

HOW TO DO BETTER CONTENT MARKETING

Deciding What to Create and Developing a Content Calendar



Content marketing is growing fast. Companies now understand its importance as a means for driving business, and they're investing in it more than ever before.

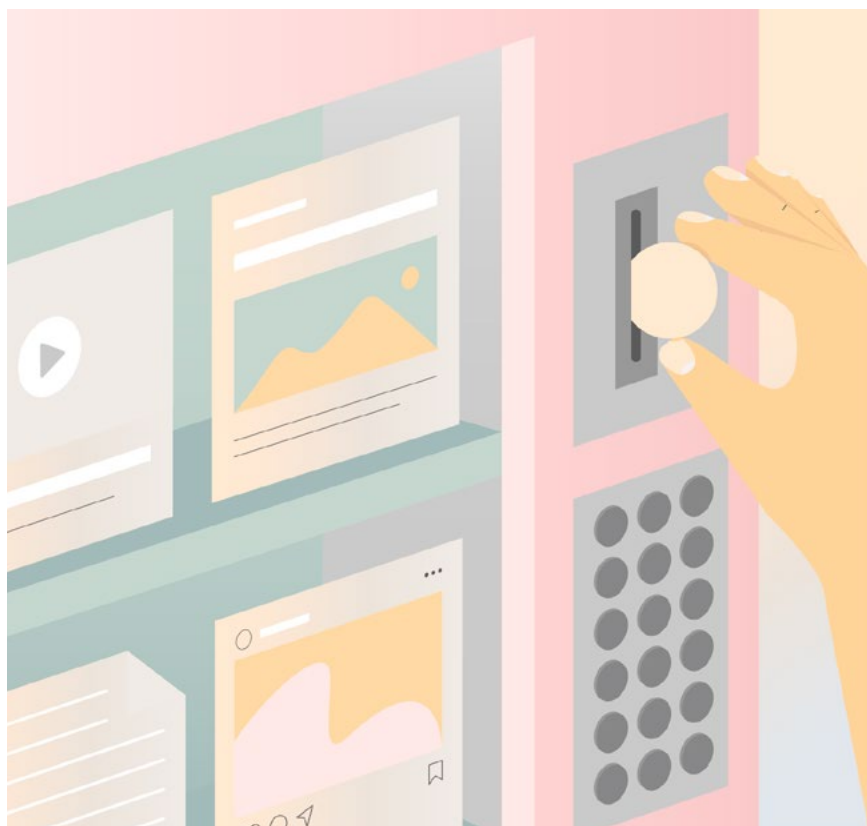
In our [Content Matters 2022 Report](#), where we surveyed marketers about the changes in their content programs over the past year, 66% revealed that they're creating more content and half noted that their content budgets have increased. But due to the relative immaturity of content marketing as a discipline, the general consensus is simply, "We need content, *more content*."

It's a good starting point. But without proper planning and prioritization, increased production won't yield increased results. Worse, the workload for your content team will quickly become unmanageable.



Between your team, sales people, demand marketers, executives, PR, product developers, and virtually everyone else at your company, there's never a shortage of requests or ideas for new content. You've probably also done [extensive research on your target audience](#) and have a running list of ideas for content based on the objectives, issues, and questions they care about relative to your product and services.

In many cases, that list ends up living in a single document or spreadsheet, while the rest of your company looks at your team as the on-demand "content vending machine" who will dispense those ideas into the world.



It's no wonder your content team is often overwhelmed. So, where do you even start? Which ideas are most important? And how do you stay organized while you tackle this daunting, never-ending list of content to create?



The key is being able to: 1) take a deep breath as a team, 2) prioritize based on your fundamental purpose for doing content marketing, and 3) form a clean, repeatable process for production. Despite frantic, high-volume demands for content, the most successful marketers take the time to slow down and do better, smarter content marketing by:

- Identifying high-value content ideas that resonate with their audience and help them hit company KPIs.
- Auditing their current content library to maximize efforts and fill gaps with repurposed content.
- Organizing and internally publicizing content production plans in a content calendar.
- Creating and publishing content quickly and efficiently to keep up with increased demand.

“As marketers, we tend to believe that we’ll move faster if we go right from idea to production. But instead, we have to slow down—start with an idea, plan, and prioritize all the iterations of that particular idea, and then start production,” says [Robert Rose](#), Founder, [The Content Advisory](#). Robert shared this nugget and other words of wisdom in this guide during a recent [Parse.ly webinar](#) on effectively using content analytics to drive growth, improve content creation, and optimize digital experiences.

