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# Content marketing for busy businesses

Building an attraction engine for your business

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## **Content marketing. What is it? What's in it for you**

Content marketing is based on the principle that the most effective way to promote your business is to add value to your customers' lives.

You give value to build trust and affinity with you and your brand.

You create and share valuable content to help your customers resolve their problems and meet their goals.

You can do this by:

1. Empowering your customers to solve their problems and attain their goals.
2. Educating your customers so they can do what you do.
3. Entertaining your customers so they grow to know you and like you.

The best content marketing achieves all three goals.

## **Give everything you know away for free**

Another way to explain content marketing is that you give away your IP to grow valuable relationships. Some people don't like this. They say ... but my IP.

Sure, IP is valuable. But IP isn't worth jack if it's not shared. We live in a knowledge economy. If you're not giving, you're not in the game.

Your IP is worth money when you create bespoke solutions.

Your IP is worth money when you educate people.

You can educate for free, knowing that it will convert to sales. Or you can educate for a fee, customising your IP to solve specific problems.

But if you hoard your IP and only let people sniff it when they show you the money ... they won't show you the money. Give everything you know away for free.

## **How digital made content marketing the smartest game in town**

Content marketing has always been a thing. It wasn't always called content marketing. It was called building strong client relationships, or creating customer loyalty, but it was the same principle. Add extra value to create a stronger more profitable relationship with your customers.

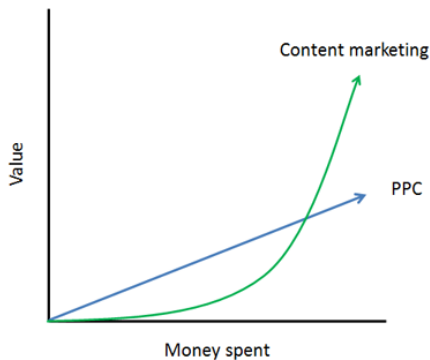
Then the rise of organic search, combined with the rise of mobile, made content marketing the main game for smart businesses.

Search engines exist to serve people the most useful content on their search topic. They have sophisticated tools and algorithms that evaluate your website content to understand what it's about, and how useful it is to people searching for that subject.

Search engines reward sites that are expert resources. To become an expert resource, you must publish lots of detailed content on a certain topic. That's it. The more high-quality content you create on a topic the higher your site will rank as a resource on that topic.

As you build your content clout, your organic search traffic will increase. Compare this to paid digital marketing. When you pay to play, as soon as that money tap turns off, you're outta juice. Content continues to deliver.

## ROI: Content Marketing vs. PPC



Combine this with the rise of mobile. People demand information on a topic instantly. If your business doesn't show up, you won't get a piece of the action.

### Where do you invest your time and your marketing buck?

There's no such thing as free marketing. Let's knock that myth on the head. Every marketing activity carries a cost, whether that's time or money.

Nor can you do all the marketing things.

If you're reading this, you probably own your business, or you head up marketing for an SME. You're time poor and cash poor. Your biggest marketing question is how do you invest your time most wisely?

The best answer I know is to invest your time in building a body of valuable content that empowers, educates, and entertains your potential customers. Build an attraction engine for your business that will become more powerful over time.

### To content market effectively you must know your customers intimately

Content marketing must be relevant and valuable to your customer to succeed.

It must answer their questions, solve their problems, empower them to meet their goals and make their life better. You can only deliver content of this calibre if you know your customers intimately. Which is why you must invest time and /or money in customer research.

Customer research helps you:

- Identify the characteristics of your best clients, those people who need what you offer, love the way you work and pay you well.
- Understand *why* they chose you and the journey they took to become your client.
- Find out what you do that's of most value to them (and anything that frustrates them).
- Keep your best clients happy (and profitable).
- Use those insights to create marketing material that attracts more great clients.

Customer research doesn't have to be arduous or expensive. It can be fun and satisfying. And it will make your business more successful.

