



the whitepaper series

#4

creating a content strategy that works

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82%

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82% of smart phone users have their phone within arm's reach most of the time, meaning most of us can access an entire internet's worth of content wherever and whenever we want to.

This access means we no longer rely on broadcasters or other media owners to feed us with a steady stream of content. We have taken control of our own content stream and we only consume what we want to. The DVR means we now watch TV at a time that suits us and we fast forward through the adverts; if given the option to skip ads on YouTube 45% of us do so immediately, even adblocking software is becoming main stream with nearly 10% of internet users blocking ads on websites altogether.

All this access to content, combined with us turning a blind eye to traditional advertising, means marketers and brands need to rethink how they engage with their audience. Forcing your message onto consumers is becoming less and less effective and consumers are beginning to frown at brands that shout too much.

Content marketing is the solution to this new consumer driven dynamic. However, many brands have already forgotten its origins and have quickly fallen back into old habits... forcing users to consume their prescription of ads and sales promotions. This whitepaper looks at the key principles of content marketing and gives some hints and tips in order to maximise the efficiency and impact of your content portfolio.

1. Content marketing needs to fit into your business objectives.

The quickest way to have any marketing programme killed by the board is to not have it fit into their overarching objectives. Content marketing, at the top level, is not about fans, or likes, or views, or shares, or comment or any of those tertiary measures. Content marketing needs to be about one or more of these four things –

“ THE BEST KIND OF CONTENT IS CONTENT THAT YOUR AUDIENCE WANT, NOT WHAT YOU WANT THEM TO WANT, BUT WHAT THEY ACTUALLY WANT. ”

- Attracting new customers
- Retaining existing customers
- Increasing sales per customer
- Reducing cost per acquisition/sale

If it doesn't demonstrably achieve one of these things, it will just end up as fluff.

2. Your customers should be seeking it out.

The best kind of content is content that your audience want, not what you want them to want, but what they actually want. Your content should answer a question they have; should help them achieve; should entertain; should enable them to be, or at least appear to be, a better version of themselves. These are lofty goals but if you do not have these ambitions you will end up creating mediocre content that does nothing.

A "how to video" helps your audience achieve; a series of style advice photographs helps them be a better version of themselves; even well written FAQs are part of a good content strategy. A two minute video extolling the features of your new product does nothing for them. They do not want this. Do not fall into the trap of thinking they want to consume everything you have to say about yourself.

To know what the audience want, you need to understand who they are. We would always start any content strategy with an overview of the audience and their motivators and desires. If you start here, you are setting yourself up for success.

3. Your customers should be able to find it.

If you are making content that they are seeking, then you also need to ensure they actually find it. This is done one of three ways; make sure it is discoverable through search; make sure the content is where they are; remove all barriers and make its consumption frictionless.

Search: This is where understanding meta-data and keywords become important. Put yourself in your audience's shoes, what are they searching for that your content would perfectly satisfy; this is the basis for your keywords and meta-data. It still shocks us that many brands don't consider search as a fundamental pillar in their content strategy, search

is pretty much everyone's first port of call. If your content cannot be found by people searching for it, you are in trouble. Don't make the fatal mistake of assuming they want to find YOUR content. They don't. They just want to find appropriate content whoever's it may be. If your content isn't in the top five results, the chances are they will go to your competitor.

Your keywords need to deliver and not deceive, if you have some content showing a new summer dress, don't tag it with 'dungarees'...no matter how many people you think will be searching for dungarees. If you know lots of people are searching for dungarees, and your business has a right to comment on the dungaree scene, it might be worth creating some dungaree content and tagging accordingly.

Make sure your content is where they are: get your content out there, spread it far and wide. Your audience, in varying numbers, will be on YouTube, Pinterest, google plus, Twitter, Vine, Reddit, 500px, Flickr, Tumblr, Instagram, Facebook, blogs, the list goes on and on. The only reason not to be on every channel is when the cost of putting the content there and managing it effectively outweighs the value of engaging with the audience on that channel.

We have some pretty cutting edge technology here at Hangar Seven that helps with the cost of managing and distributing content. If your content and its associated meta-data isn't stored in a DAM (digital asset management) system and ready to be distributed to any channel at a moment's notice, maybe you should give us a ring. DAMs won't get rid of the headache of moderation and dealing with customer queries, but it at least makes sure when you are ready to move onto a new channel, you don't need to reengineer all your assets each time.

Make your content frictionless: Do you have a compelling and inspiring video that helps customers pick the right product for them? If so do not ask them to log in, or check in via Facebook, or tweet you, just give them the content. Sure, it reduces the immediate size of the CRM database, but if the content you give them is relevant and meets all their needs, you can then ask them to share their details with you afterwards. At least then, when you contact them, they will be warm to the approach.

Also picking the right format is really important. Sometimes a video is better than copy, sometimes a picture or graphic is better than a video, sometimes a podcast is better than a picture, and sometimes copy is better than a podcast. Always think of the audience, how will they be seeking this content, where will they be consuming it, what is the best format to deliver them what they want, with the minimal amount of friction.

4. No-one knows what works, you need to find out for yourself.

Test and learn - Nothing is certain, there is no formula, just putting “needs to go viral” in a brief does not make it go viral. Success is impossible to predict and even harder to engineer, the world is just too complicated and there are too many moving parts. So testing and learning is a far safer way to go.

It would, in our opinion, be better to put 100 photos on your web site, or 100 videos on your YouTube channel and then see which ones gain traction and which ones fall by the way side. You can then jump on the ones that are working and build on their success. If you only go live with one or two assets, no matter how amazing they are, or how much you have spent on them, if it doesn't resonate you will not have learnt why it failed or what alternatives would have worked more effectively. Sure creating a host of assets that all look great, rather than one blockbuster epic asset, will not win you any awards, but this isn't about winning awards, it's about good business and about giving customers what they want.

This approach does mean you need to make sure you have a cost effective asset production facility, where creating 100 shots won't cost the earth, (we can help there). You also need to make sure you are measuring what you do.

Measurement and evaluation – going full circle, you need to make sure you are measuring what is important and, ultimately, this is about fitting into your overarching business objectives. As we say “Measure what you value, don't just value what you can measure”. Views of a video are really important as they show you which videos are being sought out and watched. However, you also need to show how this video is then going on to drive sales, or customer retention.

In Summary a great content strategy is –

- Understanding what you are trying to achieve and what your audience is trying to achieve and creating content that sits in the common ground.
- Ensure you have done everything possible to make your content discoverable.
- It is unlikely you will get it spot on first time, so creating many different assets, and using cost effective distribution and measurement, will help you hone your content to ensure you delight both your audience and your board.

To find out more about Hangar Seven's approach to Content and how we can help you deliver a better customer experience, online and in-store, visit www.hangarseven.co.uk or call Simon Peers on 07775 432 450.



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retail and consumer brands**

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