



# How to Kickstart Stalled Content Marketing Plans

# INTRODUCTION



Don't worry, it happens all the time. When there's an attractive marketing method that's working, naturally you want to get involved. Obviously, you want to try it. It happened with digital marketing, it happened with social media and it's happening with content marketing – which includes all of the above.

There are lots of content out there that offer how to launch a content marketing program and how to plan a campaign – even assemble your team – from scratch. And, hey, wouldn't it be nice to have that luxury?

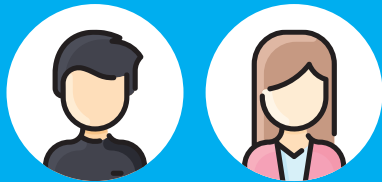
The longevity and success of content marketing suggest many of us are past that point. You've already tried it or you're already doing it to some degree.

This is for all the folks who jumped on the content marketing bandwagon without an actual plan. Whatever state your content marketing program is in, you can make it better or even fix it as necessary. Here's a friendly reminder of what you're supposed to be doing ...



## EVERGREEN CONTENT

Content that doesn't  
go out of date



## PERSONAS

Fictionalized characters  
that fit within your target  
demographic

# Grow Your Evergreen Content

If you've already dabbled in content marketing, take stock of exactly what you've been creating. Does it align with your organizational goals? Does it speak to your marketing personas?

Your evergreen content should do both. They should hammer on the relevant topics as directly as possible – free from trends or other timely angles. There's a place for the trendy stuff, too, but these pieces – usually blog posts – should be filled with timeless observations and advice.

You may discover you don't have this kind of content. That certainly doesn't mean you can't create it. Since we're talking evergreen, there's no time limit on when to make it.

In fact, any time is a good one to revisit those goals and personas and ask yourself if you've been speaking to those with the content you're creating.

In either case, it's not too late. This is an opportunity to look at what you've got and take a "fill in the blanks" approach. What relevant topics are you strong in? Which could use a little love? What are the next steps? Well, it's also important to note we're not just talking blog posts here.

It's true, blogs are a great place to start with content marketing. And we've got more consolation for those who established blogs without a plan and now post irregularly if at all. That's a classic content marketing pitfall with an easy fix – get to posting (with a plan of course) and start with the topics you have the most knowledge and authority in.

# Determine Content Type

That's blogs, but there are lots of other vehicles for content once creativity kicks in. This is basically the fun part of content marketing: figuring out all the ways you can share an idea

Let's say you start with a tried-and-true blog post. With a little ingenuity, it can become so much more.

- Perhaps numbers-fueled post can become an attractive infographic.
- Maybe the thesis would make for a good explainer video.
- A how-to post can spawn a downloadable template.
- A series of posts could build a good email campaign.
- If you're in the long-form frame of mind, an e-book might not be out of the question.
- If you have a podcast, or you're planning one, this might be a good episode.

It also works in reverse. Maybe you start with a great idea for an infographic, video or ebook and work your way back. That interview you did for a video could easily become a feature article or blog post. It could be chopped up into social-friendly soundbites. You might stitch together outtakes or behind-the-scenes footage to stretch the shelf life.

However you do it, it's important to think "beyond the blog."

*Not only are you getting more mileage out of a single piece of content, you're hitting your audience(s) in multiple ways and increasing your opportunity to generate leads.*

# Establish Your Publishing Schedule

Speaking of hitting the audience, how often are you getting in front of them? Cadence is an extremely important piece of content marketing. Perhaps your persona does not need to see you every day – and that's OK. You'll still need some kind of publishing regularity.

Even if the audience isn't sitting there waiting (wouldn't that be nice?), they should still see that you're making the effort to engage them on a regular basis. So, whether that's once a day, twice a week, three times a month or four times a quarter,

just make sure it's something and something that actually gets written down or input somewhere with deadlines.

Whether it's Microsoft Outlook, some kind of software or good, old-fashioned pen and paper, this will make the biggest difference in the potential success of your efforts. If you're one of the aforementioned folks who started content marketing and then stalled, this may be a primary reason for it. So, let's not make the same mistake twice.



*It's important to think about the end-game whichever direction you choose: how many posts do you want to share? At what cadence? If it takes multiple forms, what is the media mix?*

## Plan Your Promotion

The subheading could've just said "Social Media," but sometimes the promotion goes beyond an organic or even boosted post. During the kickstart process, you may have created or rediscovered something substantial. Don't be afraid to put some money behind it.

