

Content & SEO: Why & How to Build Trust, Authority & Reputation by @ronlieback

Let's discuss TAR. Not the negative tar in nicotine or the stuff that fills cracks on roads, but rather the positive TAR that is the foundation of successful businesses:

- Trust
- Authority
- Reputation

Without these three elements, a business is basically a copy of its competitors, multiplying choices for prospective clients.

When TAR is present, prospects become emotionally engaged, which leads to loyalty.

As for the other businesses that lack TAR, they dilute the choices, creating tougher decisions for prospects who don't want to make tough decisions.

This concept also translates into the world of digital marketing.

Trust, authority, and reputation intertwine to create the DNA of the most successful SEO and content marketing campaigns.

Look at any first-place organic rankings, and TAR is clearly present.

For scalable online success, a sharp focus on building (and balancing) all three TAR elements is a must.

These elements increase SEO visibility because search engines crave TAR, and all that content – also designed with TAR in mind – and its higher visibility will naturally earn respect from prospects, which leads to long-term clients.

The TAR tactic to strengthen a business's online presence is simple and straightforward. But the process of achieving true TAR in digital marketing is somewhat challenging because it's counterintuitive to normal campaign strategies.

Before the typical keyword research, tech audits, and content calendars are created, a TAR tactic must be woven into the

fabric of every campaign element.

And it all begins with endless questions during the vital discovery phase, including the most important question: “why?”

The answers to these questions help marketers build a successful campaign that validates the truth behind the business, which is rooted in the reason “why” the company is in business and “why” their products are needed.

Apple immediately comes to mind; its brand is built with strong TAR that reinforces its “why” as a business.

Apple isn’t in the business of selling technology, but rather inspiring creativity. Each of its product advertisements always clearly states the “why” factor before backing it with the two other necessary questions: What and How.

Here are the essential tactics to build and strengthen the TAR of your content marketing and SEO campaigns.

Think Like a Traditional Journalist: Why, What & How

I spent time in the early part of this century as a traditional newspaper journalist. The initial reason I wanted a daily newspaper gig was to “cut the fat” out of my writing.

What was equally important, though, was embracing the “Five Ws and One H” of traditional journalism (Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How).

These came into play throughout life, from heading up content marketing departments to launching an agency.

For the digital marketing landscape, the focus on the Five Ws and One H dwindles due to some obvious reasons, and the concept transforms to “Two Ws and One H.”

All TAR tactics should explain the Why to capture emotion, followed by the What and How to rationalize those emotions.

The Who, When, and Where of traditional journalism are typically answered on the company bio page or footer, raising the awareness of the other Two Ws and One H.

Always Start with Why

In “Start with Why” (more than 1 million copies sold), TED superstar Simon Sinek says:

“People don’t buy WHAT you do, they buy WHY you do it. A failure to communicate WHY creates nothing but stress or doubt.”

Unfortunately, when initiating a digital marketing campaign, many SEO professionals and content marketers solely focus on the How and What of the client’s products and services – typically the features, prices, and everything that’s different from the competition.

This is what typical research data claims a business’s web presence needs for success, and it fails to target the emotion side of things by first asking Why.

The Hows and Whats are absolutely needed, but as a rational follow up to the more emotional Why.

The Why of a business should be immediately addressed. Again, think of Apple, but this time rather than the company story, think about its individual products.

Apple doesn't just sell MacBook Pros; the product inspires human creativity, which is the clear message of the latest MacBook Pro page copy.

This simple ad immediately answers the Why of the product and is followed by the typical How and Why. Apple's page begins by highlighting "A Touch of Genius" to answer the Why of the product, followed by the How and What of the product.

The other genius Apple campaign that begins with Why was the simple iPhone 4 ad: "This Changes Everything. Again."

Companies that ask Why first will naturally appeal to a prospect's emotions, and influence the three elements of TAR that can begin a lifelong relationship – sometimes romance – with a company and its products.

