

Excerpts from Epic Content Marketing: How to Tell a Different Story, Breakthrough the Clutter, and Win More Customers by Marketing Less

By Joe Pulizzi

Do you want to know a secret? Here it is: Your customers don't care about you, your products, or your services. They care about themselves, their wants, and their needs.

Content marketing is about creating interesting information your customers are passionate about *so they actually pay attention to you.*

Your customers are exposed to over 5,000 marketing messages per day. Are your messages cutting through the clutter and making an impact?

Content marketing is an approach to marketing that helps businesses deliver differentiated value to customers. Consumers no longer buy our products and services; they buy into our approach to solving their problems.

Why your current content may not be bringing in the business you hope it would:

- You still think it's all about you – remember, customers don't care about you
- You are afraid to fail – take chances with your content
- You are setting the bar too low. Your content should be the very best in your industry
- You don't seek out discomfort – if you are not out of your comfort zone you are doomed to the status quo
- There is no call to action. Every piece of content should have a call to action.
- You are not immersed in your industry. Everywhere your customers are you need to be.

The Six Principles of Epic Content Marketing - The goal is that every time you write a blog you "move" the customer in some way.

1. Fill a need – your content should answer some unmet need
2. Be consistent – the content needs to be delivered always on time and as expected
3. Be human – Find your voice and share it. Be you.
4. Have a point of view – don't be afraid to take sides on matters that can position you as the expert in your field.
5. Avoid "sales speak."
6. The goal for your content ultimately is to be the very best of what is found in your market niche.

- a. Set an uncomfortable goal of being the leading information provider for your industry.
- b. Becoming the trusted expert in your industry is central to selling more on a consistent basis.

The Content Marketing Mission Statement

Define your content marketing mission statement. The mission statement must answer the question, "Why do we exist?"

Remember, content marketing is not about "what you sell," it's about "what you stand for." The informational needs of the customers and prospects come first. Although there must be clear marketing objectives behind the mission statement, they don't need to be outlined here.

To work, your mission statement has to be all about the pain points (in other words what keeps your customers up at night?) If it isn't, it simply won't work.

What are my customer pain points?

- What are interest rates doing? When will they go up?
- What are lenders doing in the market place? Are they underwriting differently?
- How is the economy affecting my property?
- How will the following affect the economy?
 - The Federal Reserve
 - Congress & the President
 - World events
 - Japanese & Chinese economic policies
 - European debt crisis
- How do I find the best possible loan for my property?
- Why aren't my CRE investments doing well? What can I change so they will?

For your content marketing mission statement to work, you need to clearly define three specific things:

1. Who is my core audience? (CRE professionals and owners)
2. What will you deliver to the audience? (Content that will answer their pain points)
3. The major audience take-away? (When needed I'm their "go to" person for financing their CRE investments)

What do you do with it once it's written?

- Post it. Display the mission statement where it can be found easily by your audience.
- Use it as a litmus test. Use the mission statement to decide what content you will and won't create. Run the proposed content by the mission statement to determine if it is appropriate for you readers.

Blogging Tips to Remember

1. Use killer titles –
 - a. The most popular posts had some kind of number in them
 - b. Focus on important keywords
2. Focus on the problem – What pain point should I write about today? What keeps my readers up at night?
3. Less is more – blogs are best when they are short
 - a. Keep sentences short
 - b. Use bullets
 - c. Short paragraphs
 - d. Edit – get rid of unnecessary words
4. Always include a call to action
5. Measure results – which blog articles are the most popular? Why?

The Content Channel Plan in Action

To put a content plan into action you need to have the following components:

- The Channel – the core channel you are focusing for a content initiative. (E-newsletter/blog)
- The Persona – the target audience (CRE owners and professionals)
- The Content Goal – your specific purpose for being on that channel (getting people to sign up for my blog)
- Primary Content Type – for a blog it will be text with graphic image but it could include videos
- Structure –
 - How long – 600 to 800 words
 - Short paragraphs
 - Short sentences
 - Use bullet points
 - Use at least one image
- Tone – informative while giving my opinion, my humor
- Channel Integration – HootSuite coordinates posts on Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+ and Facebook
- Desired Action – 25 subscribers per month

Search Engine Optimization –

- Target a rolling list of 50 keywords
- When you develop a piece of online content, try to think of the most likely keyword phrase someone would type into a search engine to find it.

Blog Commenting Strategy

What opened the door to the majority of my relationships and friendships with the key industry influencers was commenting on their blogs and sharing their content.

The Forgotten Skill of Blog Commenting

- Find out where your customers and prospects are hanging out. Use tools such as Google Alerts and Twitter to find out what blogs are making an impact on your customers.
- Develop a list of at least 10 to 15 key blogs in which you are going to be engaged.
- Make an informative comment on each of those blogs at least once per week.

The Influencer List

- An influencer is a blogger, competitor, or media organization that is creating content of interest to our target audience.
- We actually rated our influencer list quarterly, called the “Top 42 Content Marketing Blogs.” (See <http://bitly.com/epic-cmibloggers>).
- Initially found by:
 - tracking keywords in Google Alerts,
 - authors in industry trade publications,
 - those that were talking about the topic on Twitter
- Ranked them according to Google PageRank (this is a ranking Google gives to the credibility of a website).
- Put ranking list on website, and half of the influencers placed CMI’s widget on their home page, linking back to their site.

Getting the Attention of Influencers

- For every six pieces of content shared via social media, 4 were pieces of content from your influencer target list, one piece can be your original, educational piece of content and one piece can be your sales piece.
- While the numbers don’t have to be exact, it’s the philosophy that makes this work. When you share the content of influencers, they notice. And you should share without asking anything in return.

Measuring the Impact of Your Content Marketing

Content marketing is all about developing content that maintains or changes a behavior. Key performance indicators for me:

- Blog sign up
- First time loan inquiries (FTLI)
- Loan closings

Likes on Facebook, tweets on Twitter, etc are irrelevant to these three key performance indicators.

Miscellaneous Tips

- Make sure your blog posts are mobile friendly.
- Blog posts with images are 91 percent more likely to be read than those without an image.
- Content curation – the practice of finding, organizing, and sharing the best and most relevant content on topics that would interest your readers. Even the largest media companies practice content curation. So should you.
- Pop-ups work. Use Pippity pop-over service when offering an e-book in exchange for their subscribing to your blog.
- The only call to action (CTA) should be signing up to receive your blog posts.
- Do a SurveyMonkey asking readers about what content they would like to see. Survey only those who are regular readers. Call them personally to ask them to complete the survey.
- Kapost – it will keep a log of all your ongoing ideas as well as your active contents assets.
- Be a good netizen: participate in on other blogs. Develop a Top 15 hit list where you need to be “hanging out.”
- Do you have a firm grasp on the types of keywords to focus on that your customers are searching for? (See Google’s Keyword Tool.)
- Do you follow those keywords using Google Alerts or watch their usage on Twitter? (Do so to find the influencers in your market.)
- Write a hard bound book, not an e-book. It automatically makes you an expert in your field.
- SlideShare – LinkedIn check it out
- Check out Todd Wheatland’s *The Marketer’s Guide to SlideShare*
- Twitter - make use of hashtags as it makes it easier for people to find your content - #CRE, #theeconomy, #interestrates, #stockmarket, etc
- Hubspot has better analytical tools than Google Analytics to measure results of your social media efforts