# THE ONTENT MARKETING STRATEGY CHECKLIST

A BIG FAT, ROLL-UP-YOUR-SLEEVES GUIDE FOR BZB MARKETERS





SHARE ME!



# THE CONTENT MARKETING ENLIGHTENMENT



WELCOME TO

### CONTENT MARKETING HAS EXPLODED

THAT'S GOOD BECAUSE YOU'VE FINALLY GOT A WAY AROUND THOSE ANNOYING BARRIERS THAT BUYERS TEND TO ERECT WHEN THEY SENSE OLD-SCHOOL MARKETING.

But it's bad because it means you're competing against a tidal wave of shiny new content from competitors, analysts, thought leaders, bloggers and wannabes. **Bottom line:** good content isn't enough any more. You need *insanely great* content that's on-strategy and incites action. And you need to deliver it in a consistent, ongoing program.

To do that, you need to step back a little and think about what you're trying to accomplish and who you're trying to motivate.

This the era of *Content Strategy* and it will separate the pros from the amateurs.





### WHY CONTENT Is so critical.

#### **CONTENT IS SO CRITICAL** because people care about their own problems much more than they care about your products.

When you capture your company's expertise and package it up to help your prospects do their jobs, you earn people's attention instead of simply assuming you'll get it.

Content also fuels the three most important weapons in the B2B marketing arsenal:



#### Search

If you don't rank on your keywords, you won't get the traffic. Great content propels you up the search rankings.

#### Social

Content gives you something to bring to the social party – you don't want to engage emptyhanded, do you?

#### Outbound

It may be out of fashion but outbound is about to make a comeback. Content gives you an offer for your outbound calls-to-action, driving up response rates.

In short, content is what makes the B2B world go round and the revenue meters sing 'ka-ching!'.

#### If you're not getting good at content, prepare to lose market share.

But you can't just churn out piffle...



#### HERE'S A BIG-ASS CHECKLIST TO HELP.

The first part of the checklist is designed to help you hone your content marketing strategy and build the foundations of an ongoing content marketing program. The second part should help you attack your very next piece.

We hope you won't just read the checklist. We hope you'll print it out and start scribbling away. Use it when you're writing your content marketing strategy, developing a new piece – or whenever you hit a roadblock.

You may need to do this exercise for each product line or one for each region or whatever. But these are the kinds of questions you'll need to answer if you want your content marketing to go faster than a speeding bullet and leap over tall buildings in a single bound (or a series of carefully nurtured smaller bounds).

#### HELP US HELP YOU.

If you think we've missed anything important or got something totally wrong (how very dare you), <u>do give</u> <u>us your comments.</u> We want to improve this sucker as we go forward.

(And we'll post updates on how the Checklist campaign is doing on <u>Velocity's B2B Content Marketing Blog</u> – so do come back).

#### Ones we prepared earlier. You mean you haven't read these yet?

<u>The B2B Content Marketing</u> <u>Workbook</u> – a primer.

<u>The B2B Marketing Manifesto</u> – a frothing rave.

There's your bedtime reading for tonight. Enjoy. Night-night. Mwah.







#### START BIG AND WORK YOUR WAY DOWN:

Capture what <i>the business</i> wants to achieve in the next 6-12 months.	Think about what you'd need to change to make these goals happen – and aim high. This isn't just about business as usual.	FOR EACH
	Prioritise the most important things content can do for you, including: Building awareness	GOAL YOU CHOOSE, IDENTIFY THE METRICS YOU'LL TRACK.
□ Write down what <i>marketing</i> needs to achieve in the next 6-12 months.	<ul> <li>Educating buyers</li> <li>Moving leads along the purchase path (nurturing)</li> <li>Engaging with all influencers</li> <li>Serving existing customers</li> <li>Cross-selling or up-selling</li> <li>Generating new sales leads</li> <li>Establishing your expertise</li> </ul>	

Get buy-in on these. Everything depends on clear goals that everyone agrees on – and build them into your analytics! (see page 25).

