

Creating a Comprehensive

Content Marketing Plan



CREATING A COMPREHENSIVE CONTENT MARKETING PLAN

It's hard to believe that not too long ago, the information presented on the Internet consisted of nothing but plain text. Eventually HTML came about as a way to format text, and then graphics were added, but even those innovations were nothing compared to what you can find on the web today.



The Internet as we know it is still evolving, but it is full of pictures, sounds, and motion. Even the most inexperienced novice can design a web page using current technology and make it full of animation, funny videos, and his favorite songs.

New technology is being developed continuously, and webmasters are often quick to adopt it.

But these fascinating new aspects of the Internet are not only for fun and games. They provide marketers with plenty of new ways to inform and engage their visitors. No longer do we have to rely on the written word to get our point across sufficiently. We can also communicate with our site visitors through audio and video.

Why Use Audio?

Did you know that a large portion of the population retains information better when they hear it than when they read it? This is one of the many reasons that it pays to offer audio as an option for your site visitors. Here are some more:

- * Audio can inject personality into your website in a way that text and graphics can't. There's just something about hearing someone's voice that makes site visitors feel welcome.

- * Audio is convenient. Those who want or need to multitask can listen to audio while doing something else. They do not have to be right in front of the computer screen to use it. You can also make audio available for download to an iPhone, iPod or MP3 player (if people still use those things!), so your visitors can take it with them wherever they go.



* Using audio can separate you from the competition. Many sites do not utilize audio, and if yours does, those who enjoy it will be likely to come to you instead of your competition.

Ways to Use Audio

There are plenty of different ways that you can incorporate audio into your website. Here are a few to consider:

* **Record a podcast.** This is similar to blogging, only it is done in audio form. Users can subscribe to your podcast so that it is automatically downloaded to their feed readers or iPods.

* **Do a streaming talk radio show.** This is a great way to get targeted visitors to your website, and it allows you to interact with your audience by accepting calls or answering emails while you're on the air.

* **Offer recordings of online conferences or presentations for download.** This gives visitors an incentive to come to your site as well, and it may entice them to participate in future conferences.

* **Record a message for site visitors.** Tell them a little about yourself, suggest areas of the site to visit first, or just welcome them. This adds a unique personal touch.

Making Your Audio Accessible

There are a number of file formats that you can use when saving audio, but it is important to use popular ones so that your users will be able to listen to them. The most popular format for most types of recorded audio is MP3. It offers great file compression while preserving the quality of the audio. Virtually every computer has an application that can play MP3 files. The Windows operating system comes with Windows Media Player, which will play these and several other types of audio files.

Another benefit of the MP3 is its versatility. It can be easily converted for burning on a CD with most CD burning programs. Users can also put them on their iPhones or just about any other type of portable music player.

Why Use Video?

Online video's popularity has grown exponentially in a short time, thanks to video sharing sites such as YouTube. The increasing availability of high-speed Internet has also had a hand in making video so popular, there's absolutely no doubt about it. More than 1 billion unique users each month to the site shows us we need to pay attention. Add to that, including video on your website can greatly enhance your visitors' experience.



Live streaming video is a great tool for online tutors and others who can benefit from a high level of interaction with their visitors or customers. It makes it possible for you to communicate in real time, do live demonstrations, and answer questions with ease. For your audience, it's the next best thing to being there with you.

Recorded video can also be a tremendous asset to your website. It's much easier than you might think to make professional-looking videos to showcase your products and services. Your site visitors can watch these videos at their convenience, and if they like them they will often recommend them to friends and colleagues. For added exposure, you could make your videos available for embedding with YouTube or another video sharing service.

Ways to Use Video

Video is a very versatile medium, and it can be used in a number of ways. Here are some ideas:

* **Make viral videos.** These are usually entertaining clips that include a plug for your business and appeal to a broad audience. As a promotional method, viral video is not usually very targeted, but it can result in a huge amount of exposure at a relatively low cost.

* **Hold online video conferences.** These provide an unparalleled way to reach out to your target audience. You can use tools like Google+ Hangouts to easily hold your online events.

* **Make how-to videos.** Create them on topics relevant to your website's subject matter. Providing informative video content will generate buzz about your website, potentially resulting in an increase in traffic. It will also help you establish yourself as an expert.

The Advantages and Disadvantages of Video Sharing Sites

YouTube site makes it easy for anyone to upload videos to share with anyone with a computer who cares to watch them, and it provides viewers with a wealth of entertainment and education opportunities. It's easy to do with a mobile phone, from your computer or just about any device. Sharing your videos on YouTube and other sites definitely has some advantages.

YouTube's immense popularity can potentially result in lots of people viewing your videos. If they find videos they like, they can embed them onto their own sites or blogs. That will result in an even greater audience, and some of them may choose to embed your video on their sites as well. You can see why some marketers love the idea of video sharing.

There are, however, some disadvantages to putting your videos on sites such as YouTube as well. One of the biggest concerns of marketers is that video sharing doesn't require users to come to your site to view the videos. That means that while your videos may be wildly popular, they might result in very little traffic to your site. It's important to

give viewers an incentive to visit your site once they are finished watching the video. Alternatively, you can change your videos' settings so that they can't be viewed on the YouTube site or embedded elsewhere, but that will limit your viewership.

