google.ca/trends](https://www.google.ca/trends)

Millennial Marketing

Millennials are the most tech-savvy and informed group of consumers to date. With access to multiple online reviews and product information, they have the knowledge and ability to make hyper-informed purchase decisions. Furthermore, Millennials can and will ignore overly promotional and irrelevant marketing content. Here are some considerations to keep in mind when marketing to Millennials:

- Millennials demand the most time efficient and mobile friendly online experiences available to use for shopping and researching – make sure your brand’s mobile and web presences can readily give prospects the information and rapid shopping experience they desire.
- Millennials embrace the idea of philanthropy and take pride in shopping/interacting with brands that publicly showcase their positive impact on the world. A recent study by Cone Communications, found that “millennials are hyperaware of, and have high expectations for, corporate social responsibility efforts to make the world a better place -- for themselves and broader society.”
- Millennials are heavy social media users, and often turn to social media as a method of procrastination - make sure your social messaging and content strategy tailors to this procrastination mind-state to earn the attention of the millennial market. Ensure your content has social context and delivers concise, shareable value.
- When making purchase decisions, Millennials will almost always consider reviews from friends/ family and online reviews – monitor relevant review platforms (Google+, Yelp, etc.) to control the quality of your online brand perception.

Marketing Automation Software

Hubspot describes marketing automation as “software and tactics that allow businesses to nurture prospects with highly personalized and useful content that helps convert them into customers.” Essentially, marketing automation software can help streamline the processes of delivering the right content, to right prospects, at the right time and then provide these prospects with optimal pathways to purchase. It is important to note, however, that marketing automation software is primarily an platform that automates traditional marketing process online. Any such software will require an investment of both time and money to set up, manage, and optimize. Make sure your business is ready for Marketing Automation before time of purchase, implement the software to your existing CRM and web platforms, and then remember the below considerations as you optimize your inbound marketing strategy:

- **Nurture Your Leads.** Personalize communications with leads - even those that aren't sales ready - to further qualify them move them along their purchase pathways and generate valuable, mutually beneficial conversation. Define customer segments and interests, then build follow up email templates for your sales teams to utilize when they reach out to leads for further qualification.
- **Utilize Lead Scoring.** Create a lead scoring model that fits your sales cycle and brand to ensure your sales force is spending its time efficiently by pursuing qualified leads.
- **Optimize Online Forms.** According to a Marketo study, short forms (5 fields or less) on websites outperform longer forms by 34%. If applicable and relevant, establish progressive profiling to assist in your lead qualification process.
- **Measure Marketing Automation Performance.** Set up goals and define impactful and insightful metrics to measure your automation goals!

Summary

Content continues to reign as king; developing your content marketing strategy is a crucial step in any contest marketing plan.

As the marketers who are now empowered to tell stories, our job is to engage customers and make it look effortless. There is a wonderful quote attributed to Mark Caine that says, "Meticulous planning will enable everything a man does to appear spontaneous."

Ready to go?

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**Your brand is unique,
so are your customers.**



RAVEN5 finds new prospects and engages existing customers via contest marketing programs that utilize social sharing technology.