

The Field Guide to Content Marketing

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Executive Summary

Content Marketing is a practice that is expanding at an enormous rate. In the 8 months since the book *Managing Content Marketing*¹ was written, search traffic alone for the term has almost doubled.² It is predicted that 2012 is the first year marketers are placing Content Marketing front-and-center. More than 82% of B2B Marketers are including Content Marketing in their 2012 programs.³ Additionally, 9 out of 10 marketers – regardless of company size or industry – are using content as a form of marketing. And some 60% plan to increase their budgets for the practice over the next 12 months.⁴

But within this explosive growth there is a question: Is “Content Marketing” just another lead generation or search engine optimization “buzzword”? No. The heart of Content Marketing is the marketing function’s expansion in the organization, as well as the requirement to manage consumer experiences across myriad digital channels. Content, and the organization’s ability to manage it well, is an increasingly crucial part of creating value with customers across their every touch point. This trend is described in the introduction of *Managing Content Marketing*:

*“Content Marketing is a strategy focused on the creation of a valuable experience. This “many to many” engagement strategy is a new muscle for most organizations. We’ve never before had to “listen” as deeply and react as quickly as we do today. Marketing has been thrust into the lead role here – from not only building awareness and nurturing leads, but to servicing and engaging customers after the sale. And today, even if we don’t control it, content is flying in and out of our businesses. We have customers rating our products. We have product managers posting their opinions on Linked-In. We have the CEO wanting to blog and every salesperson in the company with his or her own Twitter account.”*⁵



So, in actuality, the process of Content Marketing is not a new marketing tactic. **Rather, it is a way to infuse a new type of content *management* process into existing marketing and customer service engagement strategies.**

This is an important distinction, as it means the process of Content Marketing can really serve multiple areas of many businesses. Customer service organizations use Content Marketing processes to engage, retain, and up sell customers. PR and Corporate Marketing groups are using Content Marketing processes to strengthen brand, broaden awareness of their organization, and create an enhanced image. Product marketers and managers are using Content Marketing processes to deepen their understanding of consumer personas, facilitate conversations, and improve their product and service offerings. Government and non-profit organizations are using Content Marketing processes to create more informed constituencies and drive down communication costs. And of course, as most widely understood, demand generation marketers are using Content Marketing processes to expand awareness, enhance search engine results, and cultivate leads through a consumer engagement process.

In short – just as a successful “content management” process creates business value across many areas of the business – so too can a successful “Content Marketing” process create that same widely diversified value. In *Managing Content Marketing*, this concept of broad business value is summarized as: *“the only way we can maintain long-term success in our business is to continually engage people. In 2012 and*

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beyond it's the relationship that matters. We have to not only GRAB attention, we have to HOLD attention.”⁶

This paper is meant to be a “field guide” for a number of the different areas where the Content Marketing process can be applied to create business value. Whether the reader comes from Sales, IT, PR or, even the marketing department, Content Marketing can be infused into a number of areas to create business value in both the short and long terms. This paper aims to offer three distinct areas as a guide for approaching Content Marketing:

- **Optimizing The Process**

Successful Content Marketing is more than just turning a brand into a “publishing machine.” It is as much about listening as it is about talking – it functions at an accelerated speed – a speed at which most organizations simply do not operate. If it takes 2 weeks to mechanically publish content that is built for Content Marketing, the process will not be successful. Content management capabilities must be aligned with the Content Marketing process and fine-tuned to function with flexibility, agility, and speed.

- **The Readiness Assessment**

This “Field Guide” presents an approach to assembling a Content Marketing process from a number of different approaches. We have identified four specific approaches that may help frame a new Content Marketing process in your organization and align your existing content management and measurement capabilities. While no one approach is more or less beneficial as a starting point, these approaches build upon each other in their level of sophistication and the requirements of the tools.

