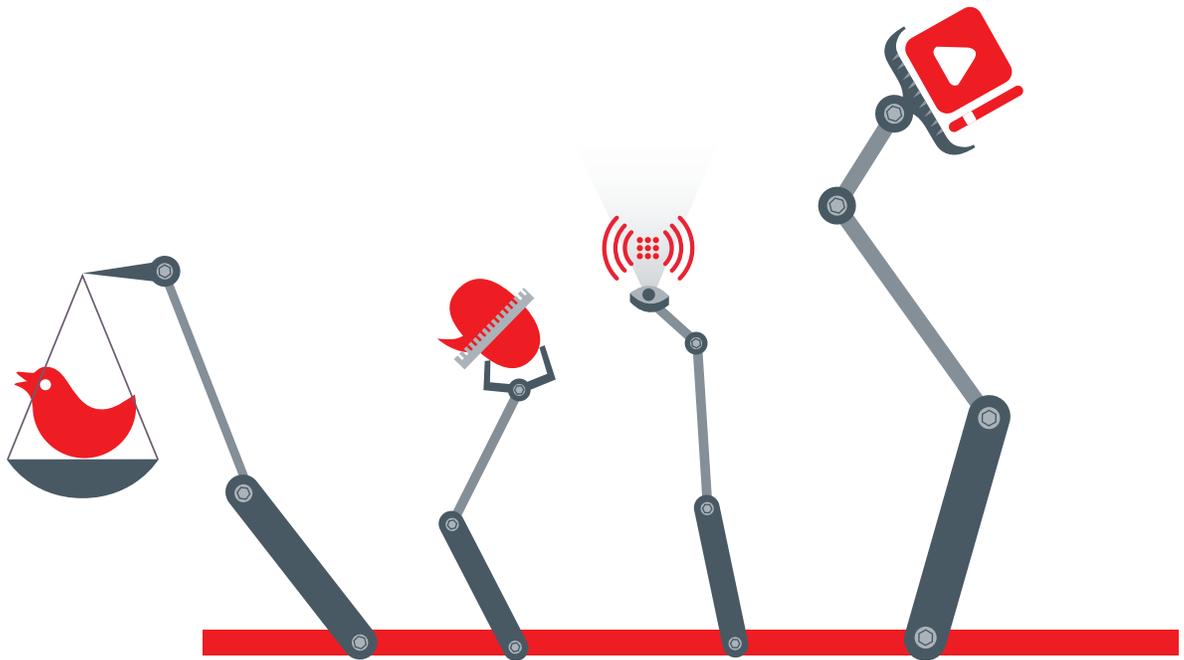




Measuring the Effectiveness of Your Content Marketing

A 5-Step Process to Prove Value and Grow Your Business



Generating an indisputable return on investment linked to advertising in traditional media—television, print, or radio—is next to impossible for marketers. Sure, we can talk about the eyeballs and impressions we generate. But to attribute new revenue—hard dollars and cents—to an ad that runs on *The Biggest Loser*? That’s tough, especially in the age of digital video recorders. Most TV viewers these days fast-forward right through those commercial breaks.

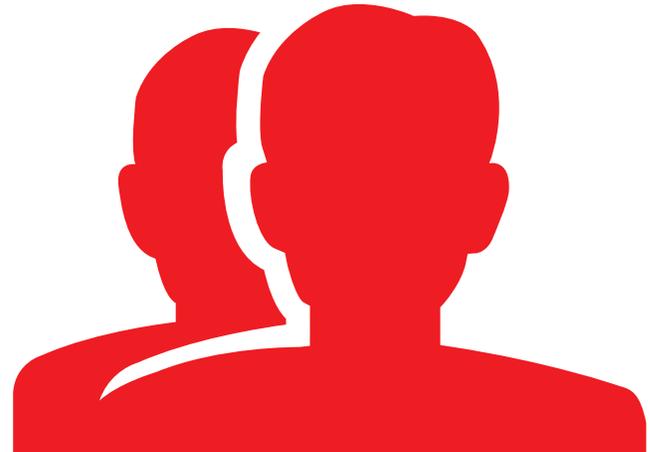
And that’s exactly why content marketing can be so valuable. When done right, it is a highly measurable part of your marketing mix—one that can prove increased brand awareness, engagement, and even bottom-line results. The key is to follow these essential steps.

