



# Thought Leader. Market Leader.

How to Revamp Your 2020 Content Marketing  
to Build Trust, Influence & Sales





# Table of Contents

Re-Focus Your Measures of Success	5
Quality over Quantity	7
Leave Room for Responsive Content	10
Give a Personal Touch	13
Become a Thought Leader	15
Finding the Right Content Cadence Formula	17

## Thought Leader. Market Leader.

# How to Revamp Your 2020 Content Marketing to Build Trust, Influence & Sales

The best time to start content marketing was five years ago, the second-best time is now. When everybody has the latest, shiniest marketing technology, what can a B2B marketer do to keep a competitive advantage, especially in an age of persnickety, empowered buyers?

**As you kick off 2020, it is a great opportunity revamp or even start up your strategy to get ahead of the pack and make content marketing truly work for your business.**

At this point, there's a few critical ingredients (of your marketing strategy) that you should already have assembled. First, you should have an idea of your product's or service's value proposition and voice. What makes you unique, or better than your competitor? What story are you trying to tell? What is your why, and why should your customers care? Second, you should have an idea of your customer – you should know their likes, their dislikes, their values and the 'why' that drives their (purchase) behavior. Lastly,

you should have an idea of what worked really well this past year, what worked 'okay' and what absolutely fell flat. Having these delectable tidbits of applicable marketing insights ready at your disposal will drive the improvement of your content strategy moving forward. Luckily, we also have a few tricks and suggestions up our sleeves to help take you one (or a few) steps further:



## 1. Re-Focus Your Measures of Success



## Re-Focus Your Measures of Success

**There is a significant problem that exists when business attempt to gauge the success of a content marketing campaign by the same measures and indicators that we would use to gauge the success of the SEO component of their strategy.**

When it comes to marketing, we know that content is (currently) king. We know this – and yet, we still so frequently fall into the archaic trap of the ‘Well, what’s the exact ROI? How many leads did that get me?’ mindset. Guess what? Great content, isn’t always directly measurable in the form of concrete leads and consumer acquisitions. It’s not a formula, it’s not an exact science; rather, it’s the heart of your strategy. Effective, creative momentum earns you something different than what you view on an SEO report – it builds your story, it makes you credible (think approval ratings, but for marketing), and sets you apart from the competition.

SEO (and related backend work) will get eyes on your product or service, but great content is what will keep them there – and cultivate those leads into dedicated customers.

The more you bottleneck your content ideation into strict lead conversion appraisal, the more you limit the scope of your reach and opportunity for connection with your customer. So, as you set your sights on 2017 and build out your content strategy accordingly, I urge you to open your mindset to consider other measures of success.

- **How are your customers (or potential customers) responding to your content?**
- **What are they commenting?**
- **How is your engagement rate?**
- **Is your content worth sharing?**

Focus on creating conversations, versus conversions. Ask yourself, are you making waves within the platforms you are targeting, or just getting your feet wet? And sure, leads, ROI and conversion rates will always have their place at the table, but take the time with your team to determine other (equally important) success metrics for your content-specific marketing efforts.



## 2. Quality over Quantity



## Quality over Quantity

**As technology continues to evolve and advance, we are bearing witness to the creation of apps, tools and social movements that may have seemed impossible years ago.**

The social landscape, especially, is rapidly changing and continuously affects the way in which businesses convey their messages to their target audience, and, in turn, connect with them. LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, – it's a brave and expansive new world of social connection. Of course, with the realization of these new social channels and trends, follows the pressure to understand and best utilize each platform in a way which benefits your business.

Now, the problem that exists here isn't a result of the platforms themselves, but the fact that companies often try to be everywhere

at once – they aim to occupy every channel, for the sake of it, instead of truly tailoring and optimizing their approach for each one. **Here's the thing: there is no one-size fits all solution when it comes to content marketing, and there are certainly no participation trophies.** You won't gain paying customers just for showing up, or tossing out a line; in fact, if you use platform in the wrong way (i.e. Distributing content that isn't aesthetically pleasing/engaging on Instagram), you risk looking either entirely out of touch, or simply lazy.