Prioritize and organize ideas for content

Instead of wasting time and resources jumping to execute half-baked, low-impact ideas, prioritize everything that comes your way—identifying the good ideas and deciding how to iterate on them, identifying the bad ideas and jettisoning them.

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Prioritization comes down to finding the ideas that solve specific issues for your potential customers, showcase the unique value of your product, and help you meet your KPIs. A good idea attracts and engages your target audience while moving the business needle—turning content consumers into potential (or actual) customers.



Remember your purpose and your audience

Start by restating your goals, your purpose, and the “why” behind your content marketing. Which objectives matter most to your business or to your marketing organization right now? Which KPIs map to those objectives? And how can [content drive those KPIs?](#)

Don’t try to achieve every objective at once. Any content you prioritize should be well-positioned to drive specific KPIs, helping work toward the specific objectives most important to your organization.

Next, reference your ideal customer personas and [what you know about your target audience](#)—who they are and what they care about. Based on customer data, competitive analysis,

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industry research, social listening, and keyword research, you should have a deep understanding of the problems, business outcomes, questions, and pain points that matter most to them. Content you prioritize should provide value that speaks to or solves those issues for your audience.

With clear objectives in place and your target audience top-of-mind, now start to identify high-priority ideas by analyzing your historical content data and the performance of related topics.

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Look at what has worked in the past

Your goal in doing historical content analysis is to identify high-performing topics, and prioritize, tweak, or veto ideas accordingly. Access content data related to posts, content subject matter and tags, and website sections. Sort by metrics that map to your marketing KPIs, like pageviews, engaged time, returning visitors, and [conversions](#).

Tag	Views: 30 Days	Posts	Page Views/Post	Context	Page Views
1 type: report		44k	3,515	45.5M visitors 3:07 avg. time	154,026,913
2 type: feature		2.6k	10,817	7.51M visitors 3:16 avg. time	28,004,233
3 apple		4.2k	2,659	4.77M visitors 2:15 avg. time	11,129,459
4 covid-19		575	15,607	4.02M visitors 2:51 avg. time	8,973,867
5 spacex		343	19,269	3.25M visitors 2:08 avg. time	6,609,292
6 entertainment		712	8,952	1.18M visitors 2:28 avg. time	6,373,924
7 public-health		466	11,674	2.34M visitors 2:57 avg. time	5,440,308
8 privacy		948	5,444	3.67M visitors 1:22 avg. time	5,161,047

Note which content topics do the best job driving KPIs that map to your business objectives—keeping a close eye on efficiency. Some of your highest-value topics might be overshadowed by the sheer volume of content related to others. Look beyond your biggest hits by focusing on metrics like pageviews-per-post and

Parse.ly tags dashboard



[average engaged time](#). If you're deciding between two good topics, choose the one that performs more efficiently.

Also, note the performance patterns of topics in relation to distribution channels and promotion strategies as well as any outlying circumstances that cause a certain topic or piece of content to perform notably well or poorly.

For any new idea, use content analytics data to scrutinize its related topic to make sure it's worth executing in the short term. That topic should have:

- Performed well before, mapping directly to the KPIs you're focused on.
- Performed efficiently, indicating high ROI.
- Experienced success that is realistically repeatable (not because of one lucky retweet or share from a celebrity).

Look closely at the promotion used for ideas or topics you're considering. In many cases, poor strategy is to blame for the failure of a topic or idea, not of the quality of the content itself.

"Many times I've heard a content marketer say to me, 'We produced this amazing whitepaper, and then the demand generation people didn't put any money behind it, didn't promote it well, and it performed poorly.' Instead of criticizing the mediocre promotional strategy, the quality of the whitepaper is blamed for the poor campaign performance.

"That's often because we're not measuring the right things. We need to get visibility into all factors of campaign performance so we can figure out how to connect the right promotion with the right message... Being able to measure your promotional efforts, syndication, and distribution strategies is the core element of understanding what you should be creating in the first place," says Rose.