#### For this B2B Content Marketing Strategy Checklist, the goals are:

To raise awareness of Velocity among B2B marketers who want to harness the power of content marketing.

To nurture people who downloaded and liked the B2B Marketing Manifesto or the B2B Content Marketing Workbook, moving the right ones one step closer to picking up the phone.

# TARGET AUDIENCES

#### SUMMARISE EACH BUYER PERSONA

**IN A FEW BULLET POINTS AND PRIORITISE:** 

Persona 1	Persona 4
Persona 2	Persona 5
Persona 3	
	We like to use short, visual personas that include psychographics not just demographics.
	For the Big Fat B2B Content Marketing Strategy Checklist, target persona #1 is:
	Martha Watton, 43
	CMO of a fast-growing £400m software company
<b>V</b>	Ambitious, confident & impatient
For more on this check out our	A big believer in the power of content
Buyer Persona Resource Round-up.	Her results from old-style campaigns are flattening out

## TARGET BUYING STAGES

#### EACH PIECE OF CONTENT SHOULD CAUSE A PROSPECT TO MOVE TO THE NEXT STAGE OF THE BUYING JOURNEY.

Fill in your top personas and use AIDA or whatever buying stages you prefer:

	Awareness	Desire	Action
Persona:			
1	······	 	
2	······	 	
3		 <b>'ROI' BLOG POST</b>	
4		 	
5			

Some pieces of content can serve in several different cells. But you do need a sense of progression – so you encourage people to move along your funnel. That's what lead nurturing is all about.

For this Content Marketing Strategy Checklist, we're targeting senior B2B marketers who are already into the idea of content marketing (like Martha Watton, above) and want to get better at it now. So they're our 'Persona 1' and this piece is in the Desire box (overlapping into Action). It's a follow-up to earlier pieces like the Content Marketing Workbook that was in the Awareness Box and the B2B Marketing Manifesto (Interest).

It can be helpful to list the questions that buyers have in each stage of the buying process. Then develop content that answers the questions appropriate to the stage you're targeting. For this piece, these might be things like, "How do I best spend my content budget?" or "How do I decide what content to produce?".



#### **ANOTHER WAY TO TARGET CONTENT**

IS TO THINK ABOUT THE EVENTS WITHIN THE TARGET COMPANY THAT MIGHT TRIGGER INTEREST IN YOUR SOLUTIONS (A MERGER? A NEW CRM SYSTEM?):

	igger:			
1		 		
2				CONTENT PIECE
3 4				CONTENT FILDE
4 5				
0	••••••	 ••••••	••••••	••••••

Does each trigger have some way of signaling itself? How can you know when a prospect experiences one?

#### For the Content Marketing Strategy Checklist, a trigger event may be:

A B2B company just hired a new CMO

The prospect just had a content marketing success and wants more

How are these two triggers signaled? We could look for news of major marketing job moves. But it's mainly through search and social – including tweets and questions on social forums.





#### THE BEST CONTENT COMES FROM A VERY SPECIFIC, CLEARLY DELINEATED SPHERE OF EXPERTISE.

This is the zone where you have the most authority. It's where no one has a better claim on expertise than you do. Write yours in a sentence:

#### Our sweet spot is:

#### **Examples:**

We're experts in the effect of ratings & reviews on ecommerce (for Reevoo).

We're experts in using data to maximize return on web advertising budgets. (for Mediaplex)

We're experts at using B2B content marketing to generate revenue (for us – Velocity)

"YOUR SWEET SPOT MIXED WITH YOUR CUSTOMERS" PAIN POINTS IS WHERE THE TRULY VALUABLE STORIES ARE" - JOE PULIZZI -



We wrote a blog post on <u>finding</u> <u>your sweet spot</u> here on the Econsultancy blog.

# CONTENT

#### FEW COMPANIES START WITH NO CONTENT.

IT'S IMPORTANT TO KNOW EXACTLY What you have so you know where your gaps are.