When it comes down to it, effective marketing lies within the understanding of your customer-courtship. Your

company isn't aiming to be the person that calls out the same pick-up line to everyone who passes – you'll strike out far more often than you'll score.



## Quality over Quantity

Use the consumer data you've already collected to shape your platform-specific strategies:

- 1. Who is your primary customer and what platforms do they occupy (and why)?**
- 2. What style of content is most effective on those said platforms?**
- 3. How can you create that style of content for your brand, utilizing your budget and resources, for those 2-3 selected platforms?**
- 4. As aforementioned in our first point, what will be your measures of success for that content?**

Ultimately, if your customer base isn't using Snapchat, you don't need to be there because, let's face it, you can't nail a first date if the other party doesn't show up. Instead, take the time to understand the 'why' behind your customer's behavior, the social platforms they use and the subsequent content they love to engage with – and apply that directly to your content marketing strategy. Instead of trying to be everywhere at once (and producing a content product that is definitively mediocre at best), allow yourself to be a dominant force in a few, intuitively targeted places. After all, today's consumer is savvy, and they have high standards, so when it comes to quality versus quantity... quality will always win.



Take the time to understand the 'why' behind your customer's behavior, the social platforms they use and the subsequent content they love to engage with – and apply that directly to your content marketing strategy.





### 3. Leave Room for Responsive Content



## Leave Room for Responsive Content

**We hear it all the time – plan ahead, or fall behind. While it is undeniably important to ideate, plan and schedule your content ahead of time with the use of project management tools and content calendars, be wary of planning too far ahead.**

**Time and time again, businesses try to get ahead of the curve with content calendars stretching past 2 months, only to witness their content fall flat. Why? Because it isn't current.**

Remember that at the core of your content marketing strategy, you are telling a story. And to tell a great story, you need to have a firm grasp on what is happening in the world, both as it relates to your service and product, and in the world of your consumer. If you plan too far ahead, without leaving room for content that is purely responsive and on the nose (from a social standpoint) you risk coming across as removed and out of touch, which can be devastating

in today's marketing landscape. You're missing the boat on all things viral, newsworthy and relatable; the trends and stories that can act as a marketing catalyst to your brand voice while connecting with your consumer in a real, visceral way. In fact, some of the most buzzed about marketing campaigns had nothing to do with selling/marketing, and everything to do with capitalizing on social commentary to connect with the consumer. Remember the viral articles surrounding Wendy's especially sarcastic and hilarious Twitter presence? (<http://www.businessinsider.com/wendys-roasting-people-twitter-hilarious-mcdonalds-retail-2017-1>)



## Leave Room for Responsive Content

Ultimately, great content is never a hands-off venture – it's not one of those recipes you can set and forget about. **Rather, great content is a two-way street, an engaged conversation.** This means that creating and scheduling a content calendar isn't enough; when developing your strategy, you not only have to leave room for responsive content, but you also have to play an active role in its on-going delivery. Whether you're creating content for LinkedIn, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, Snapchat – it doesn't matter, you

have to be present. You have to comment back, connect with local influencers, ask questions, answer inquiries, offer solutions etc. Frankly, nothing will turn a visitor away from your website or social media page faster than outdated content. But nothing excites a consumer more than knowing that the brand or business they love is actually paying attention to them, and actively trying to forge a genuine B2C or B2B connection. Remember that your consumers don't want another sales pitch, they want you.





## 4. Give a Personal Touch



## Give a Personal Touch

**Continuing with our theme of consumer courtship and genuine B2C connection – remember that you always have personalization tools at your disposal, while working to distribute your carefully curated content.**

When gearing up to send an email blast, don't send it to your entire customer base offering up one, generous helping of (potentially misaligned) information. Instead, use the information you've gathered on your customer demographic and their corresponding preferences and use that to segment your lists based on their interests, buying behaviors and experience with your product or service. This appeal to personalization applies to your ad strategy and consumer outreach as well – for which you can use an approach like Agile Marketing to deliver content in targeted blasts, versus one large (and more unfocused) campaign every time.