Nº1. Know Your Customers

Before beginning any type of content marketing program, it's crucial to have a deep understanding of the individuals with whom you want to engage. What are their interests and needs? What do they want when it comes to your industry? If you're a clothing retailer, for example, what motivates your key customers to choose your store over that of a competitor? What are some of your customers' unmet needs when it comes to shopping in your particular fashion space? Do you serve multiple customer groups with unique needs?

Understanding the audiences you serve will enable you to craft a content strategy that delivers the right mix of content types (including articles, blogs, videos, and infographics) to their preferred channels.

Customer data is the key. If you don't have it, get it. Because only when you have a keen sense of your audience can you develop content that delivers measurable results.



Bonus Tip:
Craft Personas to Improve Content Relevancy

If you know your customers well, you may be able to segment them to reflect common attributes, behaviors, and preferences. Developing personas related to each segment will enable you to create stories that resonate more deeply. With personas, you can target your content to the unique wants and needs of each customer segment, increasing the likelihood that it will be consumed and shared. Oracle Content Marketing makes it easy, with built-in functionality that aligns directly with your editorial calendars.

Check it out at eloqua.com.

Nº2.

Create Clear and Measurable Goals

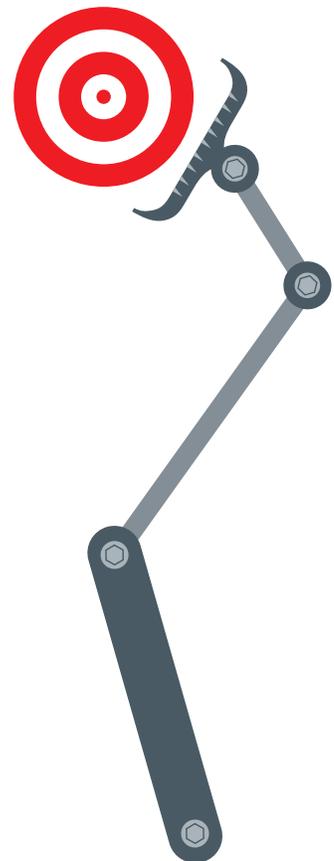
It sounds like a no-brainer, but you'd be surprised how many businesses embark upon a content marketing program without first establishing clear goals.

Don't be one of those companies. Or if you are, hit the pause button! Because the only way to demonstrate that an investment in content marketing is paying off is to begin with actionable goals that enable you to measure precisely how the program has elevated your brand and, more importantly, contributed to your organization's bottom line.

Before you begin, it's essential to acknowledge the difference between goals and objectives. An objective is a broad statement or ambition that you aim to accomplish. Objectives are good for casting a vision for your company, but don't necessarily lead to meaningful change unless accompanied by actionable goals.

Here's an example: Let's say you're a financial institution and you want to better position your business as a trusted thought leader among current and prospective commercial clients. So you develop a strategy that centers on key members of your executive team sharing their opinions and insights on the important financial services topics of the day. Among the tactics: webinars, presentations from industry events repurposed on SlideShare, and an online magazine featuring your executives as experts in articles and videos, using search engine optimization and e-mail marketing as traffic drivers.

But for all that to be truly meaningful, there must also be program goals that tie to specific quantifiable actions or outcomes that result from customers engaging with the content. Goals fall into four buckets.