	Existing Content	Persona(s)	Buying Stage	Notes
1				
2				
3				
4	•••••			
5				
6				
7				
8			······	
9				
1(	Э			

Include everything that can be used or re-purposed: blog posts, ebooks, sales decks, videos, archived webinars, etc.



#### THEMES ARE WIDER IN SCOPE THAN SPECIFIC TOPICS.

THEY REPRESENT A WHOLE AREA YOU WANT TO START 'OWNING'. DECIDE ON YOUR CONTENT SUCCESS CRITERIA AND SCORE EACH THEME AGAINST THEM.

Kind of like this (in priority order):

**SWEET SPOT** 

Criterion:	1	2	3	4
Theme:				
_			7/10	
3		••••••		
5	••••••	••••••	••••••	••••••

We always include 'In our sweet spot' as one of these criteria. Also things like 'likelihood to be shared' and 'hot topic'. Or 'timely', 'affordable' and (god forbid) 'fun'.

For this piece, we could have written something on B2B SEO or marketing automation. But we'd already picked the theme that's most in our sweet spot: Content Marketing. So we skipped this one.

# SEO KEYPHRASES

#### IT'S GOOD TO DECIDE ON YOUR SEO KEYPHRASES BEFORE YOU PICK A TOPIC

- BUT IT'S CRITICAL TO DO SO BEFORE You start writing.

Ke	yphrase:	1	2	3 B2B SOCIAL	
Тор	oic:				
-					
2.		•••••••	······	······	
	CUCIVI				
4.	SOCIAL	······	·····		
5.			······	······	

Don't forget: long tail terms can deliver the best returns in B2B.

For this checklist, 'content marketing strategy' is clearly the driving keyphrase – but we're also interested in ranking for B2B 'content marketing' and a few others.

# EDITORIAL CALENDAR

#### **YOUR EDITORIAL CALENDAR**

IS ESSENTIALLY YOUR PRODUCTION AND DELIVERY Schedule in one sheet. If you don't have one, your content marketing will become *ad hoc* rather than strategic. So have one (even if you stray from it often). Here's a simple one: Months or weeks along the top. Personas, stages, triggers, topics or a combination down the left. You decide:

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
А													
В			•••••			•••••	•••••	•••••	•••••		•••••	•••••	•••••
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C		·····	·····	······	••••••	••••••	·····			······	••••••	••••••	
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#### Editorial Calendar Q1 2012 | Calendar A: By Content Type | Budget: XXX





For more resources on this, see our Editorial Calendars Resource Round-Up

PART 1 SUMMARY

THE PICTURE

YOUR CONTENT MARKETING PROGRAM IS 39 TIMES MORE LIKELY TO SUCCEED IF YOU START BY BEING CLEAR ABOUT THE THINGS WE JUST DISCUSSED.

> BUT IT'S NOT ENOUGH TO HAVE CLARITY ABOUT GOALS, PERSONAS AND BUYING STAGES — YOU ALSO NEED BUY-IN FROM THE WHOLE TEAM. THIS UP-FRONT INVESTMENT WILL PAY DIVIDENDS.







#### FOR EACH CELL IN YOUR PERSONA/

BUYING-STAGE MATRIX, YOU NEED TO GENERATE TOPIC IDEAS. Just as in the 'themes' section above, decide on your content success criteria and score each topic against them:

Criterion:	1	2	3	4
Theme:				
-				
-				
-				
J	••••••	••••••	······	

A topic is a theme with a spin and a compelling title. It's where you get specific. If a theme is 'SEO' a topic might be '8 Mistakes in B2B SEO' or 'How B2B SEO differs from B2C' or 'Earning authentic backlinks the sustainable way'.

> For the Big Fat Content Marketing Strategy Checklist, we knew the theme was Content Marketing Strategy. The criteria for choosing a topic within this theme were:

Very Shareable

Practical and How-To Oriented

Different from our Content Marketing Workbook

Can Produce in 10 Days

The Checklist came out on top quite quickly. It feels right for the stage of adoption most marketers are in now – and it's a good follow-up to the Content Marketing Workbook that explains basic principles.



