

# Content Marketing 101



A publication of:



# Index

Introduction.....	Page 3
Chapter 1: Types of Content.....	Page 4
A. Original Content	
B. Curated Content	
Chapter 2: What Makes Good Content?.....	Page 7
A. Relevant	
B. Shareable	
C. Generates Conversation	
D. Informative	
E. Visual	
F. Provides Perspective	
Chapter 3: Getting Started.....	Page 10
A. Establish Goals and Objectives	
B. Know Your Audience	
C. Find Your Voice	
D. Develop a Content Team	
E. Take Inventory	
F. Develop a Content Plan	
G. Extend Reach of Content	
Chapter 4: Measurement.....	Page 16
A. What to Measure	
B. How to Measure	
References.....	Page 19
About Vehr Communications.....	Page 20

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# Introduction

Nearly every business knows that content marketing is a best practice. In fact, it might be the best practice. According to a 2014 report, [93 percent of marketing professionals use content marketing in their campaigns](#).

What exactly is content marketing?

Put simply: content marketing is the creation and distribution of “content” with the purpose of attracting customers. Content is either original (you create it) or curated (you either pay for it or share it). The use of the term “content marketing” has increased as of late, primarily due to the changing media landscape. With fewer outlets and less opportunity to share news, organizations are focusing more on content marketing campaigns to share and control their own messages.

Successful content marketing is more than writing a few blog posts and hoping they generate some inbound traffic; it is not an overnight game. It involves a strategic approach and thoughtful integration, and most importantly, commitment.

Vehr Communications’ *Content Marketing 101* eBook outlines best practices for content development, utilization and measurement. In this eBook, learn how to ensure your content is credible and relevant to your audiences, create a strategic approach and measure your results.



# Chapter 1: .....Types of Content

Content can fall into two categories: original and curated. Identifying the differences between the two types of content and knowing how to best use each will strengthen your strategic approach.

## A. Original Content

Original content is created and owned by a person or company. It may showcase expertise or simply exist to elicit a smile or laugh.

Original content requires time and resources. However, since original content can take on many forms, it's often possible to repurpose it.

### Examples of original content:

- Seminars or conferences
- Sales presentations
- Case studies
- Blog posts
- Social media posts
- Newsletters
- Email blasts
- Webinars
- White papers
- Memes
- Videos and photography
- Podcasts
- Infographics

Search engines love fresh content. When websites and social channels are updated frequently, they can boost your search engine optimization.

## B. Curated Content

Not all organizations have the time, resources and organizational support to develop original content, which makes curated content (content developed by a third party) a great option.

There are two ways to incorporate curated content into your content marketing plan: **content sharing** and **paid content feeds**.

content sharing	paid content feeds
<p>Seek out relevant content and share it with your audiences, while being mindful to properly cite and add your own perspective.</p> <p><b>Example:</b> A company shares outside content interesting to its audiences, from photos submitted by customers, industry news and more.</p>	<p>Partner with a provider (often a paid service) that pulls content from other websites to your sites.</p> <p><b>Example:</b> News websites and blogs commonly supplement their original content with such services. Sections with titles like “news from around the web” or “you might also be interested in...” are curated paid content.</p>

Finding the right balance between original and curated content can be a challenge. There is no magic ratio. Strive for a mix of original and curated content. Doing so allows you to meet business objectives by sharing necessary product or corporate information while at the same time provide interesting outside viewpoints.

# Chapter 2:

# .....What Makes Good Content?



Simply producing content isn't enough to capture your audience's attention; it has to be good. However, good content for one organization isn't always good content for another. It all comes down to business objectives.

Here are a few universal standards for content:

## A. Relevant

Good content must be relevant to your industry.

For example, a home goods manufacturer might produce content that provides homeowners with design trends and tips for making their homes a place of comfort, convenience and beauty. Similarly, a healthcare provider might produce content offering an audience tips on how to live a better and healthier life.



## B. Shareable

Whether online or around the dinner table, by the water cooler or at a cocktail party, good content must be shareable. It should be entertaining, memorable and unique.

## C. Generates Conversation

Great content should spark conversation between your organization and its audience.

