

A woman is shown in profile on the left side of the image, speaking into a professional microphone. The microphone is positioned in the center-right and is equipped with a large black pop filter. The entire scene is set against a dark blue background. The woman's mouth is open as if she is in the middle of speaking or singing.

# CONTENT MARKETING 101

*TURN KNOWLEDGE  
INTO POWER*

**ALABAMA**  
MEDIA GROUP

A vertical silhouette of a person on a stage, holding a flag aloft with their right arm. The background is a dark blue gradient, suggesting a stage or performance setting. The person's reflection is visible on the floor.


# Setting the Stage

While browsing the internet, consumers frequently make split second decisions about where to focus their attention. Your advertising and marketing efforts are like an audition for their attention, and you have very little time to make a big impression on the judges. Your competitors are also vying for their time, so you'll need to gain the consumer's trust in the online space. And there are some built-in challenges with today's consumer.

- **Consumers are now overloaded with competitive advertising messages.**
- **Consumers also are much more skeptical, and unlikely to respond to cheesy sales pitches and irrelevant information.**

So, you've got to be distinct to the consumer to overcome those obstacles.

This guide will provide you with the essential building blocks needed to create and implement a winning content marketing strategy so when all eyes are on you, you'll stand out on the stage.



Answer these questions:  
What makes you unique?  
What problems are you solving in your industry?

# What is content marketing?

Content marketing is the strategy of creating and disseminating authentic, relevant, consistent and educational information to reach a defined audience over a sustained period that attracts, retains and ultimately drives your best asset – target customer – to action.

Successful content marketing is:

- **Consumer-driven; it's what they want to know, not just what you want to tell them.**
- **Compelling, illuminating information that helps the consumer fill a need or answer a question.**

Once you can consistently package and deliver valuable content, consumers will return for more and more.

## Why businesses should use content marketing

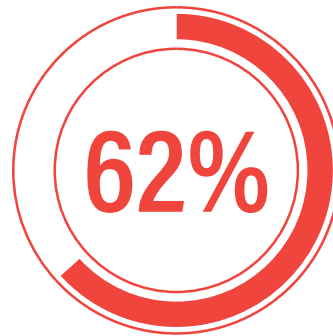
Brands are clamoring for attention from their customers, and content marketing can help you cut through the noise and heighten brand awareness, engage and educate your customers and inspire loyalty.



BUILD YOUR BRAND.

DEVELOP TRUST.

GENERATE SALES.



**Content marketing costs 62% less than traditional marketing, while generating 3x the leads**

After you attract a wide base of customers, you want to retain them. Some keys to retention are:

- **Becoming a valuable resource by creating content that meets customer needs and answers their questions so they are less likely to look elsewhere.**
- **Creating a consistent look and feel using tools such as humor and imagery to connect your customers to your brand in a tangible way.**

A loyal customer is more inclined to stay with you, even if a negative piece of news makes the headlines. Consider how many consumers have been impacted by automobile recalls. If they have been a loyal Toyota customer for decades, they are more likely to forgive a manufacturer's oversight. A **Harvard Business Review analysis** found that consumers who feel emotionally invested in a company are more likely to purchase again and otherwise generally engage more with a company on every level.

# How to get started

## Find out what your audience wants to know.

Brands can create far greater value when they focus on their clients' needs. Demonstrating how your business can solve their toughest challenges puts the focus on them, making them feel heard and appreciated.

When creating content with this goal in mind, it's helpful to ask yourself a few questions:

- A. Is it aligned with your average customer's needs?
- B. Does it answer their questions clearly and accurately?
- C. Does it have a conversational tone, free of sales pitches and buzz words?
- D. Is it easy and enjoyable to read?
- E. Is there a call to action?



BE RELEVANT.

BE RELATABLE.

BE RESPONSIVE.



## Distribute your content.

Consumers receive a constant stream of information from brands, most of it irrelevant and unsolicited. So, how can you effectively connect with them?

Distribution is the key to getting people to read your content. Unless you have a ton of website traffic already, people are not automatically, quickly or easily finding your content. Distributing it by creating headline ads and running those ads as digital display ads and social ads are the right way to drive traffic to your branded content on your site.

With that being said, here are some of the best tactics that successful content marketers use to boost visibility and promote consumer confidence.

### ➤ Your Blog

Blogging is your opportunity to take center stage, where you humanize your brand and relate to your audience. Discuss what your company is doing in the marketplace and the latest trends in your industry. Showcase your employees and company's engagement with the community. You can also use blogging to share your perspective and wisdom about industry topics that matter to your customers.






**82% of companies that blog see a positive ROI**

## ➤ Social Media

The question is not whether you can afford have a social media program, but whether you can afford *not* to have one.