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Compile and organize your top-priority ideas

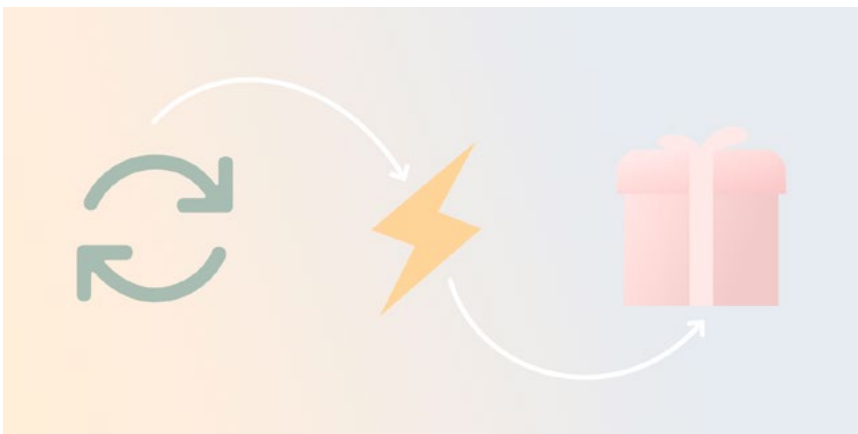
Based on your analysis of historical content performance, you should now have a good sense of which ideas are your highest priorities. Put together a list of as many ideas as you believe your content team is capable of producing in a finite period, for example, a month or a quarter. Note why you're prioritizing these ideas, including details on past performance and ideal promotion strategy for the topics related to each.

This list will represent your team's workload. You'll be confident that every idea on it is worth executing in the short term and that your team has enough time and resources to deliver in the given timeframe. Share it with the rest of your marketing team and the wider organization so everyone knows what you're working on and why.

Audit and repurpose your content library

At this point, you've sifted through a formidable collection of requests for content and should have a manageable queue of high-value ideas. You're one step closer to planning out and executing on them.

But before you do, audit your existing library to see if the content you're considering creating already exists and if you can maximize your efforts by updating or repurposing it.



Depending on your tenure at your current company and your familiarity with their past marketing and brand messaging, there's likely a load of pre-existing content you've never encountered. Maybe you read something once years ago, or helped edit a piece but never saw the finished product.

Cross-reference your high-priority content workload with what's already been created so you don't waste time reinventing the wheel. For any idea you've deemed high-priority, audit your existing content library and find out if the idea already exists as a standalone piece or content series or if there's already a close match that you can [update](#) or [repurpose](#) instead of starting from scratch.

If an idea you've prioritized has already been executed, unless it was done perfectly, your goal should be to update, repurpose, or repromote it appropriately.

"I've seen amazingly wonderful, brand-level ideas get trapped in the context of a blog post, simply because that was the way the idea was first thought of. Take those ideas and put in a process step to figure out all of the containers that they might go into...Slow the creation of ideas to exponentially speed the amount of assets that you can create through reuse and repackaging," says Rose.

In short, find those rushed through, poorly executed, or weakly promoted ideas and give them their due, a new lease on life. Edit your top-priority content workload list accordingly, noting why and how you plan to improve the original iterations.

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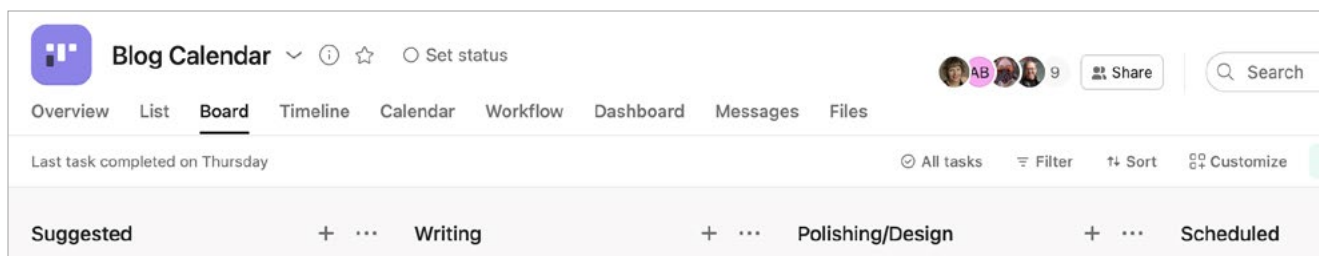
Plan and maintain a content calendar

Now that you've defined your workload of high-priority content ideas—either to start from scratch or to update/repurpose—it's time to set up your [content calendar](#). This will be your marketing team's single source of truth for all aspects of content production and promotion, from brief to finished product.

A well-organized content calendar is key to staying on track and delivering on your proposed workload, especially when multiple stakeholders and departments are involved.

Pro tip: If you plan to create many different types of content across a variety of channels, use a dedicated project management tool instead of a simple spreadsheet.

Create a content calendar with a tool like [Asana](#), then share it with your entire marketing organization, including content, design, demand, and PR teams. Your calendar should showcase all of the content ideas you've prioritized, along with related production timetables, publishing dates, design requests, product launches, and content distribution activities.



