

THE PERFECT RECIPE FOR

CREATING KILLER MARKETING CONTENT



Let's Get Cooking!

This eBook is designed to help you learn how to create effective marketing content to support your sales and marketing programs. We'll explore the ingredients for an effective marketing content mix and look at how to apply that recipe to your own content marketing endeavors. Whether you're a B2B or B2C marketer, this eBook provides a step-by-step recipe for creating killer content – the kind that gets results for your business.

INGREDIENTS

1 THE RISE OF CONTENT MARKETING

2 YOUR KILLER CONTENT RECIPE

- Start with the Main Ingredient:
Your Company Value
 - Add the Spice: Customer Personas
 - Produce Your Five-Star Meal:
Hitting the Sweet Spot
-

3 PRO TIPS FOR CONTENT PRODUCTION



The Rise of Content Marketing...

... **and the Fall of Mass Marketing** In the 1950s and 1960s, the goal of advertising was to get as many ears and eyes on a brand as humanly possible. That's because the most efficient way to reach people at that time was to completely saturate the broadcast media with a brand message. You had to build a massive amount of brand awareness to create trust with your audience. The more ads you could plaster on bus benches, play on the radio, and run in the local paper, the better.

The Cat's Meow

With this "canvas the universe" approach, marketers had to convince consumers that a brand message was actually relevant to them. Many marketing messages were geared towards convincing massive swaths of people that a very narrowly defined ideal was right for them. And in order to make that work, consumers had to buy into the idea that they were just like everyone else. Advertisers segmented their marketing based on demographics. They made plays on already-defined roles in gender, age, and geography to create a desire to conform.

For example, in the 1950's, 20-something women were considered a single demographic segment. Advertisers defined ideals of perfection for this demographic, and centered their marketing messages around those ideals. With limited access to information and variety, consumers were more likely to accept these simple demographic-based classifications, and they purchased cigarettes, hair coloring, vacuum cleaners, and television sets accordingly.

THE OLD MARKETING PARADIGM:



- Reach is paramount
- Messaging centered around conformity and narrow ideals

Here are just a few ads geared to the mid-century 20-something woman:



WAIT A MINUTE – THEY ALL LOOK THE SAME!

If you didn't fit the ideal, you did everything you could to try. And if you purchased the right product, you might just succeed. (Or at least, that's what the advertisers would have you think.)

Buyers Are in Control

The evolution of technology has created a paradigm shift in marketing. Today, consumers, not advertisers, define the groups they want to be part of. People self-select into an increasingly complicated network of segments and sub-segments. Today's 20-something woman could be defined in a number of ways. She could be a CEO, a mother, a student, a hardcore gamer – anything! Thus, the type of content and messages that might appeal to her are virtually unlimited.

Consumers are now in the driver's seat. They direct their own buying journeys. It's no longer about saturation and reach; it's about finding likely buyers, making them aware of you, then becoming a trusted advisor as they move through their buying journey. A marketer's job is to understand where consumers are on their journey, and to serve them content that will educate them, inspire them, and help them make a purchase decision.

Diversity Rules

Potential representations of the modern 20-something woman:



THE NEW MARKETING PARADIGM:



- Content is king
- Buyers are in control

ACCESS

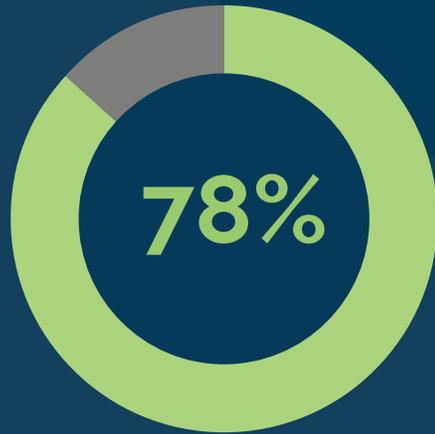
+

CHOICE

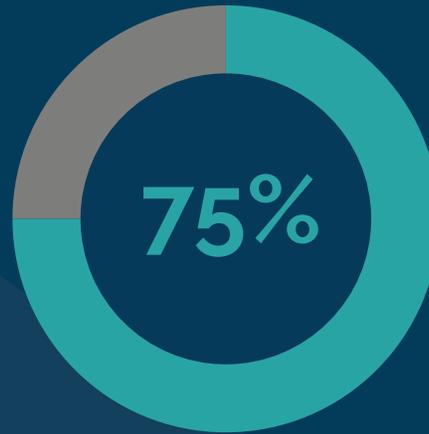
=

INCREASED
FRAGMENTATION
& ACCELERATED CHANGE

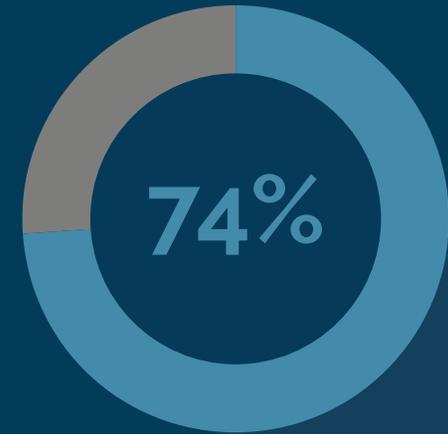
Quick Facts About The Modern Buyer



78% of consumers start the buying process with a web search.
(DemandGen Report)



75% of B2B executives get more of their content than they did a year ago through social networks or peer connections.
(DemandGen 2014)



74% of business buyers told Forrester they conduct more than half of their research online before making an offline purchase.
(Forrester Report, 2015)

The Rise of Content Marketing

This seeming loss of advertiser control is actually a benefit to marketers. Now, consumers can do a lot of the legwork for you. You don't need to carpet the universe with your brand message anymore. You just need to be able to track where your contacts are in their buying journey, and be prepared to respond with the content that's right for them.

At any given moment, buyers are searching for information that will inform them, educate them, or help them solve a problem.

Whether it's a blog post, eBook, video, or web page, marketing content needs to speak to the needs of your prospects and help them progress through their buying journey.

Getting the right content to the right person at the right time offers a tremendous upside: it establishes credibility and authority, creates brand affinity, and – maybe most importantly – reduces sales resistance.

It's important that you develop a content curriculum that maps to your buyer's needs, interests, and pain points. Remember, they are in control of the buying process. You just need to position yourself along the way and remain top-of-mind, so that they turn to you for answers – not to your competitor.



86% of B2B marketers say that they use Content Marketing - Defined as “a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience—and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action.”

(Content Marketing Institute, 2015)

13

Content marketers use an average of 13 tactics in their content marketing programs. Top outlets, in order of use, include: social media, case studies, blogs, e-newsletters and events.

(6sense, October 2015)



One out of every two brands is increasing its investment in content marketing by 20% or more each year.

(Forrester Research, January 2017)

Your Killer Content Recipe

You know that content is important, but how do you go about developing content that's really going to have an impact and resonate with your audience? To get there, we're going to look at two main elements in our recipe: your product values and your buyer personas.

Really great marketing content, the stuff that's going to get your customers to love your brand and want your product, has one key common denominator. Whether it's a 2000-word blog post or a 140-character tweet, the good stuff is going to evoke a strong emotional reaction from your audience. It's going to give them that aha moment: a laugh, a sigh of relief, or maybe a pang of empathy.

This emotional connection and recognition is not easy to produce. So how do you generate content that both connects with your target audience and compels them to become customers? Here's how to cook up content that does just that:

The Recipe... Now let's get your content cooking!



Start with the Main Ingredient: Your Company Value

The main ingredient represents the hearty center of your content – your corporate values, as expressed in your products and services. This is what you are offering to your buyers.



Add the Spice: Customer Personas

Now, let's spice it up. Sprinkle in your customer personas: with a little emphasis on the psychographic identifiers that unify your major customer segments – their needs, their wants, their worries about the future.



Produce Your Five-Star Meal

The dynamic combination of value and persona creates effective content that gets those rave reviews and more importantly, sells your product or service.

Step 1: Start with the Main Ingredient

Your Company and Product Values

The meat of your marketing content is the simplest and easiest part of the recipe – your company values. In fact, you may already have a value statement on your website or in a product spec sheets that list your product/service values and benefits. Turn this information into a very succinct list of features and values that are common across all of your products, and use it as a reference point.

- Identify driving values behind your company
- Connect values to products and product benefits

Example

Acme Time Travel Technologies: Our Company's Values

Our products are vehicles for adventure and exploration.

