

THE CONTENT CREATION COOKBOOK

**HOW TO CREATE ENGAGING CONTENT
FOR THE NEW ZEALAND MARKET**



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A note from the author

Thank you for picking-up this eBook. I wrote it because the more clients we talk to, the more we hear that while New Zealand companies understand the value of content marketing, they're a bit intimidated by the realisation that it is a hungry beast that constantly demands new ideas and fresh material.

The objective of this eBook is to give you the foundations to creating your own reservoir of content ideas, as well as some of the skills and, in particular, the critical thinking tools you will need to make sure you're delivering content that is engaging, relevant and timely.

Good content is the beginning of everything - websites, social media and other marketing tactics all need up-to-date, interesting content that adds value to the audience by informing, educating and entertaining them. Here's how to do it. I hope you take on board the ideas and use some of the tools, but most of all I hope this eBook helps you in some way to deliver high value, good quality content that doesn't disappoint.

All the best

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What is content Marketing?

Content marketing is nothing new. A good example of good content marketing done well is John Deere's *The Furrow* magazine, which has been around since 1887. Here in New Zealand, Air New Zealand's *Kia Ora* magazine is a good high-end example, as was the newsletter that Hubbards Foods enclosed in their cereal boxes.

Today however, most content marketing happens online, but that's not to say content marketing is exclusively associated with digital media. Good content may be published online, or in printed magazines, books, newsletters – even CDs and USB sticks. The channel and the form (e.g. video or article) do not define good content marketing, that's the job of the content itself.

Content marketing may be defined as creating interesting content that adds value to your target audiences in a form they prefer, across channels they frequent or are exposed to.

Where most companies fail is that they create content that is either irrelevant, boring or of no interest to the target audiences because they have failed to understand that their audiences are not necessarily as enamoured with who they are and what they do as they are.

Let's break that down a bit...

1. ... interesting and adds value... In other words, it should:

- a) Be relevant
- b) Inform or educate or entertain
- c) Trigger an emotional reaction
- d) Be objective and honest

Exactly how you do that will be explored later in this eBook.

2. ...in a form they prefer...

We all process information in different ways. Some of us are more visual, while others are more tactile or auditory orientated, so by form we're talking about the form in which you present information. For example:

- Video
- Articles
- Diagrams and infographics
- Photographs

3. ... across channels your target audiences frequent or are exposed to...

Content marketing does not just apply to digital and we should be careful not to become so obsessed with digital that we neglect other equally effective channels. Very often an effective content marketing campaign uses a mix of channels and platforms, including:

- Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter
- Newsletters
- Print magazines like 'The Furrow' and 'Red Bull Bulletin'
- Mainstream media sites like 'The New Zealand Herald' and 'Stuff'
- Google Adwords
- Blogs
- Microsites
- Educational seminars and business breakfasts

We've looked at what content marketing is, but what makes it good?

What makes content good?

Several years ago, so the story goes, a television presenter for an open university sociology programme was talking to a female production-line worker in a biscuit factory. The dialogue went like this:

Interviewer: How long have you worked here?

Production Lady: Since I left school (probably about 15 years).

Interviewer: What do you do?

Production Lady: I take packets of biscuits off the conveyor belt and put them into cardboard boxes.

Interviewer: Have you always done the same job?

Production Lady: Yes.

Interviewer: Do you enjoy it?

Production Lady: Oooh Yes, it's great, everyone is so nice and friendly, we have a good laugh.

Interviewer (with a hint of disbelief): Really? Don't you find it a bit boring?

Production Lady: Oh no, sometimes they change the biscuits...

The lesson us marketers can take from this little anecdote is "don't assume that the things that motivate you will motivate someone else". Your audience is the 'end' and all good content meets the needs, interests, questions, problems, issues and opportunities of your audience.

Chapter 2: The Problem

The consumer power shift and why content is your best answer

Consumers hate to be sold, but they still love to shop.

In the past, our audiences were passive recipients of our communications. They watched television and sat through the ads, they bought newspapers and saw the ads as largely an incidental activity... But a number of factors have resulted in a shift in power between marketers and their audiences, and these factors have not only given audiences the power to control the flow of information that they are exposed to, but have also increased their intolerance for commercial messages.

1. Infobesity.

Simply put, people are overwhelmed with the flow of information. Already by 2005, J. Walker Smith – president of consumer and marketing watcher Yankelovich – was telling *USA Today* that consumers were encountering from 3,500 to 5,000 marketing messages per day, vs. 500 to 2,000 in the 1970s.

There is no way anybody can process the flow of information we are exposed to, hence our filters are constantly up and operating.

2. Our pace of life is faster than ever.

A recent study undertaken in 32 countries by a team of scientists, led by British psychologist Professor Richard Wiseman, found that walking speeds have increased by an average of 10 per cent in the past 10 years.

"This simple measurement provides a significant insight into the physical and social health of a city. The pace of life in our major cities is now much quicker than before," he said.

People simply don't have time to sit and be sold to. We are driven by priorities, and the Internet has given us the ability live by those priorities while limiting distractions. One of the reasons Facebook is so popular is because Facebook gives us the power to associate with whom we want, when we want and for how long we want.

3. Technology is changing the way we think.

Calling it the 'Age of the iBrain', *Scientific American* reports, "the current explosion of digital technology not only is changing the way we live and communicate but also is rapidly and profoundly altering our brains".

Ask most people when they last bothered to memorise a telephone number, and they won't be able to tell you, because the need to memorise information is being made redundant by mobile technology.

A recent study, the *B2B Content Marketing: 2012 Benchmarks, Budgets & Trends* report (published by the Content Marketing Institute (CMI) and MarketingProfs) found that 41 per cent of people engage with a sales rep only after initial research, and 24 per cent only after they've shortlisted their preferred vendors.

