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The Small Business Guide to Effective Content Marketing

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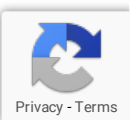
We make a lot of plans in life – meal plans, weekend plans, vacation plans – but how much thought have you put into your content marketing plan lately? You may have a blog, do some social media posts, but do you have a solid content plan?

Having a clear focus on what you want to get out of content marketing is essential in validating what you put in as far as resources. After all, why spend all that time, energy, creativity and money if you don't know how it's going to pay off?

Before you ever start putting together content, there are few things you need to know to create a solid content marketing plan. We put together a simple outline to help get you started:

Know Your Goal

Knowing your definition of success helps you create an action plan to get there. Do you want to drive more online sales? Increase traffic to your blog? Get customers into your store? Have a call to action for every piece of content you



plan to create. Then you can build the content so it guides a prospect to take the action you want to be taken.

Know Your Target Audience

Who are you selling to? Your product must be filling a need for somebody or you wouldn't be offering it. If you don't know who that person is, you won't know how to reach them. Just saying the product is for "everyone" won't get you very far and you'll be knocking yourself out trying to be everywhere for all people. You may have several target audiences – millennials, working professionals, stay-at-home moms. Each group may use technology differently and shop at different places. So your content needs to target those people and where they are in life. This is where marketing personas come in. If you don't know about these, it's worth a **crash course** to get inside the head of your potential customers.

Know Your Content Outlets

Use your goal and your audience to decide the best outlets to place your content. You don't have to be everywhere – such as all the social media outlets – because you think everyone else is. That's not a strategy – that's just throwing everything at a wall to see what sticks. If you have a young demographic, be on social media. An older audience likes printed brochures. Blogs help you show up higher in Google results. Be where your specific target audience gets their information, and keep in mind, it may be different for each campaign you run.

Know Your Topics

What is it that your business does well? In marketing, we call this your "key selling point." This provides direction for your content. By showcasing what makes your product unique, your expertise in the industry and/or your position in the market, you demonstrate why you are a better choice than your competitor. These are topics for your content. For example, is your product easier to use than the competitor? Then offer a video demo to show how. Is it a better price? Then explain how your customer gets to keep more money in their pocket.

Know How You're Going to Maintain It All



Once you know your goals, audience, outlets and topics, who is going to do the work? Most business owners and staff find they are too busy running their businesses to be writing content, finding photos, and posting to outlets. You need to hire people. Set aside money in your budget to hire professionals who will do a good job without much management on your part.

Know How You're Going to Pay for It

People used to think creating content for businesses didn't cost anything because hey, it's free to start a blog or a Facebook page! Not true. You need your communications to be well-written, well-designed and managed by a responsible person. Even if you're a creative wizard who possesses all of these skills, your business likely keeps you too busy to do it. So you need to hire people – good people. It may be tempting to turn to cheap help, but you'll get what you pay for in terms of quality. Remember, this is the front line for your business; you want it to be good. If you don't have a big marketing budget, start to grow one by setting aside 10-20% from every new sale. Open a separate bank account to put it in so you don't spend it. Then, use that to pay professional content marketers to get the job done.

Now that's a plan!



Content Marketing

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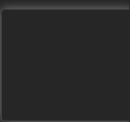
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Relevance is Content Marketing.

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