We offer experiences that are uniquely exhilarating, and immerse you in the world's unseen, lost, obscure, and dangerous past!

Our products are intuitive.

We offer experiences that We make our time travel devices easy to use so that you don't have to spend time reading the manual. You can spend your time journeying through time instead of fiddling with dials, cords, or quantum warp drive settings.

Our products are reliable.

We'll get you where and when you want to go. Our products are precisely calibrated to deliver you to the correct time, every time. And we're FDA approved!

Marketers often get stuck here, and fill their marketing messaging with fluff that extols the many virtues of their brand and products. But the reality is, that's just not compelling enough for most audiences. We need to take it one step further. And that's where the next ingredient in our recipe comes in...

Step 2: Add the Spice

Your Buyer Personas

Demographics alone are no longer enough to segment audiences. We need psychographics, to build a three-dimensional, living breathing buyer persona.

Personas are avatars for primary segments within your target audience, which are built on psychographic commonalities.

Buyer personas go beyond surface-level demographics and firmographics. They profile common personal motivators, fears, and pain points that unify a diverse range of buyers into distinct groups.

Creating Your Buyer Personas

There are several ways you can go about collecting the information you need to build out your buyer personas, depending on your scale and your budget.

Try these:

- Conduct focus groups with customers and prospects
- Conduct one-on-one interviews with customers
- Host a brainstorming session with your sales and customer service teams, who will have front-line experience speaking with your prospects and customers

Remember, the objective here is to identify commonalities and underlying trends. You'll need to collect enough information to see clear patterns and leanings. You want the personas you develop to be distinctly different from each other, so you can develop more personalized messages to each persona. It will also help you identify whether a cohort is large enough – and potentially profitable enough – to spend time and resources marketing to them.

WHAT ARE PERSONAS?



Avatars for your primary buying groups that: define the buyer's values, pain points, fears, attitudes, interests, and lifestyles

Sample Questions to Ask

- ✓ What is their job level and job function?
- ✓ What keeps them up at night?
- ✓ What are their personal and professional goals/aspirations?
- ✓ Where do they spend time online?
- ✓ What problems do you help them solve in their day-to-day lives?
- ✓ What do they perceive as valuable?
- ✓ What are some common objections to your product or service offering?

Example



Persona Type: The Young Tech Entrepreneur

Job title:
CEO, Owner, Partner

Location:
Large urban cities, including New York,
San Francisco, London, and Hong Kong

Goals:
Inventing game-changing products, growing
his business, seeking notoriety and success

Characteristics:
Ambitious, adventurous, risk-taker, highly intelligent

Online habits:
Reads industry blogs, news sites, Twitter, and Reddit

What keeps him up at night?
Concerns about the world economy, getting coverage
in TechCrunch, and getting his next funding round

NEED HELP DEFINING YOUR PERSONAS?

Download this handy
workbook, 4 Steps to
Creating a Content
Marketing Plan -
[Right Person, Right
Message, Right Time](#) -
for a step-by-step plan.



The Five Star Meal

The Expert Combination of Values and Personas

Once you've identified your product values and your personas, you can start cooking up your content. Killer marketing content comes from finding the sweet spot where company values overlap with the goals and needs that you have identified for your persona.

Good content creates symbiosis between buyer and seller. It gives your buyer something they need and want, usually by informing, educating, or entertaining them. It also meets the seller's needs, by positioning your brand as thoughtful and trustworthy, and by subtly selling your product. Good content provides value, while creating brand affinity. It's a mutually beneficial arrangement.

The content that will actually sell your product, the stuff that evokes that important emotional reaction, lives in that overlapping space.

The Content Sweet Spot

Your content – and how relevant it is to your audience – is going to come from the convergence of your ability to understand who is interacting with your brand and what your brand brings to the table.

Start by cross-referencing your customer personas with the benefits and values of your brand, and identify the spaces in their lives where you can add value. The objective is to help your customers understand the great benefit that your brand represents in the context of their life and their specific needs and goals.

This moves your marketing messages away from being product-centered, and instead focuses your content around the needs and interests of your buyers. Your objective is producing content that will interest and intrigue your buyers, and help them visualize solutions, as they explore products and move through the buying process.

