



## How to Build an Effective Content Marketing Plan

According to the Content Marketing Institute, 84 percent of marketers who say they are ineffective at content marketing **have no documented strategy**. A solid content marketing plan will help you identify goals, develop your ideas, messages, and themes, and decide how you will measure progress.

### Use these eight steps to get your planning started.

#### 1. Determine your goals and objectives.

Ask some questions to get started like, "Why are we doing this?" and "What is the goal?" Brand awareness? Lead generation? Increased page views? Know what you're shooting for in order to get there.

**2. Start with research.** Base your plan on some upfront research. Interview marketing stakeholders — both internal (employees) and external (customers, prospects) — and dive into any reports, studies, surveys, or competitive analysis relevant to your vertical.

**3. Identify your target audience.** If you don't know who you are trying to reach, then even remarkable content has little chance for success. HINT: your target audience is not always your current customers — it may be the customers you *aspire* to work with.

**4. Be systematic.** Address ideas, messages, and themes. Ideas can also be thought of as a campaign. Messages are your company's core story, and themes are targeted stories that reinforce your messages and your big idea.

**5. Consider what types of content you'll create.** Content comes in many shapes and sizes — blog posts, bylined articles, case studies, social media updates, and eBooks. Decide what to create based on goal, target audience, and function as part of the sales funnel.

**6. Develop a content distribution strategy.** Why create content if no one knows it exists? A solid distribution strategy ensures that your content receives maximum exposure to your target audience. Select appropriate social media channels and encourage staff to distribute to their networks.

**7. Get your process, team, and tools in place.** Establishing the right team and process to execute your plan is critical to its success. Are you insourcing, outsourcing, or both? Are a content management system and marketing automation software in place?

**8. Measure your progress.** Include a measurement initiative that ties your goals and objectives back to actual performance. What will leadership consider most important to measure: is it page views, awareness, readership, or engagement?

**A solid content marketing plan is the first step in making sure your content gets results.**

Checklist derived from the original blog post on Marketing Trenches, "[How to Build an Effective Content Marketing Plan](#)."