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The Alchemy of Content
A Formula for Overcoming Four
Major Content Pain Points

COMBLU

Overview

When ComBlu published Content Supply Chain in the fall of 2011, brands were trying to decide if they were publishers, and what that meant. Since then, many have come to the conclusion that they indeed are publishers, but few have imposed a disciplined content supply chain across their organizations.

The four themes we extrapolated from hundreds of conversations with major global brands when publishing the first edition of this eBook still resonate today:

ComBlu decided to publish this addendum to the Content Supply Chain book to address these themes with a fresh eye and added perspective. Along the way, we have uncovered true content heroes that we'll feature throughout this eBook.

This update contains a framework for tackling the content publishing challenge. We have included pertinent content from the original to make it easier to reference appropriate chapters.

Breaking Down the Formula:

01 We know we are a publisher, but what's the best way to organize the content creation and distribution process effectively and efficiently?

02 Once we organize to truly act like a publisher, will we be able to "feed the content beast" with content that resonates with stakeholders and tells a great story?

03 How do we get the publication cycle right? Do we continuously push content, or is there a better, more cyclical rhythm we should adopt?

04 How do we know if our content is reaching the right people? Is our content working hard enough for the investment made?

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01 Chapter One:
Organizing Resources for Brand Content Publishing

We know we are a publisher, but what's the best way to organize the content creation and distribution process effectively and efficiently?

One of the most pondered aspects of the content supply chain is the organization of the content function. This is a huge issue for brands as they think about resource allocation, bandwidth of the current team and the volume and frequency of content creation. The news bureau structure that ComBlu presented in the first edition of Content Supply Chain is still valid. However, before an organization can institute this content strategy framework, it must have a solid view of how the current content process works in its own organization. This requires mapping all the points of content creation, the intersection and collaboration between these points, the drivers or impetus for new content, the production and approval cycle, and timing.

"

Content creation dispersed across multiple functions and business units works IF there's oversight backed by authority to guide topics and timing.

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Organizing Resources for Brand Content Publishing

Our work in designing more efficient content supply chain processes for major brands underscores this need. The starting point across these engagements was interviewing multiple teams that generate, amplify and distribute content. ComBlu met with a cross section of key groups in the marketing function, including corporate marketing, customer insights, vertical marketing, partner relations, analyst relations, public relations and so on. Themes emerged that were common across many brands.

1 **Multiple pieces of content about the same topic were being created by different areas of the company with little or no awareness that the other content objects already existed or were in process.**

This drove an inefficient process for the discovery of content to support various campaigns. The best content may not have surfaced.

Lead time for analysis of content may not be sufficient to manage a call for content that warrants development of new material.

2 No "master" editorial calendar drove the content creation or amplification process.

Most brands know the topics that drive their constituents. What they often lack is a method to predict when the topic will get the most notice or the most play.

Drafting off of marketplace dynamics is a key to the "assignment desk" process. It's not just knowing how to organize to create content but how to get the necessary insights to time content distribution.

Closer Look

Channel	Object Format	Source Owner	Background Review	Content Creation	Review & Edit	Localization	Regulatory Review	Approval	Final Production Coding
	Fill in the following information for each content object	Request raw material (date)	Review, clarify, expand (date)	Assign (Resource) (deadline)	Draft reviews and change management (final deadline)	Provide base objects to regions for localization (deadline)	N/A or create checklist of all refulatory considerations and submit (deadline)	Owner (date)	Distribution (date)
PR	Case Studies								
	Social Media Release								
	Influencer Briefing Materials								
Digital	Landing Pages								
	Banners								
	Digital Magazine								
	Email								
	Rich Media								
	Campaigns								
Social	Infographic								
	Blog Post A								
	Blog Post B								
	Blog Post C								
	Communiy								
	Conversation Marketing								
	Campaigns								
	Posts								

An integrated content production process is key to a streamlined content supply chain. This worksheet helps brands organize the production cycle by working backwards from launch date for each node in the content ecosystem. This approach also uncovers interdependencies between nodes of the ecosystem so scheduling and deadlines can be adjusted accordingly.

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Organizing Resources for Brand Content Publishing

3 Content creators had no idea that someone in their internal ecosystem possessed information that would make their content better and bring it to the point of differentiation.

In many instances groups were actually working at cross-purposes, or wasting resources chasing data already at the fingertips of another group.

4 The lack of a chief content officer or a well-defined governance process resulted in no central authority to lead and direct the content development cycle.

Keeping content creation dispersed across multiple functions and business units is fine if there is oversight backed by the authority to drive topics and timing.

Creating a topic to "content objects" ratio is also key. One topic should yield multiple content objects, each suited for a specific audience and/or channel. Some people use 1:8 as their set topic to "content objects" ratio, but this should be customized for your organization, channels and audiences.

For example, topic A yields eBook, slide deck, social posts (tweets, LinkedIn posts, FB posts), website content, infographics, eNewsletters, video, augmented reality, etc.

Many other content formats exist that could be included, such as webcasts, podcasts, banner ads, HTML mailers, social news releases, surveys, POVs, interviews with SMEs, etc. Without some central oversight or established content governance, an integrated content marketing approach is impossible and will lack the power only garnered through the interplay of related content objects.

5 Marketers had no idea where to find relevant content or how to leverage it for the biggest impact.

The best process is only as good as people's ability to find germane content in a timely and efficient manner.

This phenomenon exists for content that will be used for external marketing campaigns and for content that will help marketers perform their jobs efficiently and effectively.

Talking Point

HOW CAN YOU IMPROVE THE CONTENT WITHIN YOUR ORGANIZATION?
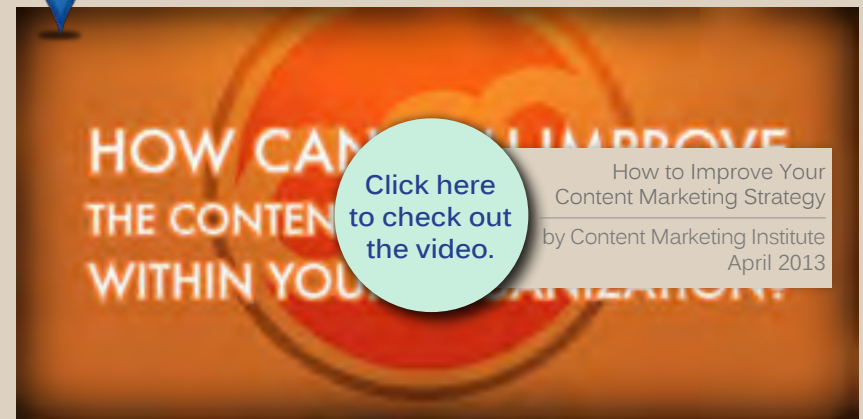
Click here to check out the video.

How to Improve Your Content Marketing Strategy

by Content Marketing Institute
April 2013

Organizing Resources for Brand Content Publishing

These dynamics are not unique. Many brands try to build a content organization without first understanding their full content creation ecosystem. Here are five things that brands should do before beginning to create their content organization. You have to ask and answer the hard questions in order to make real progress.