- The brain's plasticity—its ability to change in response to stimuli from the environment—is well known. What has been less appreciated is how the expanding use of technology is shaping neural processing.
- Young people are exposed to digital stimulation for several hours every day, and many older adults are not far behind.
- Even using a computer for Web searches for just an hour a day changes the way the brain processes information. A constant barrage of e-contacts is both stimulating—sharpening certain cognitive skills—and draining, studies show. – *Scientific American*

Exposing the dangers of content clutter and bad content

Sometime ago I was listening to a conversation on Newstalk ZB about people's attitudes to vaccinations in New Zealand (always be listening to the news and current events for story ideas).

A caller, who I think was in her late 20s, called up to answer the question about why young mothers were increasingly choosing not to vaccinate their children, despite the science. The caller blamed Google: "They get all their information from Google," she said.

When I Googled vaccinations, one of the first things I saw was a doctor sticking a large needle into a frightened child's arm. Dominating page one of Google were headlines like, Dr Kurt: Why I will NEVER choose to vaccinate my own son... and Six reasons to say NO to vaccination | The Health Home...

Counter information from health authorities was sparse, and where it existed it was boring, condescending, commercial and hard to understand. Clearly health authorities in New Zealand are failing the public because they have ignored the need to produce high quality engaging content, and unyielding attitudes to vaccinations are evidence of that.

Contrast these two examples:

Example A: From an official government health site:

Headline: What are the reasons to vaccinate my baby?

"Protecting your child's health is very important to you. That's why most parents choose immunisation. Nothing protects babies better from 14 serious childhood diseases. Choose immunisation. It's the powerful defence that's safe, proven and effective..."

Example B: From an opposing blogger:

Headline: Herd Immunity: Three reasons why I don't vaccinate my children...

"Parents who choose not to vaccinate their children and protect them with vaccine exemption forms are often chastised and stereotyped for putting their own kids at risk. But what is even stranger than this assault on individual freedom and informed choice, is that these concerned parents are attacked for putting vaccinated children at risk. These attacks are based on the theory of 'herd immunity'. This hypothesis was plucked out of an old college textbook."

What makes the one piece work better than the other?

Note the conversational tone of the anti-vaccination content, and its use of emotion and metaphor... It's not hard to see that it's more convincing than the first piece put out by the United States Centre for Disease Control. Most importantly, note the passion in the second piece. Clearly the blogger has a cause; a stake in the message.

Your organisation faces the same risks that health authorities are currently having to deal with. If you do not provide content, enough content and engaging content, your competitor's – including a fair number of flakes and nutbars – will happily fill that vacuum for you.

Hot Tip: How to use metaphor and description in your content

Using emotional, descriptive language that contains metaphor (whether in an article or video or podcast) will help you paint a picture in the minds of your audience, and is more powerful than the dry, corporate tone that dominates company communications in New Zealand.

Take a look at this health message put out by the United States Centre for Science in the Public Interest's (CSPI) in 1994, which resulted in a drop in sales of movie-theatre popcorn by more than 50 per cent.

"A medium-sized 'butter' popcorn at a typical neighbourhood movie theatre contains more artery-clogging fat than a bacon-and-eggs breakfast, a Big Mac and fries for lunch, and a steak dinner with all the trimmings – combined!"

Chapter 3: The Opportunity

Marketers must become publishers with a mission

The good news is that we are also consuming more content than ever before.

Interestingly, newspapers and other media continue to attract an audience and engage people because they tell the stories people want to read.

Telling stories that people are interested in is what the media have been doing for hundreds of years. The reason newspapers and magazines are struggling is because advertising revenues have plunged – we want the stories, but not the ads, and the Internet usually means we can get the stories without the ads.

It now remains for the advertisers to start telling stories that consumers want to consume, in formats they want and when they want it.

In essence, advertisers can no longer get away with piggybacking their ads on the back of good stories. We now have to be the source of those good stories, while still also achieving our commercial objectives.

To succeed at this, marketers must become publishers with a mission.

Mission informs good content

Journalists refer to themselves as the ‘public watchdogs’ – an emotive, passionate and cause orientated philosophy that suggests they are there to champion the public’s interest.

As such, the media have held the public’s attention with the simple mission to:

“To Educate, Inform, Entertain.” – Directive, John Charles Walsham Reith, Director-General of the British Broadcasting Corporation and father of independent public broadcasting, and still part of the BBC and US Public Service Broadcasting mission statements.

Using that formula, the media attracted readers and made money from advertisers who wanted to benefit from that readership. Today, with advertising declining in popularity, companies have an opportunity to produce the content people want to read. To inform, educate and entertain and build their own readership.

By undertaking to produce only content that informs, educates, entertains or even inspires, you’re creating a powerful platform for your content marketing programme. Even more useful, is to have a purpose or a mission – just like publishers do – that serves as a touchstone for your content.

What will your content mission be? Examples from some of the world’s leading brands make a useful guide:

- Google: Organise the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful
- Vancity: Using financial tools in innovative ways to create a positive outcome for our members and communities
- Relan: Empower individuals to make a conscious purchasing decision for sustainable products
- Zappos: Provide the best customer service possible
- FreshBiz: Bringing the world the future of entrepreneurship education

Not only does a solid content mission give your content purpose and direction, acting like a constant compass to guide your content decisions, it also ensures longevity, continuity and consistency. You know what you're looking for – a very useful outcome when you're brainstorming – and your audience knows what to expect from you.

Your content mission is a powerful tool for promoting and reinforcing your preferred brand perception in the minds of your target market.

Baptist Savings is a finance company for the New Zealand Baptist and Presbyterian movements. Essentially the organisation accepts deposits from the Christian community and uses the money to finance the building of churches, community centres and childcare facilities for churches around New Zealand.

Ordinarily churches find it difficult to get finance because they rely on donations for their income. Baptist Savings loans them the money at very competitive interest rates, while paying term depositors the same kind of interest rates they could expect from the banks. It's not the most lucrative investment depositors can make, but they have their reasons as will be explained shortly.

We facilitated a strategic marketing workshop for Baptist Savings (then known as the Baptist Savings and Deposits Society) when they held about \$60 million in deposits. They had taken fifty years to reach that level of deposits, and not a bad debt along the way. Their plan however was to get to \$100 million in just five years.