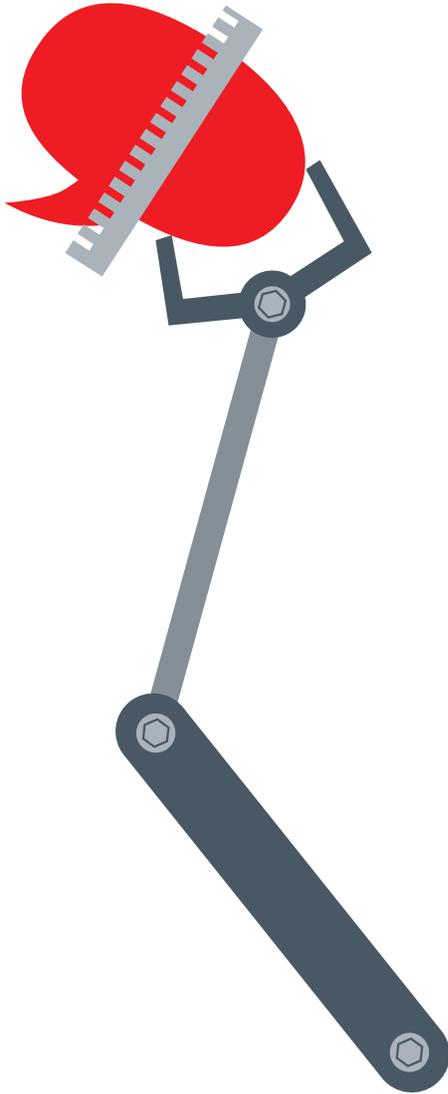
Branding and Awareness Goals

Metrics related to these goals should prove not only knowledge of your brand, but also positive sentiment that your audience associates with it after consuming content. Branding and awareness goals aren't typically quantifiable in terms of bottom line results. However, they are useful in helping you measure movement from unaware of your brand to aware among your target customer segments, which can help you acquire new leads.

Unfortunately, limiting goals to the awareness phase is an all-too-common mistake. We suggest setting branding and awareness goals as just one component of a plan. In the case of our banking thought-leadership scenario, a few actionable goals might include increasing:

- Followers of your LinkedIn company page by X percent.
- Nonbranded organic search visits from X to Y.
- Social shares your magazine content gets from X to Y.
- Views of content on SlideShare by X percent.
- Interviews of executive leadership in media by X percent.
- Links back to our website by general media by X percent.





Marketing Goals

The metrics derived from these goals start to get to the heart of what you do as a marketer—that is, drive new business for your company. Marketing goals typically measure the number of people who go from the aware-and-unknown stage to interested-and-known. It's important that you capture the lead source for these individuals because it will help validate some of your awareness efforts. Examples of these goals are:

- Drive X number of new names from each webinar you host.
- Capture X number of leads each month from presentations and from calls to action in an online magazine.
- Increase overall inbound leads by X percent this quarter.
- Grow quality leads from X to Y (usually measured by some kind of lead score).

Sales Goals

When it comes to measuring the impact of content marketing, this piece of the puzzle often gets lost in the shuffle because marketers typically don't think about the effect of content on the sales cycle. However, well-timed, relevant content that educates prospects on topics related to your company's products or services can have a significant impact on the effectiveness of your sales team. Some goals for this category could be:

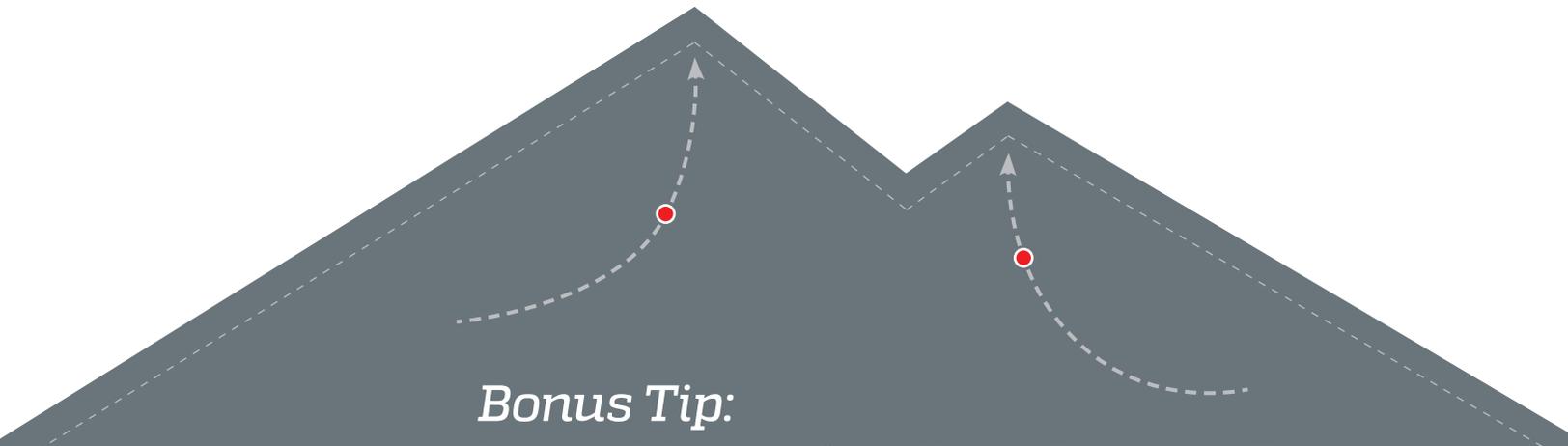
- Reduce the number of manual touch points that sales reps need to reach their prospects throughout the life of the opportunity by X percent.
- Decrease the number of days it takes for an opportunity to go from created to closed from X days to Y days.
- Increase the win percentage of all new business opportunities by X percent.