Closer Look

5 To-Do's
Before Building a Content Team

01 Map the current content ecosystem.

02 Analyze map for flow, interdependencies and redundancies.

03 Create future vision and study delta between current and desired states.

04 Create content governance framework for future state.

05 Adopt an inclusive, agile and dynamic structure for the content org.

Organizing Resources for Brand Content Publishing

01 Map the current nodes of the content creation ecosystem.

Start with the genesis of brand positioning and core positioning topics.

Include all the points of input that drive these decisions and understand who has the sign-off authority for the big themes that will ultimately drive content marketing approach.

From this starting point, create an internal content creation journey.

Who touches the content next? And next, and next?

Is there a defined process for how the big themes get parsed and converted to actual content?

Is there a defined creative or content brief process that is consistent across all content creation nodes?

Who contributes to the brief?

Is there a defined set of inputs that assures the framework will yield quality content efficiently and effectively?

Who owns the insights process for honing the topics and making sure that the company has a distinct voice and POV?

How do the different nodes in the ecosystem work together? Is there an expectation for cooperation? Who manages all of the nodes?

Organizing Resources for Brand Content Publishing

02

Analyze the map to determine:

Is there a logical flow?

What interdependencies exist between groups or nodes in the content ecosystem that will impact the overall creation and approval process?

Is the process effective and efficient?

Where does the process break down?

Can it be fixed or is a whole new approach needed?

What does the ideal process look like?

Organizing Resources for Brand Content Publishing

03 Study the delta between current and future process.

What is the step strategy to get to the future state?

Map the future state and keep it simple and straightforward.

Remove deadwood in order to streamline and expedite the content creation cycle.

What are the internal organizational and cultural roadblocks that will impede progress?

Who can remove these barriers? And what is the rationale for them to help? You need to build the business case.

Who has the authority and budget to get these changes made?

What are the technical issues in getting the right content creation experience in place?

Does the organization need a federated search approach across multiple CMSs in order to expedite finding and sharing appropriate existing content objects before creating new ones?

04 Create a content governance approach that aligns with the future state.

Define and document the content creation strategy.

Model key actions such as creative briefs, filters for content and channel fit, etc.

Create multiple use cases and model the topic to content objects ratio and mix.

Clearly define the assignment desk process for each use case, such as a major thought leadership initiative, launch of a new branding platform or introduction of a new product or service. Separate use cases could also be defined for vertical markets or major campaigns.

Include roles, responsibilities, deadlines, approval process, etc.

Create a content experience journey (distinct from UX) for core decision makers (personas). Ideal approach would be to tie a use case to each persona.

Make sure you consider the interdependencies between multiple decision makers and how this impacts content strategy.

Consider the interdependencies between nodes in creating governance and compliance guidelines.

Organizing Resources for Brand Content Publishing

05 | Adopt a Center of Excellence (COE) approach that is both dynamic and inclusive.

Create a process to include all nodes in the design of new process.

Use internal discussion boards or community to capture feedback, ideas, and enhancements on an ongoing basis.

Provide oversight across the content creation ecosystem.

Vet outside creative resources and train them in the brand voice, governance approach and editorial process.

Only when this work is complete should a company begin to create its content organization. The above audit and mapping should provide signposts, but unfortunately our research has yet to uncover a definitive guide for the ideal content org structure. Following are some insights that may help.

Success Barriers

Some people like chaos and will resist the accountability a documented process entails.

It takes time to bring order to chaos.

Once the process is created, compliance may be a challenge.
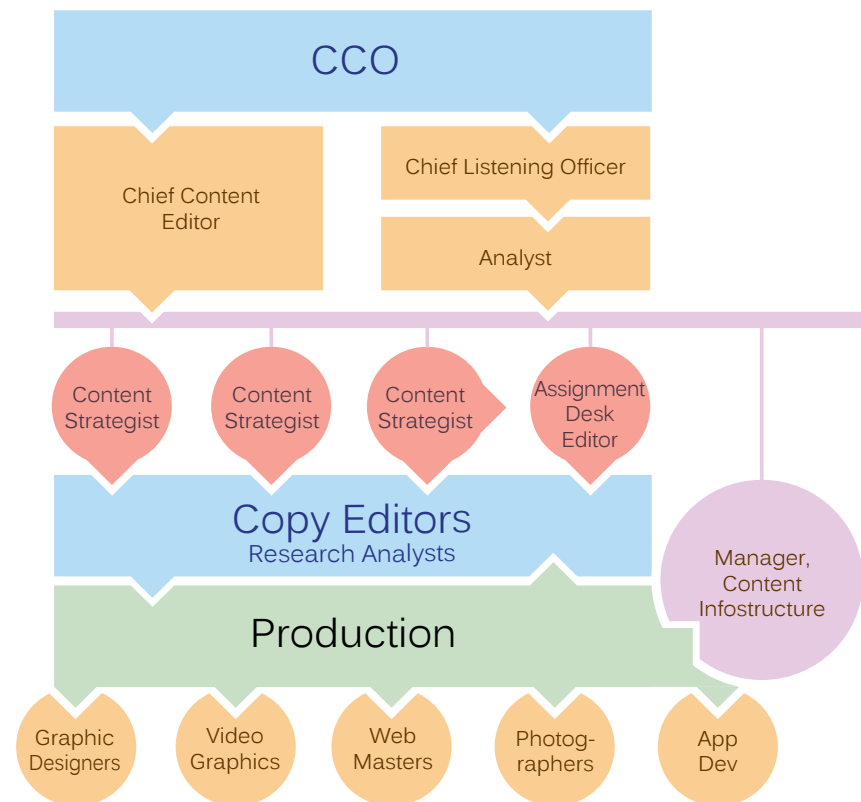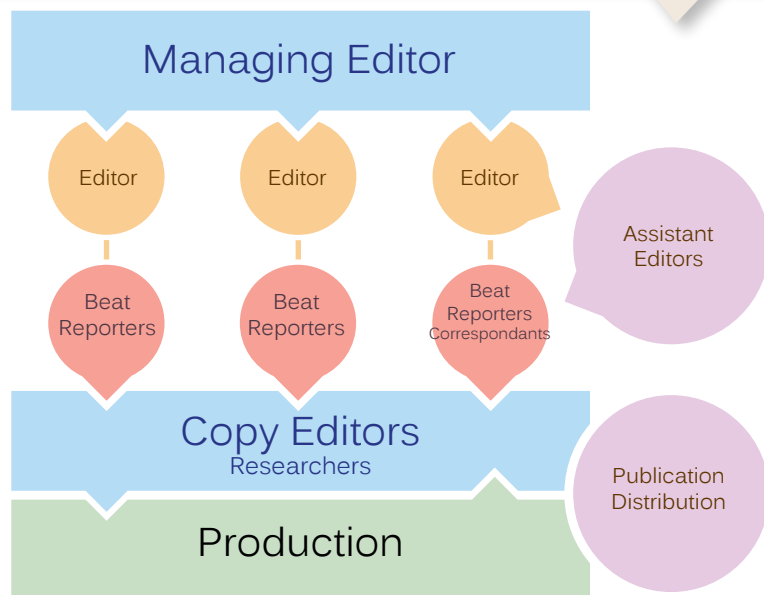
Content Org
Structure Considerations

According to Joe Pulizzi of the Content Marketing Institute, every marketer today needs to be a content expert. Content is the core asset of sales, engagement and brand differentiation. He believes that the content organization of the future will turn marketing, PR and communications into one integrated business unit that is more like a publishing department than a marketing unit. Professionals will think in terms of content subscribers vs. users, prospects or customers. ComBlu is already seeing this phenomenon at work in the insurance, healthcare, technology and consumer sectors.