“Can begin” are the crucial words here because the Why must be backed up with a solid What and How. Following is why.

Why Must be Followed by What & How

Once you appeal to the emotional side of a prospect, it's time to back up those feelings with rational data – and that's where the What and How come into play.

Here is where the usual discovery elements of SEO and content marketing campaigns surface – the competitive analysis, keyword research, content calendars, and site structure, to name a few.

The What and the How are vital, but should always follow the Why.

Appeal to emotion first; follow with rationale.

The What and How break down a company's offerings. The answers to What and How clearly explain what a service company completes from strategy and process perspective, and what a product company offers from a features and specs perspective.

Again, the What and How are absolutely needed to rationalize the emotional Why of a company and its products or services.

The natural byproduct of this strategy is the growth of TAR elements. The more consistent the What and How are defined, the more respect a client will have for those TAR elements that play off our emotions.

Who You Ask Is as Important as What You Ask

Also, who you ask is as important as the questions you ask.

Most of the agencies I worked with only dealt with the marketing departments of bigger businesses, though in some smaller businesses other teams were involved.

To truly ingrain TAR into a digital marketing strategy, agencies should speak with not only the marketing team but the CEO, founder, sales team and any of those on the proverbial front line that deal with the day-to-day customer relations.

Each one can provide unique insight on questions, helping to influence TAR factors on prospects – the more perspective you have, the more you can properly explain the Why of that company.

Once the Why is answered, and the correct Whats and Hows are in action, brand's online presence will build stronger and quicker.

Amplify What Works

Seeking the answers to these types of questions also allows marketers to amplify on the services that are the strong point of a company rather than spending time fixing things that simply aren't working.

The Why questions probe deep into a business's strategy, sometimes influencing a redirection of focus on what products or services to amplify, and sometimes what ones to dice. This also helps enforce the 80/20 factor so no time is wasted.

It may sound counterintuitive, but amplifying what works instead of spending time on stuff that doesn't is the proven

fabric of many of the world's successful companies.

Think Apple and its iPhone; these platforms work, so it makes more sense to continually build and amplify it rather than sideline it and direct more attention to an entirely new phone model.

Yes, Apple successfully builds other product lines, but notice what gets the most attention within their marketing campaigns.

This all stems from the TAR Apple has already built into its marketing.

The only way to truly achieve TAR is with questions from actual humans from the beginning – questions of Why to expose the emotional factor, followed by questions of What and How to rationalize that emotional factor.

This type of strategy can drastically change the outcome of SEO and content marketing campaigns.

Make Questions – Especially Why – The Soul of Your Content Marketing Trinity

When engaging with clients, I constantly reinforce the creation of a “Content Marketing Trinity” – one that will inspire them to be storytellers and build an optimal online presence.

This trinity includes:

- Constant fresh and emotionally appealing content hosted on their business website.
- Guest posting on authoritative websites within their industry.
- Constantly feeding the social media machine.

The SEO value within this trinity needs no explanation, and neither does its value in content marketing as you look to build a powerful voice within your industry.

But how do you go about making it work? Simple – start with the Why first to appeal to emotions, and rationalize those emotions with the What and How.

This “Content Marketing Trinity” also naturally has synergy with the three elements of TAR – Trust, Authority and Reputation.

This is where $3 + 3$ equals 6 for conventional marketers that don't begin with Why, but equals “innovation” for those who begin with Why.

Conclusion

In the bestseller “Zero to One,” Peter Thiel says:

“Doing what we already know how to do takes the world from 1 to n , adding more of something familiar. But every time we create something new, we go from 0 to 1. The act of creation is singular, as it the moment of creation, and the result is something fresh and strange.”

A marketer’s top mission should focus on delivering something “fresh” to client campaigns (and sometimes strange), bringing its client’s online presence from “0 to 1.”

The solution resides in exploiting the strongest TAR elements, and it all begins with asking the correct questions, always beginning with why.

More Content Marketing Resources:

<http://tracking.feedpress.it/link/13962/8915816>