



An Entrepreneur's Ultimate Guide to Content Marketing in 2016

Welcome, new entrepreneur, to the wide world of commerce. You will quickly become an expert in all elements of business, from human resources and finance to operations and marketing. You will especially become an expert in marketing, and we're here to help you along the journey. Every business in 2016 needs a content marketing plan, but few people know how to do one well and keep it running strong.

Throughout this guide, we will start with the basics and then dig deeper into deep linking and cross-channel promotions. This information can be applied to an e-commerce website that ships products directly to consumers or lead generation tactics that drive customers to call or visit for a particular service. There's a reason these avenues are called best practices. If done right, almost any industry can use them to flourish.

Take a deep breath, you entrepreneur, and prepare to learn what you need to know about content marketing in 2016.

Setting Your Budget and ROI Goals

We recommend reviewing your spending quarterly, or monthly, to decide whether more funds need to be added and to find where wasted spending can be cut. If you hire an outside agency or contractor to build your website in Q1, or use a consultant to improve your SEO in Q2, you might find yourself running short for the year. Further, you might find that the amount you initially needed to get you through the year was an unrealistic guess once your marketing programs begin operating.

You can choose between two paths when deciding what to spend on content marketing in 2016: a [static budget](#) and a [return-based budget](#).



A **static budget** relies on a concrete number each month. This type of budget is often used by small businesses because they can treat this budget like a set expense needed to keep the lights on. While this approach is great for some marketing programs, such as paying flat fees for copywriting services or media placements, this type of budget poses challenges if performance-based marketing programs do better than normal.



A **flexible budget** will let you spend as much as you want on marketing as long as you meet your return goals. For example, as long as your paid search campaign generates a \$10 ROAS (return on advertising spending), you can keep spending. If you go \$2,000 over budget at a \$10 return, your business should make \$20,000 more than planned.

To set ROI goals, look at your overall budget and then work through your marketing channels from most to least efficient. If you start at \$10,000 per month at a \$12 return, then you will need to give channels with a strong ROI the most budget and break out what's left over to poor performing media. Some marketing strategies might have

only a \$4 return, but as long as others have a \$15 return, you will even out in the end.



Also, set aside some money to try something new each month. [Ninety-one percent of brands](#) don't have an innovation budget to experiment with different media and marketing tactics. You'll never know what's out there if you don't try something new.

SEO Requirements and Web Usability in 2016

Search engine best practices and usability standards have become strongly intertwined in 2016. Google wants to take users to a website that immediately answers users' questions, rewarding you if your pages are easy to use and drive conversions. Below are some SEO (search engine optimization) best practices, which also cover web design and usability, to get your business started on the good side of Google.

DELIVER HELPFUL CONTENT



What does it matter if you have pages of long-form copy on your website and the information itself is not helpful to customers? While people might be interested in how you formed your business if you have a good story tied to your brand, that narrative also might get in the way of converting customers.

Ask yourself the following questions: What do you want customers to get out of your website? Do you want them to call and set an appointment or find your address? What you want your customers to do should be front and center. Do you want them to buy a product there? If so, you should have strong, detailed product descriptions and photos that offer any necessary information.

Put yourself in their shoes and [create content that solves their problems](#) before they buy. The SEO rankings will follow as Google notices your site bringing customers exactly where they want to go.

MAKE DESCRIPTIVE ALT TAGS AND IMAGES A PRIORITY



If SEO seems like a paradox to you, then start with the basics to help the search engines read your site easily. While a few tools can bring new traffic via Google, a few tips can help get your site off to a strong start.

Check each of your pages for strong tagging, meta descriptions, and labels. When Google is scanning your site's code, it will use these items to decide what your website is about. Tags, labels, and meta descriptions are [particularly important for images](#) and image-heavy websites. You can do more harm than good if you don't have descriptions telling Google about the objects pictured on your pages.

Like a visit to the doctor, certain tools can help you make sure your metrics are healthy and functioning. [A checklist](#) can help make sure every page has the right H-tags, meta description length, and internal links.

