

# CONTENT MARKETING FOR MAGAZINES

## Techniques to Grow, Engage and Hook Your Audience

# Hotsheets

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Content marketing is about reaching customers with content that they want and ask for, with the goal of inspiring a particular customer action. It works. People not only like consuming content that they enjoy—and may therefore want to do business with the brand/group behind it—but they like it online, which has until recently been a tough medium for traditional “interruptive” marketing to crack.

As masters of producing great content, magazine publishers are in a perfect position to apply tried and tested content marketing techniques to help drive audience growth, reader engagement, and subscriptions/sales. Here’s where to start.

### GET CLEAR ON STRATEGY

A good content marketing strategy is founded on clarifying business objectives and marketing goals first. It then itemizes and prioritizes content marketing tactics and social media platforms; lays out how you’ll distribute and promote your content; and identifies who’s going to do what in your organization. A clear, documented strategy will also outline how you’ll promote your standout stories and magazine brand across online channels, including free and paid promotion.

### CREATE A CHANNEL PLAN

A channel plan gives your team an invaluable tool for clarifying your brand voice, tone, messaging, frequency of publication, and target audiences for each of your social channels. It takes nothing more than a spreadsheet and a team meeting to determine what you want to say and how you want to say it on each channel, which might include your website, social media, podcasts, and/or in-person events.

### CREATE PERSONAS

You know your magazine audience. But have you considered who you need to reach and engage online

in order to fulfil your business objectives? Content marketers typically identify 3-5 personas to target (personas are characters representative of the people you need to fulfil your business objectives). Get to know yours well. How old are they? Where do they live? What’s their education? What do they most want and need from your brand? What are their online habits? What do they search for? If you don’t know the answers, study the analytics across your channels or, better yet, ask. Interviews with current or desired subscribers can yield excellent results.

### CREATE CONTENT FOR EACH STAGE OF YOUR CUSTOMER’S JOURNEY

Identify how each of your personas (above) is most likely to become aware of, get interested in, engage with, purchase, and endorse your product or brand. In marketing-speak, these stages together are known as the “customer journey.” For each persona, ask yourself: what kind of online content would catch their eye? Get them to your website? Persuade them to sign up for your newsletter? Get them to subscribe, or better, to shout to the rooftops about how great your magazine is? Once you know, get to work creating that content and deliver it across platforms, targeting personas where they like to be, online and off.

### TAP INTO THE POWER OF NETWORKS AND INFLUENCERS

You’re publishing amazing content on your website and social channels. But what about tapping into the networks of others in your domain in order to reach new people? A blogger in your subject area may have an audience your size or greater on Twitter or YouTube. A publisher across the country might be keen to align their brand with yours. An advertiser might love to tap into your network, and allow you to reach out to theirs in turn.



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## DON'T FORGET ABOUT THE POWER OF PAID ADVERTISING

Free social platforms are great, but many have become “pay to play” environments—which means that you won’t necessarily reach readers unless you pay to do so. Luckily, it needn’t cost the farm: you can “boost” content to targeted readers on Facebook, for example, with a tiny budget. And the specificity of targeting on these platforms is shockingly good.

## MEASURE ONLY WHAT'S RELEVANT

Hearken back to those business objectives. For each, note specifically how you could track your progress in achieving it. Here are a few ideas to kick things off:

- Set up Goals in Google Analytics. If a business objective is to get people to subscribe, set up a Goal to track how many people make it to your “thank you for subscribing” page.
- Track your market share. Keep a monthly tally of the actual people who have connected with you, including subscribers, website users, Likes and Followers on social channels, event attendees, and/or newsletter subscribers.
- Measure the love. It’s an imperfect art, but start with tracking monthly likes, shares/retweets, and comments you get on your content. On your website, track time spent on site, and pages per session, too.

## ADJUST YOUR STRATEGY

Once you know what you want to measure, assign someone on your team to track and record each KPI at least monthly. And don’t stop there: get that person to report those analytics regularly to your team, along with insights, observations, and/or recommendations for change. And—you guessed it—document them in your strategy, put them into action, and adjust as you learn.



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