

CONTENT MARKETING



FOR B2B SALES



INTRODUCTION

Traditional marketing doesn't work like it used to for B2B organisations. New business development initiatives are struggling to generate the same results they did ten years ago.

Buying has changed over the past 10 years, and purchasers are now engaging with sales reps much later in the sales cycle, or are looking outside of the traditional vendor - buyer process for guidance when making a decision. Of the 10 million+ technology buyers on LinkedIn, 83% use social media for IT news and information on tech developments each month. Of that group, 75% are visiting LinkedIn for information (compared with just 32% on Twitter).

Content marketing clearly has a huge impact on the purchase decisions of your buyers. So how can you use content marketing in your sales initiatives.

CONTENT FOR B2B SALES

In complex B2B sales scenarios, multi-level sales messages that span across departments and topics are harder to convey in short posts on Twitter compared with long-form publishing on LinkedIn. Content has to be credible and useful; sales-focused, "pushy" messaging doesn't work, in fact LinkedIn's survey found that 59% of buyers are most interested in non-branded, non-sales focused content about industry developments and trends.

Many people get LinkedIn publishing wrong by only sharing company focused content which promotes a particular company rather than mixing messaging to look at broad topics, key industry themes and posts that guide buyers rather than just sharing pushy marketing content.

CONTENT MARKETING TO DIFFERENTIATE

Content marketing is particularly suited to the B2B technology businesses who are always looking for new ways to connect with audiences, and to differentiate their company from the next. This is not a simple thing to do; differences can be difficult to explain and products can seem very similar without in-depth comparisons and critiques of products.

E-shots often fail to get this message across and brochures don't provide any real-world or market context. Content marketing, on the other hand, allows you to put your solution into a 'story' and get all of those critical messages across to the client.

Content marketing alone cannot make the need to purchase any more important, but it can trigger an interest in buyers' minds so that when they do embark on projects, they are informed and armed with information to make a more favourable decision about your product.

LEAD GENERATION OR VALIDATION TOOL

Content marketing needs to be seen as a validation tool so that when your sales reps are calling out to clients, the customer is able to look you up and see instantly that 'yes, you know what you're talking about' – or 'you understand my sector'.

Or, it might act as an introduction to your company, easing the path for a future sales call.

Finally, it might be useful further down the sales cycle when the client is considering options. If they had to weigh you up against someone who said they were an expert in a specific sector yet had nothing to show for it online or within specific industry publications, then who do you think the customer would choose?

CONTENT MARKETING STARTER CHECKLIST

If you haven't already got a working content marketing strategy in place then the first few questions to get you on your way to developing a strategy are:

1

Who do you want to target?

Which sectors, what size of companies and also what job role are you aiming for? There is no point writing about the amazing cost savings of your low-energy servers if the ultimate buyers tend to be the web design team within the company who don't have an IT budget to consider.

2

What outcome do you want to achieve?

Obviously, you want to sell your product. But what is the outcome of each stage of your content marketing strategy? You might want to focus on building a presence in the manufacturing sector, or you may be wanting to establish yourself as an expert in connectivity. Different objectives require different approaches and content.

3

At what stage of the buyer journey are you targeting customers?

There are different content approaches for different stages of the sales cycle. At the prospect phase, you may be focusing on getting high level pieces out about your ideas around IT solutions for SMB. Or you may be talking about how cuts to councils' budgets are affecting the services being delivered. This helps to spark an interest. If you're trying to convert a customer further down the sales cycle, then long form case studies may be what they need to make the final decision, or comprehensive business cases that point to where savings could be made and how your product will change the way they operate.



CHECKLIST WORKSHEET

Who do you want to target?

What outcome do you want to achieve?

At what stage of the buyer journey are you targeting customers?



CONTENT MARKETING FRAMEWORK

There are a number of key points that need to be integrated into your framework:

Who is going to be creating the content?

Who will input into the content (i.e. the content creators may not be the people who are providing the insights)?

What will the regularity of the content distribution be?

What channels will you use to distribute this content across; social media platforms, blog, articles, publications?

MEASURING EFFECTIVENESS

How will you measure the effectiveness of your content marketing?

It might not be a clear line between content marketing collateral and revenue generated for every business, but you need some form of success criteria measurement.

This could be:

- Quality of sales leads
- Number of sales leads
- Revenue generated
- Meetings arranged
- Web traffic
- Social media follows/likes/retweets
- Event attendance
- Sales conversation quality
- Partner/reseller interest

DEVELOP YOUR CONTENT STRATEGY

Use our worksheet on the next page to develop your own content strategy.

Content Strategy

Campaign Name:

As a business, we want the following outcomes:

.....