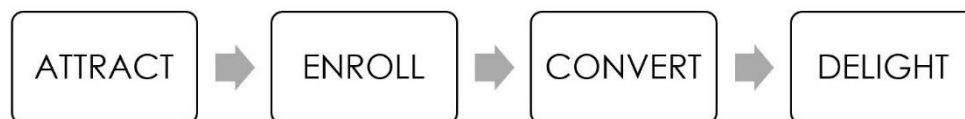
## Your customer's stages of awareness

The concept of stages of customer awareness is based on research by Eugene Schwartz. In his 1966 book [Breakthrough Advertising](#), he identified five stages of awareness.

1. **Completely Unaware:** No knowledge of anything except his own identity or opinion.
2. **Problem-Aware:** Your prospect senses he has a problem but doesn't know there's a solution.
3. **Solution-Aware:** Your prospect knows the result he wants, but not that you provide it.
4. **Product-Aware:** Your prospect knows what you sell but isn't sure it's right for him.
5. **Most Aware:** Your prospect knows what you sell, and only needs to know the deal.

Eugene believed the greatest mistake marketers make is *trying to create demand*. Instead, your goal is to meet your prospect *where they're at* in their thought process.

A four-step process, built on the stages of awareness, can help you plan your marketing *and* make your website a more powerful business development tool.



### 1. Attract strangers

These people are unaware. They don't know you, or what you do, and don't know that they have a problem. Or they're problem aware. They don't know you, or what you do, but they do know that they have a problem.

You attract these people by creating content for channels outside your bubble. Use digital watering holes that your target market frequent. Know your niche. Know where they go online.

These people are looking for free information to solve their problems. Create content that helps them out and builds trust and affinity. Your primary goal is to drive traffic to your site. Don't sell.

### 2. Enroll them in your community

This group are solution aware. They don't know you, but they know what they want.

Your primary goal is to enroll them on your email list or into a private social community. Do this by creating helpful content and offering irresistible opportunities to grab even juicier tools, by joining your inner circle.

### 3. Convert them to customers

These people are either aware of you, know what they want, but aren't 100% convinced you're the one for the job. Or they know you, know what you do, know they want to work with you, and only need to know the deal.

They're on your email database, in your private social community, or a personal referral. Convince them with proof you can solve their problem. Then convert them into customers.

### 4. Delight them so they become your ambassadors

Once someone has joined your family of customers, your goal is to inspire repeat custom and make them into loyal advocates who give testimonials and refer new business your way.

## Each stage has different goals, channels & content

Different channels bring you into contact with people in different stages of awareness. Leveraging this is key to your business development success.

STAGE	YOUR GOALS & TASKS	CHANNELS & CONTENT TACTICS
<b>ATTRACT</b>  Unaware Problem-aware	<b>Drive traffic to your site</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feed new leads into your community.</li> <li>• Create content that sparks curiosity and pre-qualifies leads.</li> <li>• Include calls to action that drive traffic to your site.</li> <li>• Don't sell.</li> </ul>	<b>Outside your bubble</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social media (organic or paid).</li> <li>• Guest posting (articles on other people's websites).</li> <li>• PR to publications for your market.</li> <li>• Speaking and teaching.</li> <li>• Organic search (blogging).</li> <li>• Podcasts.</li> </ul>
<b>ENROLL</b>  Solution-aware	<b>Get them into your social community then capture their email.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give value.</li> <li>• Build trust and affinity.</li> <li>• Offer irresistible opportunities to get their hands on even juicier tools, by signing up to your community.</li> <li>• Don't sell.</li> </ul>	<b>Website and social media</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Blog <a href="#">content upgrades</a> and calls to action to capture email addresses.</li> <li>2. Lead magnets. How to guides, research reports, business templates, quizzes, and assessments.</li> <li>3. Free coaching (webinars or automated courses).</li> </ol> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invitations to private Facebook or LinkedIn groups.</li> </ul>
<b>CONVERT</b>  Product-aware Most-aware	<b>Nurture and convert</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In your inner circle because they're on your email database.</li> <li>• Convince them with proof you can solve their problem.</li> <li>• Convert them into customers.</li> </ul>	<b>Website and e-marketing</b> Convince with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Content that goes deeper on your process and your expertise.</li> <li>• Case studies.</li> <li>• Testimonials.</li> <li>• E-marketing.</li> </ul> Convert with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free consultations.</li> <li>• Offers.</li> <li>• Deals.</li> <li>• Service / product pages.</li> <li>• Budget webinars and courses.</li> <li>• Budget offers (books or digital assets).</li> </ul>
<b>DELIGHT</b>  Loyal advocates	<b>Inspire loyalty. Create advocates.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do great work.</li> <li>• Keep in regular contact.</li> <li>• Provide added value.</li> <li>• Ask for referrals.</li> </ul>	<b>Personal contact, social, e-marketing, research</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customer experience and support.</li> <li>• Customer welcome pack.</li> <li>• Special perks and gifts.</li> <li>• E-marketing.</li> <li>• Social media.</li> <li>• Personal contact.</li> <li>• Project reviews.</li> <li>• Surveys and customer interviews.</li> </ul>

