# Content Overhaul

White Paper

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As a marketer, ask yourself this question: When was the last time you had to write a piece of content for your website, a campaign, or for anything? Odds are good that it's been fairly recently. That's because content has a much larger role in a business's marketing than it is often given credit for.

Why focus on Content?
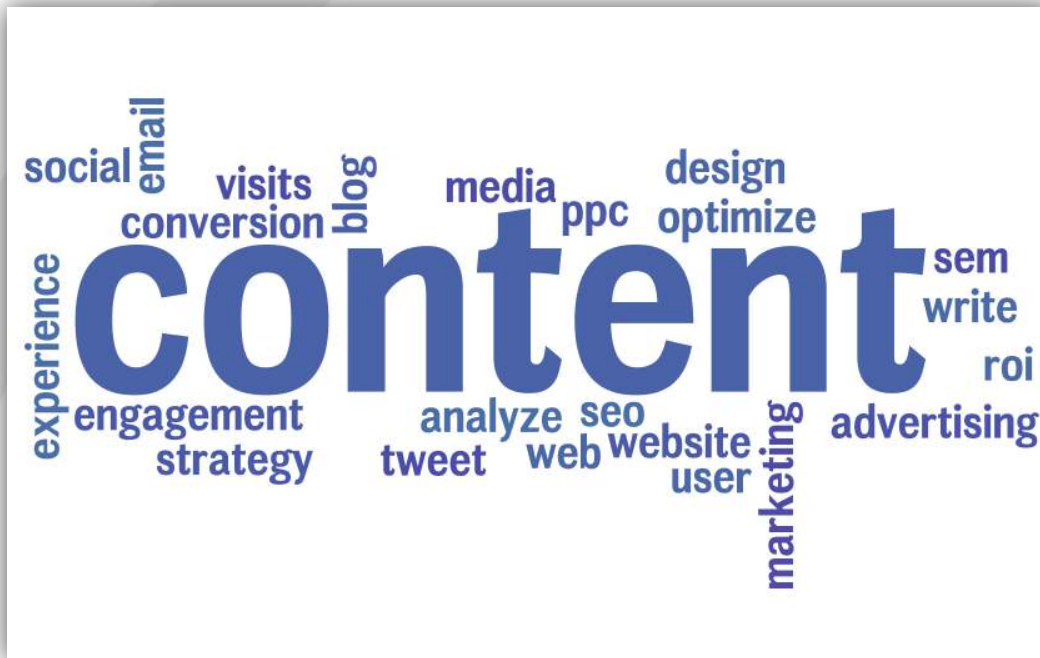
Simply put: today's marketing world demands it. Consistent and relevant content is at the heart of nearly every marketing campaign, from Pay per Click to Email Marketing or Search Engine Optimization. Unless you've got solid content behind everything your business does, you'll never see the engagement or the return-on-investment (ROI) you want. Why? Because content…

- o   Ties marketing campaigns together

- o   Drives conversions through user engagement

- o   Is one of the most essential aspects for solid SEO

Below, you'll find ways you can overhaul your current content arsenal. Just remember that the tips you find here will ultimately have a positive impact on your marketing **as a whole**. Let's get started.

Website Content Optimization

They say that first impressions are everything, and in terms of any modern business, this directly translates to your website. As much as you'd probably like to write your web pages' content once and forget about them, that's not the best course of action. Website content should be updated on a consistent basis, the content itself should be relevant to the expectations of your target audience, and every page should always align with SEO best practices. If you haven't taken notice, these tips aren't going to be "silver bullets." They'll take some research and work to fully implement.

Your website is where you'll receive the most visibility from potential customers, so you have to ensure you've accurately identified your target market segments and catered your content to what they find most informative, interesting, and valuable. In addition, onsite content should serve a defined purpose. Ideally, you'll want users to explore your site, engaging with its elements during their visit. With that being said, your content should lead users with actionable statements and calls-to-action, compelling them to discover more about your business, contact you, or even download a document.