- Find the overlap between your buyer persona and product values
- Good content benefits both the buyer and the seller

Acme Time Travel Technologies

- Adventure and exploration
- Intuitive and easy to use
- Reliable



A Method for Finding Your Content Sweet Spot

Ask yourself a series of questions to start coming up with potential topics for your marketing content.

- What does each product or service mean to your target persona?
- How does each product value or feature benefit this persona in his/her day-to-day life?
- Which of the persona's goals, aspirations, or pain points are affected by the products you offer?

Adventure

The leading question: What does adventure and exploration mean to the tech entrepreneur?

Possible answer: Adventure and exploration means pushing the envelope beyond day-to-day expectations, and in a way that has never been done before. It means climbing Mt. Everest without oxygen, swimming with sharks, and inventing game-changing new products that dominate world markets. It means going where his peers can't go, or are afraid to go.

Possible content marketing topics:

- Time-Travelling Vacations No One is Brave Enough to Take
- Lost Archives: Can Ancient Texts be the Key to Unlocking Holographic Technology?
- 10 Best Parties in History – Are you on the List?

Ease-of-Use

The leading question: How will the product's intuitive and easy-to use interface benefit the young, tech entrepreneur?

Possible answer: Time is money. The tech entrepreneur can't spend precious minutes calibrating complicated technology. He'll find the interface as familiar and comfortable as his Prius's center console.

Possible content marketing topics:

- Trip Profile: Marco Zuckerbird's First Time Trip is Easy and Fun
- 10 Productivity Tools That Will Give You Half Your Day Back
- 7 Easiest-to-Use Technologies of 2053

Success and Notoriety

The leading question: How will the product impact this persona's desire to gain notoriety and success?

Possible answer: Time traveling technology is a status symbol that sets him apart from his peers. It can also be used as a competitive advantage in his quest to dominate his industry – he can re-gain lost days and re-negotiate contracts.

Possible content marketing topics:

- 10 Ways to Use Time Travel to Win (Formerly Lost) Contract Negotiations
- How Marco Zuckerbird and the Time Traveling Elite are Shaping the Modern Age
- 5 Must-Do Time Trips for Techies

Pro Tips for Content Chefs

1 Import your ingredients.

In order to support the quantity of content required to implement a robust content marketing program, get ideas and content contributions from outside sources. It's often impossible for just one person or even one team to support the volume of content required. Try finding good writers on your sales or product team, ask for guest contributions from key partners, and work with thought leaders in your industry on cobranded collateral. Also, having multiple voices and perspectives keeps content fresh.

2 Dress up your leftovers.

Old content sometimes just needs a bit of dressing up to make a hearty meal. Get the most mileage out of every piece of content you produce, and don't be afraid to reuse and recycle your assets. Try repositioning old content for a new persona, adding new research to an old whitepaper, or reformatting existing content to a new media format. For example, you can take a 10-page whitepaper, break it into smaller pieces, and use it as 4 new posts for your blog. Then, make it a presentation and post it on SlideShare. Use that same presentation as a basis for a webinar. Have two people discuss it in a Q&A, record the discussion, and post it as a podcast.

3 Serve at the right time and temperature.

Timing matters, so make sure you are serving the right content to the right person, at the right time. Here are a few things to keep in mind:

- Produce content for different stages of the buying process. Content that appeals to new buyers in exploration and discovery mode will be very different from the content that appeals to current customers looking to make additional purchases.
- Monitor the digital body language of your buyers to determine what types of marketing messages are right for them. A retail buyer exploring winter coats online shouldn't be sent a promo for a swimsuit sale.
- Position your content in the context of current events for maximum impact.