Under the leadership of their business development manager Andrew L'Almont, the organisation achieved \$80 million in just 18 months and has now well exceeded its initial \$100 million target. The content programme was important – from the videos, blogs, newspaper articles and radio slots to newsletters and financial health check seminars the organisation carried out – but I believe that it is their mission that has driven that success. Knowing that their depositors could achieve higher returns with slightly more riskier investment opportunities, Baptist Savings had to do something more. What they did was offer their depositors an opportunity to:

‘Leave a Legacy’.

In other words, you will earn a reasonable interest rate with Baptist Savings but more importantly your money will be used to build something good and contribute to the advancement of God's Kingdom on earth. For a secular mind this may be hard to understand, but it makes perfect sense to a Christian.

Baptist Savings' content mission, to help their depositors leave a legacy, has driven their content creation programme, including financial seminars and breakfasts which will strengthen people's financial position with sound financial advice, and once those people had improved their financial position they become good candidates to invest money with Baptist Savings.

Westforce Credit Union is a not-for-profit savings and deposits taker which caters, mostly but not exclusively, to the lower socio economic demographic in West and South Auckland and Northland.

Westforce Credit Union recognised that people would struggle to overcome debt and improve their lives so long as they learned bad habits from their parents.

As a result, Westforce Credit Union embarked on a content mission on two fronts – to educate people on how to avoid bad debt, and more tellingly, to promote child financial literacy. This included promoting membership of [EmagineIF™](#) a child financial literacy social networking site.

Chapter 4: Engaging with Content

Audience needs, problems and questions first and foremost

Good content hinges on giving your audience what it wants, needs and desires.

We have already discussed how compelling content consists of four elements, namely objectivity / honesty, relevance, value and an emotional trigger. The thing is, all four elements could vary wildly depending on your audience.

Isn't it interesting that after all the advances we've made in marketing technology, psychology and techniques, we still miss the point that the quickest way to engagement is not to assume that our audience is motivated by the same things that motivate us.

For example, an interior decorator or furniture manufacturer may assume that customers are interested in style and space, while what really motivates them is impressing their friends. That motivation, to impress friends, could lead to multiple decision outcomes, including installing a new spa instead of a stylish couch. It is a disconnect in communication that's just waiting to happen.

Understanding the motivation – and therefore information needs – of our audience remains the single most important rule of content engagement, and our failure to apply it is why marketers today are struggling to even understand what makes good content, never mind how to cut through the clutter and engage our target audience.

A thorough understanding of their problems and needs – and importantly, the questions they ask during each phase of the buying cycle – will inform your content far more powerfully than approaching it from the perspective of 'what do we want to tell our customers?'

Rather, ask yourself 'what do our customers want to hear?'

The more narrowly you can define your audience, right down to even those who influence the outcome of a buying decision, will add meaning to your content. It is best to mean something to someone, rather than trying to be everything to everyone.

To understand what your customers want to hear means understanding them on a far more intimate level, one that digs below even simple demographics.

How to gather the information about your audience

In developing advanced target market profiles / personas, the objective is more qualitative than quantitative. Engagement is a matter of personal connection rather than one of connecting with a demographic.

At a personal level, the objective is to reach, engage and ultimately influence a percentage of the target market whose decision making processes are driven not just by market forces – such as affordability and the economy – but also by a wide range of emotional and cultural factors, as well as social influences, for example within the company, family or a group of friends.

One method to accomplish this understanding is to commission a study by a social anthropologist, who can observe and interview customers about how their lives intersect with your product or service. An anthropologist may provide us with insights that are less dominated by prices and market information, and more about the culture in which the buying and selling of your services and products occur. As storytellers, our primary interest is the behaviour and feelings (personal thoughts, attitudes, judgements) of our audience.

Heart wins over the head every time and the most powerful stories strike an emotional chord.

Such an anthropologist's study may be considered similar to a focus group survey, but without the vulnerabilities that come with a focus group study, for example loyalty, feelings of 'team' or desire to please the people hosting the focus group.

The anthropologist's interviews should provide qualitative, unadulterated, personal insights from the social and psychological perspective of anthropology.

If the budget won't allow for it, consider the following methods that you can carry out yourself:

- a) Purchase existing market research data
- b) Telephone your top ten clients or ten clients from each buyer persona and interview them
- c) Use SurveyMonkey to survey your company database
- d) Interview the sales team about their customers
- e) Conduct a focus group

Before embarking on market research however, it is important to segment your buyer personas (although of course, market research may reveal additional buyer personas).

1. Identify your organisation's buyer personas

“A buyer persona is essentially a representative of a type of buyer that you have identified as having a specific interest in your organisation or product or having a market problem that your product or service solves.” – *David Meerman Scott, The New Rules of Marketing and PR.*

Adding to that, a type can be defined as: “a class or group of people, animals, or things that share similar characteristics” – The New Penguin English Dictionary.

For example, Achievement Discoveries is a New Zealand company that offers, as one of its services, aptitude assessments that enable young people to understand their aptitudes and abilities so that they can make good decisions about the career they choose.

People who will participate in the buying process include the young person trying to decide what he or she wants to do for a career, as well as her mother, father and guidance teacher – that's four distinct buyer personas.

A university's buying personas may include alumni, post-graduates, the high school student considering college, mum, dad, existing students and also independent adults who are considering advancing their education.

Companies selling to farmers, for example, may consider the farmer, his or her spouse, the farm manager, share milkers, farm hands and farm consultants etc.

2. Profile your buyer persona using an empathy map

With the information you have gathered in hand, including your social anthropologist's study, you may find an Empathy Map is a useful tool for profiling your buyer persona as a means to understanding what motivates him or her; how he or she consumes information and even who influences his or her decision making process.

Developed by Dave Gray, founder and chairman of XPLANE the visual thinking company, the Empathy Map may be defined as a “collaborative tool teams can use to gain a deeper insight into their customers. Much like a user persona, an empathy map can represent a group of users, such as a customer segment”.