Another aspect to consider is the competitive landscape. Researching your competition's web-based efforts offers insight into tactics related to content you may not have thought to implement. In addition, this research allows you to ensure that you have the pieces in place to differentiate your business. Going back to the notion of first impressions, it's also important to consider what sort of attitudes and unique styles should accompany your brand. How do your employees conduct themselves during the day? Is there laid-back camaraderie, a profound sense of team spirit, or a completely different approach to your workplace? Whatever the case may be, that personality should always come through in every piece of content you create.

Physical Marketing Materials

Another big content contender that you might not have thought to maintain are the documents that make up your company's marketing materials. These include flyers, service data sheets, presentations, and product brochures, just to name a few. With these materials, it's really important to make sure you're consistently reinforcing your brand, both through the papers' visual design as well as their actual content.

How? If your company has developed a unique mission statement or value proposition, then the content of all physical marketing documentation should be centered on those ideas. In addition, physical materials should carry over the visual elements of your website, including logos, color schemes, and any other eye-catching images.

Other important aspects that can more directly tie the digital to these traditional documents are the URL of your company's blog, a QR code to direct prospects to additional online assets, or Social Media logos to remind them of your presence there. Something else to remember is that this process is by no means a one-way street. If your physical documents are appealing and their messages effective, then some of their design cues can be carried over to your digital assets, including presentations, case study PDF's, or even informative streamable content like videos and webinars.

Email Marketing

As a way to capture leads or cross-sell existing customers, email marketing is pretty hard to beat. But without engaging content to drive those newsletters or promotions, your email blasts will never get off the ground.

The solution? Work to improve your emails in stages, beginning with the subject line. It's a small element, but it can make all the difference between a prospect opening your message and immediately trashing (or worse, junking) it.

Is the subject line actionable? Is it personalized? If not, consider coming up with variations and testing them, either manually or within your email marketing software platform.

Next, move on to the copy itself. Is it relevant to the subject line? Is it written **to** the recipient rather than **about** you or your company? Is it concise, but still conveying considerable value?   Does it directly communicate benefits rather than get caught up in details and features?

All of these are imperative for emails that will get your audience reading, and more importantly, clicking, engaging, and coming back.

Social Media

No other form of digital marketing has taken off quite as much recently as Social Media. With these interactive networks, businesses can instantly connect with their audience, sending out posts and updates that are immediately seen by vast numbers of people. Social Media has also revolutionized how businesses find new talent, develop promotions, and build brand awareness. And as with everything else, great content lies at the heart of successful Social Media marketing.

Social Media is a fast-paced platform, and your messages will sink or float depending on their frequency and relevancy. Because there are so many different social networks out there, it can be difficult to keep your posts and updates organized. Integrating a Social Media Management System into your set-up can make things a lot easier and more efficient (we recommend the easy-to-use & popular HootSuite platform). These kinds of management systems also allow marketers to monitor or "listen" for trends among customer bases. Focusing on specific keywords or industry topics, for example, can shed a lot of light on what prospects are engaging with the most, the kinds of content they find most valuable, and how your company should position itself with Social.

**A Look at the HootSuite Social Media Dashboard**

All of these different networks also mean that many different audiences exist on them. Audiences with their own expectations, language, and behaviors. Every message your company sends out should be catered to the audience in each unique social realm. A very basic example is use of the Hashtag (#) on certain networks and not others. Some social networks are more for conversations, while others work well for building customer relationships, while others are better suited for posting jobs. The trick is to educate yourself on every facet of the social spectrum and compose your messages accordingly.

Remember to Measure

This point simply can't be stressed enough. At every stage of your company's marketing process, a plan for measurement must be incorporated. Beforehand, take the time to determine the precise metrics that are the most meaningful for your business's content marketing goals and objectives. These should be monitored over time as you overhaul your content. That way, you'll have analytical proof of what worked, what didn't, and any areas that might need further improvement.