More importantly, the understanding of your target consumer and the development and ideation of your core content strategy (and appropriate segments) should always be well construed and conceptualized within your team, before you make any attempt to effectively scale that content.





5. Become a Thought Leader



## Become a Thought Leader

**We've entered an age where leadership matters more than ever – thought leadership, to be exact.**

In a landscape where everyone (and every brand and business) can occupy a social media platform, have a voice and have something to sell or insights to offer, the question becomes:

**How do you separate yourself from the masses? Great content? Yes. Effective PR strategies? Yes. Appropriate SEO intact? Yes. A thoughtfully designed and curated digital presence? Of course. A strong and evolving customer understanding? Definitely.**

But perhaps more than anything, you need to establish yourself as a trusted source of information, clearing away the debris left behind from mediocre, misinformed content to make your mark in a solution-driven economy.

According to a study from The Economist Group, executives do see thought leadership content as important. What's more, around eight in 10 said superior thought leadership influences both their purchasing decisions and choice of business partner. In other words, for companies that get thought leadership right, the payoff can be significant. A recent survey by Edelman and LinkedIn revealed that thought leadership content containing valuable insights plays an important role throughout the entire B2B buyer's journey—from firm awareness to consideration and selection. Not only do executives spend considerable time on thought leadership, they also use it to evaluate firms that are publishing

content. 90% of C-Suite executives surveyed agreed that their respect and admiration for an organization increased after engaging with strong thought leadership. And more than 80% said that thought leadership has increased their trust in a vendor organization.

To do thought leadership content successfully, you need to determine what solutions are of value to your target audience, and how you can tap into that demand. You have to readily infiltrate and command content-driven platforms like LinkedIn Pulse, Quora, Medium, and local publications, to differentiate your product or service as the best, not by trying to sell it – but by being a (seemingly selfless) value-driven thought leader in your industry. Because once you become an expert, a trusted and sought-after source for information and perceived value, marketing becomes easy.



## 6. Finding the Right Content Cadence Formula



## Finding the Right Content Cadence Formula

**When it comes to content marketing, there is one frankly indisputable rule to keep in mind: a steady cadence (of high quality content) always wins.**

Sure, you could create and distribute a great, original piece of content – but if you stop there, so does the momentum of your content strategy.

This is where content cadence becomes the driving force of your success, whether you are working from a brand perspective or as a CEO striving to establish him or herself as a thought leader in their respective industry. After all, today's media and content landscape is defined by the consumer's on-going desire for instant gratification and a habitual content consumption, and it's up to today's brands and thought leaders to get on board.

The results are in and publishing content regularly and consistently generally leads to an increase in traffic and leads. In a recent study, Hubspot found that companies that published six or more monthly posts generated nearly twice as many leads as those that published less than six. And though we often think of content marketing solely in terms of lead generation and branding, it's equally important for customer retention. Google and other search engines are looking for good quality and relevant content to show in their search results and freshness is just one of the factors taken into account by their ranking algorithms.

**So take a moment to ask yourself, are you publishing enough content?**

Of course, content cadence doesn't just mean publishing a high volume of content – it involves the strategic and timely release of that content, in order to build (and maintain) excitement around your brand or offering. In a sense, you have to think of your content strategy as a month recipe; not only do you need a certain number of ingredients (content pieces), you also need to time the addition of those ingredients properly.

## Finding the Right Content Cadence Formula

Based on our proven, real-world experience with clients, we recommend a monthly recipe of the following:

### Value-Driven Content:

4 Blog Posts distributed throughout your company website, social and trade outlets.

### Expertise Highlight:

1 thought leadership article

### News:

1 Press release or company announcement

### Milestones:

Research-based or interactive content. These can be released on a quarterly basis, used as evergreen content for your sales funnel or lead generation tools that are gated.



When it comes to content marketing, there is one frankly indisputable rule to keep in mind: a steady cadence (of high quality content) always wins.