By completing this empathy map, you will be putting yourself in your customer's shoes both intellectually and emotionally.

We recently did a strategic content marketing workshop for the Bayleys digital team, and hired a social anthropologist to interview a wide sample of property vendors as a means to informing the empathy map. One of the stand out things we learned was that Bayley's is considered an aspirational brand, and that property is very tied to the aspirations of New Zealanders.

In short, Kiwis aspire to getting on the property ladder, increasing their wealth, providing for their retirement or simply achieving peace of mind and security through property. As a result, ‘aspiration’ became a central ‘touchstone’ in the organisation’s content strategy. Every time a piece of content is considered, the Bayleys’ team can ask themselves how that piece of content reflects the ‘aspirational’ aspects of the brand and meets the ‘aspirational’ needs of the target audience.

How do you use the empathy map? Define your buyer personas – there may be one or ten or more – and then put yourself in the shoes of your persona when asking the questions defined in the empathy map, particularly in terms what they say, see, hear and think in the context of their problems, questions, needs and desires and how those relate to you brand, services and products.

Consider Bayleys. If we know that the target audience is aspirational – perhaps to achieve the best price for his or her property – and that one of the Bayleys’ brand values is aspiration, what then might be...

- a) The fears and insecurities the target audience has around selling their property?
- b) What are they hoping for? What excites them?
- c) What questions will they commonly ask?
- d) What do their friends have to say when they hear they’re putting their property on the market?
- e) What do they see when they look around their neighbourhood?

Each one of these questions is a potential content silo, capable of generating numerous content ideas. For example, the vendor may hear that the ‘property bubble is about to burst’ and this could instil a sense of urgency or worry – in itself a potential piece of content.

How to develop an empathy map

An empathy map (see page 24) is a collaborative tool developed by the visual thinking company, XPLANE, which you can use to gain a deeper insight into your personas. Use it with your sales team and other stakeholders to build up a picture of your various audience segments.

What is on his or her mind, in the context of your offering?

His/her preoccupations

His/her worries

What he/she thinks

What does he/she see, in the context of your offering?

His/her environment?

His/her friends?

What the market offers him/her?

What does he/she say, in the context of your offering?

His/her attitude?

How he/she appears in public?

What he/she tells others?

What does he/she hear, in the context of your offering?

What his/her boss says

What his/her friends say

What media influences him/her

Pains

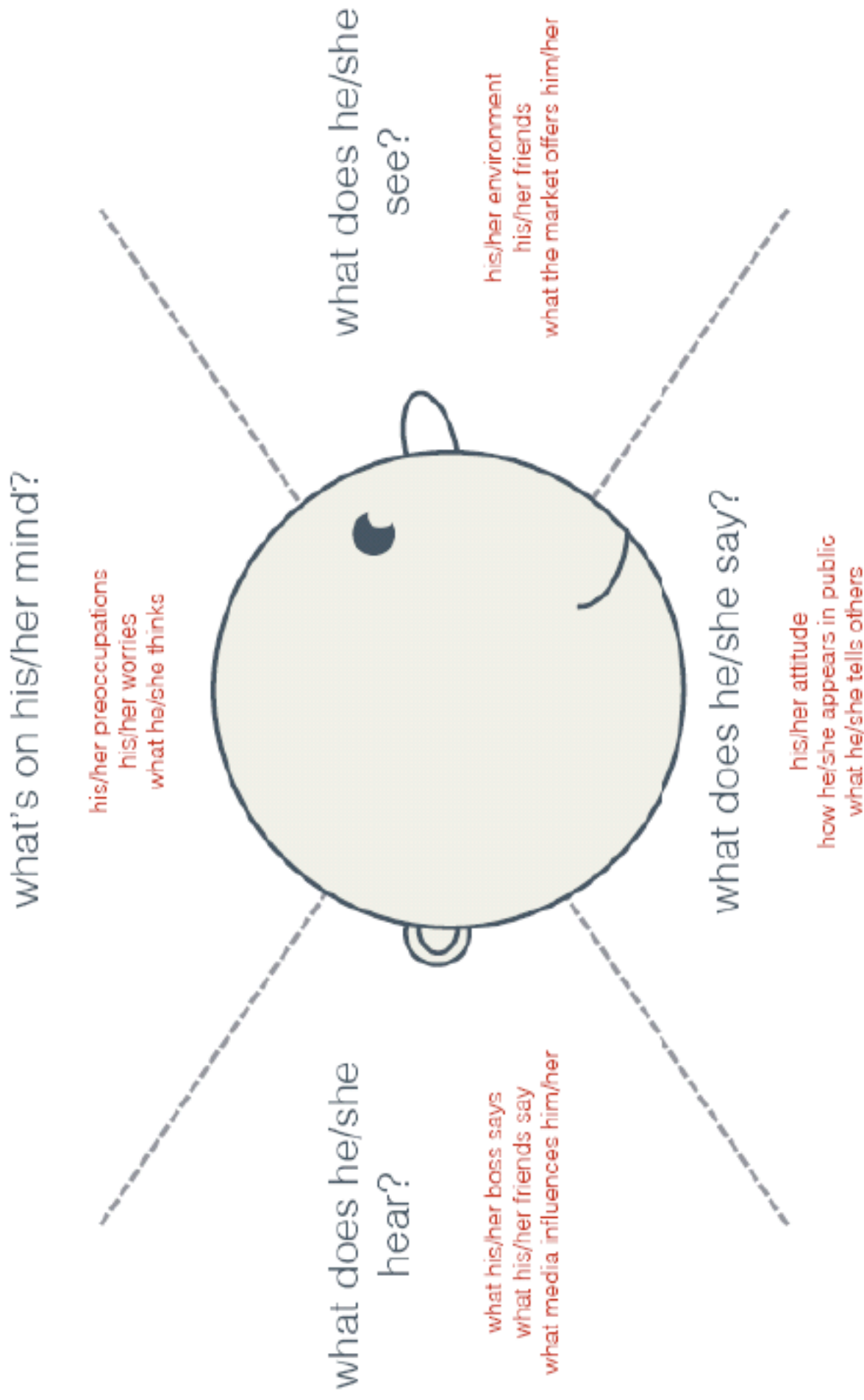
As a result, what are the pains, problems, challenges, obstacles and questions your content must address?