The framework of this content organization is very much grounded in the traditional structure of news organizations or publishing houses—with a few tweaks, of course. Let's look at the lessons that the news desk brings to the future marketing organization turned content publisher.

As stated above, the news bureau structure is a common model for organizing the content function within corporations and service firms. The typical structure at a publishing organization looks something like this:

News Desk / News Bureau Structure

Corporate Content Organization

Managing Editor

Editor Editor Editor

Assistant Editors

Beat Reporters | Beat Reporters | Beat Reporters Correspondants

Copy Editors
Researchers

Publication Distribution

Production

CCO

Chief Content Editor

Chief Listening Officer

Analyst

Content Strategist | Content Strategist | Content Strategist | Assignment Desk Editor

Manager, Content Infostructure

Copy Editors
Research Analysts

Production

Graphic Designers | Video Graphics | Web Masters | Photog-raphers | App Dev

Content Org
Structure Considerations

This structure is a good starting point, but is not directly applicable to the modern brand, organization or corporate structure. The following chart illustrates some of the similarities and differences between the two.

From	To	Glossary
Managing Editor	Chief Content Officer	• Typically reports to Chief Marketing Officer • Oversees all content initiatives across multiple platforms and formats to drive sales, engagement, retention, leads and positive customer experience • Expert in content and channel optimization, brand consistency, segmentation, localization, analytics and measurement • Maps content strategy and content roadmap • Supervises editors and content strategists • Establishes and drives compliance with content governance • Establishes workflow via assignment desk function • Coordinates with IT team to implement CMS
Editors	Content Strategist	• Creates content strategy for organization or specific area of specialization (vertical) • Translates brand mission into content strategy; achieves business goals by maximizing the commercial impact of content • Brings an understanding of design, writing and technology to the strategy function – Analyzes, creates, edits, distributes, manages and monitors content • Drives the content experience across multiple channels • Builds and manages the content roadmap for a channel or a business unit or function • Determines the mix between brand generates, partner and curated content • Understands the alignment of specific types of content at specific points of customer journey

Content Org
Structure Considerations

From	To	Glossary
Beat Reporters	Chief Storyteller Content Creator Brand Journalist	• Develops content about a specific topic or for a defined channel • Translates content into stories that educate and engage • Includes a combination of internal SMEs, professional writers and producers and outside resources
Correspondents	Curator	• Aggregates content from multiple sources aligned with a specific topic • Augments brand-generated content
Copy Editors	Content QA	• Performs same duties as traditional copy editor • Reviews for accuracy, voice, brand mission, grammar, style, etc.
Research Analysts	Chief Listening Officer	• Creates listening "tracks" for specific content topics • Uses a variety of tools to research topics and provide additional insights to content creators
Print Production	Channel Producer	• Accomodates multiscreen and content formats • Operates as a multimodal production team

Chapter Summary:

No easy answer exists for how best to organize the content function inside a brand or organization. Some trial and error will yield the optimal mix of internal and external resources and the right internal skill sets needed for today's content-centric marketing function. Nothing will work, however, if your organization skips the five steps that take you from mapping the content ecosystem to creating a meaningful content COE. Only then will the right starting point present itself for beginning the journey to a world-class content infrastructure.

Content Organization

Click here for more information

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02 Chapter Two:
Epic Content

Once we organize to truly act like a publisher, will we be able to "feed the content beast" with content that resonates with stakeholders and delivers a great story for us?

Feeding the content beast is another major pain point for brand publishers. In fact, according to a Content Marketing Institute and Marketing Profs study, 64% of marketers say their biggest challenge is creating sufficient content. Marketers fret that they will never have enough content to reach people and stay top of mind at every point of the buyer's journey. In reality, your brand will never maintain the post position in the day-to-day lives of your customers, prospects and other stakeholders. Content whizzes past people's consciousness so quickly that they barely have time to bookmark, download or save it. And even if they do, they may not remember they did when they need it.

"
Epic content kindles an "aha" moment when a person discovers it and realizes it's just what they need right now – that's the goal.
"

Epic Content

Many brands overcompensate for these dynamics by generating a ton of content and indiscriminately amplifying it across as many channels as possible. They count the linkbacks and try to keep ahead of SEO, which many consider a zero-sum game as search results continuously change. Maintaining front-page ranking requires vigilance and investment. The real goal is to create fewer pieces of content and instead create content that kindles an "aha" moment when a person discovers it and realizes it is what they need right now. That is how most people consume content. They find it when they need it.

How do you make your content resonate deeply at the point of discovery?

1 **Start with an insights process that provides deep understanding, fresh perspective and a honed vision of what will resonate and fulfill a specific need.**

Content should not be all things to all people; it should be surgical in its mission. Designing the right insights process to create content that matters requires an understanding of the content mission and KPIs.

For example, if a content amplification program is designed to help drive SEO for a consumer products company, then the insights approach starts with understanding high-value segments and what information each is seeking. Several inputs need to be overlaid for each segment. Information would be extrapolated from customer insights reports, marketing documents, search term analysis and listening reports.

Click here to check out the full image.
10 Steps to Content Marketing Success by Ledger Bennett | 2013

Epic Content

Be creative in the overlay of multiple inputs to glean a new approach or POV.

In our experience, there is no dearth of available background information to inform story ideation and roadmap development, but typically information is scattered throughout the organization with no systematic way to capture, analyze and apply it.

Organizations have listening programs, send people to conferences, interact with customers, provide counsel to prospects, research customer buying habits and preferences, gather competitive intelligence, manage customer communities and so on. These same organizations employ content editors and creators, outside agencies and contractors to create and distribute content. The intersections between the first set of people and processes and the second are at best linear and at worst haphazard. It's not that content creators don't talk to salespeople or don't read the reports from customer insights, but few manage this as a dynamic set of inputs that when overlaid in an interesting and innovative way can take content quality from commodity to transformative.

Epic Content

2 **Model the insights process for a specific need and use the results to create a COE methodology for content insights.**

Define an insights pilot that can provide direction for multiple functions or areas. The process could be applied to a vertical marketing group, a campaign theme or topic, a product or business unit, etc.

Overlay with any brand campaign themes that are part of the marketing program to get more germane.

Use Content Containers as an organizing construct for the big themes that drive purchase. For healthcare, these could be patient safety; patient experience; quality outcomes or remote medicine. The verticals' marketing plans and aligned customer research and sales reports can all provide a starting point for identifying or naming the three to five containers that will organize the vertical content strategy.

Review listening reports that align with the content containers to identify hot topics and key thought leaders. Trending analysis can help determine the maturity or life cycle point of each topic.

Overlay with any brand campaign themes that are part of the marketing program to further calibrate.

↑ Click here to check out the full image.