10-Page Whitepaper



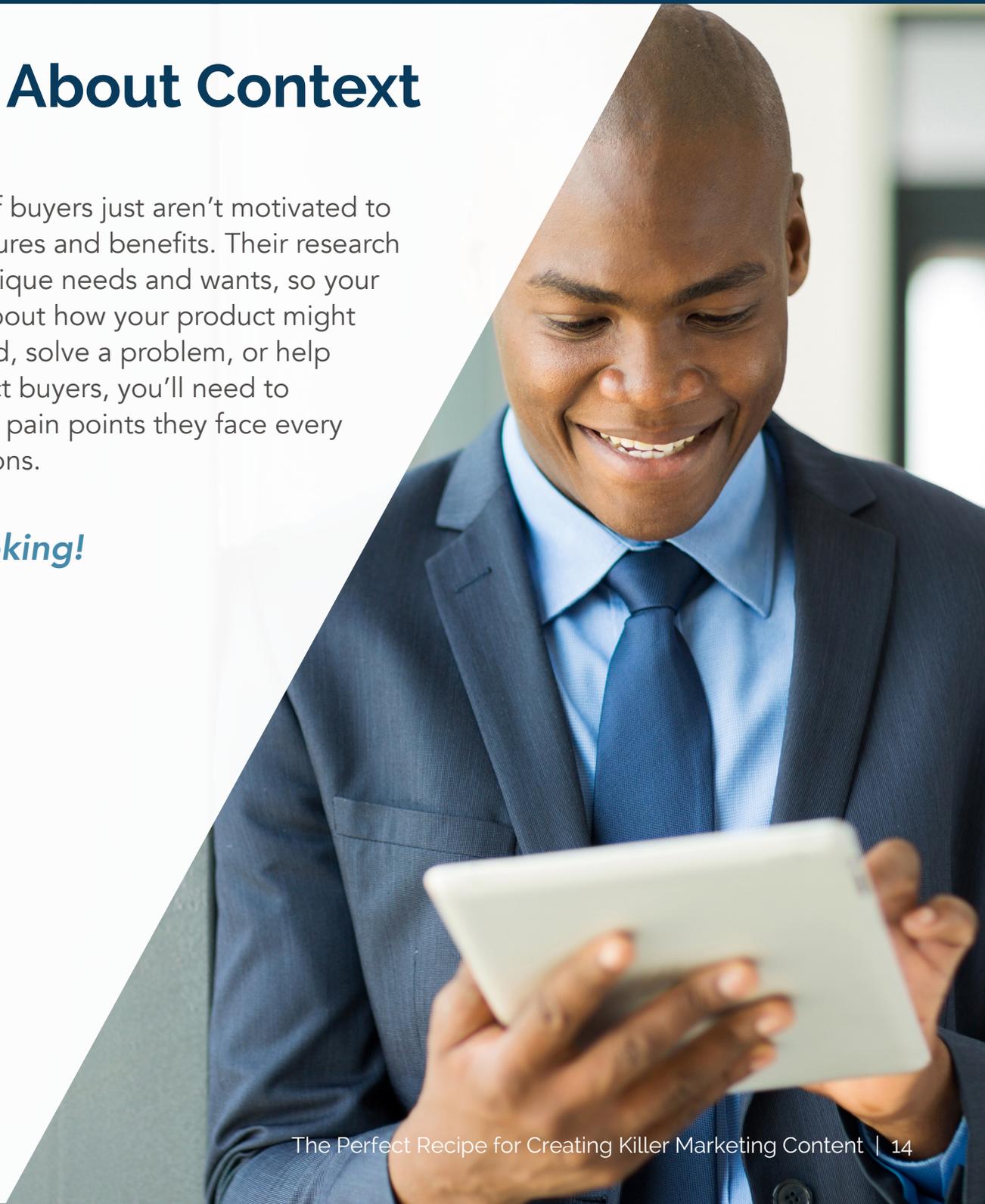
4+ Blog Posts



Remember: It's All About Context

Context means everything. The majority of buyers just aren't motivated to buy simply by learning about product features and benefits. Their research and online activity centers on their own unique needs and wants, so your content should too. Your buyer will care about how your product might improve their life, give them peace of mind, solve a problem, or help them achieve their goals. In order to attract buyers, you'll need to provide content that speaks directly to the pain points they face every day, and the desires that drive their decisions.

Now get that killer content cooking!



Acclaim for Act-On



See all of Act-On's
awards & accolades...

About Act-On Software

Act-On Software is a marketing automation company delivering innovation that empowers marketers to do the best work of their careers. Act-On is the only integrated workspace to address the needs of the customer experience, from brand awareness and demand generation, to retention and loyalty. With Act-On, marketers can drive better business outcomes and see higher customer lifetime value. The Act-On platform provides marketers with power they can actually use, without the need for a dedicated IT resource.

Connect with us to learn more