GUIDE

A Strategic Guide to Content Marketing for Business Growth

Parse.ly

Content marketing is the art of helping your audience be smarter and better at their job, in a way that also benefits your business. By cultivating a conversation and a relationship with an audience, a business can stand out, deliver value, and build trust.

That's content marketing in a nutshell, and it is the best way to nurture leads, engender customer loyalty, and build brand reputation.

In this guide, we'll show you how to:

- Position your content marketing for business growth

- Drive more qualified leads and conversions

- Turn site visitors into brand advocates

- Set up an effective growth content marketing team

- Improve cross-department communications

- Publish on the channels that matter to your audience

- Unite an agile CMS and content analytics to support your content marketing strategy

Content marketing poises businesses for growth

Cat videos to political screeds, the internet is full of content for content's sake.

But for businesses, content needs to go beyond mere entertainment. For one, it needs to be able to scale to reach larger and more qualified audiences. And to really pay off, it also needs to drive better lead quality and growth.

Content marketing isn't free, of course. Unlike traditional advertising, pay-per-click advertising, or social media post boosts, the cost is primarily time and resources. It takes talented professionals to brainstorm, research, write, edit, and publish great content.

Traditional advertising is more like a slot machine, content marketing an apple tree.

Like a slot machine, traditional advertising may lead to jackpot instant gratification. But if you want a continuous revenue stream, you have to keep dropping quarters. Content marketing, on the other hand, is like planting a seed. That effort won't pay off right away, but as the seed blossoms into a tree, it can feed and nurture you for seasons to come.

That's because your visitors will want to share great content with their friends. Thought leaders in your industry will want to refer their audiences to your insightful ideas. And people searching for answers or advice will find your content through search engines.

Every time someone learns about your brand and your product from trusted sources, your return on that initial investment grows.

Content marketing has an audience of 4.66 billion people
In the past, marketing had a natural limit. No matter how many people you enlisted to fill call centers, knock on doors, or offer

product samples to the public, there were only so many potential customers you could reach with your message in a day.

Enter: content marketing.

There are [4.66 billion active internet users worldwide](#), according to Statista. Content marketing scales in a virtuous cycle. People who gain value from a piece of content will be more inclined to share it, and search engines will be more likely to surface it. The more people who find your content, the further it spreads.

While your product or service won't be useful or valuable to every human with an internet connection, content marketing's ability to reach a worldwide audience far outpaces traditional advertising.

Effective content marketing develops a life of its own, branching out across the internet to educate, entertain, and inspire potential customers no matter where they live.

Content marketing helps your most valuable customers self-select

Not everyone is going to be interested in buying your product. So the less time wasted on unqualified leads, the more resources your business has to invest in growth.

Content marketing is a great tool for guiding the right visitor toward your website and a potential sale. A visitor who arrives for an answer to a general question and receives a great explanation from your content is more likely to click through to another piece of content to learn even more.

Because you have the best answers, they're more likely to be interested in your product's solution to their needs. The best part is, if you're truly delivering value and helping them solve problems, even visitors who aren't the right fit will walk away with a positive feeling about your brand.

So, how do you guarantee your content is meeting the needs of your visitors and creating value for anyone who visits?

How to turn site visitors into brand advocates

Each visitor's journey to becoming a customer is unique.

It's important to understand what mindset a visitor has when they approach your content. If you listen carefully, visitors will tell you what they're looking for by their words and actions.

Pay attention, and cater to those signals accordingly, and you'll find yourself developing, nurturing, and converting leads, retaining customers, and transforming buyers into advocates.

Content marketing drives lead generation and conversion

Precious few visitors to your website arrive ready to buy. The estimate of how many touchpoints it takes to turn a visitor into a lead and, finally, into a sale, varies by study and by industry. But two things are universally true: the number of channels where those touchpoints may happen will continue to multiply, and content plays a role in each.

To ensure visitors don't treat your website like a pit stop on the journey to a purchase elsewhere, it's important to deliver value—and fast.

Match your content to your visitors' needs

Content can deliver value to visitors regardless of where they are [along their customer journey](#).

Early in that journey, it's about providing information for visitors. If you're an outdoor gear company, your ideal buyer might turn to Google with a question like "How do I hike Kilimanjaro?"