As an example (within the free Google Analytics platform), some potential metrics that can guide your content decisions include:

- o   Your website's top landing pages (the first page that users saw upon arrival)

- o   Its top exit pages (the last page they saw before leaving)

- o   The average number of pages per visit (the journey they took)

- o   The average time on page/site (how long their journey was)

- o   Bounce Rate (how often a user saw and visited only one page before exiting)

- o   Other metrics, including those that indicate the amount of referral traffic from social media posts or other campaigns (such as email marketing campaigns).
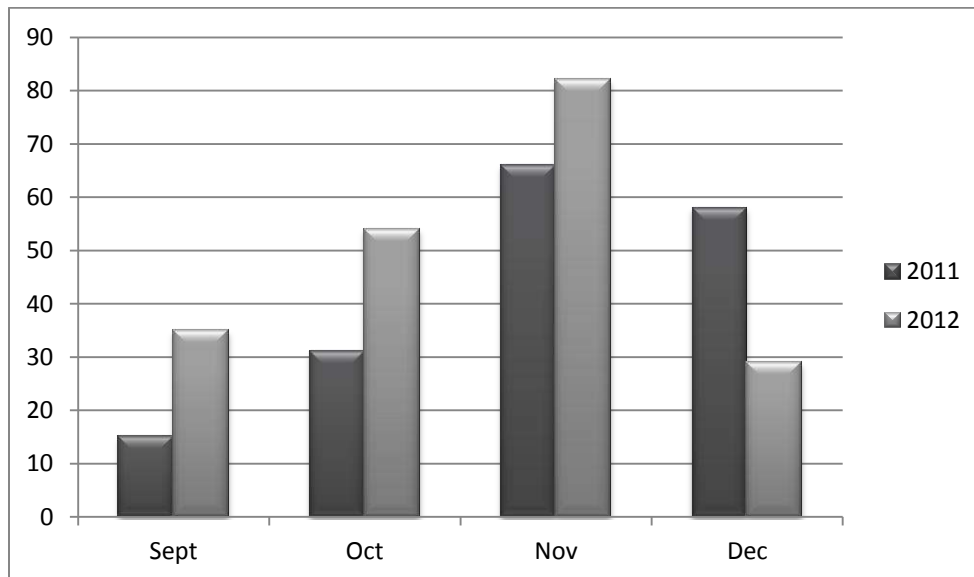
Additionally, Google Analytics incorporates advanced experimentation features, allowing you to test content variations on landing pages or within your conversion process. Using these Content Experiments' results, you can draw accurate conclusions about your top-performing content and which elements, language, or page layouts most resonate with visitors.

If you do choose the testing route, another available option is Adobe's Test&Target, a paid solution that integrates with their Omniture Web Analytics platform. If you plan on using Adobe for conversion optimization, their SiteCatalyst solution is also a viable option from an analytical perspective. As long as you have an Analytics solution in place, you'll be able to make connections to understand the way your content impacts leads, sales, and onsite conversions. With a proper analytics implementation and regular analysis, your content-centered efforts can be easily tied to concrete value for your business.

The Takeaway

What's there to learn from all of these content-based efforts?

First, that it does, in fact, take considerable **work**. Content development and updates are well worth it over time, offering your business considerable marketing and customer retention advantages. If done the right way and often enough, you'll see results in your marketing ROI, site traffic volume, as well as in new leads and sales. Right now, the most important thing is to get started now and keep your efforts consistent.

Second, begin to realize that content's role really is spread across every marketing move your business makes. Put simply, your content isn't something you can sweep under the rug. For the best results, it has to be made a priority. If you want your Pay per Click ads to drive ROI, they'll need compelling ad copy. If you want visitors to convert on your site, you'll need valuable information and calls-to-action. All marketing, in one way or another, ties back to content.

Finally, all the tips above are just a jumping-off point. They aren't all-inclusive, and some might not work for your business's unique situation. They do, however, provide some fundamental guidelines to get your content (and your marketing) steered in a better direction.

Below are some next steps you should take to get started.

1. Set up scheduled evaluations for your content across every medium, from your website to your physical documents
.
2. Stay informed on industry trends and keep an eye out for insights from your competitors.

3. When creating content, always think from your intended audience's perspective. Determine what they find most valuable and deliver.

4. Let your company's personality shine through. Differentiation is an important step on the road to success.

5. **Always** measure your progress and make informed decisions based on your analytical data.

The value of content from a marketing standpoint is sometimes underestimated, but utilizing the tips and information above will allow you to bring content to the forefront. Take action now and your business (and your budget) will thank you later.