



Steal these strategies!

**FOUR STRATEGIES FOR BOOSTING YOUR
CONTENT METRICS BY 100% OR MORE**

Brought to you by Parse.ly



About Parse.ly:

At Parse.ly, we built the world's most innovative content analytics system, which drove the growth of the web's biggest sites with an audience-first strategy. Over 35,000 users at hundreds of companies actively use our content dashboard to monitor audience attention on their sites and apps.

Visit **parse.ly** for more information.



4 strategies

Which one should you steal?

Working with content teams from major media organizations and fortune 500s to the most scrappy start-ups, we've been fortunate to gain a clear picture of best practices for any content team.

While these 4 strategies are proven to benefit any organization, each one will take time to and resources to implement successfully... TLDR, pick 1-2 that make the most sense for what your organization is working towards now.

Some content teams have already cracked the SEO nut and need to find ways to improve their internal recirculation, while others have a stellar social team and need to expand their organic discoverability. Some need to create new content, while many could use tactics to make the most out of content that already exists.

Here are the key questions to ask yourself:

HOW MUCH CONTENT DO I ALREADY HAVE?

If you have an archive that spans 10 years, we recommend the **Evergreen** or **Newsletter** strategies as a place to start.

Only have a small backlog of posts? Take a look at the **Recirculation** strategy to make sure that once you deploy future content, you'll have people staying on your site.

WHAT DO YOUR RESOURCES LOOK LIKE?

If you need to be more strategic about where you place your "content bets", the first place to look in this guide is the **Stop Doing** strategy. Pick up another strategy once you've opened up some space in your day-to-day.

If you have a team that can take on more, **Newsletters** are a great place to start, because so much can be accomplished with a newsletter program.

WHAT DOES YOUR AUDIENCE LOOK LIKE NOW?

Do you have an existing group of loyal readers that you don't want to lose? **Newsletter**.

Do you need to break through the noise and get noticed? **Evergreen** or **Stop Doing**.

Do you need to focus on acquiring new readers? (Everyone should focus on that).

Recirculation or **Evergreen**.

Based on your answers, skip straight to the recommended strategy, or skim through them all and see what makes the most sense for your goals and team.



The Strategies

× 07

EVERGREEN

Make the most of your existing content.

○ 11

RECIRCULATION

Get audiences to go deeper and read more of your articles and posts.

× 14

STOP DOING

Identify what's not working so you can spend time on what is.

○ 17

NEWSLETTER

Give your loyal readers what they want (while reducing churn).





Tips for Getting Started

MAKE ADJUSTMENTS FOR YOUR TEAM

These strategies don't come with hard numbers for how many stories you'll need or exact publishing frequencies, because those decisions will depend on the size of your content operation. You can adapt them to fit your resources: they've been used by the biggest media companies, as well as one- to two-person content teams with success.

GET IT RIGHT THE FIRST TIME AND PROVE IT'S WORKING

Do you have a boss who trusts you to do whatever you want and never checks in to see how things are going? Yeah, neither do we. Even the best strategy in the world requires continuous refinement based on audience feedback, and even the most trusting boss wants to see what she's getting out of all that investment.

MAKE A BUSINESS CASE

Need help making a business case for content? For your strategy? We're here to help. The Parse.ly team of content analytics experts can help you make the argument for why not only you need a content strategy, but a way to monitor, improve, measure, and report on it as well.

Email us / hello@parse.ly or visit www.parse.ly to get started.



Strategy 1

Evergreen

Make the most of content that already exists



WHY WE LIKE IT

This strategy makes the most of work that already exists. It's hard (and expensive) to constantly create new content, but you can execute on this strategy for free.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- » A content archive (a “library” of previous content)
- » “Evergreen” content: subject matter that doesn't go out of date or become inaccurate quickly

WORKS BEST FOR

- » Improving loyalty with an existing audience
- » Testing different formats or platforms with less risk

WHO FOUND THIS STRATEGY SUCCESSFUL?

WIRED


WEDDINGWIRE

“ We are dedicated to trying to figure out how to make WIRED's 26-year-old archive really shine. ”

Indu Chandrasekhar
Director of Audience Development, WIRED

PLAYBOOK

FIRST

Go digging for content

An evergreen strategy requires diligence around finding potential stories that live in your archive. You can start with one method of finding these stories, and then move to another, or use a different method each week.

Method 1:

Start with your analytics system. Look for stories that were published prior to this month, year, two years, or start with more recent content, and then expand backwards.