Guides and "How to"-style blog posts are perfect content here. Rather than jumping straight to a sales pitch for your high-tech, lug-soled hiking boots as the solution, this is a fantastic opportunity to provide value by answering questions and moving visitors to the next step in their journey. All while creating awareness and visibility for your brand.

After more research, your visitor now knows boots are a must for that bucket list trip. And they might be ready to consider your product. You'll know they're in the right frame of mind if they are searching for things like "best X for hiking" or "product X vs. product Y for summiting mountains" or "pros and cons of product X." Product comparison articles are a natural content type here, providing value for your prospect while they are still researching.

When it's time to actually buy, content is there again to help your prospect pull the trigger. At this point, they may be searching specifically for your brand's boots. Maybe they're adding phrases like "where to buy" or "discounts" to the search.

Here, content like product demos and tutorials, case studies, or calculators (e.g., finding the right shoe size) can help convert your prospect into–finally–a sale!

How content marketing wins loyal customers

The customer journey doesn't end after a single purchase.

Customer retention matters as much, or even more, to a business targeting rapid growth. Businesses that consistently

[achieve the highest customer satisfaction ratings enjoy 2.5x the growth](#) of other companies, according to *Harvard Business Review.*

Content marketing can kindle that kind of customer loyalty by continuing to deliver value post-sale.

Imagine your outdoor gear company sending the proud owner of a new pair of hiking boots an email highlighting how to care for leather boots or offering a top-10 list of great trails in their area.

From buyers to brand advocates

The holy grail of marketing is when your customers do the marketing for you.

When a friend or family member refers a lead to you, it's a shortcut to social proof that your brand will deliver on its promises.

To get your customers talking, create content that bolsters their social proof first.

Consider blog posts about industry trends, provocative thought leadership pieces, or timely tips that help customers stay in the know.

Content like this may not drive traffic, but for the customers who are already believers in your brand and mission, it can turn them from buyers into advocates.

What does a growth content marketing team look like?

Content marketing is a team sport, and there are many roles that play a part in any content strategy's success.

At first, some players may have to wear multiple hats, but use this job roster to guide you as your business grows.

Strategy

Before you create content, you need to know who you're creating it for and what you're hoping to achieve.

This is where your marketing team dives deep into who your ideal customers are. That means going beyond simple demographics to understand where and what they engage with, their challenges and pain points, and their aspirations.

Then determine how you'll measure success for this campaign. Be specific.

If you're focused on raising awareness about your brand, try improving page views, keyword rankings, or engaged time. If the goal of the campaign is converting marketing qualified leads, set an objective for the number of email signups or ebook downloads.

With the right tools, this is a job where everybody on the marketing team can, and should, contribute. Parse.ly makes it easy for your whole team to track content-centric metrics like engaged-time and content conversions to understand how your content is contributing towards common marketing KPIs.

Research

Once your strategy has identified a target, research helps you aim. What kinds of questions are your ideal customers asking

at this stage in their journey? How are competitors answering? What insights does your company have that will differentiate your content from the rest of the market?

Combine the research from your strategy with keyword research to decide what content to create.

Creation

This is where the rubber meets the road. By tapping that research, you'll be primed to design an infographic, pen a pithy social media post, shoot a compelling video, or write a long-form blog post that draws the interest of your target audience. And raise the odds that you'll beat competitors to the punch.

Editing

Behind every good creator is a great editor. Before you hit publish, make sure someone on your marketing team does a careful appraisal of the content.

Catching mistakes is important because errors can muddy your reputation and injure the trust you've built with visitors. However, the editing job is also about making sure the message is clear and aligns with your team's strategy.

Analysis

The published content isn't a conclusion; it's a hypothesis. Analysis is where you dive into the numbers to see whether the experiment worked.

There are countless variables—subject matter, format, distribution channels, promotion strategy, etc.—to keep in mind each time you're concocting a new piece of content. A tool like Parse.ly can help you understand which levers to pull and knobs to twist. And how those changes affected the result.

How to scale your content marketing efforts smoothly

Expanding your marketing team has its advantages: more creators and editors means your business can produce more

content without sacrificing quality. Meanwhile, diversifying the team's talent to add social media pros, videographers, or podcasters allows you to produce content for more channels and reach a wider audience.