Custom Content Creation Infographic by C4 | 2011

Epic Content

Glean further insights from a deeper review of thought leader POV and aligned conference topics to further inform content strategy.

Interview internal subject matter experts and functions for context and further insights.

Analyze data from your CMS to add content consumption info to the mix. Some CMSs offer support for implicit and explicit rules-based targeting, recommendation engines and, increasingly, geolocation. Some capture the click path, content consumption or page dwell times of a content consumer once they land on a page via an inbound link and dump that info directly into a CRM system. This in turn feeds the recommendation engine and can be an important source for the content insights process, which makes curation more granular and effective.

Review the most frequently shared and highly-rated pieces of content for insights on resonance and quality of content.

Overlay inputs and create a topic Venn diagram to determine topics best suited for brand differentiation and marketplace resonance.

Use results to create a content roadmap.

Audit existing content to identify holes and get new content needs into the content production cycle.

Success Barriers

This is an arduous process that requires inputs from multiple sources and marketing functions.

A content strategist needs to analyze the inputs to come to usable, actionable information.

Many brands think they are already doing this; most aren't. Be honest about the delta between two.

Epic Content

3 **Extrapolate pilot learnings into a defined methodology for an insights process that meets the needs of your organization.**

Identify business models, customer segments and other natural marketing doppelgängers to create a defined insights process that works for that group, marketing discipline or segment.

When the Insights process is complete, the information is used to build a content roadmap. The roadmap will help to determine the right mix of content sources, which usually includes some combination of the following:

Brand-generated

SMEs

Content creators

Curated

Via content hub or curation

Human curation

Partner co-created

Brandscaping strategy

Co-created thought leadership

User-generated

Influencers

Blogger networks

Band advocates

"
Content should not be all things to all people; it should be surgical in its mission.

"

Epic Content

Finding the right mix will help eliminate the "feeding the beast" syndrome as less of the content creation burden falls on the internal content team. The Chief Content Officer should help calibrate that mix across the full content ecosystem. The Content Strategist or editors will help apply the right mix for their beats or areas of responsibility. Managing the disparate resources necessary to deliver the content mix also falls to the content strategists.

Once the roadmap is complete, creating the right content becomes a more focused effort. One outcome of the insights process is the creation of filters that can be incorporated into a checklist or scorecard to gauge overall effectiveness of each content asset. These filters would include segment relevance, message attractiveness, appropriate voice for genre or format, contribution to KPI, ability to differentiate and pertinence to the marketplace. This tool will focus authors and give editors or strategists a process to optimize the value of content. And, if the content is both emergent and engaging, it will have a longer shelf life, which can result in the need for fewer pieces of content.

Content roadmaps can take many different forms. Five best practices to keep in mind:

Think through the structure that makes most sense for your business objectives.

Make sure you have a "swim lane" for each target or decision maker.

Color-code content objects by format.

Show how each topic is translated to multiple formats and objects.

Fewer pieces of great content have more impact than many objects pushed at the marketplace.

Here is one example of a content roadmap.   ➡

	Month/Year	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5
HIGH DEMAND CONTENT	Primary Topic	Launch of content on new topic/video	Refresh of current content/interview	Launch of new content on topic/quiz or assessment released at industry conference	Refresh of current content/Workbook	Launch of new content on topic/use case
DISCUSSION FORUMS (Owned and Partner)	Subtopic #1	New Thread		New Thread		New Thread
	Subtopic #2		New Thread		New Thread	
	Subtopic #3	New Thread		New Thread		New Thread
BLOGS (Owned and Earned)	Audience #1	Subtopic #1	Subtopic #3	Subtopic #2	Subtopic #1	Subtopic #3
	Audience #2	Subtopic #2	Subtopic #1	Subtopic #3	Subtopic #2	Subtopic #1
	Audience #3	Subtopic #1	Subtopic #2	Subtopic #3	Subtopic #1	Subtopic #2

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Content Along the Decision Journey

Another consideration in taming the content beast is understanding the content journey. It's important to distinguish a content journey from the actual user experience, which is where most journey work focuses. In the user journey, the brand concentrates on how a visitor interacts on their owned properties, particularly websites and content hubs. Further, many journeys begin and end with a specific part of the buyer's journey, and often do not differentiate between the experience for a person in the early stages of discovery vs. a valued customer who is looking for specific product-in-use information.

"**Dynamic sets of inputs when overlaid in interesting and innovative ways, can take content from commodity to transformative.**"

Talking Point

Click here to check out the video.

The Coca-Cola 2020 Vision

by The Cognitive Media
Aug 2011

Content Along the
Decision Journey

Click here
to check out
the full image.

Content Layering
Through the
Buying Cycle
by D Custom | 2012

B2C brands, for example, tend to publish content designed to build awareness and spend little time in the middle or end of the funnel. This is either because they haven't yet figured out preference, conversion and post purchase advocacy or they never get out of "campaign mode." B2B companies, on the other hand, focus largely on conversions and very little on the awareness, consideration or post-purchase points of the buyer's journey.

Because digital content is dynamic by nature, a content journey is broader in scope than the user journey. A content journey may start with the user's experience on the brand's owned websites or digital assets, but soon jumps to other destinations including influencers' blogs, analyst's content, social sites, third-party review sites or wherever Google takes them. It's important to remember that the brand's content has the most authority in the discovery or awareness stage of the journey and then again at the point of purchase. In between, the user seeks third-party influencer POV or peer ratification and insights, and goes to other places to find this type of content.
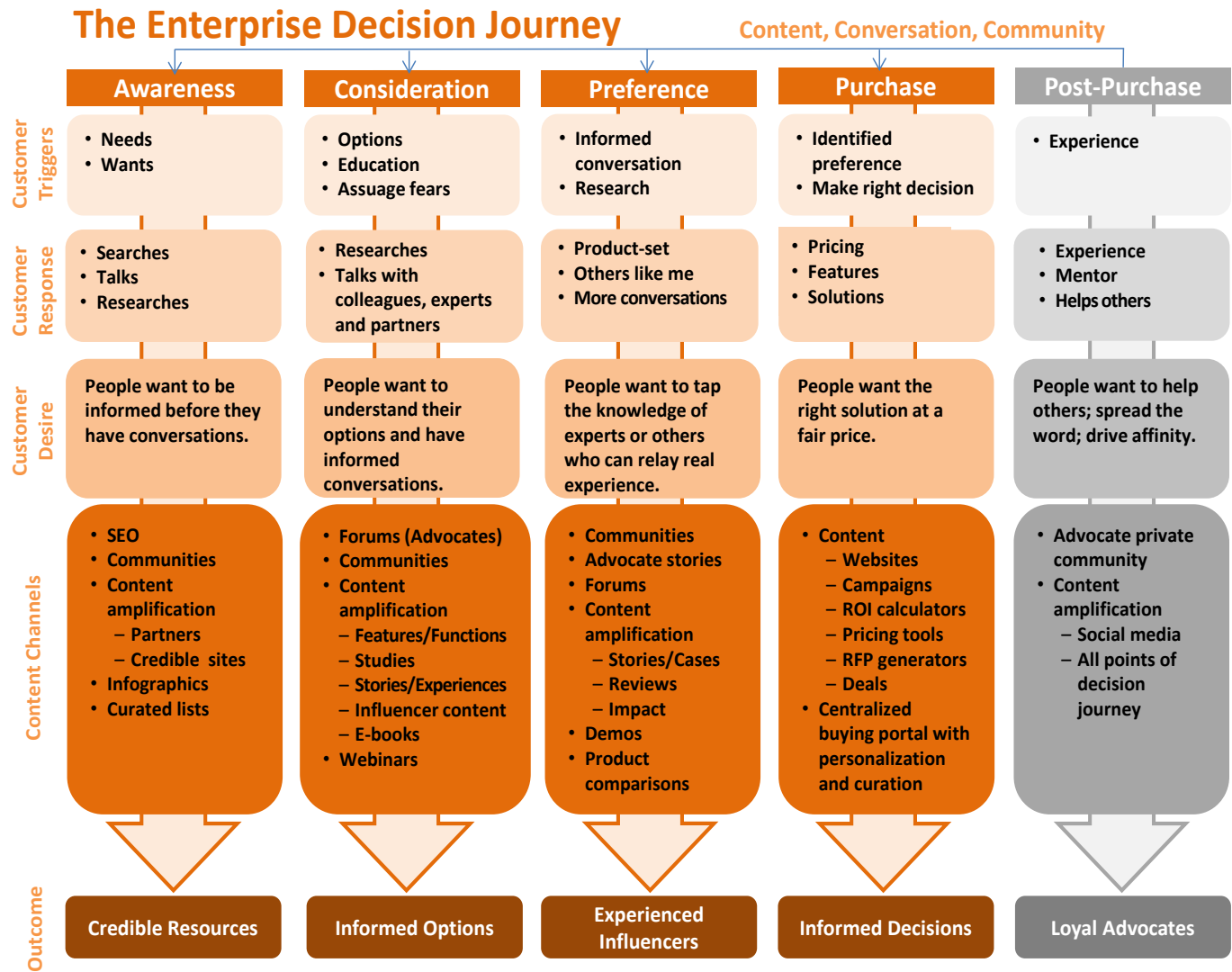
Content Along the Decision Journey

