5 Ways Companies Can Create Content That’s Actually Helpful

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Whether you’re creating content for social media or PR pitches, savvy marketers will give you the same advice: Make it useful and actionable. However, what’s talked about much less often is how actually to do that.

In the media world, those little bits of helpful information are called “service,” — and journalists are pros at adding it to an article. Editors will often tell their reporters to add a bit of service to a column to make it higher value for the reader. Your company can employ this same strategy in your own content.

When content is serviceable, your audience is more likely to remember it, share it and return to you for more high-value information. It’s a strategy for building long-term trust and loyalty with your audience (and ultimately revenue as they turn to you, the industry thought leader, for their needs).

Nearly 70 percent of businesses plan to increase their content marketing budgets this year, per Semrush. If you’re spending a budget on content marketing, here are five things that will make your content more serviceable — and more likely to produce a high ROI.

1. Tips are realistic and simple to follow

You may be tempted to give lofty suggestions like “repaint your living room to make it feel more spacious” or “install a home gym to work out more.” But these are quick ways to dissuade your busy audience from engaging further.

Instead, research to provide tips your readers can follow easily and realistically.

More practical tips might include “arrange your short furniture against the wall so you can see more of the floor, which makes a living room seem bigger” or “join no-equipment workouts like tai chi or yoga with a group to help you stay accountable with your fitness goals.”

If a tip takes more than 5 minutes for your audience to complete, you’re probably asking too much.

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2. Following the advice is low-cost or free

Similarly, your audience shouldn’t have to dig far into their wallets to follow your advice. You want to provide them with something of value for free before you ask them for their business with your company. It somewhat defeats the purpose if your content requires them to spend.

Both of the examples listed in the previous tip – moving furniture around your living room or joining a free outdoor fitness class – can be done at no out-of-pocket cost.

The best pieces of service are those that are free, but keep

it under $20 if cash is required.

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3. The advice is highly specific

Provide your audience with specific steps to get started and provide as many examples as possible.

For instance, if you're a cookie company suggesting ice cream sandwiches for the summer, provide actual step-by-step recipes your audience can follow. Or if you're a barista training school, don't just tell your students that beautiful latte art requires patience and practice — give them a detailed guide on pouring slowly, getting close to the cup and choosing the right milk for a perfectly frothy result.

4. Your recommendations are vetted by an expert

Although your brand is speaking as the expert here, it's even better if you can quote an individual within your company (or a trusted expert outside of it) to incorporate that human element.

For instance, a skincare company could ask the dermatologist it developed the line with to share tips on a trending topic, like the skin barrier. Whether you're the expert or quoting an outsider source, note any credentials to establish authority from the get-go.

Having an expert vet your company's recommendations is also a great way to get press around your serviceable content since journalists are always looking for high-value sources.

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5. The content is original to your company

It’s surprising to see how many companies simply repurpose other information found online. You don’t need to do that! You’re the expert in your field, so consult your own experiences to create content that hasn’t been published elsewhere.

One great way to do this is by referring to the common questions customers come to you with and the answers you provide them with. The more specific you can get, the better.

Let’s go back to that barista training school example. If a student asks you questions about the specific ratio needed for different types of pour-over techniques, that’s a great piece of content to create – especially if you have a perspective different from the industry norm.

The bottom line: If you identify pain points in your target audience and provide realistic solutions, you will be able to create quality content for your audience. Keep their best interests in mind, connect with them on a human level and don’t forget to showcase your credentials along the way.

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