#### YOU'VE GOT A TOPIC.

**NOW WHAT MEDIUM IS BEST FOR IT?** Prioritise according to things like the size and scope of the topic, the need to gate behind a download form, shareability, etc.

<ul> <li>White paper</li> <li>eNewsletter</li> <li>Checklist</li> <li>Curated piece</li> <li>Infographic</li> <li>Print (remember print?)</li> <li>Article</li> <li>Live event</li> </ul>	
□ Interview □ Other:	
□ 3rd party expert □ In-house expert □ Other:	
<ul> <li>Interview/Chalk talk</li> <li>Demo/Documentary</li> <li>Viral/Animation</li> <li>Webinar</li> </ul>	

It's good to keep a mix of different media – it's a lot more interesting than a library of 19 white papers. And try new stuff. Prezi, Pllop, Infographic, iPad magazine... The medium can be the message.

> For this piece, a checklist presented itself as the obvious medium for a practical, hardworking piece that captures some of our experience in a short form – and hopefully really helps B2B marketers in their content marketing efforts. We'll no doubt spin this out into blog posts and infographics and stuff. And we've already done a Prezi: <u>The Content Marketing Tutorial.</u> We like Prezi.



#### **GREAT CONTENT IS AUTHORITATIVE.**

Your choice of format will influence where you source your information (an infographic often needs different kinds of content than a webinar or eBook). So where will you get the goods?

In-house experts (list):	Existing internal content:
Customers:	Existing external content:
Known sites & resources:	Desk research (Google, Twitter, Social forums)
	<ul> <li>Original research</li> <li>Crowdsource</li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>Commission an expert</li> <li>Bribe an analyst (surely, "engage with")</li> </ul>

You don't have to consult all these sources before getting started. Once you feel you've nailed the topic, you can keep researching to validate your ideas but you might as well start writing your outline.

> <u>The Big Fat Content Marketing</u> <u>Strategy Checklist</u> you're reading right now is based mainly on our internal 'chops' – we've been doing this for a long time. But we did check in with our friends and marketers we respect (see the section at the end).



#### YOU'VE PROBABLY GOT A TARGET TONE OF VOICE

**OR 'LOOK & FEEL' IN YOUR MIND.** Share it with the writers and designers who will be creating the content:

<ul> <li>Copy style guide pieces (stuff that kind of sounds like):</li> </ul>	Design guide pieces (stuff that kind of looks like):

You don't want to tie the hands of your creatives (heaven forfend) – just give them a sense of where you're aiming.

You might think it's hard to get tone and attitude into a checklist like this one – but it's the little glosses like this one that add that human touch. We hope.

On the design front, we aimed for: 'working doc but kind of fun and engaging to look at'.



### YOU'VE GOT GREAT CONTENT.

NOW GET IT OUT THERE, ATOMISE IT AND MEASURE ITS IMPACT.

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# PROMOTION

#### THINKING ABOUT THIS BEFORE YOU CREATE THE CONTENT CAN HELP YOU SPIN IT FOR MAXIMUM IMPACT. BUT IT'S GOOD AS A POST-CREATION CHECKLIST TOO:

#### Your own channels

- □ Your blog
- Vour e-newsletter
- □ Your website real estate
- □ Your resource library (where will it fit in?)
- Cross-promotion in other related content (essential!)
- 🗆 Internal alert
- Email footer

#### Influencers, bloggers, partners,

- & mates (online PR)
- □ Give them a sneak peek
- Let them know it's live
- Give them thumbnails and (tagged, optimised) URLs
- □ Write a related story for key media
- □ Thank them when they share (duh)

#### Social Media

- □ Twitter
- LinkedIn including relevant groups
- E Facebook
- □ Google+
- Tumblr
- Flickr
- Pinterest
- □ Social bookmarking (Stumble, Digg...)
- 🗆 Q&A Forums Focus, Quora...
- □ Wikipedia (good luck)

#### Paid media

- PPC search engines, LinkedIn, etc
- Banner ads
- Newsletters & sponsorships
- U Webinar with media partner
- Cost-Per-Lead programs
- Direct mail & print media
- □ National TV campaign (kidding)

In our experience, marketers tire of a piece of content far before the audience does. Hit it and hit it again. Then hit it some more. We'll report on our <u>B2B content</u> <u>marketing blog</u> about the media we use to promote this checklist. Do come along.