## Finding the Right Content Cadence Formula

### Value-Driven Content

When committing to 4 blogs per month, you are able to divvy that content up for a weekly release. This allows you to link blogs back to one another, as you tackle larger topics that can be divided up between multiple articles (since it will be fresh in your reader's mind) and create anticipation for the next blog, each week.

Of course, not everyone has the staff, writing expertise, talents or time to create, edit and publish high quality, valuable content for build influence and create awareness. That is where a specialized content agency comes in as an integral part of your content strategy and budget. In fact, more than 64% of B2B marketers outsource writing and 86% of the most effective marketers

have someone who oversees content marketing strategy (<http://www.toprankblog.com/2014/05/b2b-content-marketing-statistics-2014/>). In the competitive B2B space, it is more important than ever to structure your budget with resources allocated to the successful and on-going creation and management of your content. After all, if you aren't willing to invest in your content segment, or commit to its continuous development, you can't expect it to be successful.

### Expertise:

Thought leadership has quickly become it's own, living and breathing force within the world of content marketing and popular media.

Over the past few years, CEOs and industry moguls have begun connecting with their audience through means of online journalism, platforms like Quora and Medium, and their own websites and social media— providing content that is timeless to their followers because it has no sales-related motives, it is simply there to provide insight and expertise on a certain subject or issue.

To become a thought leader, you must establish yourself as an informed opinion and a trusted, go-to source for information within your field. You must be able to inspire others with innovative ideas and proven processes to replicate your own success, all while highlighting the human experience that everyone can relate to. And in order to do that, you have to leave

## Finding the Right Content Cadence Formula

room within your content strategy for a thought leadership article, each month (ideally released halfway through the month, or towards the end). Consider the unrelenting popularity of TED talks; that organization has built a platform for diverse thought leaders across every industry, and the world is invested in what they have to say.

### News:

Within this content recipe, it is ever-important to keep your audience in the loop, in regards to any major company updates and/or highlights from the previous month. This is where traditional PR comes into play, requiring you to release a monthly Press Release or company announcement to distribute any news-worthy information surrounding your brand. As with

your blog creation, aim to allocate a portion of your content budget to the outsourcing of this PR segment, if you do not have someone in-house who is familiar with the creation and strategic distribution of a Press Release.

### Milestones:

Milestones and benchmarked content actually play an integral role in the quality of your content cadence. As referenced here (<https://www.skyword.com/contentstandard/marketing/how-creating-cadence-in-your-editorial-calendar-can-benchmark-your-content-and-build-excitement/>), Magazine publishers have been doing this for over a century in the form of dedicated issues that mark the passage of time and celebrate milestones, events, people, and



## Finding the Right Content Cadence Formula

companies (Time's People of the Year, Forbes 400 etc.).

In the case of the B2B landscape, these milestones can be achieved in the form of quarterly white papers, ebooks, guides, infographics and webinars. Not only will this help you to identify new leads (in the case of downloadable content that captures information upon download), but this provides your consumer with a content piece to actively anticipate and engage with, each quarter.

Building awareness, credibility, engagement, and retention are continuous processes. At the end of the day, it's tough to come up with the magic number of content pieces you should produce and there's no cookie cutter solution. Every organization is different, so determining publishing frequency and timing will depend on your unique goals, budget and brand story.



## **Thought Leader. Market Leader.**

How to Revamp Your 2018 Content Marketing  
to Build Trust, Influence & Sales

### **2018 Guide**



#### **About Puzzle Partner:**

Puzzle Partner Ltd. is a boutique marketing agency focused exclusively on complex B2B initiatives for the travel and hospitality technology industry. We are experts at combining strategy and tactical execution in a way that doesn't just maximize a company's potential; it redefines it. By delivering influential content, marketing services, and public relations rooted in the skills of our team and tested through real-world experience, we help our clients gain visibility, raise their profile and ultimately increase their sales revenues. **To learn more visit [puzzlepartner.co](http://puzzlepartner.co).**