If you'd like a more detailed explanation of customer stages of awareness, here is [a detailed guide to creating a content strategy that attracts, nurtures and converts](#).

## Plan your own customer-centric content strategy

Use this table to brainstorm ways to reach and nurture people at each stage.

STAGE	CHANNEL	CONTENT
<b>ATTRACT</b>	<p>What social channel will you use to communicate with your niche?</p> <p>What publications do your niche read?</p> <p>What channels do they use online?</p> <p>What questions would people who know they have the problem that you solve be asking Google?</p> <p>What events do they go to?</p> <p>Where do they go if they want coaching on the problem you solve?</p> <p>What channel do you feel most comfortable using? Blog? Podcast? Video?</p>	<p>Brainstorm some topics for content that would work to attract attention from strangers who need your help.</p> <p>Consider content that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shows them you empathise with their problem.</li> <li>• Answers their questions.</li> <li>• Tells the story of when you fixed the same problem for someone else.</li> </ul>
<b>ENROLL</b>	<p>Which community growing method feels most like you?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offering high value content on your website.</li> <li>• Offering free coaching, like a webinar or an automated series of emails giving useful advice.</li> <li>• Building a private social community, where you share valuable information.</li> </ul>	<p>Brainstorm ideas for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead magnets.</li> <li>• Blog content upgrades.</li> <li>• Free coaching.</li> <li>• Private social media communities.</li> </ul>
<b>CONVERT</b>	<p>How will you package your services / products to make it easy for people to become your client?</p> <p>Write down three-five services / products and the outcomes people get from buying each one from you.</p>	<p>Brainstorm ideas for offers to convert people from prospects to clients. This could be a:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introductory course.</li> <li>• A piece of work you know most prospects need.</li> <li>• An audit that gives them a plan for improvement.</li> </ul>
<b>DELIGHT</b>	<p>How will you make sure your clients are happy and ask them for testimonials and referrals?</p>	<p>Brainstorm three ways you'll improve your client experience to make them more loyal advocates.</p>

[You can download an editable Word version of this worksheet here.](#)

## Simplifying marketing for success

The best way to attract your ideal customers, those people who need what you offer, love what you do, and pay you well for it, is to ensure that every marketing action adds value to them.

This starts with stripping your marketing back to the essentials.

- Know **who** you serve and what they want from you.
- Understand **why** you are uniquely suited to give them what they desire.
- Understand **how** your business makes their lives better.
- Invest in content marketing and create content for customers at all stages of awareness. Educate. Empower. Entertain.
- Focus on three platforms only:
  1. Your website. Build your attraction engine of valuable content.
  2. 1 x social channel. Attract strangers who want / need what you offer.
  3. Email marketing. Nurture the curious.
- Use paid digital to promote your top performing content.
- When you're confident with your three key channels, add one more activity that attracts strangers into your bubble. This can be guest posting, PR, speaking engagements, or increasing paid marketing spend.

## Choosing the right social channel

When you choose your social media channel ask yourself: is my market here?