CREATE MULTIPLE OPTIONS AND FILE PATHS



When addressing web usability, remember that your customers don't think like you and might face challenges with your design. Many developers create multiple options to reach the home page to account for different user behavior. If you give site visitors choices and an easy navigational structure, then they're less likely to get frustrated and leave your site.

Also, as you build your site, continue to run tests to make sure your links work and direct users to resources or pages where you want them to go. Nothing destroys both your SEO and customer experience like a dead page or broken link.

MAXIMIZE MOBILE OPTIMIZATION



Most of the algorithm changes that Google launched in 2015 were designed to reward sites for mobile optimization and punish

sites with a poor mobile experience. In May 2015, Google launched "[Mobilegeddon](#)": Brands without a mobile site were negatively affected on search engine results pages (SERPs). In September, Google also aimed to downrank sites with [obnoxious mobile pop-ups](#).

While many people make claims that Google is out to kill their brand, these updates are really meant to enhance search results. Internet users don't want to struggle with difficult mobile sites or click out of pop-ups. Overall, users will have a better search experience if they're directed to websites without those elements. The best step you can take for your business is to create a clean mobile experience that's easy to use — and Google will reward you.

GET GOOGLE ANALYTICS INSTALLED



While the above elements outline the basics for your website, don't ignore that you will likely encounter distinct challenges and problems after your site launches. Your new best friend is [Google Analytics](#). Not only will you better understand your customer demographics and interests, but you can also see the paths they took to arrive at your site and troubleshoot problems by observing bounce rates and page views. Start by observing your KPIs (key performance indicators), then challenge yourself to make adjustments to improve web usability.

Making Sure Your Content Is Contemporary and Complete

Often, business owners get caught up in the technicalities of SEO and don't pay enough attention to the branded content. Remember, you will need not only on-site content that converts and drives sales, but also external content that lives on peer blogs and social media.

The following starter checklist illustrates [what kind of content](#) you will need to develop for a website launch, along with more options to boost your content marketing and search value.



Product Descriptions | Even if you have only a handful of products, content about your offerings or services will build customer confidence in your brand. Breweries can describe their different brews, marketing agencies can discuss their specialties, and medical offices can describe treatment methods. You have no excuse for not talking about what you do or sell.



Customer Reviews | If you're feeling lucky, install a Yelp widget that showcases your most recent or top reviews. Your customers are going to check your reviews anyway, so you might as well offer some for them. If your business isn't Yelp friendly — perhaps you're a national or online company — ask a few customers for testimonials highlighting your strengths. Word of mouth is powerful, so leverage its power.



About Us Information | Like your product descriptions, this area is an opportunity to show credibility and explain how you stand out. What makes you different and why should the customers open their wallets to you instead of your competition? Control the story and tell your tale.



Frequently Asked Questions | Put yourself in the minds of your customers. What objections will they have to keep from converting? This page can be as simple as "Do you allow dogs?" to "How long does the contract approval process take?" Your FAQs page can be updated as you hear more questions, and this page can even become inspiration for blog posts down the line.



Blog Posts | The key to a strong online marketing strategy is updated, timely content. If your business lacks product turnover, then you need a regularly updated blog to stay relevant. If nothing changes on your website, why should the search engines come back to crawl it? Why should anyone come back to visit you, for that matter? Updating the blog at least monthly will keep you relevant and draw traffic back.



Social Content | While plenty of your blog and website content can be repurposed into social posts, you will want distinctive content that's exclusive to social media to keep customers interested. Use social media to show off your personality in a way that you can't on your formal About Us page. Engage and react to what people are saying and be spontaneous. Social media is a marathon, not a sprint, and content done well will take time.

This list is only the beginning for site content. In the next section, discover how you can go beyond informing and start impressing.

Go Above and Beyond With Your Content

Of course, all of your competitors have a great story and detailed products, so what's going to make you stand out in the minds of your potential customers? When content marketing is done correctly, the effort moves from a list of requirements into an entertaining art form. Take up your innovation budget that we talked about earlier and experiment with these added media forms.