Gains

What goals or outcomes can your content help your customer achieve?

For more information on the rationale of empathy maps, and other tools that can help you gain insight to your target audience, visit our blog, in particular posts such as [Anthropology: The new edge in customer research](#) and [Content that connects: the proper use of buyer personas](#).

empathy map: simple customer profiler



Organise your content according to the decision making cycle of your market

By matching consumer needs to your buying cycle you overcome a problem most marketers encounter, which is how to marry the needs of their audience with the commercial objectives of the business.

Once you understand the emotional, social and other factors influencing your buyer persona – within the context of their preferences and daily lives – you can begin to think about creating content to meet their needs and interests within the buying cycle.

Essentially this is where all the social and emotional drivers meet your business imperatives.

A good content programme creates and publishes information according to the stages of the buying cycle because your persona's information needs will change with every stage, and it is important your content is there to fill in the gaps.

One model of the buying cycle is provided by Engel, Warshaw, Kinnear in the book *Promotional Strategy*. It is a comprehensive model and whether or not you apply it will depend on your time and resources. Essentially the Engel, Warshaw and Kinnear model follows five stages:

- 1) Need recognition
- 2) Search for information
- 3) Alternative evaluation
- 4) Purchase
- 5) Outcomes / evaluation

A more concise, less resource hungry model may be broken down into three States:

- Awareness stage
- Consideration stage
- Decision Stage

A local New Zealand example

Achievement Discoveries is an aptitudes testing company which helps:

- Students choose the right career by discovering their natural aptitudes and gifts
- Management place the right people with the right aptitudes and personality in the right positions
- Men and women caught in a mid-life crisis (which is more often than not a result of career dissatisfaction)

Let's examine how content may be developed for each of the buying stages for Achievement Discoveries, bearing in mind that forty per cent of the New Zealanders (about 920,000 people), are unhappy in their jobs, according to the employment website Seek.

1. Awareness stage:

It's Sunday night and our persona Mark Gooding is dreading going to work in the morning. He has steadily come to the realisation that every Sunday night is the same – he hates those Monday blues.

So, Mark decides to Google a way to get through Monday, perhaps using keyword phrases such as 'how to cope with Monday' or 'getting through Monday' or 'beating the Monday blues'.

Another keyword phrase may be: "I need an excuse to get out of work on Monday".

As a result of his search, Mark finds an article that suggests that if he hates Mondays, he is probably in the wrong job or has missed his calling in life. Perhaps it's an article, or a cartoon, that reads something like: **"Monday morning blues: I like the people but I hate my job"**. Another headline might be: **'Classic excuses to get out of work and why you might need them'**.

The article suggests that his Monday blues are a result of Mark not applying the natural gifts and abilities that he was born with, and goes on to call him to action by telling him it is never too late to find out what he is good at – even in mid-life.

2. Consideration stage

Now that Mark is aware he doesn't like Mondays because he thinks it may be that he isn't applying his natural talents and abilities, he begins to search for solutions. Of course, there is a mortgage to pay, a family to support, a tight job market, he's not getting any younger... what are his options?

At this point, Achievement Discoveries may have created a stream of articles and case studies about men and women who experienced the same thing – pieces of content that articulate his predicament right back at him.

One in particular catches Mark's eye, where a man near his age, in the same profession and circumstances, remained in his job but got to exercise his talents and abilities as a hobby woodworker over the weekends.

3. Decision stage

Mark understands that there are some things he has always wanted to do, and he is perhaps wondering why he doesn't just go off and try those things, like oil painting for example. Mark's deciding to go out on his own is part of the evaluation and decision process, and as such Achievement Discoveries can be more explicit in what the company wants Mark

to do next. The company will also have to deal with objections, for example: an expert opinion on your aptitudes will save a lot of time, money and wasted effort.

The company may also offer other advice, like ideas on how to cope with the Monday blues until he has been tested, as well as providing information about what's involved and the steps to having his aptitudes tested.

Chapter 5: Relevance

Relevance is at the heart of dynamic and responsive content

Developing dynamic and responsive content goes beyond passionate and purposeful, and understanding and empathising with your customers. To be engaging, content must be relevant.

Passionate, purposeful, empathetic, understanding and all the other keys we've discussed to developing a dynamic content marketing strategy are valuable for informing your content, but it will all be for nothing if the content is not relevant and timely within the context of your audience's daily lives.

The two most important questions you can ask yourself about your content is:

1. ***“Is this content relevant to my customer persona?”***
2. ***“Would this content be worth my time, if I was not involved with the company?”***

Relevant is defined as “closely connected or appropriate to the matter in hand”. In other words is this important to me now?

How to use news values to achieve relevance

A good tool for developing relevant content is the journalist's measure of newsworthiness, which can and should also be applied to lighter, even entertaining content. Examine your content in the context of the following criteria that a journalist uses to determine if a story is newsworthy:

1. Timely

- Is your content topical?
- Did it happen recently?
- Are people talking about it now?

So-called newsjacking is the practise of developing content based on current news events, since it is logical that it would be topical and also be featuring high in search activity. For example, when ACC (New Zealand Accident Compensation Corporation) made it into the media for breaching data, or even for refusing to pay-out on some claims, both stories lend themselves other stories, videos or podcasts on actions those affected could take to solve the problem. Released shortly after these ‘scandals’, your content would be timely and topical.

2. Impact

- How many people, or who specifically, will your content impact?
- How will they be affected?

This is where you define your audience. Is it niche or does it affect all Kiwis? The more people your story impacts, the more chance it has of being picked up by mainstream media. However, if your article is niche, it may be more likely to be shared between those affected, for example, between members of a fishing club if the story is pertinent to their fishing activity.