Are any stories still getting consistent weekly traffic? This traffic often comes from search engines, but you should examine any older stories that readers are sharing without any prompting. What about those stories has triggered on-going discussion?

Look for older stories that may have high engagement (time on site or engaged minutes) but low visitor counts.

TIP

Parse.ly's content analytics system provides an ability to filter by a piece of content's publish date, and we provide an Evergreen Report that identifies potential evergreen stories for you!



Method 2:

Use the site search function on Google to search your archives for articles or stories related to trending topics of the week. You can update or use them to participate in “of-the-moment” conversations without creating brand new posts. Check for articles that mention recurring events, like holidays or industry conferences.



Generating a “top listings export” makes it easier for us to identify evergreen content. We use pageview referrals from different channels and total engaged minutes as two metrics we value when looking for this content. Each week, we generate an Excel file and use that to tag more evergreen stories we'll use on social media at some point in the near future. ”

Social Media Editor from a technology magazine



SECOND

Track your changes

Once you find articles, add them to a Google spreadsheet or Excel file. Add columns for:

Article	Updated	Improved	Create New	Reshared

You can add more columns, but these will get you started. In each row you'll add the article information, plus the dates that you've completed each task.

Update

Do a quality check on the articles.

- » Make sure images and layouts aren't broken
- » Update links to newer stories

Improve

- » Update headlines to help people make a connection to current events
- » Update and renovate guides and explainers
- » Optimize for keyword rankings
- » If your system allows it, tag articles that you've updated with a term that identifies them so that you can measure their success later.

Create

In addition to updating existing content, having a robust evergreen strategy means that you create new content based on existing content that you know people already enjoy. Often this can be done by finding a new format to put

the content into. Formats that work best for evergreen content:

- » Explainers/How-to's
- » Guides
- » Roundups
- » Advice
- » Reviews (of movies, products, etc.)
- » Longform pieces or extended reads
- » Q&As

Example: Turn a longform piece into a video that can be shared on social platforms.

TIP



Consider a video creation platform that allows you to easily transform existing content into video, which you can share across your distribution channels.

Promote

- » Re-share on social platforms
- » Save a place for the evergreen stories in your newsletter
- » Use evergreen stories for an on-boarding email campaign or in a messaging app
- » Share the backstory behind popular pieces

Read more about this strategy on our blog:
<https://blog.parse.ly/post/8577/tips-from-wireds-evergreen-content-strategy/>

HOW YOU PROVE IT WORKED

- » **Compare overall metrics** to your content production. You want to see that you are getting more readers, visitors, or whatever KPI you value while producing just as much, or even less, new content.
- » Watch to see if you're **keeping loyal readers engaged** by reminding them what made them love your brand in the first place. Is your returning visitor volume increasing?
- » **Check search referrals and discovery metrics:** are you increasing search traffic and new visitors from organic sources?
- » **Conversions:** are readers becoming subscribers to your newsletter?



Wedding Wire keeps an eye on the top 50 to 100 posts by search

referrers for up-and-comers:

Frequently, something starts popping that we hadn't seen before, or an older article comes up with a lot of search referrals.

Because of that finding, we'll look at keyword rankings and then optimize the article accordingly. We've had a lot of success updating articles in that way. ”

Morgan Gibson
Senior Manager of Digital Content, WeddingWire

Overview

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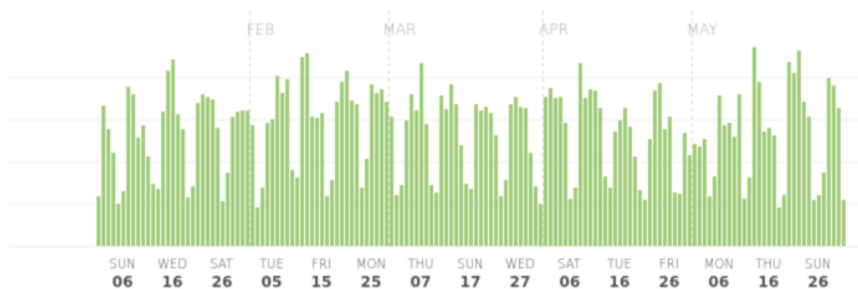
EVERGREEN
POSTS