We want our content to have the following outcomes:

.....

We will measure by:

.....

Target sector

Ideal client description

Buyer personas


Role

Concerns

Interested in...


Role

Concerns

Interested in...


Role

Concerns

Interested in...

Subject themes

.....

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Type of content

- Blogs
- Articles
- Ebook
- Infographic
- Whitepaper
- Case Study
- Newsletter
- Social Media
- Interviews
- Videos
- Vlogs
- Presentations
- Images
- Web Content
-
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Keywords

Regularity

Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Quarterly	Semi-Annual	Annual

CONTENT MARKETING CHECKLIST



Define your sales messaging so that you are clear on the technology related benefits and the business related benefits – alongside the tangible outcomes for the customer.



Create a content marketing strategy framework that is documented and distributed across your organisation.



Develop a framework for the operational side of your content marketing: who is going to be delivering the content, who will input into the content, what will the regularity of the content distribution be and what channels will you use to distribute this content across.



Measure the effectiveness of content marketing and ensure that you are tweaking your strategy based on effectiveness review outcomes.



Engage with your customers to develop new content – this could be through interviews with your sales teams to understand what they are seeing and hearing from customers or via case study reviews.



Engage with partners to supplement your content creation and to aid in content distribution (i.e. sharing posts, liking updates and providing feedback).



Repurpose content – turn blogs into whitepapers, change case studies into articles and create mini-videos from whitepapers. Look at the breadth of information you have already produced to create additional, useful content for your customer base.

CONCLUSION



Now it's about putting what we've been through into practice. Based on the information we've shared with you, what are the top three actions you're going to take to build your own content strategy and get started with publishing your own content to drive sales?

1

2

3

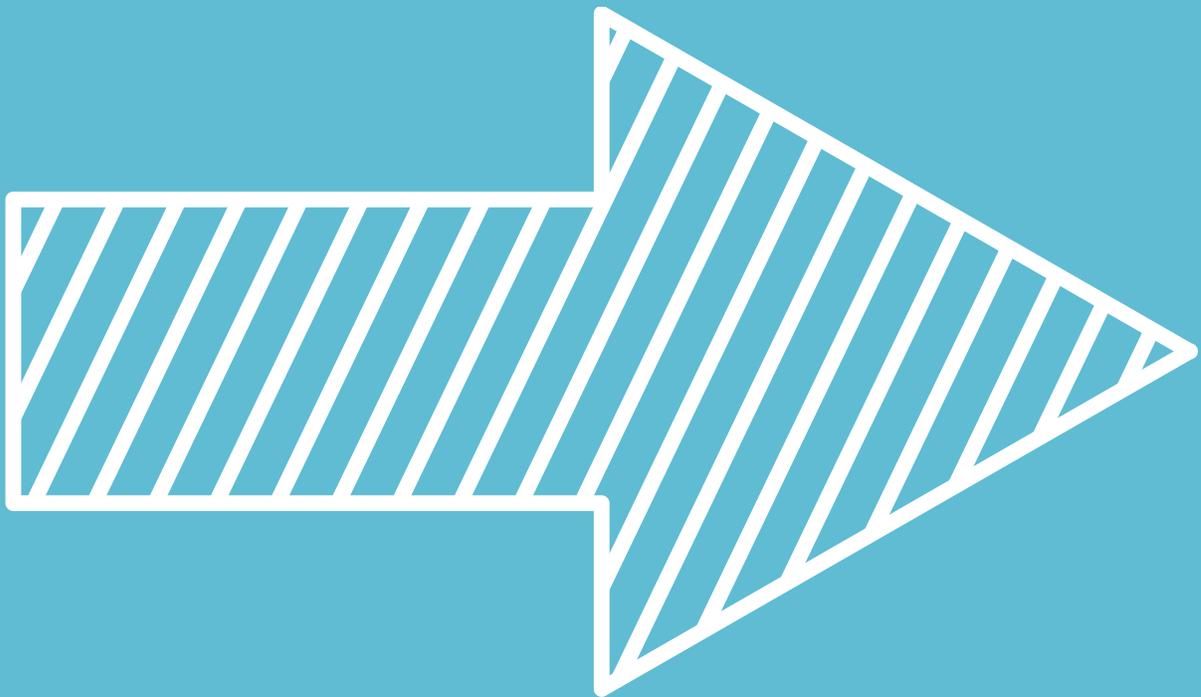
Happy selling! If you have any questions about social selling or B2B sales then we have a regular Q&A article series where we share answers to challenges faced by B2B sales reps and teams.

Email your questions to hello@mysalesacademy.com

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