3. Prominence

- Is your content important? Sales content is rarely important in the greater scheme of things, but if it touches on a current event, for example, imminent changes to legislation that will impact your target audience, it becomes important.
- Is your information based on comment or opinion from a prominent person or expert? Consider quoting experts, even independent industry experts who are not associated with your company. It builds credibility and trust. For example, a white paper we wrote for Meridian – on lighting for businesses – quoted advice from an award winning lighting designer.

4. Proximity

- How pertinent is your content to the audience? An event in Christchurch is unlikely to appeal to an Auckland audience.
- Reference the areas or regions you want to reach. For example, if you want to reach audiences in Paihia, Karapiro, Opotiki, Reefton or Amberley, then reference them in your content – it assists local search findings.

5. Is it bizarre or different?

Is your story different from the norm – ‘man bites dog’ is an old gem of an example, but it gives you the general idea.

This kind of content is difficult to achieve, but a notable international instance that has been viral for some years is the ‘[will it blend?](#)’ example. Blendtec, a blender company, makes a series of videos where they blend anything, including iPads, paint balls and a bottle of Old Spice (note, they blend whatever is topical at the time to demonstrate how powerful their blender is).

6. Controversy and conflict

Fact is, people love conflict and controversy. When it comes to brand journalism however, it is advisable to look for the positive angle. Highlight a problem, but rather than whinge about it, show people how to solve the problem or interview people for advice.

Not so long ago, a prominent finance company ran an article through the New Zealand Herald's branded content product, Brand Insights, about how companies within a certain sector were struggling to get government work. At first glance, this seems fine, until you read the whole piece and realise it was just one long whinge from companies that ended up sounding like sour grapes.

The newspapers love this, because it's controversial and 'newsy', but both the New Zealand Herald and this company miss the point. Content marketing is not about getting into the news – that's public relations (although it's debatable about whether this example was even good public relations) – it's about providing value through the news.

A better example would be to highlight the problem, which is that companies aren't getting government work, and then talk to companies that are. How did they do it? What is their advice? Even a step-by-step piece on how to win government work would have been of more value – keep it positive, you're a brand and you want all perceptions around your brand to be positive.

7. Current

- Does your content address the current needs of your audience?
- Their regular questions?
- Present and future problems they are confronting, the context of their lives today?
For example, a particular sector's struggle to win government work and advice from those who have.

8. Human-interest

Human-interest stories have to be just that – about people in interesting situations. It is perhaps in this category that you can explore the true definition of a story. For example, if you're selling hair care products, perhaps you could tell a story about somebody who had a disaster at the hairdresser – and the social problems and emotional angst this caused her – before you came to the rescue...

9. Does it add value?

When you inform and educate your audience, you automatically position yourself as an expert, and that is good for your brand. Think about giving them tools and 'how to advice' that helps them do better, and make better decisions.

Hot Tip: What not to do with your content

Don't sell.

Content marketing is not advertising. Both have their place, even alongside each other, but never should the two meet. Advertorials are the sad and broken prodigy of that particular marriage.

Remember that everybody loves shopping, but we hate to be sold.

Nobody wants to be pinned down by a salesperson for two or three minutes, least of all when we can choose to disengage with no social cost.

Customers volunteer to engage with your content. There is no slick salesperson to hold them there.

Some thoughts on advertorials

It is important not to be sucked into the advertorial trap through so-called native ad products.

Those hideously boring articles are hopelessly overpriced and written by mostly junior journalists who hate every minute of it. Open you local newspaper and they're easy to find somewhere near the back, with headlines like:

- Be friends with your dentist
- Send anything anywhere
- Serious fun for a serious purpose

It's fairly obvious little thought or effort has gone into the articles and their headlines, and as such they don't invite serious engagement either. The headlines say little to nothing, and the text isn't much better. It's fair to ask the question, how can anybody expect anybody to invest any of their precious time with content that makes little or no effort to be meaningful?

Good content adds value. It informs, educates, inspires and entertains.

The sales, conversions, credibility and brand building happen as a powerful by-product of good stories.

Contrast these two examples: The first Example A: "Be friends with your dentist", was an advertorial published in the *North Shore Times Advertiser*. The introduction addresses a fear, of pain, and also price – two good themes – but both in the introduction however is an example of careless writing (if it was done by a junior the news editor should be hauled over the coals, if he or she even looked at the copy).

It then goes into good news and commercial speak and reads more like an advertisement in which we hear all about the dental practise, but there is little if anything of value in there for the reader – an ad would have done a better job.

The second, example B: 'Bad breath not just in your mouth' deals with a fear too, called Halitophobia, which is an irrational fear that your breath smells. It is far more engaging, interesting and the reader comes away not just having met the dentist who contributed to the piece, but also better informed about dental hygiene and what they can do about.

Example A: "Be friends with your dentist"

Be friends with your dentist

Have you been putting off visiting the dentist because you're scared that you'll require further treatment, or you believe it will be a costly experience?

The good news is that you no longer need to be afraid, with experienced dentist [REDACTED] offering compassionate and affordable dental care from her custom-built [REDACTED] clinic.

Jean is passionate about ensuring all patients take care of their teeth, as she believes good health is a person's most important asset.

She says the secret to success is preventive treatment, including regular check-ups and a scale and polish every six months. This allows your dentist to quickly and efficiently detect any issues and address them before they develop into larger problems that are more expensive to fix.



Compassionate care: [REDACTED] Dental Group is the place to go for gentle dental care.

adolescents, whose teeth, gums and orthodontic alignment all require regular monitoring as their teeth grow and settle into their adult smiles.

Jean encourages anyone who suffers from anxiety or a heightened fear of visiting the dentist to bring a support person along and for nervous patients both IV and oral sedation options are available.

from patients since the clinic opened in [REDACTED], including some clients who had not visited a dentist for more than 20 years!