13k

EVERGREEN
VIEWS

29.5%

OF SITE-WIDE
PAGE VIEWS



Content Comparison

EVERGREEN		SITE-WIDE	
VIEWS	TOP SECTIONS	TOP SECTIONS	VIEWS
7,629	Parse.ly Tech	Data Stories	19k
2,118	Analytics That Matter	Analytics That Matter	8,716
1,989	Journalism Today	Parse.ly Tech	8,040
799	Data Stories	Journalism Today	3,675
429	Changelog	Changelog	2,609

Strategy 2

Recirculation

Get audiences to go deeper and read more of your articles



WHY WE LIKE IT

Internal linking: While this SEO method can feel a little like a dark art to content creators, this strategy breaks internal linking down into two key components that you can follow without having any technical expertise. You can also use this strategy in conjunction with the evergreen strategy, above.

WHO FOUND THIS STRATEGY SUCCESSFUL?

Policygenius

RESULTS OF POLICYGENIUS CHANGES

21%
increase
IN PAGEVIEWS

12%
increase
IN ENGAGED TIME

300%
increase
IN INTERNAL
RECIRCULATION

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- » Some Google traffic to existing posts
- » A system that adds and tracks tags

WORKS BEST FOR

- » Sites that have a high bounce rate and low average engaged time on posts
- » Teams that want to instill a habit with their readers of coming back to their site



PLAYBOOK

FIRST

Make a list of your best work

Make a list of existing high-quality content. The list should include articles that consistently attract readers and articles that readers share, have high engaged time, and/or those that bring in search traffic. They should already be updated. They can also be guides, posts, or pages you want to promote.

Above all, these should be posts or articles about topics you want to be “known” for.

Put these articles into a spreadsheet that will become your “linking guide.” For each article, include a column that has the terms you want each link to use in text.

SECOND

Uncover underperforming ranking articles

Now, change your focus and look for articles (aim for 20 to 30) that may rank in search, but don’t do much else. These typically have high bounce rates and low engaged time. Export these into a separate spreadsheet.

Make a column for important things to fix on each: Title, Headers/Subheaders (for clarity), Updated images/alt tags, Internal links, Tags. Go through the articles one by one and clean up the ranking articles.

- » Check for broken images, links, or outdated references.
- » Does the layout still make sense? Add in headers for clarity.
- » Even if the images aren’t broken, could they be more compelling? Do they still fit with your brand’s visual style?

Link	Title	Tags and Terms
https://blog.parse.ly/post/1019/what-makes-a-good-article-recommendation	What makes a good article recommendation	article recommendations, content recommendations, recommended content



This means that more people are coming to these articles, engaging with them, and going on to a new piece of content, which means they were interested and want to read more. ”

Hanna Horvath
Staff Reporter, PolicyGenius

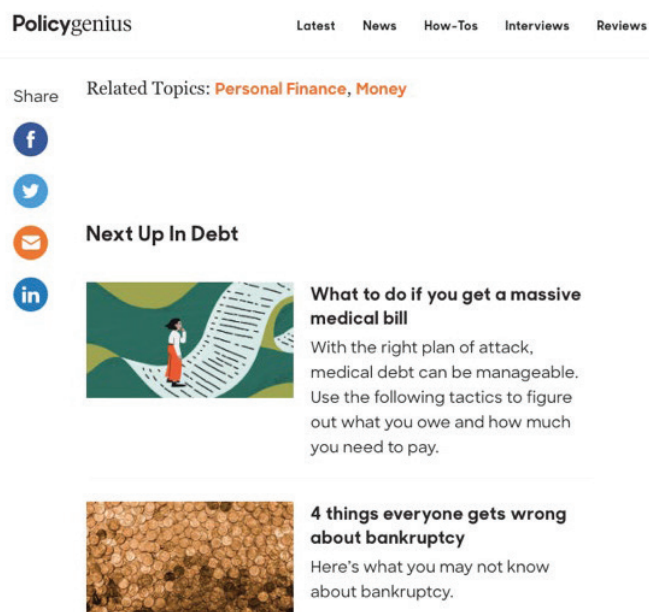
ADD INTERNAL LINKS

Now you combine the work you did in step one with step two. Find the terms you identified for the links in step one, or add them to the posts in step two. Link these terms to the URLs you identified in step one.

CREATE CONTENT DISCOVERY

Create pages or lists of articles grouped by your new tags so that it's easy for audiences to find relevant information for a single topic, even if you don't have a site page or section already built for it.

Make sure you're recommending similar stories on the page the reader is on when they're finished with the article.