SEM and content activation are great ways to get your content noticed. You created it with a specific audience in mind, after all. Why not get right in front of them with your article, blog post, infographic or video? Try some YouTube pre-roll or implement some video listening in the case of the latter.

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These questions can all help direct your content plans or spawn new ideas, so don't overlook social media and digital marketing for your finished product.



# DEVELOPMENT

All modern content is digital, but the genesis can all take place on a blank sheet of paper and something to write with. These simple tools can lead to many great things.

We're going to take a page from ABC Creative's idea-based marketing philosophy and start with the concept as opposed to the medium. We'll get to that later. For now, let the message drive the media you will use to engage your target audience.

If you've followed the first steps, you have the idea(s) for what content you need and who you're hoping to attract. Simply write that down at the very top of your paper of choice.

# Form the Framework

Now let's move onto the meat. I prefer bullets to get my points across. You might want to think of these as subheadings in a blog post. Even if we decide not to write a blog post, this creates a good roadmap for your content.

What do you want to tell your personas? This can be very blunt at this stage, e.g

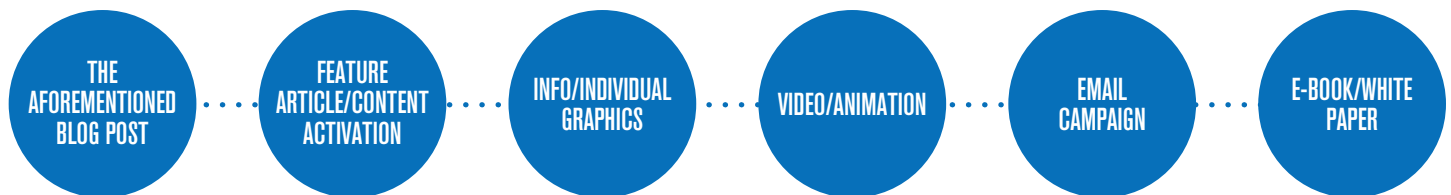


At this point, you're only thinking about what you hope to achieve, not the actual art or copy you will use to tell that story.

## Select the Primary Medium

Once you have your bullets, you can start thinking about how to tell your story. I tend to lean toward a blog post (if applicable) or web page copy since you should be focused on evergreen content that generates leads at this point.

But, as we've said many times, you don't have to start with blog or web copy. In fact, this may only limit your thought process. Content development is an exercise in creativity, so you should give consideration to everything. It's part of the fun. In the broadest strokes, these might include:



Perhaps your goal is to educate the audience and you have an expert available to write a post. Perhaps this person can be a source for an article. Maybe the subject matter calls for an interview that leads to long-form video or an animated "explainer" of a complicated topic. If stats drive the message, consider infographics or individual images to present those. Can you wrap all this up in a lead-generating email campaign or downloadable e-book? Go for it.



## Consider Spinoffs

We'll call this phase three, the point at which we consider presenting our message in multiple formats. I like to use a blog post as an example. I might take a post about how to kickstart stalled marketing plans and transform it into an infographic format, where each step is explained in shorter form. I might break that down to a series of graphics I can share on social media. I might use those to create a how-to video. Perhaps I expand on the topic to create a white paper.

The possibilities are really infinite and really quite efficient. That one blog post can be spun off into a dozen or more pieces of snackable content that lends itself to your key promotion channels of social media, all of which can drive back to your post or lead-generating web page.

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# MEASUREMENT



Now that we've got the content machine humming, it's time to check on the actual product with the third and final tool we'll cover: measurement.

The most important piece of measurement actually starts with the planning. Before you publish a piece of content, you should determine the metrics you will be using to gauge its effectiveness. This could be something as simple as view counts, likes, comments and shares, or as specific as email signups.

There are dozens of key performance indicators to choose from, so we'll walk you through a handful of the most basic you'll want to consider just to get you started.