Make sure you use YouTube's handy tools to include promotions in your videos, clickable links and more. This will help bring more of your YouTube watchers back to your own site.

The sheer power and excellent features of YouTube likely outweigh concerns you might have.

Embedding Video from Your Own Server

Those who do not like the idea of uploading their videos to sites such as YouTube can upload them to their servers and embed them from there. This gives you more control over your videos and ensures there is no "YouTube" logo on your videos.

But before you jump into that, it's important to remember that video files are usually very large. Making them available directly from your server can take up valuable file storage space, and it can also drain your bandwidth. When you upload videos to a video sharing site and embed them from there, you use that site's storage space and bandwidth.

Whether you should upload video to a video sharing site and embed from there or keep it on your own server depends on several factors. If you don't mind having another website's name pasted on your videos and don't want to overtax your server, video sharing could be the best option. But if you want to ensure that users have to come to your site to see your videos and prefer not to provide free advertising for a video sharing site, hosting your own videos might be the best way to go.

The Don'ts of Audio and Video

Using audio and video on your site can greatly enhance your visitors' experience. It gives them alternative ways to receive information and makes your site more interesting. But it is important not to push these mediums on your visitors, because it may actually be a turnoff for some. Here are some things to look out for:

- * Try to avoid using audio or video that automatically starts when a visitor arrives at your site. Most people want the power to choose when they watch video or listen to audio on the web, and if that is taken away, it could leave a bad taste in their mouths.
- * If you're embedding videos, don't put too many on any one page. This can cause slow load times, and possibly even browser crashes for users who do not have the fastest connections or the newest computers.
- * Don't take a "one size fits all" approach. If you're streaming audio or video, offer options for those with slower connections alongside the standard options. You can provide written summaries for recorded content, for example.

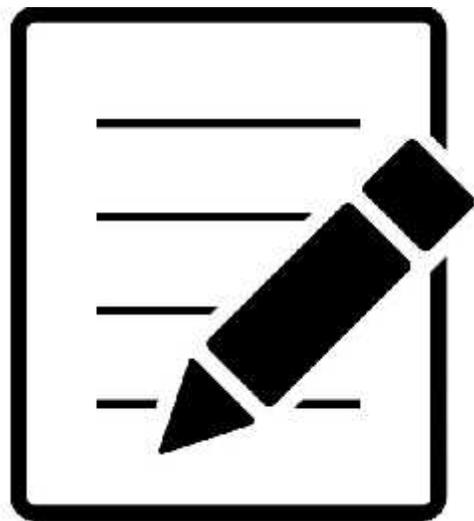
* Don't forget to seek input from your website's visitors. If you're considering audio or video but have not implemented them yet, consider doing a user survey to find out how they would like to see it used. If you are already utilizing audio and video, ask them if they feel you are using it in the best way possible. You're providing these things for the benefit of your users, so it's crucial to make sure that they are in fact benefiting from them.

It's important not to alienate anyone through your use of audio and video. The idea is to give your users more options, not to make things more complex or decrease usability.

Why Bother With Text When You Can Use Audio and Video?

With all of the possibilities that audio and video have to offer, one might think that plain old text would be outdated. But even though these things add a great deal to the Internet, there still is, and probably always will be, an important place for the written word.

The Internet was founded on text. And while text is no longer the only thing you can find online, it is still what the Internet is based on. It's largely what the search engines use to determine whether a page is relevant for a given keyword, and it's often what people want when they are seeking information that they can share easily.



Text is currently the only medium that allows for easy searching. This is not only important to the search engines, but also for the average user. This is starting to change as technology advances, but currently you can't type in a search term and skip to each instance of it on an online video or audio recording. But if you're on a web page and need to find a specific word or words, you can simply use your browser's search function to go directly to it.

It's also important to consider that there are people who use text-only browsers to access the Internet. Those who are blind often use browsers that read the text on a page aloud, and if there is not sufficient text to describe what the page is about, they may seek information elsewhere. In addition to this, there are users who do not have sound cards or speakers, rendering audio useless and video usable but silent.

There are many things online that need to be presented as text. Doing them any other way just doesn't make sense. For example, you probably wouldn't want to access your bank account information as an audio file. And you might not benefit very much from your digital camera user guide being presented in video form, although videos showing specific picture taking and maintenance techniques might be helpful.

Text is still an important part of any web page. Audio and video can be great assets to your website, but in most cases they shouldn't completely replace your text. Text is still favored by many Internet users, and it gives the search engines more to go on when they index your site.

Text Can Be Portable, Too

Online audio and video are becoming easier and easier to take wherever you go. They can be downloaded to watch later on your computer, or you can put them on portable audio and video players. But text doesn't have to be bound to the Internet or computer screen either.

When people find information that is valuable to them online, they often want to save a copy of it for later reference. They can bookmark the web page, but subsequent changes may move or eliminate the information they want. They can save the page in question to their hard drives, but few people do. Making it easy for your site visitors to take your words with them is good for business. Here are some ways to accomplish that:

- * Offer printer-friendly versions of popular pages. Your site design may cause pages to print out poorly, especially if you use frames. Making it easy for users to print pages that look like they should will allow them to easily archive information for future reference.