Policygenius recommends related topics and other articles to read based on tags added to articles.

HOW YOU PROVE IT WORKED

- » Track how many people go on to read additional articles or view other pages on your site; this metric is called “recirculation”.
- » Watch for an increase in organic traffic from search

**Not sure which tags to use?
Follow these tips to add
relevant tags:**



Tags should be highly relevant to the topic. For example, what is it about, not what does it mention.

Tags should be general enough to apply to multiple pieces of content, but not so general that they apply to half your posts.

Keep the tags short.

Search for existing tags to match spelling, title, or sentence case, or themes.

See more: <https://blog.parse.ly/post/9063/best-practices-for-applying-subject-matter-tags/>



Strategy 3

Stop Doing

Identify what's not working so you can spend time on what is



WHY WE LIKE IT

Does it feel like you're always being asked to do more with less resources? This strategy requires you to identify the worst performing stories, something that, at best, we usually ignore. But don't worry, it's for a good cause! It'll "allow" you to stop doing things that don't contribute to your overall goals, which improves your ability to work on the activities that do.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- » A high volume of content -- more than two or three posts per week is enough.
- » No extra hours in the day

WORKS BEST FOR

- » Teams that need to make the most of their time.
- » Teams that have written about the same topics or beats consistently for over a year.
- » Teams that want to drive newsletter subscriptions or conversions with content.

WHO FOUND THIS STRATEGY SUCCESSFUL?

The (Charleston, South Carolina) *Post and Courier* reduced the number of posts from 50 to 60 a day, to 30 while continuing to grow subscribers by 250%.

250%
growth
IN SUBSCRIBERS



If a story didn't have 500 unique visitors and at least 1.2 minutes of engaged time, it got reevaluated. That doesn't mean those kinds of stories just stopped. Instead, staff looked at how the story was written, the headline, the keywords for search and other dials they could adjust.

If after all that, if those pieces still didn't hit those minimum goals, the newsroom stopped doing them. ”

Post and Courier, as told to Poynter



PLAYBOOK

FIRST

Find your worst performing work

Choose a relevant time frame (we'd recommend at least six months to a year) and a list of *all* stories published. Reverse sort this list by the metrics you choose so you can see which ones *had the least interest*.

We know, this can be scary! Try not to judge the interest level, we all experiment with things that ultimately don't work, and remember that nobody bats a thousand.

Identify five to six story types, themes, or any similar thread that seems to perform poorly. First, you can try to update this type of content, either the existing content, or any that you'll produce moving forward. Rethink the headlines, the angles, and the value those stories bring to your audience.

Set specific goals per story, to see if your updates worked, but if they don't, put them on a "Stop Doing" List. You can also do this with any tasks that you aren't seeing a strong return on, from sharing on certain social networks, to creating additional graphics to go with each story.

You may find that you were doing work because that's "how it's always been done," or because someone else at your company gave the directive. This data can show you exactly what you can stop doing, without causing any harm to your business, audience, or content.

SECOND

Analyze your "Stop Doing" list

Once you've identified the things you can stop doing, look at the list and consider for each item:

- » Can you try to tell any stories in different ways, especially if they're critical to your mission?
- » What stories can you tell that aren't on the list and that would matter to the audience?

Also consider:

- » Can you spend more time on stories that you do well and devote more resources to them?

Continue to be ruthless about what you cut from your production and your schedule. And not everything has to be stopped, sometimes you just need to do things differently.





Evaluate the following activities with a “stop-doing” process:



Social Media

Evaluate the time spent on each of your social media channels and other platforms. Are you seeing referral traffic or another metric that matters to you out of that time spent?



Process and workflows

Do you have an editorial meeting every morning? Could they be shorter or reimagined?



Story ideation

Do you comb through press releases or wait for ideas from another source? Can you set up alerts on Twitter, Buzzsumo, or Google News for keywords that will lead to new story ideas instead?

HOW YOU PROVE IT WORKED

Measure how many stories you published a month, and the average metrics per post (not just site-wide metrics). Focus on high impact, not high output.

Strategy 4

Newsletter

Give your loyal readers what they want
(while reducing churn!)



WHY WE LIKE IT

Andreessen Horowitz led a \$15.3M Series A round for email newsletter **start-up Substack**. This means that enough people read newsletters to make this worth your time. It also means email inbox will only continue to get more crowded, so your newsletters better be good.