[REDACTED] is offering some great specials, including a check-up with two digital X-rays and a scale and polish for \$120, and the Zoom Tray home whitening system for \$400.

Jean provides free WINZ quotes for eligible patients, free general dentistry for 13 to 17-year-olds and ACC emergency dental care when required.

[REDACTED] Group is at [REDACTED] with ample free parking and easy wheelchair access. It is open Monday to Friday 9am till 5pm, with late nights Tuesday and Thursday till 6pm, and Saturday 9am till 2pm. Phone [REDACTED] or email [REDACTED]. Visit [REDACTED].

Example B: "Bad breath not just in your mouth"



Bad Breath – Not Just in Your Mouth

0 Comments / in Teen Reading / by Dental Expert

Bad Breath – Not Just in Your Mouth

Most people assume that bad breath comes directly out of your mouth, and seeing as the mouth is a hotbed of bacteria, most people are safe to assume this. However, 90% of real halitosis cases (bad breath) are caused by some sort of malignancy in the mouth. This can come be in the form of a rotting tooth or gum disease.

If you have a healthy gums and teeth, it is very likely that you do not have bad breath. If you still believe you have bad breath but no one agrees with you, you either have some overly polite friends, or are suffering from what is known as halitophobia – an illogical fear that you have bad breath, even though you don't.

Chapter 6: How to tell stories

The problem story

Everybody loves a good story – to hear one, and to tell one – which is why a good story, well told, is engaging, memorable and cuts through clutter like a scalpel, particularly if we can cut through the clutter with an opening that demonstrates we understand the audience’s problem.

A good story should be viral in nature. In other words, one that people believe is worth repeating – whether it’s at the water-cooler or around the BBQ.

In this example we will use a joke as our example. A joke is actually a story... look at how often people repeat good jokes. I’m not suggesting you tell jokes, but that you analyse a joke that you like, to understand how it works and why it works.

Let’s help you get started by dissecting a joke story:

- Act One: Sets up the situation;
- Act Two: Develops the context of the situation;
- Act Three: Resolves the situation in a satisfying way.

Here’s an example of how it might work:

Act One:

One Saturday evening two horses are sitting at a bar, having a drink. Sitting alone at a table nearby is a dog, enjoying a beer, and listening to the two horses that are discussing the results of a recent horserace, including the merits and demerits of the winner’s pedigree.

Act Two:

Eventually the dog clears his throat and says: “Excuse me, gentlemen. I hope you will forgive my rudeness for eavesdropping, but I couldn’t help but overhear your conversation. I can’t however, keep from pointing out that the heart of a winner is just as important as his pedigree, when it comes to determining champions. Wouldn’t you agree?”

Act Three:

Mutely the first horse looks at his mate, whose expression is inscrutable.

Then the first horse takes a thoughtful sip of his drink, shakes his head and says: “Fancy that, a talking dog.”

Let’s break that down a bit:

Act One

Set up the problem, including when, what, who and where; two horses, their conversation, a bar and another patron, the dog. The situation is patently ridiculous, but that's the hook. Remember the newsworthy criteria we discussed earlier? Number 5 was 'is it bizarre?'. The 'problem' being set up here is that you have two horses and a dog in a bar, how bizarre!

Act Two

Develop the problem context (the bits that immediately precede and follow a word or passage, and clarify its meaning). In this case not only are there two horses and a dog in the bar, but the dog interrupts the conversation. There is action. In broader storytelling, the problem context is frequently the reasons for the problem e.g. interruption.

Act Three

Reaction, in this case the reaction is an unexpected switch in direction, but satisfying nevertheless. In general storytelling, this is where you sketch the resolution. The resolution here is that the horses choose to ignore the interruption in a way that is funny and memorable.

To summarise the problem story:

1. Problem;
2. Reason for the problem;
3. Solution.

The archetype story

Another practise that isn't often utilised by content creators and marketers is to create a story that touches on those timeless archetypes that strike powerful chords deep inside our psyche.

Elements of an archetypal story:

- a) The story should have a hero; usually you or someone in your company;
- b) The story should have a 'damsel in distress (your customer). It is important that we care about our damsel. Tell us a bit about them. Why he or she is a good person and why we should care about what happens to that person.
- c) The story should be about a problem.
- d) The problem should hold consequences for the person we care about. It's not something we want them to have to endure, or at least endure further. Better still it should be a problem with which we empathise, understand or identify.
- e) Complication; just when you thought it couldn't get any worse, there's a complication. Perhaps your customer tries to solve the problem and only ends up making it worse.
- f) The story should have a challenge. What are the obstacles to solving the problem?
- g) The grand finale. How did you solve the problem? How did you overcome the obstacles to get there, and what was the final big problem – the dragon you had to slay?

Let's look at how we can translate that structure into a business story by breaking down the various business functions into archetypes.

- Hero (company, product, expert);
- Damsel in distress (customer persona);
- Problem (persona's problem, issues, questions);
- Consequences (the pain the customer is experiencing);
- Complication (things that happen from applying wrong or incorrect solutions);
- Challenges (why people revert to the wrong solution e.g. wanting to save money);
- Conclusion (present the solution to the problem and tell us why it is a solution).

If we care about the 'damsel' then the solution needn't be dramatic, or funny or carry a great punch line – although it helps. The most important thing is that we are made to care, through the problem or the people.

Hot Tip: The value of authenticity and objectivity

Nothing irritates your audience more than a misleading headline.

I'd put it in the same bucket as misleading advertising and does absolutely nothing for engagement. Content marketing is more than just grabbing attention, it's about building a relationship long term and like any relationship it will thrive when you pay attention to the needs of your audience, act in their interests and deliver on your promises.

Mainstream media dislike publishing stories that originate with business, hence the age-old running battles between the newsroom and public relations agencies.

Your audience trust you to put their interests first.

Break that trust and they won't be back in a hurry. Sincerity and authenticity are difficult concepts to get your head around when it comes to creating content with a business purpose, but it is key to keep your promises. If your headline makes a promise, you must deliver on it. Too often I see headlines that offer a 'how to' promise, only to conclude that the 'how to' is to hire the company's services.