Another important distinction is the interplay between decision makers that happens along the buyer's journey. A lot of journey work shows the path of a single decision maker and ignores the dynamics between decision makers or influencers. Each person in this chain has different content needs, most likely in varying degrees of detail and formats. Some of the people involved in the decision cycle need one type of content for themselves and yet another when they communicate either up or down the chain. These interactions are just as important to understand as the separate but linked journeys of each level of decision maker.

In order to strike the right balance, brands need to understand the type of content that has the most authority at each point of the buyer's journey. This chart helps map an approach for each point of the journey. ➡

The Enterprise Decision Journey
Content, Conversation, Community

	Awareness	**Consideration**	**Preference**	**Purchase**	**Post-Purchase**
Customer Triggers	• Needs • Wants	• Options • Education • Assuage fears	• Informed conversation • Research	• Identified preference • Make right decision	• Experience
Customer Response	• Searches • Talks • Researches	• Researches • Talks with colleagues, experts and partners	• Product-set • Others like me • More conversations	• Pricing • Features • Solutions	• Experience • Mentor • Helps others
Customer Desire	People want to be informed before they have conversations.	People want to understand their options and have informed conversations.	People want to tap the knowledge of experts or others who can relay real experience.	People want the right solution at a fair price.	People want to help others; spread the word; drive affinity.

Content Channels	• SEO
	• Communities
	• Content amplification
	  – Partners
	  – Credible sites
	• Infographics
	• Curated lists
		• Forums (Advocates)
		• Communities
		• Content amplification
		  – Features/Functions
		  – Studies
		  – Stories/Experiences
		  – Influencer content
		  – E-books
		• Webinars
			• Communities
			• Advocate stories
			• Forums
			• Content amplification
			  – Stories/Cases
			  – Reviews
			  – Impact
			• Demos
			• Product comparisons
				• Content
				  – Websites
				  – Campaigns
				  – ROI calculators
				  – Pricing tools
				  – RFP generators
				  – Deals
				• Centralized buying portal with personalization and curation
					• Advocate private community
					• Content amplification
					  – Social media
					  – All points of decision journey

Outcome	Credible Resources	Informed Options	Experienced Influencers	Informed Decisions	Loyal Advocates

Chapter Summary:

This dynamic approach to gathering insights and applying them to the content roadmap and creation process helps build content equity. It keeps the brand in the forefront of thought leadership and reaching consumers with pertinent content at each point of the decision journey. While this makes good sense, this type of integrated insights process is often difficult to execute. Why? It requires a horizontal cut through the functional silos of most organizations. This prevents efficiencies in gathering these valuable inputs and impedes the multidimensional analysis that leads to content breakthroughs. In many organizations, information is not readily shared—reports were created for one specific reason, and value beyond original intent is not considered. Others who could leverage that same info for other purposes— like content analysis—do not know to ask for things they don't know exist. Even getting integrated into the marketing roadmap is not always easy—campaigns may run from multiple areas, and the content area may not be in the loop in a timely fashion. Still, by building a strong business case and showing the ultimate benefits and returns on money and resources better spent, intra-disciplinary or departmental cooperation emerges. People often discover a hunger for this type of collaboration and integrated process, and adoption is quicker and easier than anticipated.

Epic Content

Click here for more information

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03 Chapter Three:
Content Cadence

How do we get the publication cycle right? Do we continuously push content, or is there a better, more cyclical rhythm we should adopt?

Many brands still fall into the trap of thinking they need to produce content because they have a publishing cycle that dictates "x" pieces of content per week or month. They use traditional time-stamped publishing models to schedule content. An emerging best practice is to monitor the content amplification process to uncover the natural rhythms and life cycle of your content. This will probably vary for each distribution channel and can be impacted if you publish content that regularly goes viral. However, if the nature and quality of your content is optimized, you may be able to publish less frequently with better effect.

"
Content will be more relevant when market dynamics and events create natural swells of interest in a specific topic.
"

Content Cadence

One of the key outcomes of the insights process (see chapter two) is data that informs both content cadence and publication timing. It requires the brand to view the output from the insights process through a different lens.

Start by looking at events that can impact the timing of content publication. Cyclical events, seasonal dynamics or conferences are good examples.

The example of the insights process from the previous chapter overlaid inputs from conferences, listening, thought leaders, marketing plans, etc. to generate a list of hot topics. These same inputs can be looked at across a timeline to inform the publication cycle.

Create a timeline that maps pertinent "timing" events.

Include conference topics aligned with hot topics, upcoming publications of books or white papers, release of blockbuster entertainment events, issuance of government regulations or dates of special hearings, seasonal or cyclical events, marketing campaigns, etc.

Continue this process for all appropriate events or inputs.

Look for clusters of events around each hot topic to identify content sprints for each topic.

Adjust the content roadmap to accommodate these points of topic interest.

Success Barriers

Just putting the date of a conference on a timeline is not enough. Researching specific sessions and speakers uncovers the best chances for groundswell events.