- **Recommendations For Getting Started**

Once you have developed your process, reviewed the type of tools you need, and identified an approach that might make sense for your business, it is time to take action. This section demonstrates the process from choosing an approach to moving forward and building the process in the organization.



It is clear that Content Marketing is a strategy being adopted across all aspects of consumer engagement touch points, and it is no longer a question of “if” but rather “how.” Tomorrow’s competitive advantage will not be in adopting Content Marketing as a practice. It will be in successfully deploying a process to manage it well.

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Optimizing the Process

In her book, *Content Marketing: Think Like A Publisher*,⁷ author Rebecca Lieb plainly states one of the biggest challenges of developing a Content Marketing strategy:

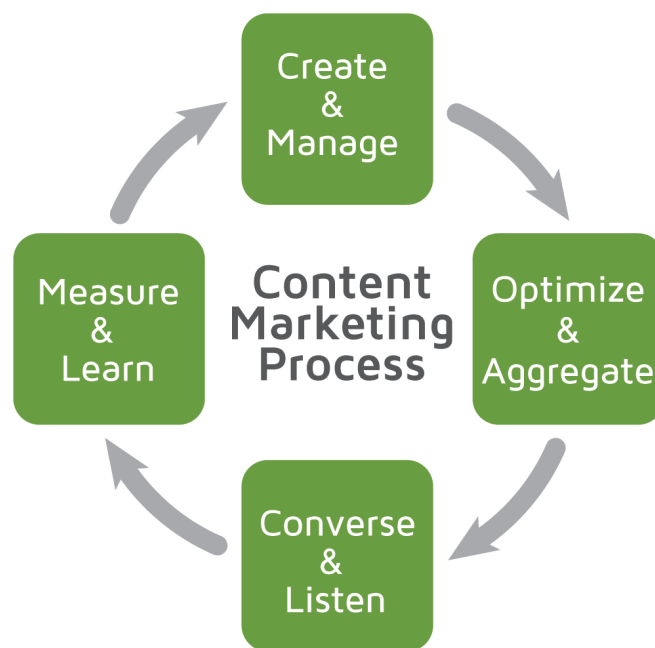
“Content Marketing has been embraced by businesses large and small. They know there’s far less of a need to buy media when they can create it themselves. . . But strategizing, creating, assessing, disseminating, evaluating and monetizing content doesn’t just happen by itself. Someone’s got to actually do it.”⁸

Those last six words are absolutely the biggest challenge for most organizations. The single biggest challenge that emerges time after time in survey after survey is “*who is going to produce and manage all this content we are going to have to create.*”

Those familiar with the web content management process will hear a familiar refrain in that complaint. Organizations that are successful in deploying a web content management process understand intuitively the concept of adoption throughout the organization and the need to gain the participation and support of the entire team.

Aligning marketing and management processes

Most organizations – either by default or design, already have a content management system. One key to deploying a successful Content Marketing



process is to align the major steps into the existing content management process.

*Managing Content Marketing*⁹ outlines the following four-step Content Marketing workflow:

1. Create & Manage

The first step is the creation and workflow of content. Most organizations have an existing process for creating, approving, managing, and publishing content to destination channels.

2. Optimize & Aggregate

This step is where the marketer will include processes for optimizing content for different personas, or for search engine optimization. This is also the step where content marketers might aggregate or curate multiple sources of content and/or repurpose it for other channels or audiences.

3. Converse & Listen

Gartner stated, “by 2016, social technologies will be integrated with most business applications. Companies should bring together their social CRM, internal communications, collaboration and public social site initiatives into a coordinated strategy.”¹⁰ For a successful Content Marketing process – the integration of inbound conversation (e.g., comments, preferences, ratings, etc.) and the outbound response is a critical component of success.