Within your content calendar, assign tasks to the individuals who will be responsible for owning and completing specific tasks related to content production. This means that before you get to work, you need to decide who will be involved in briefing, writing, editing, designing, approving, launching, and promoting each piece of content.

Content calendar project in Asana



Your content team will likely own writing and editing. Design and demand generation will own packaging and promotion. But don't let team structures and formal job descriptions prevent you from creating the best content possible. Don't be shy about pulling in subject matter experts (SMEs) from your organization to outline, write, edit, or provide guidance on creating content related to their area of expertise.

SMEs can be anyone who makes, sells, uses, or supports your company's products and has a deep understanding of how they work and why they're valuable to your target audience. As you schedule out your content calendar and delegate tasks accordingly, identify potential SME candidates who might be able to help here and there. Request their collaboration and add them into your calendar as contributors.

Create and publish content quickly

With your calendar full, deadlines set, and tasks assigned to the appropriate stakeholders, now it's time to actually start creating content. Begin executing on your high-priority content ideas, following the production process you've laid out. It will probably look something like this:

Create a brief and outline. Write a first draft. Edit it. Iterate. Edit some more. Run everything past a copy editor. Approve the final draft. Design. Publish. Promote.

Along the way, equip every stakeholder with a copy of your company's style guide so they can follow your [brand voice guidelines](#). Also, push to have publishing tools in place that allow everyone on your team, no matter their technical skills or expertise, to create quickly and efficiently.

Use a CMS built for agility

Democratize the publishing, editing, and design process with a creator-friendly, agile content management system (CMS) that decreases the lag time between idea and execution and that frees designers or developers from being content gatekeepers.



For example, [WordPress VIP](#), an enterprise-grade CMS platform, allows nontechnical creators to design, edit, and publish pages on their own using the CMS (WordPress) that powers more than 40% of the internet, making creating consistent, branded content across different channels faster and easier.

This agility is especially important when you're publishing content to a variety of channels, a common practice for marketers today. In fact, modern companies activate [an average of 5.2 channels](#), including devices like voice assistants, smart speakers, wearable devices, touchscreens, and phones.

WordPress VIP helps you build cohesive digital experiences across all of these channels and more, with a massive library of APIs and plugins that allow you to quickly and easily integrate new tools and channels into your marketing stack.

Finally, don't forget to [tag your content appropriately](#) so you can access meaningful and powerful insights from content analytics down the road. Tag based on subject-matter, content type, and content structure to group your content data around these high-level themes. Use a content analytics tool like [Parse.ly](#), part of the [WordPress VIP platform](#), to measure then optimize your efforts based on performance not guesswork.



The screenshot shows a Parse.ly dashboard interface for an article. On the left is a placeholder image of a PlayStation Plus icon. The article title is "Sony takes aim at Xbox Game Pass with PlayStation Plus Video Pass" with an external link icon. Below the title, the date and time are "Apr 21. 09:52 AM", the author is "Sam Machkovech", and the category is "Gaming & Culture". A "SHARE" button with an arrow icon is in the top right corner. The main area displays a collection of tags in blue boxes, organized into three rows. The first row contains "playstation", "playstation-4", "playstation-5", "type: report", and "xbox-game-pass". The second row contains "Arts & Entertainment", "Technology", and "Television". The third row contains "PlayStation", "PlayStation (console)", "PlayStation Network", "Sony", and "Sony Interactive Entertainment". Below these are more tags: "Subscription business model", "Video game console", "Xbox", and "Xbox Game Pass", followed by a "Hide" button.

Tags in the Parse.ly dashboard



Final words of advice

As you go through the design and publishing process for every piece of content, make sure to bake in strategies that encourage people who find and consume your content to eventually spend money with you.

Plan the desired action you want users to take after they engage with your content. Where should they go next? Which pages should you link to? What is the ideal action a user can take on that page? Knowing this will help you add the right links and calls-to-action (CTAs) to your content.

With a deliberate strategy around CTAs and a strong tagging taxonomy, you'll be well-positioned to report on and analyze the ROI of your content and how different types of content impact your business objectives.

Next in our series: Improving your content strategy

Now that you've created a prioritized calendar based on historical content performance and started executing your content production process, it's time to start monitoring and maximizing the results of your efforts. Keep an eye out for Chapter 4 of our *How to Do Better Content Marketing* series, where we'll walk you through performing a content audit and using content analytics to iterate on your content production and promotion processes, improve the quality of your work, and make a greater impact with fewer resources.





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](#)