An intern cannot do this process. This requires a seasoned professional who understands both the industry and the business to detect the inputs that really matter.
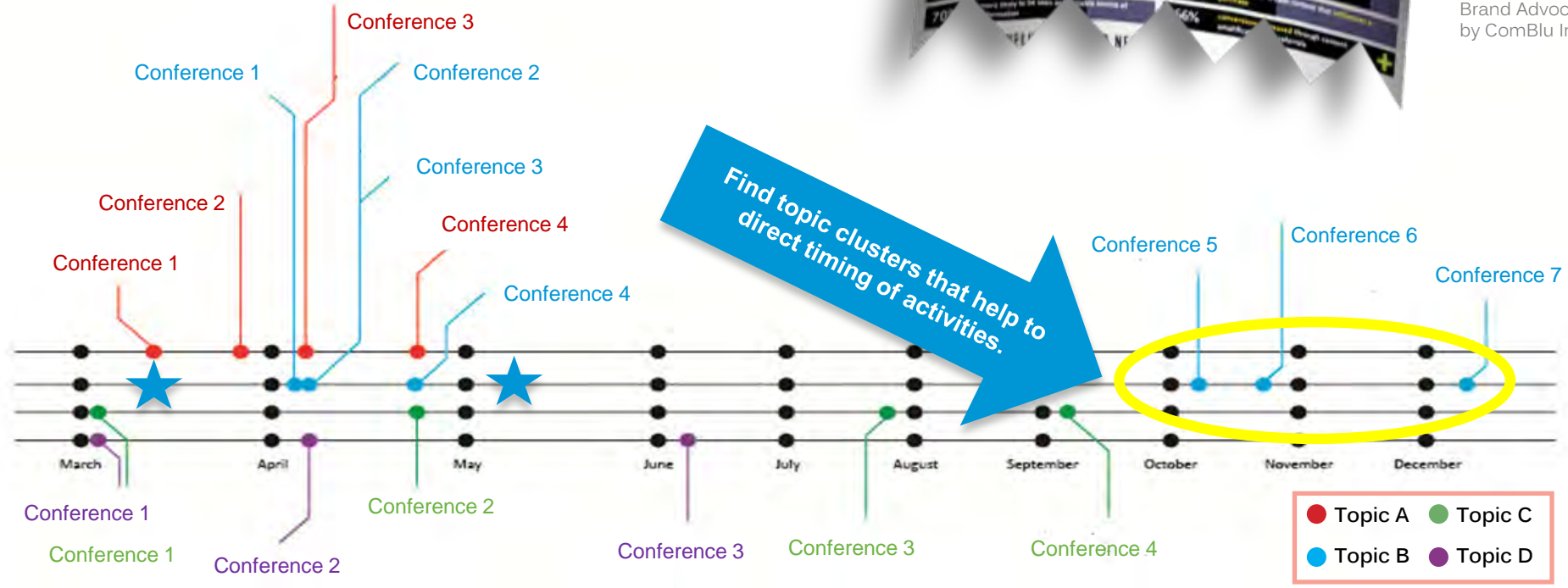
Content Cadence

When the topic approach of the insights process is married with its timing aspects, the brand can create differentiating content and deliver it to the marketplace when it has the biggest potential for impact. Content will be more relevant when market dynamics and events create natural swells of interest in a specific topic. Of course, this requires that the content delivered is truly differential and provides a unique POV.

Between clusters or brand marketing campaigns, topic-driven listening reports can provide additional timing insights. This is when a brand's advocates and SMEs can be marshaled to contribute links to germane content or provide context to important discussions. This part of the publication cycle is more dynamic and organizations need to be nimble in order to leverage this important "networked channel."

Click here to check out the full image.

Power of Brand Advocates by ComBlu Inc. | 2012

Find topic clusters that help to direct timing of activities.

Conference 3
Conference 1
Conference 2
Conference 3
Conference 2
Conference 4
Conference 1
Conference 4
Conference 5
Conference 6
Conference 7

March   April   May   June   July   August   September   October   November   December

Conference 1
Conference 1
Conference 2
Conference 2
Conference 3
Conference 3
Conference 4

Topic A   **Topic C**
Topic B   **Topic D**

Chapter Summary:

Brands need to dynamically adjust the published content roadmap or editorial calendar as clusters or events dictate. Both internal marketing strategies and external dynamics contribute to the ideal content publication schedule. A new product launch, for example, dictates a dedicated content marketing sprint. Giving the product launch context and "legs" requires the publication of additional content to coincide with natural points when the content will resonate and be well-received. Alignment of the product with an important hot topic or cyclical event makes it relevant and appropriately contextual.

Talking Point
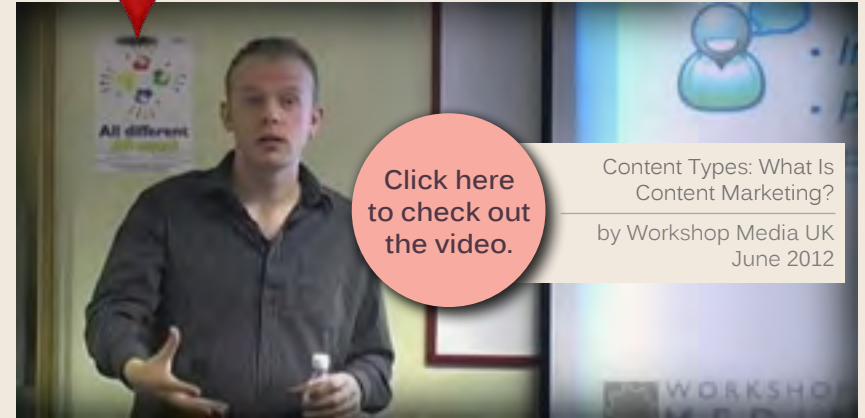
Click here to check out the video.

Content Types: What Is Content Marketing?

by Workshop Media UK
June 2012

Content Pain Points

Click here for more information

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04 Chapter Four:
Content ROI

How do we know if our content is reaching the right people? Is our content working hard enough for the investment made?

Let's address the second part of this theme first. Content measurement has advanced considerably since ComBlu published the first edition of [Content Supply Chain](). We've had many in-depth conversations with brands that are trying to figure out how to measure the impact of their content programs rather than just displaying several unrelated metrics on a dashboard.

"

An integrated approach to measurement yields a value story, not simply activity metrics.

"

Content ROI

These discussions have yielded three distinct content measurement scenarios that ComBlu has added as use cases in its Social Performance Index (SPI™) measurement service. SPI™ measures social programs and content performance against defined KPIs. It integrates data streams from multiple sources into a single dashboard, which allows analysis that gleans insights and creates a path for appropriate action.

While we are featuring our SPI™ service here for content BI, you can use any tool that you prefer. Many organizations export data from multiple sources into a spreadsheet and analyze from there. The important thing is to know which content is performing and which distribution channels provide the best positioning and consumption.

The SPI™ content use cases are designed to track the impact of content topic, type and channel on content marketing KPIs. Following is a brief description of the three measurement scenarios that were of highest interest during our chats with many large global brands.

Click here to check out the full image.