Retention Goals

Not only should you measure your content marketing efforts through to a sale, but you should also measure them in an ongoing way to see the effect your content is having on your company's renewal and retention rates. It's always more cost effective to motivate an existing customer to renew your product or service, or to make repeat purchases, than it will be to acquire a new customer. So here are some sample retention metrics:

- Increase your renewal percentage by X percent.
- Grow the number of customers who make repeat purchases by X percent.
- Widen share of wallet by X percent.

Keeping these goal buckets in mind, the more specific you can be—and the more clear the metrics—the more you will be able to prove the success of your content marketing initiatives.



Bonus Tip:

Make Measuring Your Results Easy

Most companies today use a slew of disparate tools to manage the various stages of their content marketing programs. It's a painful and, frankly, costly way to go—especially when there is an efficient solution. Oracle Content Marketing unites every aspect of the content marketing process—including establishing goals and measuring results—into a single tool. To see the metrics dashboards [visit eloqua.com](http://eloqua.com).

Nº3.

Define Your Sales and Marketing Funnel and Associated Content

Now that you've developed customer personas and set goals for your content marketing plan, it's important to make sure you have enough content in place that aligns with various stages of the customer buying cycle. This is the nitty-gritty of your sales and marketing funnel. While it will certainly vary by industry and specific businesses, a typical funnel consists of four stages:

Unaware:

This stage typically consists of everyone who could conceivably be your customer but who has not yet heard of your company or cared enough to let you know. Much of the marketing for this state would build brand awareness, with the goal of getting on your customers' radar and drawing them to your product or service.

Aware:

At this stage there is mutual awareness: People are familiar with your business and have indicated some level of interest in your brand, and they are known to your company. These prospects have interacted with you in some way and have identified themselves, possibly signing up for a newsletter or filling out a form on your website. While they haven't yet turned into customers, or even legitimate sales prospects, they know of you and should be receiving information from you.

Interested:

This group includes qualified sales prospects—individuals who are in active discussions with a sales rep and are evaluating your product or service as a potential option for their purchase.

Customer:

These are the people who make it all the way through your funnel. They have either signed up for your service or have purchased your products—and they are the focus of your retention goals.



Bonus Tip: **Fill Up Your Funnel!**

Tailoring content and calls to action to address the unique interests and needs of prospects at various stages of your sales funnel will generate strong results. Oracle Content Marketing makes that easy by enabling you to repackage and repurpose content from a single dashboard, and deploy it directly to the most effective social and e-mail channels. Visit eloqua.com to see how a comprehensive marketing platform can help your team produce the content needed to keep your sales funnel full—from top to bottom.

Individuals in each stage are going to have different content needs, which means you'll need to develop stories that have slightly different angles. Still, the goal is the same: Engaging your audience with content that moves them to the next stage. The exception is the customer. Here, of course, your goal is to develop content that builds long-term loyalty.

Using our example of the financial institution, some people may have first encountered the organization through online search, which led them to a specific article in the online magazine, or to an executive's presentation on an important industry topic. Some could be prospects who signed up for the executive insights spotlighted in the newsletter. And some could be current customers who received the newsletter and learned of a new product or service. Each piece of content that will be delivered to each different group should be tailored to move the individual to the next stage of the funnel.