#### NO, YOU CAN'T JUST UNLEASH

YOUR SALES ANIMALS ON Everyone who downloads An Ebook. You need to be scientific about it.

Using lead nurturing will allow you to use your content where it belongs in a prospect's 'journey' (instead of just throwing it at everyone who's in your database today).

So a new prospect who might sign up for your newsletter next January may get your new piece of content first – to them, it's brand new! Nurturing does many good things for you but extending the life of your best content is a biggie.

#### Lead Nurturing Checklist

- Meet with Sales to define a Sales-Ready Lead
- Decide how to score leads according to fit and behaviour
- Set up your marketing automation platform\*
- Map your content to stages in the buyer's journey
- Design a content flow for each new prospect segment
- Send inbound prospects into your new nurture stream

#### \* What, you don't have a marketing automation and lead nurturing platform?

Well... Go get one.

### Here's a sample 5-step nurture flow for Velocity:

- 1. Thanks for visiting our site
- 2. Here's our B2B Content Marketing Workbook
- 3. Liked that? Check out our B2B Marketing Manifesto
- 4. Ready to go? Here's a Strategy Checklist to help
- 5. Need content like the stuff you've just experienced?.... We should talk.





#### BTW

By downloading this checklist, you've placed yourself inside our Marketo system. Don't worry, we're not going to hound you to the ends of the Earth – but if you're the CMO of Adobe and you go and <u>download all our other content</u> and <u>read</u> <u>every web page</u> and open every email... you just may get a friendly call. (Opt out is absolutely respected – just drop us an email).

# ATOMISATION



Plan your atomization as you create each major content piece — and put all the spin-offs into your editorial calendar.

Of course, each of these spin-offs should link back to the mother ship — using the right keyphrases as anchor text. We'll atomise The Big Content Marketing Strategy Checklist in lots of cool ways, no doubt. Watch this space (and all the little spaces around it).

Our mate Roger Warner calls this 'versioning for shareability'. We kind of like that.

### MEASUREMENT & TESTING

#### **WORK OUT** WHAT SUCCESS REALLY MEANS FOR YOU AND MEASURE IT.

- □ Make sure all URLs are tagged
- Set up test landing pages, campaigns, etc
- Set up goals and custom reports in your analytics
- Set up advanced segments
   (to track each channel and campaign)
- Optimise to ramp up what works (and kill what doesn't)
- Report on campaign ROI

The best content marketers tend to live inside Google Analytics (or their chosen tool). You don't have to master it yourself (go on, it's fun) but you do need someone on your team to master it.

#### You're our guinea pig

If you're reading The Big Fat Content Marketing Strategy Checklist, you've already been through at least two tests – including a landing page that obviously did the job.



THE BEST CONTENT MARKETING ORGANIZATIONS HAVE LEARNING CULTURES. IT'S IMPORTANT TO EXPLICITLY CAPTURE WHAT HAS WORKED, WHAT HASN'T AND WHY YOU THINK IT'S TRUE.

- □ Identify success factors and capture them
- □ Identify what failed
- Gather evidence to support conclusions
- □ Share with the widest team possible, regularly

Regular, informal meetings to share what you've learned – and hear what others have learned – are a great way to start to embed this learning in your marketing. They make the whole process more fun, too.





Now take all this priceless experience and put it to work for your next content marketing strategy, quarterly plan, campaign or next piece of content.



### HERE'S THE VELOCITY GUARANTEE THIS STUFF WORKS

Content Marketing is an energizing discipline. Every marketer will have their own approach based on their unique situation and experiences.