Content Marketing Metrics
by Pardot | 2012

Drive SEO

Why **CONTENT** for **SEO**?
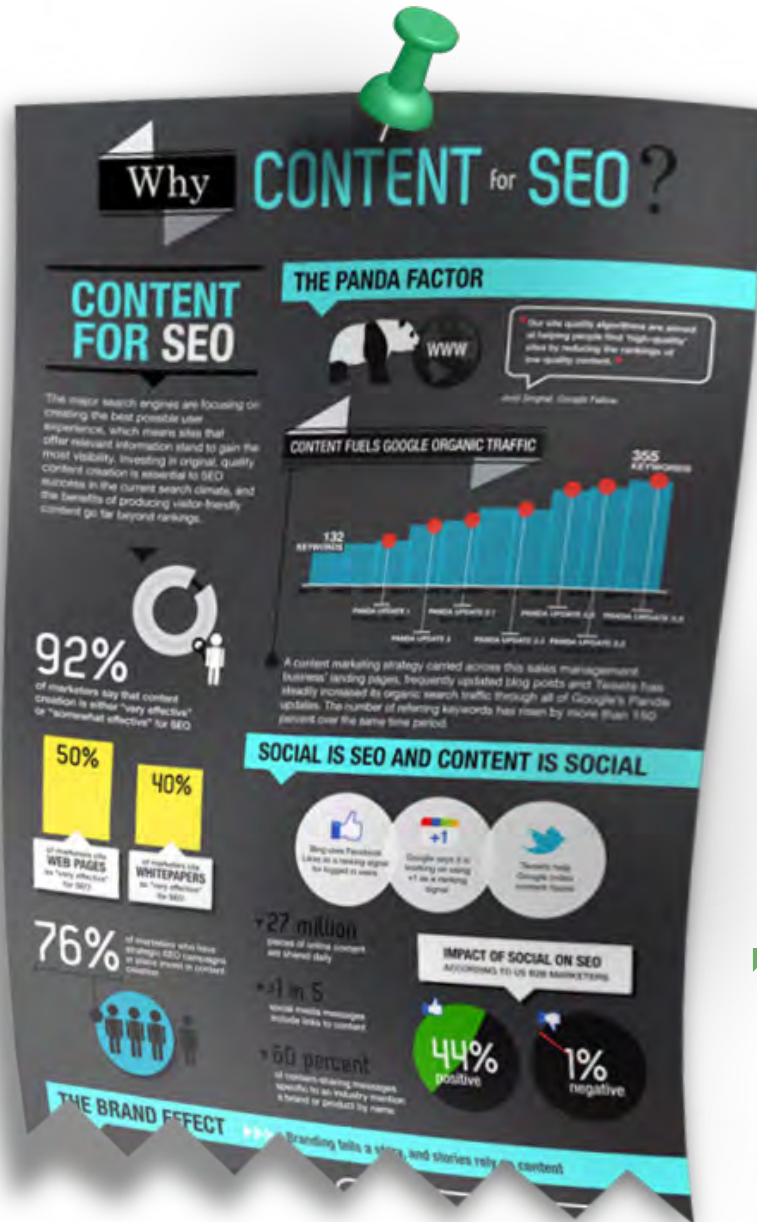
This measurement approach is for brands that want to increase traffic, SEO and domain equity. This module allows brands to rate content by channel and topics. Brands that subscribe to web analytics services like Omniture™ or Webtrends™ can get many comprehensive reports that tell a story across both owned and social channels. If they want to analyze by specific search terms or add earned and paid channels to the mix, they will need to bring in several other feeds from such sources as partners' and pay-per-click platforms. Our SPI™ service allows the brand to bring in data from earned, paid, owned and social. It uses multiple metrics to assign an efficiency rating to specific channels so resources can be allocated according to results.

Click here to check out the full image.

Why Content for SEO? by Brafton | 2011

Content Performance

This scenario is for brands that want to identify the best content to leverage on marketing sites and CRM outreach. Brands typically publish content across a variety of channels from a centralized content hub or directly from a CMS. In order to determine which specific content has the most impact, it is essential to be able to track content by categories, type, author and reach. The necessary metrics are drawn from both traditional web analytics tools and social platforms. An algorithm is applied that generates a rating for each content object. The reports can be segmented by topic container or category so the brand can gauge which articles are most effective in a specific topic area. Data can be pulled for a specified time period or matched to a specific campaign. The resulting data can provide insights for more efficient and effective content marketing programs, as well as provide valuable information to the sales team about what is resonating in the marketplace.
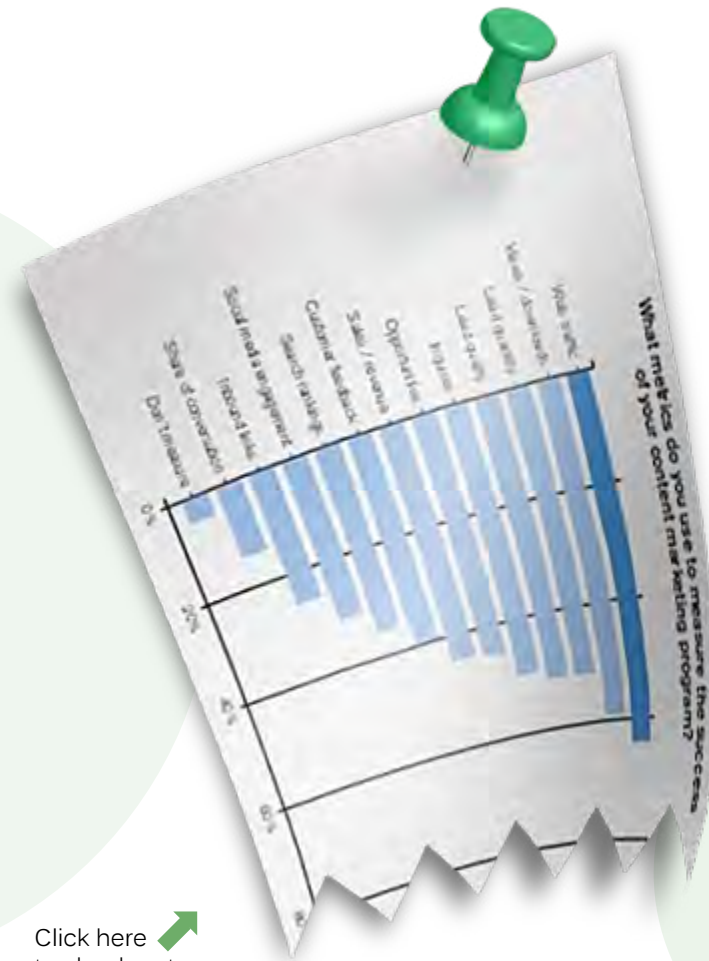
Click here to check out the full image.

Content Marketing ROI
by Brafton | 2011

Conversion Tracking

Inbound Marketing Funnel
by First 10 & Smart Insights | 2012

Click here to check out the full image.

Another area of great interest to brands is increasing the number of conversions on its digital assets and measuring which channels result in the most conversions. This module allows the brand to identify the channels, topics and content that drives the most conversions by using multiple data points to create an efficiency rating for each channel. In essence, the brand can determine whether socially amplified content has higher conversion efficiency than either partner or paid channels. The brand then can make an evidence-based decision on where to allocate more resources based on the relative performance of its social, partner or paid channels. Further, the brand can review the efficiency rating for each asset or platform in a specific channel. For example, it can gain insights that 10 Facebook posts do not yield as many conversions as 20 tweets, thus allowing even more granular calibration of the content-to-conversion equation.