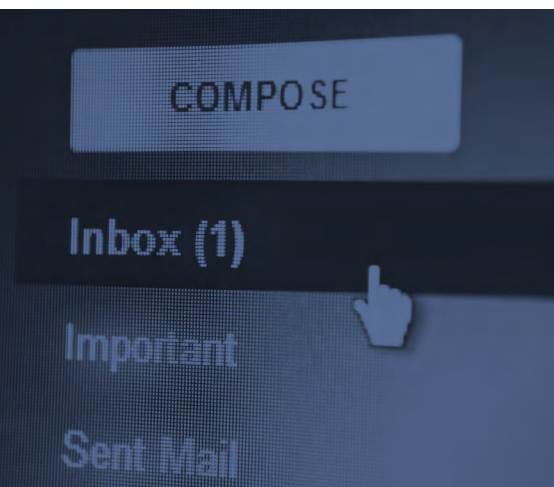
Keep in mind that not every social media platform will be effective for your business, and each social space has a different purpose and audience. Selecting the correct approach for the correct platform is essential to connect with your desired audience.

If you're primarily a business-to-business marketer, LinkedIn might be your platform of choice, whereas Instagram might be better choice for retailers or restaurants.

PLATFORM	USERS	AUDIENCE	USE IT FOR	BEST PRACTICE TIPS	RECOMMENDED FREQUENCY
 FACEBOOK	1.37 billion active daily users	69% of US women, 67% of US men	Reaching consumers and creating "influencers" who love your content and share it with friends, seeking "likes" and comments	Facebook is visual, so post great photos and videos and keep text short. Encourage sharing and interaction through quizzes, contests, etc.	5-10 posts per week
 TWITTER	3.30 million active monthly users	21% of US women, 21% of US men	Short, timely messages. Send relevant information to capture attention of audience and draw them in deeper.	Use Twitter Cards to include images, video, audio, and any links with your message. Keep messages short. Twitter has expanded its once-strict 140-character limit, but being concise is still the power of Twitter.	3-5 tweets per day
 INSTAGRAM	800 million active monthly users	32% of US women, 23% of US men	Visually showcasing the best of what you do. This image-driven size works best for businesses with visual appeal.	Post high-quality images and videos. Use hashtags to reach bigger audiences. Learn what people respond to and increase your offerings in those areas.	1 per day
 LINKEDIN	500 million active monthly users worldwide	23% of US women, 28% of US men	B2B and partnership prospecting; sharing industry news and thought leadership; recruiting fresh talent.	Include compelling copy with a call to action. Use engaging images, and target desired audiences by filtering for job title, industry, etc.	1 per day, weekdays only
 YOUTUBE	1.5 billion active monthly users	Reaches more 18-49 year-olds on mobile than are reached by any broadcast or cable network	Sharing educational/informational videos that highlight your company's expertise.	Use catchy titles that include keywords and compelling thumbnail images. Include links to your website. Encourage comments.	1 per week

# Attract More Customers With Content

- Sponsored Content
- Website Content
- Blog Content



Keep it short. Videos **less than 2 minutes in length** receive the most engagement.

## ➤ Sponsor Content

Consider working with a website (one that your customers are likely to frequent) to publish sponsor content that positions you as an authority and thought leader within your industry. Sponsor content is typically educational content focused on a particular industry that uses quotes or expertise from your business to establish credibility with readers.

**People are 53 percent more likely to read sponsored content than to click on traditional ads.**

## ➤ Video

**Cisco** predicts that by 2019, video content will account for 82 percent of all internet traffic.

Video is a powerful medium for storytelling that connects with consumers and instills feelings of trust. Video is also a great way to demonstrate your expertise for consumers searching for advice. Using real employees at your company to answer questions is a nice touch that makes your business feel more real and relatable.

## ➤ Email

Many businesses have an email database of customers, but few know how to effectively use it. Collecting customer emails through purchases, store visits, promotions, etc. and using your list to stay in touch with your buyers is an easy way to grow your customer retention rates. In fact, **email subscribers are 3.9 times more likely** to share content from email marketing on their social media channels.

## Monitor and Optimize

Even the best strategies need evaluation and improvement.

Be flexible enough to change course if something isn't working, or if you identify new opportunities for growth. Enlist the best team members who can develop a steady flow of content across multiple distribution channels.

And don't be afraid to seek out help. About **50 percent of companies** outsource some of their content creation needs, such as writing or graphic design.

# Your Checklist

- ✓ Create relevant, relatable content that speaks to your audience.
- ✓ Distribute your content across multiple channels.
- ✓ Be responsive to your audience.
- ✓ Review and refine your content strategy.
- ✓ Don't be afraid to ask for help.

## About Alabama Media Group

Alabama Media Group is Alabama's #1 media company and largest digital advertising network, producing top websites, social brands, videos, newspapers and magazines for Alabama and the Southeastern United States. From hard news to southern pride, Alabama Media Group publishes many genres of popular content under two main flagship brands, AL.com and Red Clay Media, as well as, the state's top three newspapers: The Birmingham News, The Huntsville Times and Mobile's Press-Register.

We sell a full range of advertising services including:

- Online Display Advertising
- Content Marketing
- Social Media Advertising
- Search Marketing
- Print Advertising
- Video Marketing
- Email Advertising

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Learn more about our multi-channel marketing solutions by contacting your Alabama Media Group marketing solutions specialist at [advertise@al.com](mailto:advertise@al.com).