But scaling comes with challenges, too.

Marketers at large organizations [recently told](#) the Content Marketing Institute their top challenges were: coordinating content marketing efforts among multiple departments and brands (62%), too many departmental silos (58%), and technology integration (54%).

Communication across multiple departments

Combat these challenges by developing good relationships with key representatives in various departments. Appoint a point of contact for each, someone involved in content ideation and creation. They can become your content marketing liaisons, helping you get projects across the line.

After assigning content marketing liaisons from each department, ensure your organization is using the right communication tools. For example, [Slack](#) can keep conversations organized and projects moving forward, even if your team is remote. Collaborative work tools, such as [Notion](#), are also helpful for content creation and ideation.

In addition, the [Parse.ly analytics reporting suite](#) is an efficient way to eliminate communication challenges.

Departmental silos

These manifest when communication and transparency between departments break down.

Combating departmental silos requires good management, which reinforces a positive working environment and open communication between employees and management.

Create accountability through transparent, clear, and actionable goals and deadlines to keep the team on track. The [Parse.ly](#)

[Goals](#) feature is perfect for setting and tracking goals so you and your team can stay aligned toward shared KPIs.

Technology integration

The marketing technology industry is bursting with software and tools to make marketers' jobs easier.

However, an oversaturated market often breeds indecision, not clarity.

Businesses should be focusing on hiring the right talent and developing efficient processes first. People and processes can overcome the wrong technology, but the reverse is rarely true.

With people and processes in place, consider tools that automate or simplify pieces of your process to make your team more efficient.

Make sure any tool you choose provides a sufficient return on investment by either saving your business money or time. And remember, the market shifts fast, so the more flexible your technology solution is, the more future-proof your process will be.

Publish your content where your customers are

If you publish content in an empty channel, it's guaranteed not to move the needle on business growth.

To identify your ideal customers, review the content marketing strategy your team created, understand their demographics and needs, and develop a hypothesis about where to find them.

For example, if our outdoor gear retailer is targeting a younger audience and has talent on staff to create amazing visual content, consider channels like Instagram or TikTok, valuable for creating product demos—39% of people learn about new products through TikTok videos.

Regardless of where you think your audience is, it's important to turn to analytics to prove or disprove the theory.

Look for metrics that show which channels are referring traffic back to your website and who among those visitors are most engaged. Content marketing is an iterative process. By seeking constant feedback, you'll home in on the best channels for your content and the types of content that generate the most engagement on those channels.

When you're deciding what content to create, what its purpose is, and where to distribute it, using data to inform your decisions is essential.

You can't improve what you don't measure. Content analytics is the link that creates a data-driven feedback loop for your business. It highlights what content is resonating with your audience and helps you use that knowledge to find ways to maximize and build on that success.

A final note

For a growth content marketing strategy to succeed, organizations need to deliver content faster and smarter, across an array of channels. To turn readers into brand advocates, that content your content marketing team creates and promotes

needs to be informed and optimized by content analytics. In the end, by scaling the quality and speed of content delivery, you'll create exceptional customer experiences that 1) Stand out as they drive awareness, 2) Deliver real value to the right audiences, and 3) Build long-lasting trust—turning visitors into advocates for your brand.

Make an agile CMS and content analytics the backbone of your content marketing strategy

Today's consumers expect sophisticated, multi-channel digital experiences with your brand. [WordPress VIP](), an agile, enterprise-ready, content management system (CMS) built on WordPress, empowers your whole team—content creators to content developers—to meet those expectations, at scale, with velocity, securely, and across channels. As part of the WordPress VIP platform, [Parse.ly]() provides the robust content analytics teams need to ensure their campaigns are driving business growth, and empowers marketers to become data-driven in their everyday content-related activities.

About Parse.ly

Parse.ly is the analytics platform built for content creators.

Parse.ly gives creators, marketers and developers the tools to understand content performance, prove content value, and deliver tailored content experiences that drive meaningful results.

With Parse.ly, your writers and marketers don't have to turn to the analyst team for answers—they can be data-driven themselves.

[Learn more about Parse.ly]()

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