10 Steps for Creating an Effective Content Marketing Campaign

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The following excerpt is from Robert W. Bly's The Content Marketing Handbook. *Buy it now from* Amazon | Barnes & Noble *or click here to buy it directly from us and* ***SAVE 60%*** *on this book when you use code* ***MARKET2021*** *through* ***4/24/21****.*

What makes for successful B2B and B2C lead-generating content marketing campaigns? There are 10 key steps.

Step 1: Define the Target Audience and Their Information Needs

In B2B, defining the target audience or readership involves knowing the industry, company size and prospect's title, responsibilities, education and degree of knowledge in your chosen topic, as well as how they use your type of product in their business. You should also think about the information needs of prospects at the stage of the buying process at which you're reaching them.

Step 2: Come Up with a Strategic or

Useful Content Plan

A *strategic content plan* is one in which publishing and distributing the content solves a marketing problem. A *useful content plan* disseminates information that's of value to the prospect in their job but isn't a sales pitch for your product or service. For instance, a computer reseller might offer prospects and clients a special report on how to prevent data loss or avoid hackers, malware and viruses. This kind of actionable information doesn't specifically accelerate the steps in the sales cycle or sell the prospect on the reseller or its solutions. But the prospect will appreciate the free tips and will reciprocate by viewing the reseller in a more favorable light. It builds goodwill and creates the impression that you're an expert in your field.

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Step 3: Select a Format or Medium for Your Lead Magnet

Content can be presented in many formats and media, and your choice can make a big difference in the success of your content marketing campaign.

In addition to downloadable white papers or reports, there are many other options. You can:

- Offer a free webinar, online course, podcast, infographic or poster.
- Post a video on your site or YouTube.
- Send an audio CD or a DVD.
- Load useful data and content onto a thumb drive.

The key is to think beyond a downloadable report or white paper. Alternative media, because they're less common, often

gain more attention.

Step 4: Create a Great Title for Your Lead Magnet

Perhaps the biggest factor determining whether prospects will request your free content is the title of your lead magnet. The purpose is to grab the prospect's attention, generate interest and curiosity and compel them to request the lead magnet.

Step 5: Research, Organize and Write the Content

The amount of research you need to do depends on your knowledge of the topic. But even if you know the topic well, do some outside research to augment your knowledge of the subject with facts, figures and ideas outside your own.

Once you've gathered your content, think about how to organize and present the material. Sometimes the content naturally dictates a particular organizational scheme, such as alphabetical or chronological order. At other times, something as simple as a numbered list might do. Or you might choose a Q&A format, as in a FAQ page on a website.

Finally, write your document. Once the document's done, edit to make it tighter, clearer and better, then have a professional proofreader go over it.

Step 6: Create a Landing Page for Downloading the Lead Magnet

A *landing page* is a stand-alone web page where the prospect can request the free bait piece or lead magnet. On a properly

designed, effective landing page, there are only two choices: Request the free lead magnet or leave. Therefore, the conversion rate – the percentage of visitors who fill in and submit your form – is much higher on dedicated landing pages than on homepages or any other web pages.

Step 7: Drive Traffic to Your Landing Page

How do you drive traffic to your site without burning through your available cash in a couple of weeks? There are seven cost-effective ways to get hits on your site: running Google ads, through affiliate marketing, participating in co-registration pop-ups, buying web-hosted ads, email markting, buying online ads or doing viral marketing by adding a line to your outgoing email marketing messages that says, “Please feel free to forward this email to your friends so they can enjoy this special offer.”

There are many other cost-effective ways to get hits on your site, including postcards, sales letters, print ads, blogs, social media ads or posts, webinars or podcasts.

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Step 8: Fulfill Inquiries

When a prospect requests the lead magnet, you must deliver electronic lead magnets, such as PDF downloads, within seconds or minutes. Physical lead magnets, such as books or DVDs, should be mailed within 24 to 48 hours.

Step 9: Follow Up

Though opinions vary, I prefer to require prospects to give both their phone number and their email address to enable

salespeople to follow up.

Step 10: Secure an Appointment or Conversation

Marketers frequently need to be reminded that the ultimate goal of content marketing is not to give away information but to sell something. So eventually, you have to take the next step in the sales process, which is securing an appointment — either in person or on the phone — with the prospect to do some personal selling.

If you've done steps one through nine correctly, you'll have an edge in making that sale, for several reasons. First, by offering a lead magnet, you'll have gotten more leads, and thus more sales appointments. The more appointments you have, the more sales you'll close.

Second, a well-written white paper or other lead magnet can educate prospects before the sales appointment. So when you have that first conversation with them, they're already predisposed to buying your product.

Third, good content can anticipate and answer the most common objections prospects are likely to have. When objections are asked and answered before the first sales call, the conversation can focus on positives, because the negatives have already been dealt with and dismissed.

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