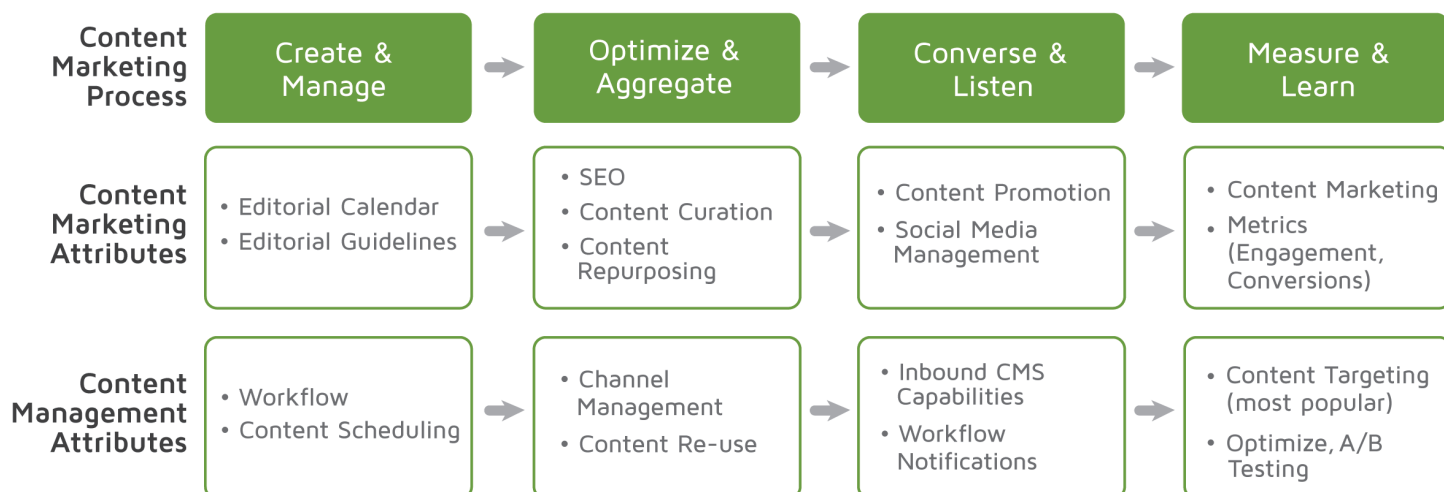
4. Measure & Learn

This involves using a holistic approach of engagement, conversion, social, and, of course, sales analytics to derive insight from usage of the content. And, it is not only a manual review – but includes the “automated” capabilities of tools to optimize and learn to increase the relevancy of the marketer in real-time. Using this phase includes using the process to create as much of an automated feedback loop as possible for content targeting, optimization, and relevance.

One of the keys to developing a Content Marketing framework for the organization is to understand how the Content Marketing process aligns with content management capabilities. Marketers should ask questions to balance their current content management capabilities with the Content Marketing process. This chart provides a basic guide to create this alignment.

This type of alignment helps identify gaps in the planned processes. For example, an organization’s content management process (either the software tools or the manual process) will have workflow and content scheduling capabilities. The Content Marketing process requires editorial calendaring and editorial guidelines. The question is, how will these needs be bridged? For example:

- The Editorial Calendar can be integrated into the existing workflow.
- The Editorial Guidelines (e.g., tone, length, grammar, etc.) can be integrated into the content scheduling process.
- The functionality of content scheduling can be integrated with the Content Calendar.



Aligning the Content Marketing team

Today, an increasing number of jobs are being created specifically to fill the role of Content Marketing within organizations of all sizes. The focus on “audience” in the marketing department is providing fertile new ground for journalists and other writers within the confines of what used to be only home to “copy” and “persuasion.” As Ann Handley of MarketingProfs and author of *Content Rules* said recently on the Wall Street Journal publication FINS:¹¹ “You can have a nose for stories and sharp digital intuition, but you really have to think about your audience first. Journalists are the only people in my mind who can do that naturally.”