Some methods you can use to help keep your content authentic include:

- Quote independent experts. For example the Meridian lighting piece which quotes advice from an award winning lighting designer.
- Offer tips and advice, which the customer can apply independently of your solution. How to select a solution, which ticks all the boxes of your solution, would not qualify.
- Set aside your stake in the content piece, and ask yourself, if another company created this, would I give it the time of day? Is it worth my time? If it doesn't, it isn't good enough.

Chapter 7: Publishing: An overview

Publishing, a simple overview

While the purpose of this guide is focussed primarily on how to create engaging content, some thoughts on publishing are appropriate.

There are essentially three avenues you can use to publish your content, each with a number of channels and or platforms.

1. Owned assets:

These are channels that your organisation owns, such as your website, your blog, and your social media channels like LinkedIn and Facebook. From a digital perspective, the traffic to these channels is determined by the quality of content and how much you invest. Owned assets may also include printed media like a magazine, The Furrow, television documentaries like Red Bull creates, and even seminars or workshops you host.

2. Earned assets:

These are independent, third party controlled sites which may choose to use your content, or not, depending on elements such as newsworthiness, relevance, value etc. They may include news media websites, independent bloggers and social news sites – as well as print, radio and television media. Your content must earn the right by relevance and newsworthiness to be featured, but the high volumes of traffic and site authority of such media makes it well worth it.

3. Bought assets:

Bought assets are media channels your organisation purchases. Websites like the New Zealand Herald have tremendous traffic volume and strong site authority. In other words, they feature prominently in Google as trusted sources of information. When your content and links appear on such websites, they not only get more eyeballs, they also lift the search engine rankings of your own website or blog.

Media such as the New Zealand Herald offer so-called native advertising products, which is essentially branded content they publish on their website. The New Zealand Herald charges between \$20,000 and \$40,000 for a campaign that consists of one article published every day for two or three months. The copy is expected to be of a high standard, but does sometimes fall short.

A year long campaign could cost as much as \$250,000 and comes with a number of benefits such as your organisation's own branding and site links. According to the New Zealand Herald, readers don't particularly differentiate between the branded content and mainstream editorial, provided the branded content is of sufficient quality.

Another avenue to buying real estate for your content is content discovery platforms like Outbrain and Taboola. Less expensive than going direct to some media organisations, platforms like Outbrain will publish your content on high traffic sites using a cost-per-click model (CPC), similar to Google Adwords.

Part of the problem with some content discovery platforms like Outbrain has been the use of misleading headlines. You click on a story about solving some headache or other and land up on a gambling website. Outbrain has moved against this kind of misleading spam advertising and is cleaning up its act.

While Outbrain does emphasise organic traffic, and offers analytics and geo-targeting, it is unable to provide the same kind of specific audience targeting that Facebook does, for example.

Other content platforms to investigate include Nativio, nRelate and Disqus. Yahoo Stream Ads is another service, which Yahoo used to replace their banner advertising product.

Bought social media

There are three paid social media services, which are strong in New Zealand and worth mentioning.

Facebook Sponsored Posts

Facebook gives you the ability to sponsor posts, or boost posts. Boosting a post promotes that post on your own timeline, whereas a sponsored post will be visible to a broader audience – as defined by your choice of demographics.

LinkedIn Posts and Sponsored Updates

This is LinkedIn's version of native advertising and is aimed at higher income earners and business people. A good choice for business-to-business organisations or those involved in the job market.

LinkedIn already provides basic services such as a company page, and the ability to publish posts that you can share via your connections. By clicking on advertising, under Business Services, you can choose to sponsor the article according to a budget you set.

Twitter's Promoted Tweets & Promoted Accounts

Twitter allows you to promote both your tweets and accounts using the CPC model, and there is particularly strong emphasis on mobile devices. Don't neglect to use visuals in your tweets.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

Put your audience first

The goal of this guide was to give you some ideas on how to create engaging content, and to show you that there are many tools you can use – from metaphors to archetypes – to achieve that, but the most important thing to remember... is to put your audience first.

1. Learn what motivates your audience so you can be empathetic;
2. Add value, ensure they come away with something useful (inform, educate or entertain);
3. Communicate in the form (e.g. blogs, video, infographics) that they prefer;
4. Maintain a visible presence across channels they use or are exposed to e.g. Facebook;
5. Have a publishing mission, a 'content cause' that guides your content;
6. Create content for every step in the decision making or buying cycle;
7. Apply news values to be relevant;
8. Use storytelling to make your content compelling; and finally
9. Be authentic, sincere and objective.

Understand your customer's problems, answer their questions, put their interests before your own and they will return the favour.

About the author

Colin Kennedy

Colin Kennedy is an online marketing and content strategist, writer and editor of Espire's Marketing Online magazine.

With more than 20 years experience in journalism, public relations and marketing, his previous roles include newspaper and magazine editor, CEO of New Zealand Agritech Inc. and marketing director for BNI New Zealand.

He applies his publishing and marketing experience to help a range of corporate and middle market companies develop strong online content marketing strategies and programmes.

A previous member of the Panel of Judges for The David Awards, Colin has worked with Britestar and Conferenz to deliver content marketing workshops, as well as with New Zealand Trade and Enterprise on several 'path to market programmes' and 'dragon's den' panels.

About Iron Road

Iron Road is a content marketing agency that works with clients to create engaging, relevant content that adds value to the target audiences.

How can Iron Road help you?

- Content marketing strategy and planning, including workshop facilitation with your stakeholders;
- Content creation from ideas to production from articles and blogs to video and infographics;
- Publishing and syndicating your content using a range of channels such as social media, native advertising, high authority media sites and blogs;
- Helping you set-up your own content marketing programme e.g. publishing platforms, content calendars etc.;
- Deliver content marketing training & mentoring to your team.

If you'd like to get in touch, even for a chat over coffee, let's meet:

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