Clues are in your data. Which channel gives you the most quality engagement? Which channel sends you your most engaged website traffic? Which channel delivers most sales?

If none of your social channels are nailing these metrics, then either you're not on the right channel, or you're not delivering content relevant to your audience.

And always remember that social media is a two-way conversation. Spend as much time engaging with your community as you do publishing your content. Nobody likes the person who rushes into the room, yells out: "I'm the dog's bollocks, look at all my cool stuff!" then leaves.

Don't be that dude.

## Customer-centred content is essential for all marketing

- Search engines reward publishing regular relevant content on focused topics.
- Social media requires compelling content.
- Paid digital requires great content to work.
- PR requires relevant stories to succeed.

You don't have to do all the things to succeed in business.

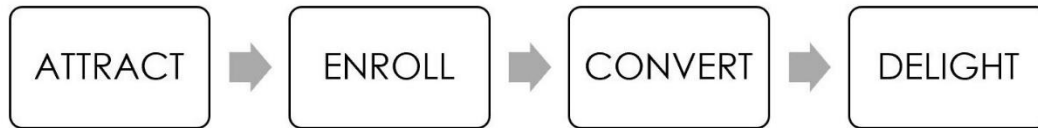
You just have to do the right things.

NOTE. Don't know who your ideal customers are? [Do some work to uncover your niche.](#)



## Blogging to grow your business

Blog posts can help at all stages of your customer journey.



- They attract people by solving their problems and answering their questions.
- They enroll people with content upgrades and calls to action.
- They convert people by demonstrating your expertise.
- They delight people by adding value.

### Content strategy components

#### 1. UNDERSTAND YOUR CLIENTS

- Do customer research. Understand your clients' problems and what they need from you.
- Do customer interviews, record them, and use verbatim quotes in your content.
- Pitch your content to your audience's level of understanding.
- No matter how sophisticated your audience is, keep your writing simple and easy to read.

#### 2. SET CONTENT MARKETING GOALS

You manage what you measure. Every business marketing activity must deliver results.

Community growth goals	Weekly money goals	Weekly performance goals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New social followers</li> <li>• New email list subscribers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enquiries</li> <li>• Sales</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comments on each post</li> <li>• Reactions on each post</li> <li>• E-newsletter subscriptions</li> <li>• The number of people you engage with in your community.</li> </ul>

#### 3. USE CONTENT TOPIC PILLARS

Content pillars help you build your brand in a consistent manner.

##### Content pillars for an attraction

Amplify stories	Create personal connection	Add value to experience
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amplify your visitors' authentic stories to attract more people. Are the visitor stories you're amplifying representing all your target markets?</li> <li>• Use storytelling to add a richer sense of place to the experience you offer.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use your personal story to create connection. How does your story and your experience make you uniquely suited to meet your visitors' needs?</li> <li>• How can you entertain people and add personality to your</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What questions do people need answered to become your customer and enjoy their experience more?</li> <li>• What stories and info add value and enhance visitors' experience of Queenstown?</li> </ul>

<p>Think history, geology, ecosystem, and culture.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leverage the detail of your business to entertain. Think fun facts, and behind the scenes insights. A day in the life of. How's it made? What happens when you go home?</li> </ul>	<p>brand? Can you make your team part of your online storytelling? Can you leverage fun quirks that your visitors experience to make people feel like they're part of an inner circle of true fans?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whet people's appetite and show them what to expect, with sneak peeks, and video walk throughs.</li> <li>Can you use giveaways and upgrades to encourage people to hype their visit in advance and share their experience after?</li> <li>Social conversation.</li> </ul>
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### Content pillars for a B2B consultancy business

If you want your B2B content marketing efforts to make you money, serve and give 80% of the time. The other 20% of the time, share personal insights that help people build a relationship with you. I have three key content pillars. Feel free to adapt these to work for you.