Think about how your organization could start a conversation about something in your industry, something happening in your community or region, or even around the world.



## D. Informative

Content should inform. Should your audience read, bookmark or refer to your content time and again, then you're doing something right; your content is providing value.

## E. Visual

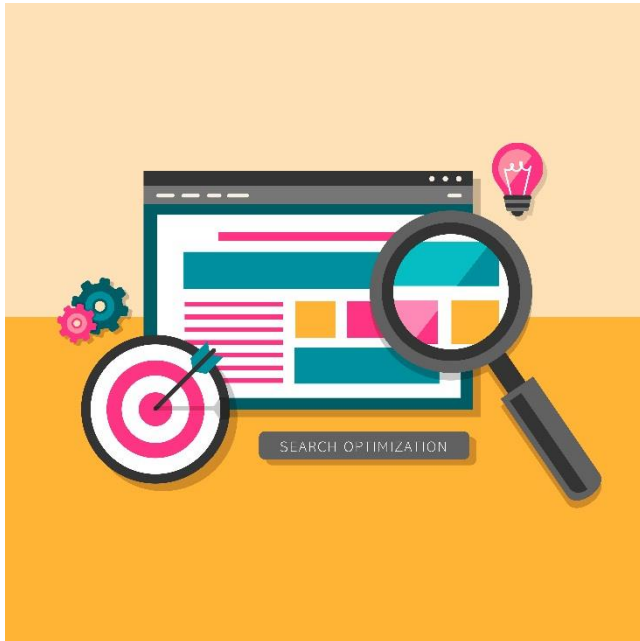
Interesting content is more than just words. Highly visual content increases the likelihood of being noticed, retained and shared. Infographics, photos and videos can tell your story in an engaging and easily digestible way.

Websites like BuzzFeed have mastered this concept by grabbing audiences' attention via memes and other interactive visuals.

## F. Provides Perspective

Contribute to current conversations by offering your own unique view.

Here's an example: In 2013, Panera Bread® decided to publish its own content to support one of its community causes: to raise awareness about food insecurity (hunger). CEO Ron Shaich decided to take the SNAP challenge, which required him to live off just \$4.50 a day for a week. He documented and shared his experience via LinkedIn, which received hundreds of thousands of impressions. He also submitted an opinion piece to CNN addressing the larger issue of food insecurity. The story was picked up by the *Los Angeles Times*, *Huffington Post* and *DailyFinance.com* (to name a few).



# Chapter 3: ..... Getting Started

Good content marketing requires a sound strategy, though surprisingly, [only 27 percent of B2C marketers have one documented](#). As with any initiative, getting started can be the hardest, most intimidating aspect. However, while a documented strategy doesn't have to be set in stone, it should serve as your framework.

## A. Establish Goals and Objectives



What is your overall goal for content marketing? What business objective does content creation serve? What actions do you want readers to take? Although goals and objectives vary from company to company, here are a few common categories:

- Brand awareness
- Lead generation
- Product/service inquiry
- Sales
- Customer retention/loyalty

It is important to note that goals must be specific, include a timeframe and must be measureable. A few examples could include:

To educate X% of patients about the benefits of getting a health screening during campaign.

To gain X% more leads than last year at an annual trade show.

To increase product information requests on Facebook or Twitter by X% in six months.

To increase sales by X% during a three-week campaign.

To increase return visitors to a website or blog by X% in four months.

## B. Know Your Audience

Take time to understand the basics. What are the demographics of your audience? From what sources do they consume content? How do they access content (mobile, tablet, desktop, print)? Once you know more about your audience, it's time to consider what content will be appealing.

### A few questions to get you started:

- What are your audience's most frequently asked questions?
- What do they already know?
- What are your audience's pain points?
- How does your product or service meet a need?
- How does your product or service NOT meet a need?
- How can your product or service help individuals personally?
- Does your audience wish to be informed or entertained?

If you don't know the answers to these questions, ask! Do it via in-person focus groups, online surveys or on social media.

## C. Find Your Voice

Your brand's personality needs to come across through your content. If done right, it can set you apart from your competitors and make it more relatable.

Your brand voice depends on your company values and how you wish your brand to be perceived in the marketplace. Is your brand pithy and authoritative? Smart and sassy? Reserved and informational? Friendly and helpful?