- * Consider putting certain information in PDF format. This is the file format that is often used for ebooks and brochures, and it provides easy readability. It prints out nicely if your users want a hard copy. And there are now portable ebook readers on the market that allow one to save his ebooks and other PDF files and take them with him wherever he goes.

- * Provide options for mobile web users. It is worthwhile for to set up mobile web pages and for, some businesses, text alert systems. If your website offers up-to-date information such as news, weather, or account information, your users could benefit from mobile options.

The many recent innovations that utilize text indicate that it is still a medium that should not be ignored. While it may not have the potential for personality of audio or be as visually stimulating as video, it is easy to transfer and doesn't require any special software to use.

Audio and Video Should Complement Text, Not Replace It

One of the most important things to realize about audio and video is that at this point, they often don't translate into money as quickly as text can. Utilizing audio and video is more about making a name for yourself and building your brand than immediate monetary gratification. It helps generate traffic to your website and boosts your business's image.

Of course, there are exceptions. Popular videos participating in the ad revenue sharing program with YouTube can earn some decent money. YouTube is also always developing their technology for embedding links and other more interactive elements into videos.

In addition, you may find using video on a sales page increases your conversions and it can work as a very well in this regard.

But overall, text is so vitally important on any website. Audio and video can enhance a website or sales letter, and they can go a long way toward convincing a visitor to become a customer or client. But ultimately, it is usually text that seals the deal. At the very least, text is the most effective way to instruct visitors on how to order or sign up.

Audio, video and text can work together to make your website nice to look at and listen to, as well as highly functional. Each medium appeals to visitors in its own unique way. Taking advantage of the multimedia opportunities available online can boost your site's popularity while making it more useful.

Planning Your Content

One thing that's very important, if you plan to leverage the power of audio, video and text, is to have comprehensive content marketing plan. Here's a little checklist that might help you do that.

Step 1: Set Your Goals

All your content creation should have a purpose and that purpose should not only benefit your readers, but benefit your business as well.

Some purposes might be:

- Search engine traffic
- Word of mouth and viral effect
- Pre-selling and warming up the audience to a product
- Establishing credibility and authority
- Reader satisfaction
- Boosting your opt in list subscribers
- Boosting customer relationships
- Selling your products



Just remember, the goal or purpose of each content piece is aligned with your overall marketing strategy. This may also help you decide whether content should be in audio, video or text format. For example, if your goal is to boost customer relationships, you might choose a video of yourself to do that.

Make sure your content includes a call to action that supports your goal. For example, “For more information about how to manage debt, grab our free report 12 Steps to Eliminate Debt in 12 Months.” – tell them what you want them to do next.

Step 2: Research

Carving out time for research is very important. From brainstorming topic ideas to finding supporting information for those topics, there is plenty to be done. You also want to research potential places to distribute your content as well.

Here are some things that will make your research easier:

- Keep a list of content ideas throughout the month.
- Use the following to generate content ideas/topics:
 - Social networking
 - Keyword research tools
 - Blog comments
 - FAQs
 - Client interaction
 - Brainstorming
- Review the analytics and results of last month’s content and evaluate which pieces generated the most interest or results. Know which pieces your audience responded to and are use that information to create content topic ideas for this month.
- While you’re researching topics, take note of interesting articles, statistics and other items you might reference later as you’re creating your content.
- Keep your eye out for places where you might publish your content. Connect with other website owners who might publish for you. Connect with them by subscribing to their sites, on Facebook, Twitter and more.



Step 3: Creation and Distribution

Here are some things to plan and keep in mind, so your content gets out there to your audience.

- How much content will you need? Will you write it all yourself, hire a writer or use PLR? If you’re using a writer, ensure they have all the information they need well ahead of time, so they can meet your deadline.

- Have you created your content publishing schedule? Plan ahead, so that you can match content topics with products you'll be promoting. Decide where each piece will be published and which pieces will be published in multiple places. For example:
 - Autoresponder
 - Blog
 - Guest blog
 - Website
 - Social networking page
 - Article marketing site
 - Video sharing website (ex. YouTube)
 - Audio sharing website (ex. iTunes)
 - Other

Part 4: Repurposing

The best way to make the most of your monthly content is to find ways to reuse it and repurpose it. However, when creating your repurposing strategy make sure that you're still focusing on your goals. Each repurposed or reused piece of content still needs to serve a purpose and support a goal.



- You've created a plan to reuse or repurpose some or all of your content. For example, an article published on your blog can be rewritten and published on an article marketing site. Or an article that resonated with your readers, could be made more visual and viral by turning it into a video.
- Each piece of content that is repurposed or reused content has a goal/purpose. You should always keep benefiting your business (and your audience, of course) in mind.

It may seem overwhelming to have to plan all this content in a variety of mediums, but over time you'll learn what your audience responds to and where you should focus your efforts. And remember, quality is more important than volume, so focus on delivering the best content you can to your audience.



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