For new readers, the online magazine should be designed with calls to action that lead them to places that capture information about them, such as a form to sign up for the newsletter or to view a webinar. For prospects who subscribe to your newsletter yet have not opened an account, you could tease compelling stories in the online magazine and create a call to action that spotlights a relevant new product with a special incentive to open an account. And for your customers, the newsletter can be personalized to promote content related to their specific needs, with calls to action that demonstrate the value of expanding their account to include complementary products and services.

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Integrate and Implement Tracking Systems

Businesses use a variety of tools to plan and review editorial content. Multiple tools can also give you deeper insight into customers and the success rates of your content plan. Three of the most common options are discussed here.

Web Analytics Tools

These are useful for determining how your content is affecting general awareness goals because they track the aggregate of all of your website and blog activities. Although you can't identify specific individuals whose online activity is tracked for this report, you'll be able to see such data points as where they come from, page paths, how long they stay on the site, and how they move about. In general, web analytics tools give you a good feel for broad-based trends. Some are free. Some can cost a bundle. Whatever tool you choose, make sure to append appropriate tracking data in the other marketing tools you're using, such as email or social media, for example, so that you can have that in-depth view of online behavior.



E-mail and Marketing Automation Tools

These tools can be extremely useful for prospects with whom you already have some type of relationship, as they have fairly sophisticated segmenting and nurturing capabilities based on where people are in your sales funnel. They also provide important metrics related to e-mail, specific campaigns, and other measurable actions aligned with your goals.

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Tools

CRM tools can be very valuable for their ability to track and measure the return on investment of the various marketing activities. With content marketing in particular, they can help evaluate which types of content and contributors are performing the best.

No matter which combination of tools you end up using, there will likely be overlaps in what they accomplish. To develop a holistic (and efficient) plan, you can see why it's so important to first set your program goals and solidify your funnel. That way you'll know what you need to track and can assemble the right tools—without over-investing.

With our scenario, the financial institution would need a tool that could track website usage and social sharing. For the marketing goals, the company would need a database solution (e.g., e-mail or marketing automation) that can capture the source of a new lead into your system. There are technical ways to do this using query strings and hidden form fields, but you'll want to find a solution that works best for you. The last two goals can also be achieved using a CRM system that has the ability to create and track sign-ups, sales, and cancellations.

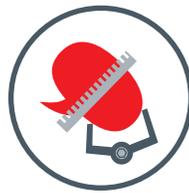


Bonus Tip: Create Your Metrics Dashboard

It's common to use multiple tools to measure the effectiveness of an integrated marketing program. But if you're just getting started, Oracle Content Marketing features built-in tools for measuring the effectiveness of your program against your goals. It's the perfect way to get started because it makes the process easy. As your content marketing efforts ramp up, you can consider supplementing the content marketing platform with additional tools. Visit eloqua.com to learn more about how the platform analytics work.

Nº5.

Identify Desired Actions for All Visitor Segments and Goals



The last and critical step in the process of developing a program that can be tracked and measured is to determine what actions you need your prospects and customers to take in order to achieve the identified goals. These are your calls to action and should be integrated into every aspect of your program. With content marketing, you're not producing stories just for the sake of educating and entertaining. You want your customers to consume the content and engage with your business in some way. So calls to action might drive a reader to take a webinar, attend a seminar, download a white paper, sign up for an e-newsletter, schedule an appointment, or buy a product.

We recommend that for each goal, you develop and test a few different calls to action to see how customers and prospects respond. Remember, people like to get things for free. So attaching incentive offers to engage will likely deliver even better results.

And that's what content marketing is all about—delivering measurable results. Indeed, the beauty of a strategic content marketing program—one based on goals linked to measurable actions—is that you'll be able to clearly and definitively demonstrate to your upper management why content marketing is necessary for your company. You'll be able to prove that it builds brand awareness, achieves your marketing goals, and grows your business.

Bonus Tip: Test and Refine

Using a content marketing platform enables you to maximize the effectiveness of your program within a single dashboard. Before you even publish a blog post or article, the platform helps you optimize your messaging for personas, goals, and search. Then, once you start publishing your content, you can evaluate its performance by individual story and contributor right within the tool. You'll see what customers respond to and what isn't quite hitting the mark—and you'll be able to refine your editorial lineup and the content itself to deliver more of what your audience likes. That's the beauty of content marketing using Oracle Content Marketing. It's all there, in one easy-to-use tool. Check it out at eloqua.com.



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