

WHY DOES CONTENT MARKETING MATTER?

You can't read more than a few sentences these days without coming across some mention of content marketing and why it's crucial to your business. In this paper, we're going to help you understand what content marketing is, why everyone's talking about it and why you might want to pay attention to what they're all saying.

What is Content Marketing?

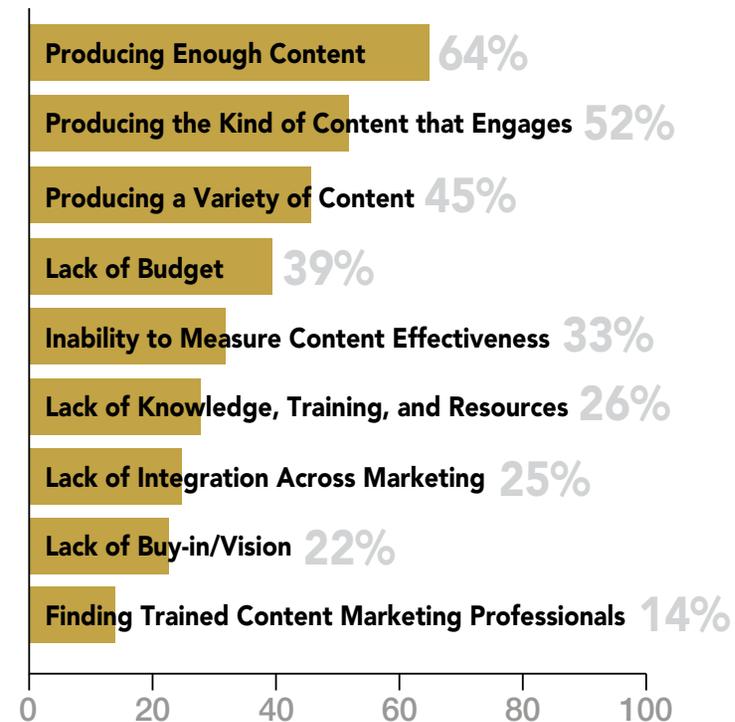
So is content marketing something completely new, or is content marketing something from the past being dressed up as a completely new concept? Let's start by trying to explain what it is and why it's suddenly become such a popular topic. Content marketing is a term used to describe the shift in marketing emphasis from predominantly quick, advertising-based messages positioned to catch buyers' eyes to more in-depth, learning-based content developed to address buyers' specific needs at a specific time in their buying process. Content marketing isn't meant to replace traditional advertising, which is exceptional at providing brand awareness. Rather, it's meant to complement it by adding more depth, context and relevance for the reader.

Why Is It So Popular?

The huge increase in discussions around the concept of content marketing is really a direct result of the radical shifts that have taken place in media consumption in the past decade. Traditional marketing messages reflected the available tools at that time—newspaper and magazine pages, TV and radio ads. Marketers simply didn't have the ability to provide any real depth to the message because those vehicles couldn't provide a longer-form opportunity. In some ways, those media tried to adapt. In TV, for example, the infomercial was born as a long-form advertising vehicle, but marketers often trivialized the format with overt product pitches and over-the-top sales messages. In B2B, the advertorial was born as a longer format with the ability to provide more education and depth. In both cases, however, the content itself was still limited to being broadcast or shown to massive cross-sections of an audience, and required the reader/buyer to come 'get' that content via an established vehicle like a TV or a magazine.

But with the growth not only of the Internet but particularly social media like Twitter and LinkedIn for the B2B market, marketers suddenly had a much more diverse means of distributing their messages. Even more importantly, those same buyers now had mechanisms by which they could pull content to themselves based on their interests, as

Challenges that B2B Content Marketers Face



2013 B2B Content Marketing Benchmarks—North America: CMI/MarketingProfs

opposed to having to go out and find it. Clearly, this created a wealth of opportunity for marketers to reach out to prospects in a wide variety of ways. But with that came a new set of challenges. With so many new avenues at their disposal to pursue information and with so many new mechanisms for marketers to push out messages, those prospects

WHY DOES CONTENT MARKETING MATTER? (CONT.)

have been inundated with marketing chatter from every angle, to the point where less-sophisticated messages simply get lost in all the noise.

Enter Content Marketing and the Rise of Storytelling

With so many points of contact for a potential prospect (email, web sites, magazines, live events), smart marketers need to be careful not to add to the noise those prospects are facing. That's why many have learned that the best means of truly connecting with a potential prospect is to craft specific content to the varying needs of different audiences. Rather than blast out a similar message to many prospects and hope to connect with a percentage of them, marketers are realizing that the way to cut through the clutter is to build different content for different audiences with different needs and to follow those audiences and adapt content to their shifting needs.

Sound simple? It's not. A proper content marketing strategy has several key components that require considerable thought. More importantly, it's imperative marketers take an integrated and consistent approach to how they build their content in a way that tells a story for the prospect—a story that resonates with that prospect's specific needs.

To do that, marketers need to be mindful of the following:

- Do they have enough content?
- Is that content rich in the keywords relevant for the company?
- Does the content have a consistent message
- Does the content speak to different audiences at different phases of the buying cycle?
- Can the company track a prospect's shifting content needs as they evaluate their buying decision?
- Can the company assess just when to send a relevant piece of content to a prospect based on those shifting needs?

Effective content marketing involves having a strategy for answering these critical questions. In many instances, the marketer needs help not only in answering the questions, but developing the strategy to address them. A recent study by MarketingProfs illustrated the most common challenges marketers face when building their content marketing strategies.

Finding Content Marketing Partners

In the chart at right, it's clear marketers are struggling in this new environment to keep up with both the content demands of this new approach to marketing, as well as the resources to support it. In current economic conditions, many companies simply don't have the resources to build it themselves. This is where B2B media companies have excelled by using decades of marketing experience, backed by extensive rosters of in-house subject matter experts, to help not only assess and build vibrant content libraries, but also measure and track prospects through a purchasing funnel.

At Putman Media, we provide both the content development expertise, based on our award-winning team of editors and their knowledge of what topics resonate with our audience, and the diverse content marketing vehicles to get content to a prospect at the time when that prospect is most likely to engage with it. At the heart of our offerings is our extensive database, based on decades of interaction with our market. Around that database, we've built diverse products to engage with readers, including:

- Email newsletters for branding as well as to promote content marketing pieces like white papers.
- White papers that we deliver via our trusted channels designed to avoid spam filters and reach inboxes.
- eHandbooks are digital editions that provide strong brand awareness and allow sponsors to include their stories alongside our award-winning content.
- Webinars come in various flavors to suit the needs of our clients: custom webinars can be built around any topic of a client's choosing, while our scheduled webinar series offers the opportunity to associate your brand with content developed by our teams.
- Custom live events are a new offering for us and represent the ultimate engaged lead. Our team can build a breakfast event for a targeted audience of 12 or a full-day conference around a tailored topic for 150.