Content ROI

Once a brand gains deeper insights into its content performance, it can begin overlaying multiple dashboards to generate their own custom use cases. For example, one of the SPI™ dashboards helps measure impact of engagement along the decision or buyer's journey. By overlaying that with the Content Performance module, the brand can measure the effectiveness of specific content objects on driving awareness or generating brand preference. Or it could overlay Content Performance and Conversion Tracking to gain new insights into which articles drive conversion and which channel is the most efficient by article or topic.

This overlay of multiple "value stories" is what tells the brand if it is reaching the right people with the right content at the right point in their decision journey.

Success Barriers

Failing to clearly identify KPIs matched to content mission.

Using manual process to integrate metrics from multiple sources and platforms.

Customization of public APIs to automate the surgical capture of metrics is more complex than it appears on the surface.

Thinking multiple activity metrics tell a story just by putting them next to each other on a dashboard.

Chapter Summary:

Content ROI is subjective and driven by the business mission or objectives of the content marketing program. An integrated approach to measurement yields a value story as opposed to simply tracking activity metrics. The important thing is to know which content is performing and which distribution channels provide the best positioning and consumption. The resulting data becomes another source for the insights process so that efficiencies and effectiveness evolve exponentially.

The measurement process provides the data points needed for quality control, sourcing excellence and the performance of specific assets at specific points in the decision journey. This leads to better decision support across the entire content supply chain.

Content ROI

Click here for more information

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Conclusion:

Brands face many challenges today. They must grapple with content proliferation; inconsistent and uncoordinated content creation; the lack of strategic direction in the content insights process; and the difficulty for consumers, customers and prospects to find content that is relevant and timely. Without strategic development of the content supply chain, companies will miss the opportunity to optimize the value of their content and maximize content ROI.

These challenges led ComBlu to develop a content model for organizations that are struggling to get the greatest impact and ROI from their content investments. According to *Harvard Business Review*, "Few companies have created the roles and systems needed to manage their content supply chain and create a coherent customer experience." Managing the content supply chain starts with understanding that content has equity and proceeds to a systematic structure and process for effectively managing content as an asset.

Building content equity requires discipline and a deliberate process. The task can seem daunting, but in reality it is a series of common-sense steps that can be parsed into doable actions. The resulting efficiencies will not only take cost out of the content supply chain, but also deliver content that drives results.
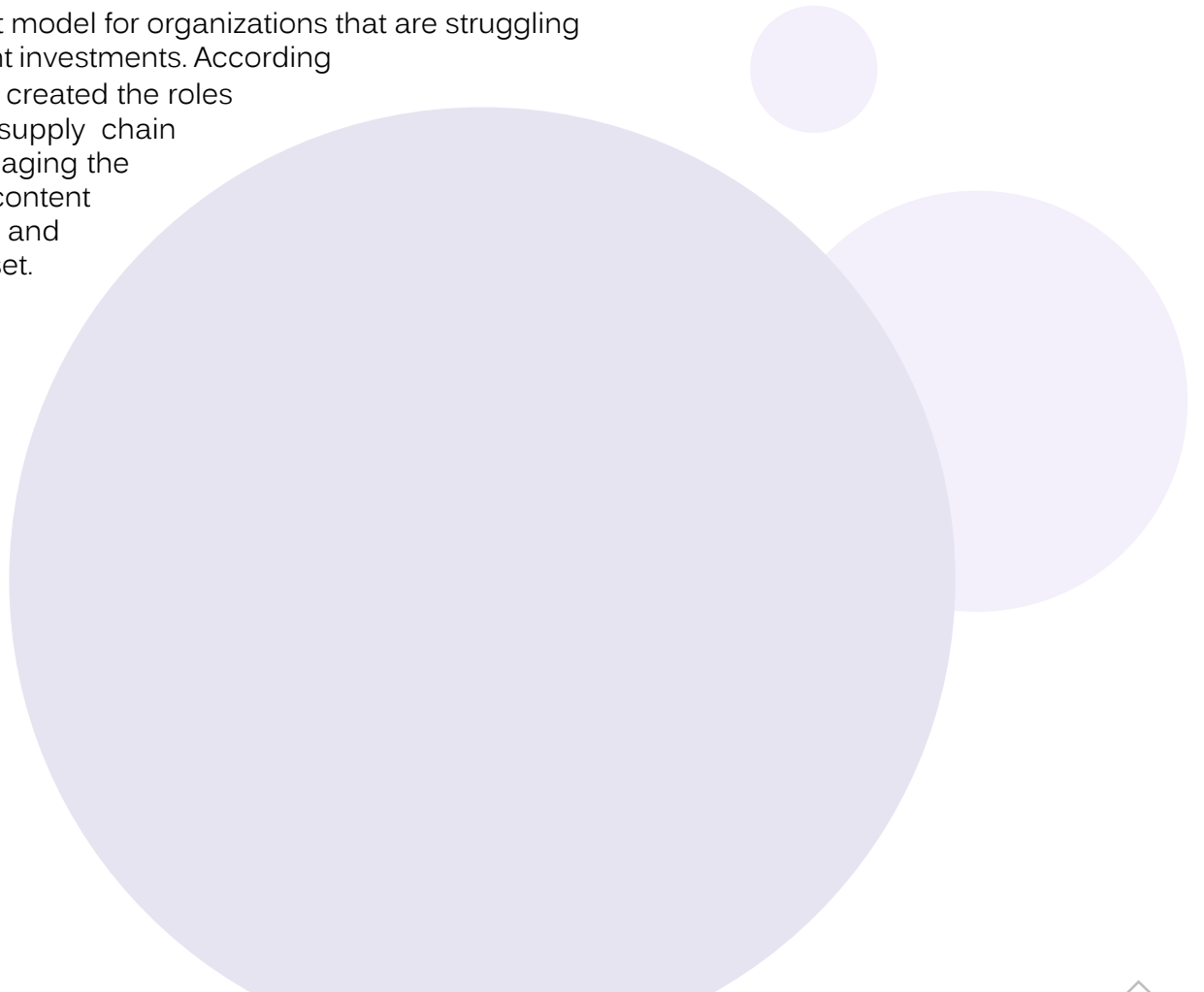
Conclusion

A well-designed and executed Content Supply Chain:

Directly drives revenue growth

Establishes content consumption relationships with a broader customer and consumer base

Generates powerful word-of-mouth and expands the social graph of content

Optimizes staffing around content ideation and creation, leveraging company staff, partner relationships and community experts

Aligns the content team cross-functionally across the business unit

Centralizes core process that frees the local or business unit staff for high-value activities

Ensures relevance and timeliness of new content

Creates higher-value content that is distributed at the appropriate points along the decision journey in the right format and voice for each segment

ComBlu Assets

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Contact Us

If you need:

Content Strategy Review

Content Experience Journeys

Creation of Insights Process to drive breakthrough content

Content Audits

Content Roadmap

Content Dashboard

Content Org Mapping

ComBlu Assets

Click here for more information

Contact us about a customized Content Strategy Workshop to get the ball rolling.

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