How to guides	Stuff that works & true stories	Personal
<p>My three main topics are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How to make your website more effective.</li> <li>How to write better content.</li> <li>How to plan your content marketing.</li> </ol>	<p>Case studies. Stories of things that went well (or failed). Customer interviews. Best practice. Cool things I've tried. Anecdotes from 20 years in marketing. This content shows that I know my shit. Anyone can fake a how to guide with research. You can't fake experience.</p>	<p>My philosophy. Stories from my life. Failures. Successes (although people like failures better). Insecurities and vulnerabilities. The mess. The fun. The grey hairs. The cake.</p>

## 4. HAVE A CONTENT PRODUCTION PLAN

A content production plan keeps you honest and efficient.

This is my LinkedIn content production plan. The reality doesn't always look as tidy as this. But I try to be consistent. This approach works for any social channel.

- At the weekend I write a resource for my website. This is a chunky how to guide, usually over 2,000 words long. It includes examples, advice and actionable takeaways.
- Then I break that article up into 4-5 social posts for the week ahead.
- Put a call to action in every social post. This can be as simple as comment, or follow for more good gear like this, or it can be a link to your e-newsletter sign up or a lead magnet.
- I also write a potted version for my e-newsletter.
- I aim to post 3-5 times a week on LinkedIn and engage with people's content every day.

One of my connections on LinkedIn is Chris Walker, CEO of a business called [Refine Labs](#), a marketing company specialising in B2B revenue growth. He uses a video driven content production plan as follows.

- Host a live Q&A every week for your audience with an expert who has valuable knowledge that your customers want.

- Take the full video recording and post it on YouTube with search-optimized title, description, and metadata.
- Embed the YouTube video on your website.
- Rip the audio from the video and post it to a podcast using [anchor.fm](https://anchor.fm) or another free tool.
- Cut the long-form video into short micro-content videos, get captions from [Rev.com](https://www.rev.com), write thoughtful text copy, upload to LinkedIn & post.
- Engage with 50 new people on LinkedIn a day.
- Execute consistently for a sustained period.

The consistent theme here is working smarter.

- Build a content hub on your website that becomes an attraction engine for your business.
- Start with a big high value piece of content for your hub.
- Break it down into snackable chunks for your various marketing channels.
- Repurpose everything to get maximum ROI on your content marketing investment.

### **Content marketing is a long game**

If you share quality content and interact with your target market regularly and consistently, you can expect to start seeing some results after five to nine months.

If you maintain this for a year, you should start to see regular enquiries and leads from your social media and e-marketing.

## The formula for magnetic blog content

### A magnetic blog post has ten key elements

1. A headline that grabs your attention and whets your curiosity.
2. A topic relevant to your target market. Solve a problem. Answer a question. Help them achieve a goal.
3. Your opinion. It's important that you have a stance on this topic. Often you see articles where the writer has researched a topic and presented their findings in an expert round up. The problem is this doesn't showcase *your* expertise. You've got to show your experience, process, and personality because you want people to buy you.

Don't be afraid to take a bold stance or be a contrarian. People enjoy content that discredits concepts and methodologies.

4. Your process. Show them how you do things better. Show them the steps to take to get the same results that you do.
5. Proof that backs your take on the topic. Use reputable research.
6. Real life examples that show best practice, horrible mistakes or before and after. Include three-five examples.
7. Stories that illustrate your point.
8. Quotes from experts that relate to your topic or validate your stance.
9. Images and infographics that illustrate the point you're making.
10. A metaphor that supports the point you're making.

### Your goal with every blog post is to demonstrate your expertise

Posts that showcase your smarts include:

- How to posts.
- Behind the scenes post.
- Detailed case studies.
- Myth busting combined with thought leadership.

Posts that don't work include:

- Interviews (unless it's an interview for a case study that shows your expertise).
- Listicles (without the process and expertise element).
- Reviews.
- Rants and myth busting without thought leadership.

## How to write killer headlines

Headlines are the hook that your hard work hangs on. Make 'em sticky. I'm still working on elevating my headlines. Here are eight proven headline formulas I snagged straight from [Buffer's blog on perfect blog posts](#) (bit basic, but their headline hints are gold).