For example, crafting a social media post to introduce a new diet-friendly snack flavor could be informative:

*“At 10 percent of the fat of the leading diet-friendly snack, ABC Snacks’ new zesty flavor is only 90 calories per serving.”*

Or sassy:

*“Don’t pile on the pounds – ABC Snacks’ new zesty flavor heats up your snacking experience without the guilt.”*

Brand voice is often overlooked by marketers. Just as brand standards are developed and reworked, brand voice is important. How the product/service is presented visually or graphically should be carefully considered.

## D. Develop a Content Team

Implementing your content marketing strategy takes time. Unless your organization is lucky enough to have a person (or team of people) dedicated to content creation, you’ll need support. Depending on the channels you use, your team may include an outside communications agency or staff members from marketing and customer service.

**Either way, you’ll still want to ask these questions:**

- Who can determine content themes that support company goals?
- Who can determine what content should be produced?
- Who serves as the ears of the organization, listening to customers, prospects and stakeholders?
- Who will serve as the content expert and help ensure accuracy and efficiency?
- Who can provide an objective third-party perspective? Who will manage work flows and approval processes?
- Who will actually create (write, produce, design, etc.) content?

## E. Take Inventory

Take inventory of your current content (website, advertising, newsletters, brochures, annual reports, human resources presentations, sales one pagers, images, etc.), where it lives and how it's utilized across different platforms (if it is). Does your content address your audience's needs or strictly promote your products and services?

**Here are some other questions to ask yourself:**

- Is the look and feel consistent?
- Will my audience share this with friends, family, colleagues and business associates?
- Are there duplicating efforts?
- Are there gaps in my content library?
- Is there content that can be repurposed?
- What types of content tend to be most popular among my audience?

## F. Develop a Content Plan

Your content team is responsible for developing a content plan and specific workflows. A content plan should outline what content you want to create over a period of time for each channel you own, whether it is your monthly newsletter, weekly blog or daily social media posts.

Workflows are the steps necessary to produce a specific piece of content. They include tasks, deadlines and publication dates. Each piece of content should have its own workflow.

## G. Extend Reach of Content

Repurpose, repurpose, repurpose. How many times have you heard these words? This simply means finding ways to use each piece of content across all appropriate channels. A good goal is to use each piece of content three different ways.

Suppose a leader in your company just drafted a white paper on a hot topic. What else can you do with this content?

Turn a white paper into a series of blog posts.

Turn a white paper into an e-newsletter.

Format compelling statistics into an infographic.

Feature a synopsis on the company website.

Share an interesting fact via social media.

Use a white paper as the basis of a webinar.

Note: Content should be edited to fit the needs of each audience and channel. Content developed for B2B customers will not work for consumers, and every consumer segment has its own preference. Likewise, a post appropriate for Facebook may not always be a good choice for LinkedIn. Always tailor!



# Chapter 4: ..... Measurement

After you've established what you want to achieve, it's time to choose what you're going to measure and how you're going to measure it.

The effectiveness of your content marketing efforts doesn't have to be a mystery, which is why it's important to institute a good measurement process. Measurement should provide insight (quantitative and qualitative) on whether something is or is not working over time. Here are a few tips to start.

## A. What to Measure

There are a number of quantitative and qualitative measures that can be tracked. First and foremost, you can keep an eye on the sheer volume of content that is produced.

- How many pieces of content were developed?
- How many speaking engagements were scheduled?
- How many social media posts happened?
- How many opportunities did your audience have to see your content?

Then, measure how your audience responds to each piece of content. For example:

- Are they requesting more information?
- Are they downloading your content?
- Are they signing up for an event?
- Are they linking to your blog?
- Are they opening your e-newsletters?
- Are they commenting favorably about your content?
- Are they liking or sharing your content?
- Are they going to, and spending considerable time on, your website?
- Did your content change an opinion of your product or company?
- Are they purchasing your product?