Joe Chernov, the Chief Content Officer for marketing software firm Eloqua, was interviewed in February of this year.¹² In that interview, he was asked why these new job categories were so hot. He stated:

“It's the hottest job function for a hiding-in-plain-sight reason. It's the only reliable way for a brand to be remembered. Paid media is all about brand recognition, but being 'remembered' requires something else entirely. It requires a value exchange and, moreover, a value exchange on the customer's terms. It's the Chief Content Officer's job to figure out what those 'value opportunities' are, and then devise the context, media and metrics for the delivery.”

But while some larger enterprises such as Cisco, Coca Cola, AOL, and Netflix are building entire teams of Content Marketing-focused staff, many organizations will need to align existing marketing functions with these new roles. Again, existing content management processes and roles can inform the alignment of the function of the roles within Content Marketing. Marketers will do well to examine their existing content management teams and determine how they might align with these Content Marketing roles:

Chief Content Officer


The Chief Content Officer is the person responsible for the content/editorial management of the Content Marketing strategy. He/She might be a VP of Marketing, or this may even be a shared role among the many individuals that make up the team. This role sets the ultimate strategy for the Content Marketing initiatives.

Managing Editor

The Managing Editor is the day-to-day manager and storyteller for the organization. In most cases, this role is based on writing and editing. This role is most commonly filled by someone with a journalism background. Again, this role may be filled by multiple individuals in the organization, but it is the role that has the most responsibility for content editing, repurposing, and re-use across different channels.

Content Creators

The Content Creators are the sources of content, or the content “well.” They may be writers, but in



many cases are not. This may be the CEO who wants to write a blog, or the product engineering team that can be the source of great customer-focused content. These are the sources in and around the company that must be mined for the story that will ultimately be shaped by the Managing Editors.

Content Producers

The content producers create useful, appealing content. This is the role most commonly delegated to an outsourced design agency or team. The design of content is critical – especially across different channels. In some cases, parts of this role are outsourced based on the channel. For example, an in-house team may handle the print and white paper creation, while an outsourced agency handles other types of media (e.g., video/audio/multimedia/mobile app).

Chief Listening Officer

Great Content Marketing generates conversation. The CLO is the “air-traffic control” for social media and other content channels. This role is responsible for directing the conversation to the appropriate part of the organization. If a comment on a blog post is seeking more information from customer service, the CLO ensures that the customer care team follows up.

Creating a successful process of Content Marketing is key to ultimately creating a successful strategy. When these roles are combined with the process and aligned with the content management process,

the organization can begin identifying gaps in capabilities. For example:

- **In the process of Converse & Listen** – the organization may identify three individuals on the content team who will assume the CLO role. The question is: how do existing content management capabilities enable these individuals to accomplish this? Does the organization have the ability to notify team members on new blog comments? Do the CLOs have the ability to assign tasks (with automated follow-up) to other team members?

Or...

- **In the process of Create & Manage** – the organization may have identified one person as the Managing Editor. How will he/she receive content submissions? Will it be by email? Or, will it be through the content management system? Today’s capable web content management system should be able to receive content from digital channels as well as publish to them. Incorporating this web content into a workflow process can provide much-needed ownership of conversational content. Will the Managing Editor also handle the SEO optimization, or will that be managed by an outsourced agency?

Using these models as a guide, gaps can be identified and the necessary responsibilities can be assigned to fill them.