VIDEO BEYOND ADS



In 2010, video marketing was as simple as uploading your TV ad to YouTube. The approach was basic but boring. In 2016, **74 percent of Internet traffic will be video.**

More and more companies are creating product videos on top of their descriptions. Understanding the use and scale of a product when the image is on a white background can be difficult. Demonstration videos offer context and show your best items in their natural environment.

INFOGRAPHICS



One of the best aspects of infographics in marketing is the ability to slice and dice them across multiple channels. Once you post an

infographic, you can cut out snippets and have Instagram, Twitter, and email content for days.

We recommend creating an infographic to introduce new audiences to your brand and company. This approach can also work on a local level if you create a map of your town with the graphic "X great things about living in Y." If the data is relevant, your infographic will keep getting shared for a year or longer. **The investment is bigger, but the ROI is better**, as the content is much stickier than a blog post.

WHITE PAPERS AND EXPERT CONTENT



Video content is a must, but businesses on a shoestring might have to choose between investing in infographic or white paper content. Infographics tend to entertain as much as they educate, while **white papers establish authority in the field.** Depending on your business objectives, the white paper might be better for you.

Once you have a white paper living on your site, reach out to industry or local media. You don't have to give away your best content in exchange for new traffic. If you make your white paper relevant and newsworthy, then other outlets should be scrambling to cover its release.

The two keys to great content are creativity and testing. Try new approaches and then, six months later, try them again. Don't be afraid to experiment with something new. Who knows? You might have a home run on your hands.

Regional Content Marketing and Local SEO Advantages

If you came to this guide looking for a silver bullet SEO solution to rocket to first position, then you will be sorely disappointed. In fact, call us when you find that silver bullet, because we would like to know, too. However, you can achieve a few tactics that regional businesses can take to gain visibility on Google.

SET UP YOUR GOOGLE MY BUSINESS PAGE



Google is moving to serve more local ads, so if you have a brick-and-mortar presence, you can get closer to the front page by getting your information set up. Through Google Webmaster Tools, go to [My Business](#) to claim your page. If your business is new, then you shouldn't have anyone trying to list your information.

Once you claim your business, **list your website, contact information, and store hours**. Hours can be listed a year in advance, so if you're planning extended Black Friday hours, you can upload those hours in June.

BUILD UP YOUR REVIEWS



The next step is to build up strong reviews through the help of your customers. You will need to have a strong presence on both **Yelp** and **Google**, so keep both media in mind when encouraging customers.

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has a set of guidelines for creating promotions based around reviews. Businesses are not allowed to pay customers for positive reviews or [buy endorsements](#), so try to engage your audience organically. Customers are more likely to take action on a bad experience than a good one, so start by reaching out to your top customers and asking them to share their opinions online. This approach will also give you a safety bump if any negative reviews arise.

INCLUDE LOCAL SYNONYMS IN YOUR CONTENT



If you're a local business, then why aren't you taking advantage of all the knowledge the big guys don't have? You understand the neighborhoods and lingo that someone outside of the area doesn't. Try to include [words and phrases about your town](#) in your About Page, blog posts, and product content. When people in your area search for

your niche, Google will know that you're engaged in the community and worth listing near the top.

Wash, Rinse, and Repeat

The first year of any business is going to be difficult and stressful. You're about to learn both the intricacies of content marketing and how the Internet exactly works. Year two will be easier, but not by much.

Once you hit your 12-month period, it's time for a refresh. You might need to update your site navigation to increase usability, and you will definitely need to tweak your content. While you will be able to build upon what you know, you will also grow more advanced and want to try new tactics.

Content marketing involves trial and error. You might find that something that fails for you is a home run for your peers, and that's OK. Try again in 6 to 12 months.

Do you feel ready to take on the content marketing world in 2016? If not, read this article again or give us a call at **1 (888) 505-5689** (to talk about your worries). We can steer you in the right direction and [help you thrive in the content marketing world](#) of 2016.

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CopyPress is a full service content marketing company with over 5 years of experience creating and promoting digital content.