We hope this Big Fat Checklist helps you evolve your own best practice. And we hope you'll share some of that with us. Content Marketing is the effective part of B2B. Do it right and your budgets will increase, your sales teams will sing your praises and you'll trade in that Ford Focus for one of those fancy foreign jobbies.

Do it wrong and your content will have the lifespan of a tweet. So our advice: do it right.



START WITH WHAT YOUR Prospects need to know.

Not what you need to say.

#### STICK TO YOUR SWEET SPOT.

Where your company is an undisputed expert.

#### HAVE REAL IDEAS AND WRITE WITH PASSION.

Confidence is the most powerful force in marketing – and a bit of attitude and energy go a long, long way.

#### LESS CAN BE MUCH MORE.

4

Fewer major pieces of real value beat a firehose of lightweight stuff. You're building a content brand here: you need to be famous for excellent content that's worth people's time.

#### LIVE BY THE NUMBERS.

There's no excuse for flying blind anymore. Analytics is to digital marketing as air and water are to the human body. And A/B testing is the... um... the kidney?

### SOME OTHER VELOCITY (ONTENT MARKETING RESOURCES YOU MAY LIKE



#### <u>THE B2B CONTENT</u> MARKETING WORKBOOK

This is a content marketing primer. It's good for:

Getting up to speed fast Convincing other people to do content marketing Keeping your content efforts focused Getting ideas for your next piece

#### THE VELOCITY B2B MARKETING BLOG

A virtual boutique of B2B content marketing goodies.

Bigger than Google.
More addictive than Pinterest.
Humbler than Donald Trump.



#### THE B2B MARKETING MANIFESTO

This is a bit of a rant. It's good for:

#### THE VELOCITY NEWSLETTER

We won't spam you. Just the (very) occasional emission.

Letting go of old-school thinking

Raising your sights

Reminding you why you went into this crazy game in the first place



### SOME FAVOURITE CONTENT MARKETING FOLKS BRESOURCES

No, we're not the only content marketing strategists out there. We get inspiration, motivation and sometimes the howling fantods of envy by following:

The Content Marketing Institute – stuffed to the gills with great content about content marketing.

Econsultancy – the daddy of all digital marketing communities. If you're not a member, you're stumbling around in the dark wearing the wrong size shoes and a hand-scrawled sign on your back that says, 'Homer Simpson'.

Marketing Profs – give excellent advice on bestpractice marketing, including newsletters, events and webcasts. And MarketingProfs University offers some really good courses.

#### **FIVE EXCELLENT BOOKS:**

Content Rules Ann Handley and C.C. Chapman

Get Content Get Customers Joe Pulizzi and Newt Barrett

Managing Content Marketing Joe Pulizzi and Robert Rose

The New Rules of Marketing and PR David Meerman Scott

eMarketing Strategies for the Complex Sale Ardath Albee SMART B2B CONTENT MARKETERS AND VERY NICE PEOPLE INDEED WHO HELPED AND/OR INSPIRE US:

Ardath Albee Bob Apollo Ambal Balakrishnan Michael Brenner Kieran Flanagan Ashley Friedlein Ann Handley Michele Linn Billy Mitchell Jeff Ogden Peter O'Neill Maria Pergolino **Rene Power** Joe Pulizzi **Robert Rose** Liz Smyth John Sweeney Stephanie Tilton **Jeremy Victor** Roger Warner John Watton

Wow. What a group. THANK YOU ALL





#### VELOCITY IS A B2B CONTENT Marketing Agency (but you Probably guessed that).

We're based in London but have up-todate passports and often find ourselves in the far-flung corners of the B2B globe, from Silicon Valley to Stockholm.

#### Let's connect

Velocity's YouTube channel Our Facebook page Our Google+ page Our Pinterest boards (sheesh)

#### Link up

Doug Kessler on LinkedIn Stan Woods on LinkedIn

#### Follow us on Twitter

@velocitytweets @dougkessler @nstoneman @rskin11

#### Or just plain get in touch

stan@velocitypartners.co.uk Stan Woods +44 0208 940 4099