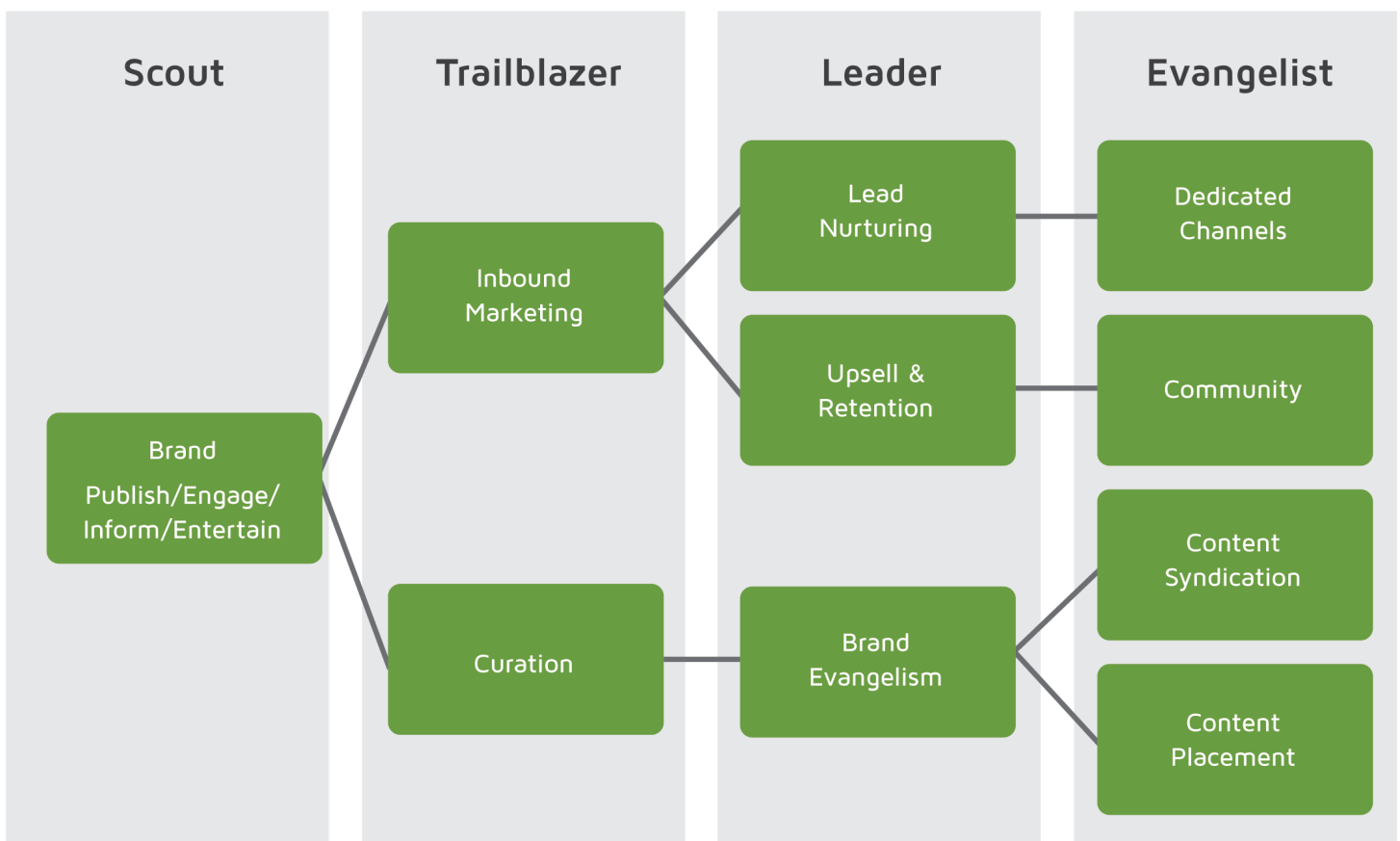
The Readiness Assessment

One of the key conclusions in the CMI and MarketingProfs' 2012 *Content Marketing Benchmarks, Budgets and Trends* report was that "Best-In-Class" Content Marketers were aligning their content with their consumers' "Buying Cycles." Of those surveyed in the study that rated their Content Marketing as "effective" or "very effective", 45% were aligning their content to the buying cycle. This compared to 29% of those that rated their Content Marketing efforts as "ineffective".¹³

As marketers look at getting started in Content Marketing – beyond identifying how internal

processes align – it can be helpful to recognize what part of the funnel the organization first wants to address and what capabilities will be required to effectively accomplish this. To help frame this, we have identified the Four Different Approaches for Readiness Scale. This Readiness Scale defines the approach to the Content Marketing process.