WHO FOUND THIS STRATEGY SUCCESSFUL?

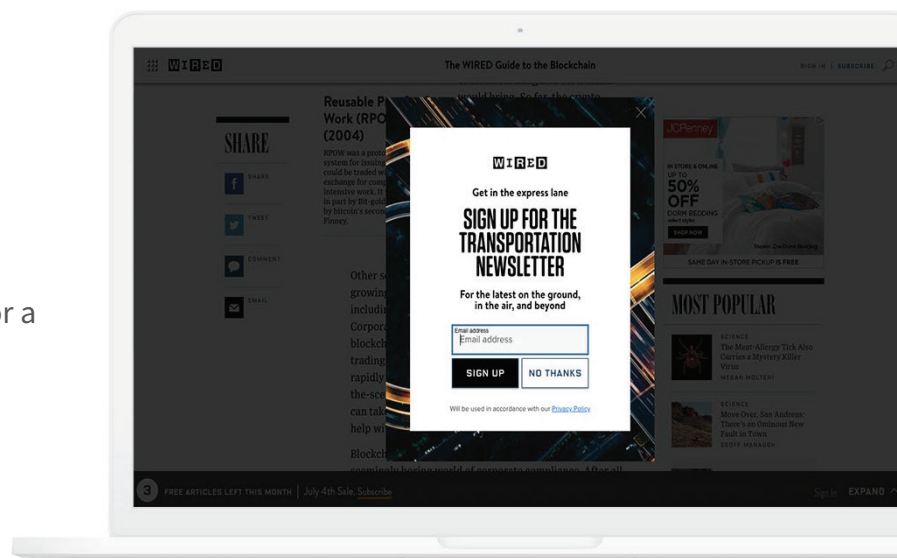
WIRED

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- » An email service provider: Mailchimp, PostUp, Campaign Monitor, etc.

WORKS BEST FOR

- » Everyone! Email newsletters can work for a single writer or big media companies.



PLAYBOOK

FIRST

Evaluate your existing newsletters.

Start with an exercise to examine the following four elements of your existing newsletters. If you're starting from scratch, imagine the answers to these questions as the basis for a new newsletter:



Discoverability: Is your newsletter sign-up easy to find?



Promotion: Could you promote your newsletter sign-up in more channels?



Value proposition: Do people know the value they'll get when they sign up?



Relevance: Can you *personalize* the content you send to readers?

Rank each element in order of priority for what needs to be improved the quickest. Is your newsletter amazing and relevant, but no one knows about it? Focus on promotion and discoverability. Do people sign up for your newsletter in droves, but then unsubscribe or tune out quickly? Revisit the value proposition and relevance aspects.

SECOND

Think through newsletter subscriber "moments".

When someone converts on your site, whether for a purchase or subscription, how does that impact the content they receive from you? This is a great time to make them aware of or add them to a newsletter list*.

WIRED examined its subscriber onboarding process and discovered that not all subscribers were being added to the daily newsletter list. The priority for the consumer marketing and product teams then became to fix that issue, add new product features to *WIRED*'s newsletters, and improve subscriber onboarding overall.

RESULTS OF WIRED'S SUBSCRIPTION EFFORTS

300%
increase

IN SUBSCRIBERS SINCE
LAUNCHING A PAYWALL

4x
increase

IN SUBSCRIBERS SINCE
LAUNCHING A PAYWALL





You may also on-board newsletter subscribers through emails that explain to them what they get by subscribing. You've piqued readers' interest enough that they offered their email address, take advantage of the attention they've given your brand.

- *Send a welcome email from the editor-in-chief (EIC) or CEO when someone subscribes. Include a personal note reminding them what the newsletter is about and/or links to "best of" content from your archive so they don't have to wait for the first send.*
- *Consider creating pop-up newsletters around events that are important to your audience: industry conferences, storylines around news events, or holidays.*
- *Send check-in emails a few weeks after someone subscribes to ask if they like the newsletter.*

HOW YOU PROVE IT WORKED

Make sure you're familiar with email metrics, including open rates, click-to-open rates, unique open rates, unique click rates, and unsubscribe rates.

Evaluate your audience using segments to evaluate their engagement. Don't assume a 50% open rate means every reader opens every other email because 50% of your audience may open every email, while the other 50% never does - treat them differently.

Use UTM parameters and campaigns to track any content you include in the newsletters.

Need a way to track UTM codes on your content? Parse.ly can help with that!