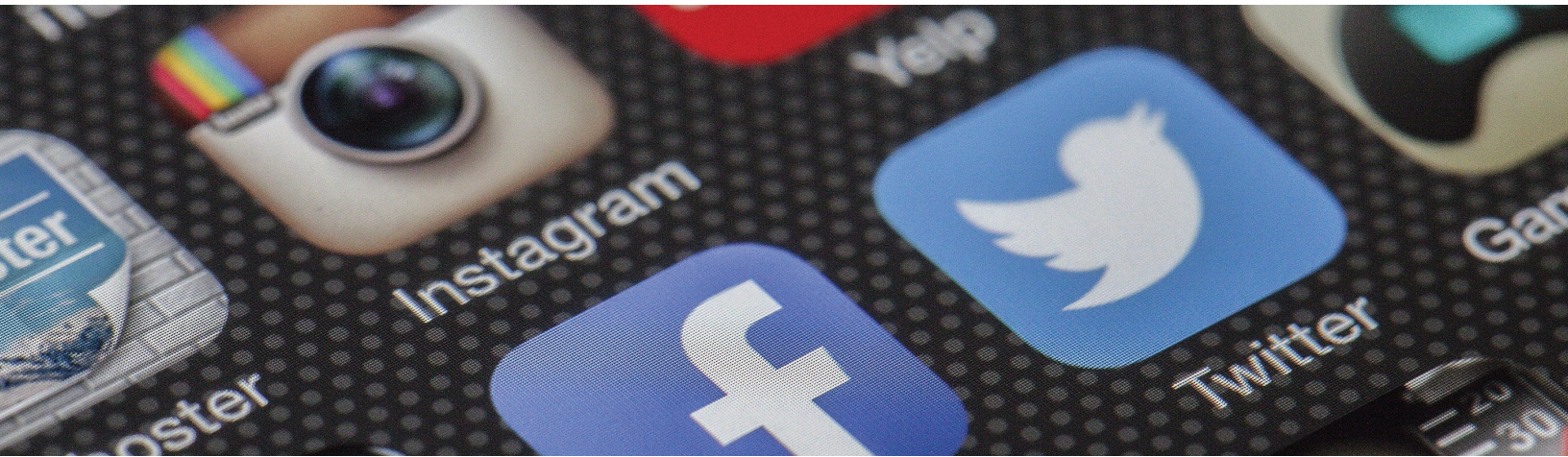


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# Social Media Metrics

Considering a buyer consumes an average of five pieces of content before pulling the trigger, social media metrics are not to be ignored. For many if not most, it's the main vehicle for content promotion. This means that engagements (likes, comments and shares) matter.

You can look at this engagement post-by-post, but content marketing software is recommended for a deeper analysis that allows you to see what's working and what's not. Not only can such a breakdown help determine what to create more of, it can spark new ideas as well.



# Google Analytics

We'll use a blog post as an example here since it's such a traditional and valuable piece of content marketing. The first KPI we want to look at is the most basic: page views. How many people actually found the content?

Next we look at how they found the content. High organic volume tells us that SEO efforts are working. How much was the social we just outlined above responsible? If it was significant, you might want to consider boosting that content.

My favorite Google Analytic, though, is average time on page. This is as true a reflection of engagement as you will ever see as it answers the question as to whether all those visitors you worked so hard to earn actually spent time viewing your content. Pages per session completes the picture when paired with average time on page. It tells you what other content users engaged with after initially landing on your site.



## Frequency

Now that we've covered some basic KPIs, the next question is how often to check in on these metrics. The short answer is it's up to you, but it's recommended to do so at least quarterly.

This gives you enough information to truly make some data-backed determinations. Checking too often won't give you the "big picture," which is what we're after here. Remember, you're trying to determine what works and what doesn't so you can make sound decisions about what content to plan for and create moving forward.

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It's also worth noting that something that appeared to tank might just need a little love. Content marketing software, for example, can help you determine the best days and times to post your content on social. Might be worth circling back on something that took a lot of time and effort to create.

In fact, time and effort are the two biggest takeaways here. If you learn anything from this, it should be that content is a powerful marketing tool that needs to be treated like any other. Take the time to plan, pour the creative effort into development and monitor closely to see how it goes. A good marketing agency has lots of practice in those areas, should you need a partner in what can be a complicated process.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

A journalist by trade, ABC Creative's Director of Content Development Shane Liebler tells stories that connect brands with target audiences and inspire them to act. He's a writer, not a copy machine, and that approach brings exceptional content to every print or digital piece he pens. Shane taps into his past as a reporter and editor to develop clear messages that resonate in every medium, be it blog or brochure, sponsored content or script. Daily newspapers developed a habit for idea generation, attention to detail and knack for question-asking. His background as a magazine and web editor keeps client communications grammatically sound and effective. Shane's word-based deliverables range from long-form features to concise digital copy to persuasive prose. Looking to kickstart your content development? Contact Shane at [shane@abcideabased.com](mailto:shane@abcideabased.com)



## ABOUT ABC CREATIVE

ABC Creative Group is Central New York's first and only idea-based marketing experience. For more than 30 years, ABC has provided diverse local, regional and national clients with award-winning creative content and strategies. From advertising to web development and design to video, ABC's team delivers a full list of services that engage consumers, inspire movement and sell products.