1. **Surprise** – “This Is Not a Perfect Blog Post (But It Could've Been)”
2. **Questions** – “Do You Know How to Create the Perfect Blog Post?”
3. **Curiosity gap** – “10 Ingredients in a Perfect Blog Post. Number 9 Is Impossible!”
4. **Negatives** – “Never Write a Boring Blog Post Again”
5. **How to** – “How to Create a Perfect Blog Post”
6. **Numbers** – “10 Tips to Creating a Perfect Blog Post”
7. **Audience referencing** – “For People on the Verge of Writing the Perfect Blog Post”
8. **Specificity** – “The 6-Part Process to Getting Twice the Traffic to Your Blog Post”

Lenka Istvanova developed a headline formula based on her analysis of best practices for headlines that get clicks.

Numbers + Adjective + Target Keyword + Rationale + Promise

10 Simple Things You Can Do Today That Will Make You Happier

It's also helpful to remember that a loss is more persuasive than the equivalent gain. Frame your headline up in terms of the loss your reader will make if they don't read your article.

- Are you leaving money on the table?
- Stop your funnel from leaking profit.
- Are you making this expensive mistake I see CEOs make all the time?

## Other hot tips for magnetic blog posts

- Start your post with a personal story.
- Write at least 1,500 words. 2,000 to 5,000 words is even better. Long-form posts generate nine times more leads than short-form posts.
- Keep your paragraphs short. No longer than three sentences folks. One sentence is fine.
- Break your post up with sub headlines, bulleted lists, pull quotes and images.
- Add internal links to content on your website that expands on the point you're making.
- Add external links to sources that support your argument. Always credit quotes and images.
- Add a call to action. This should be to sign up for your e-newsletter or your lead magnet.
- Do keyword research and include your long-tail keyword in your:
  - Main H1 heading.
  - First paragraph of your post.
  - At least one sub-heading.
  - In your image captions and image meta data (alt text).
  - URL, meta title and meta description.

Once you've written the first draft of your blog post, put it away for a few days. Then get it out again and pretend you are your niche market. Do you have a clear answer to your question / solution to your problem? Feel inspired? Have actionable advice you can use right now?

## A content marketing challenge for you

The only way to get started is to get started. So, I have a choice of content marketing challenges for you, to get your content marketing mojo cranking.

### Challenge option 1. Blog daily for 30 days

Why do this?

- Experiment with new content topics and formats.
- Get into the blogging groove and create a new discipline. After blogging every day for a month, blogging weekly will be blissful.
- Create lots of new content to promote on social.
- Attract more organic search traffic. This won't happen instantly, but as your new posts get indexed the cumulative effect should be seen.
- Improve your writing. If you write every day for a month, you'll be a better writer at the end. Guaranteed.

If you take this challenge on, don't be too hard on yourself about adhering to every one of the ten magnetic blog post elements. For once this is about quantity not quality, and I don't say that lightly. Even if you only manage a 500-word sniff of a blog post, bloody good on you. You can always come back later and build it out.

### Challenge option 2. Post on social media every day for 30 days

If daily blogging feels a bit intense for you, here's a more bite sized content marketing challenge. Choose one social media channel and post every day for 30 days.

Concentrate your energy on the social platform where your clients are most likely to be.

Post lots of different types of content. Long-form, short form, images, and link posts. The only rule is that most of the content must be your own original work. If you share someone else's work, add your own opinion.

You must post at least one video post.

While you're doing this keep a record of your posts and their performance. At the end of this experiment you'll have valuable insights to help shape your social media strategy.

Bonus points if you use a smart content production plan to repurpose blog content for social, as outlined on page nine.

Commit to a challenge and see it through.

The best time to kickstart your content marketing is now.

### Need help with your content marketing or your digital content?

There is little I like better than helping excellent people with cool businesses build a content attraction engine for their business. So, if you're an excellent person with a cool business and you need help with your content, hit me up.

[hello@lizziedavidson.co.nz](mailto:hello@lizziedavidson.co.nz) | 021 403 013