While none are necessarily better or worse starting points than others, they build upon each other in their level of sophistication and the requirements of the tools and processes.





The four approaches for readiness

The Scout Approach

This can be a great way to start using Content Marketing to build or strengthen brand. This is common for smaller organizations or startups, as it is an effective approach to position an organization as a leader in its industry. It can be the easiest to approach from a content management perspective, as it is about supplementing the existing marketing channels with one or more channels of engaging, informative, or entertaining content. Simple tools such as blogging or other web content management systems are common, as the content is much less targeted to a specific user, and much more for the general consumption of consumers. Measurement strategies are focused on branding (brand perception and strengthening) and engagement metrics (e.g., page views, content downloaded, blog visits, etc.).

The Trailblazer Approach

The Trailblazer is a very common starting approach for content marketers at well-established companies because it involves optimizing content programs to be “found.” This typically occurs when one looks at “Inbound Marketing” tactics or other Content Marketing programs where the goal is to publish a high velocity of content with the purpose of ranking higher in search engines. Content curation programs can also become critical at this point, as the organization can focus on “news” within their industry – and provide a point of view on it – as a technique to keep the velocity of content high. While simple tools will work as well – WCMS and other tools that are able to accept

incoming content from third-party sources will be important capabilities. Social publishing and content curation tools are also important. In addition to the engagement measurement strategies that are in place from The Scout approach, organizations must also add SEO measurement, social media, and other referring traffic measurements.

The Leader Approach

This is where Content Marketing is used to facilitate leads through a pipeline – with different calls to action across different content pieces and even channels. Ultimately, the purpose is to use content to engage more deeply with prospects until they reach their “goal.” This approach moves the content beyond simply marketing – it pushes into customer retention and up sell as well. These tools definitely become more robust as content is focused on narrower targets (e.g., registered vs. anonymous) and more sophisticated measurement and nurturing techniques. These tools offer strategic approaches targeted at optimizing content in real-time in order to deliver more relevant content at the right time, ultimately with the goal of driving higher conversions. Again, building upon the first two approaches, measurement needs will expand to include conversion rates at the content level as well as A/B and multivariate testing results. This is ultimately where Web Content Management tools must integrate with other marketing tools to create a unified experience for customers and a unified marketing platform for the organization.

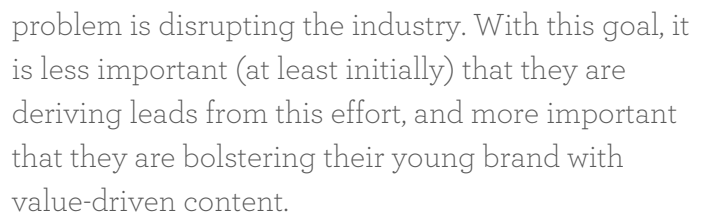
The Evangelist Approach

The Evangelist involves the marketer taking the Content Marketing program beyond the bounds of


100%

With **The Scout** approach, the content is typically very broad with less of a direct measurability factor for the Content Marketing.

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Next, adding a level of sophistication to the targeting and measurability, **The Leader** approach adds in lead cultivation and targeting content based on funnel placement. The organization will typically deploy a suite of tools to help identify



where personas are entering into the funnel and how content can be optimized to the user to ensure relevance.

Finally, **The Evangelist** approach – may be the culmination of the organization’s efforts. At this point, they may have set up a customer-focused community and are delivering highly personalized content to their users based on the type of customer, or even the products they are using.

It is critical to emphasize that this is not a linear scale and that different functions may overlap considerably. For example, **The Trailblazer** and **The Leader** approaches are very common in a B2B Content Marketing program, and they are almost always associated with helping demand generation marketers create more cost-effective leads.

Getting Started

As stated previously, there is no right or wrong way to get started with a Content Marketing process. Whether you choose one or all of the approaches, each can provide tremendous business value. However, you can use the process, the team, and the approach to start framing the existing capabilities you currently have.