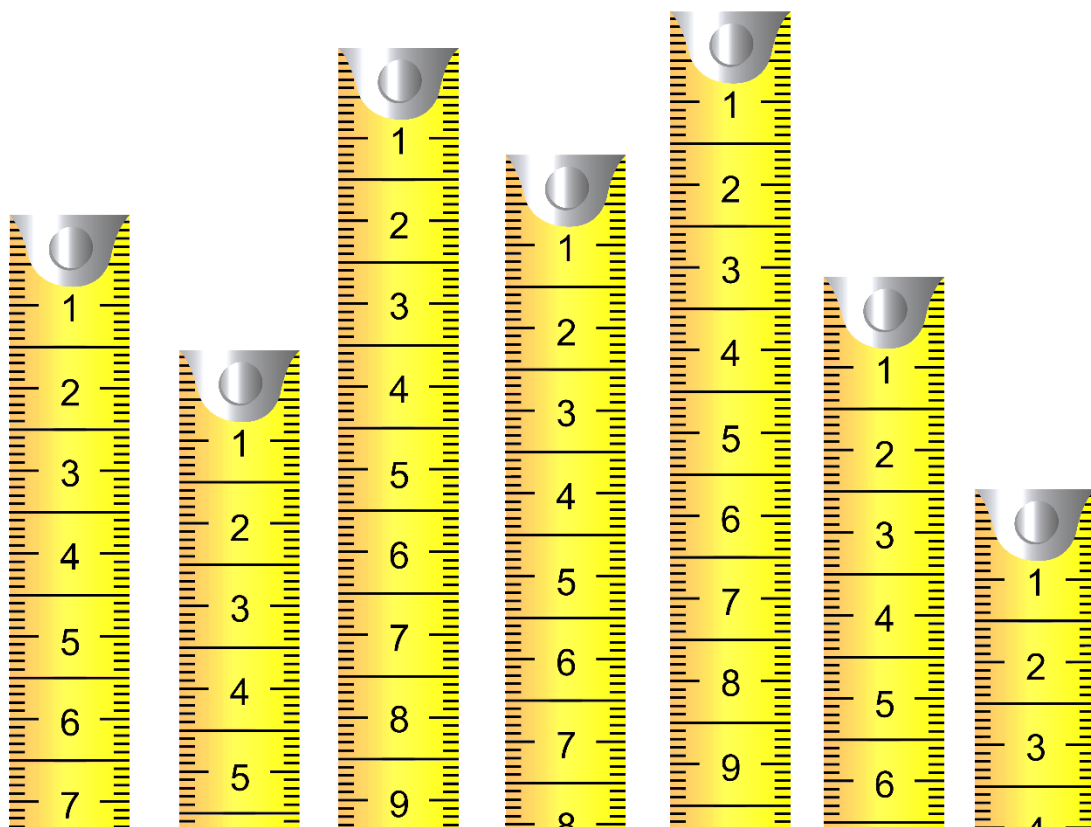
## B. How to Measure

There are a lot of great content measurement tools at your disposal. Your decision is likely a matter of your budget and how deep your data needs to be to prove your content is or is not working. Simple surveys may uncover if people are interested in your content. Google Analytics provides great detail on website activity generated by content. Social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter provide free analytics on content reach and engagement.

You also may choose to invest in paid content management programs that pull analytics from across all content (social media, website, inbound) into one platform.

After you have the tools in place, you'll be able to gather data, compare results to industry benchmarks and adjust your content, if needed.

Continue to measure again and again to see if, when and how you've moved the needle.



# References

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Vehr Communications, LLC seeks to be a strategic partner with its clients to help them manage their reputations, build valued relationships and deliver meaningful results.

## We offer our clients:

**Refreshing Attitude:** We partner, we listen, we challenge. We learn. We work hard. We make a difference. And we have fun in the process.

**Resourceful Approach:** We approach each client opportunity with creativity, energy and discipline to build relationships that matter.

**Global Reach:** We're an IPREX partner ... 75 strategic communications agencies with 1,500 staff and 100 offices from 33 countries working as one to support global communications programs for our clients.



To learn more about who we are, what we do and how we think, visit us at [www.vehrcommunications.com](http://www.vehrcommunications.com). While you're there, sign up for our monthly e-newsletter, visit our blog or download any of our publications designed to help you make the most of your strategic communications activities.

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