- Aligning the process with existing content management capabilities helps identify the existing process and technology gaps that need to be filled in order to produce content as marketing. This allows identification of the type of tools you will want to examine – from full suites of Web Engagement Management solutions – to point solutions that can be integrated into existing technologies.
- Aligning those gaps in your process and technology with your existing team can identify who can, or will, be the best type of person to actually “do the work.”
- Once the roles have been identified and the responsibilities assigned – defining the new workflows that can be created within the Web Content Management tools comes next. A good governance model is key – but so is the ability to create fluid conversation. Identifying the rules gives the organization the “flexibility” to break them.
- Aligning your existing capabilities to the Assessment Approach can allow you to

define the type of project you should attempt, given your existing toolsets and capabilities. This can help determine whether your organization is ready to start today, or should wait until capabilities have been adjusted or upgraded.

One of the easiest ways to get started with a Content Marketing program is to identify an existing part of your sales funnel and layer a Content Marketing process on whatever tactic is being used for that part of the funnel.

For example, take the Google retargeting banner network (Pay-Per-Click) ads as an example. If the Leader Approach is applied to it, the intention will be to decrease the costs for leads that we are driving into the funnel. In short, the goal is to decrease pay-per-click costs by creating a call to action that increases the number of individuals who ultimately convert on whatever action the ad is trying to create.

So, perhaps the “call to action” changes from “buy now” to “download this white paper”. Monitor the results to determine whether changing to a Content Marketing call to action may actually decrease the CPL (Cost Per Lead) or perhaps increases the quality of the leads (e.g., more likely to become customers). Of course, we need the measurement and content management tools in order to accomplish this – and that’s where aligning those capabilities to understand not just what we might WANT to do – but what our existing processes and tools give us the CAPABILITY to do.

Conclusion

Marketers have come a long way from the “Mad Men” days of 2- and 4-hour martini lunches. In both good and challenging ways, more and more is being expected from today’s marketing professional. Today, it is about creating compelling and engaging experiences. And, it is not only about attracting more and more consumers into that experience – it’s HOLDING their attention with MORE experiences once they have had the first.

Whether the immediate challenge is to evangelize to customers with highly personalized customer service experiences, or to simply publish content to re-brand the company as a thought leader, content is at the heart of these experiences. Software tools will make it easier for us to communicate those experiences, target them more relevantly, and gather insight more effectively. But ultimately, the real value of a Content Marketing/management suite of tools is that it gives us the time and flexibility to create more engaging experiences. That is the real competitive advantage: when our teams have more time to create value, we create more value.

Content Management Sidebar

Why the Right CMS Means More Than Ever

Gartner analyst Laura McLellan recently predicted that CMOs will spend more on technology than their CIO counterparts.¹⁴ Technology has become a critical piece of the marketer’s platform, and for Content Marketing, the foundation is the WCMS.

Whether it is a complete suite of tools or an integrated point solution strategy – a new breed of “digital engagement management system” is becoming the core that enables everything from the management of content across every digital channel to the targeting and testing and measurement tools to fuel the insight into new content.

Many WCMS vendors are addressing this by expanding well beyond “content management” across multiple digital channels and diving deep into web “engagement management”. This is a natural progression. The explosive growth of digital channels and approaches that consumers can interact with brand content means that managing, repurposing, targeting, and measuring content is more important than ever.

However, these burgeoning capabilities of the modern WCM solution also add complexity to the organization seeking to acquire a new tool. It becomes more important than ever to align the digital marketing processes – and apply the right content management tool to facilitate that process.

Choosing the right WCMS software solution can truly mean the difference between an easy-to-manage Content Marketing process and one that is fragmented and difficult to scale. The correct software tool can provide efficiency for the content management process, but (depending on the nature of the business) provide a differentiating competitive edge for using content to change or enhance consumer behavior.

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