

Content as an effective marketing tool

Creation of Marketing Content and its propagation do not require huge budgets. With proper planning and strategy marketers can gain exceptional return on investment from their content marketing plans and leverage it as an effective marketing tool.



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Introduction

Seller can leverage content effectively at different stages of the buying cycle

In the marketplace, (B2B & B2C), a seller has to provide enough information to the buyer in order to influence his purchase decision. He provides this in various forms, including advertising, mailers, seminars, website content, one-on-one discussions, etc. Also this information is provided at different points in time, gradually moving a buyer through different stages.

Unaware → Aware → Interested → Engage → Negotiate → Business closure

It is appropriate to say then that if the seller has appropriate content information available with him in different forms, he can use this judiciously to engage with different kinds of buyer audiences at different stages of the buying cycles. The objective of the content is different at different stages of the buying cycle.

Content creation and propagation does not require huge budgets. With proper planning and strategy marketers can gain exceptional return on investment from their content development budgets. This white paper discusses how you can use content as an effective marketing tool in your marketing plans.

Importance of Content in Marketing

While marketing products & services, a marketer needs to understand the buying behaviour of their target customers for successfully delivering value at all levels. The typical stages involved in a buying process are:

- a. **Unfelt Need:** The operations are running quite smoothly and the need for improvement through specific tools/products is not felt. The innovative competition might be thinking ahead of the curve and investing in a solution that they will need in the future.
- b. **Need felt, but unaware of solution:** The need to fix a problem exists, but there is no consensus on the solution or the type of solution that needs to be looked at. Prospects get involved in the process of research to find the desired information to solve the problem.
- c. **Vendor shortlist:** The need becomes quite intense and features in plans/budgets. The organization actively starts evaluating different vendors that can meet their requirements.
- d. **Commercial negotiation:** Once the solution is shortlisted and technical parameters are finalized, the focus moves to the contracting stage to finalize the legal and commercial parts of the contract.

As mentioned above, it would be obvious that the earlier you enter a customer's span of attention among the above 4 steps, the higher is your probability of

coming out as a winner. At every stage different forms of content are required to win the battle.

Stage	Objective	Content artifact
Unfelt need	Thought leadership Future ready	White paper Articles Webinars on projections, analysis Interview features on select topics Newsletters Roadshows Seminars
Felt need	Build awareness	Brochure Demo Free trial Datasheet Website content Case studies
Vendor shortlist	Meet selection criteria	RFI/RFP response Commercial proposal/Model
Commercial Negotiation	Business closure	Proposal Business Model

While you create one content artifact, always keep an eye on how you can repurpose the content and create several more content artifacts

Creation of Content Artifacts

Here's a small list of different forms content can take. As a marketer, you can use a combination of a few of these, while reaching out to your target customer. While you create one content artifact, always keep an eye on how you can repurpose the content and create several more content artifacts.

Websites

Websites are the means of primary corporate presence on internet. In case of small firms, this may be the only exposure that you have. The website design needs to be effective so that customers can find exactly what they are looking for. Website needs to provide complete information regarding the company, its products and why the prospects should buy from you.

Webcasts / Webinars series

Webcast presents you the potential to gather hundreds or even thousands of participants in a virtual room. Presenters deliver audio content combined with a slide presentation, the participants can also ask question and get the answers in real time. Webcast are usually free to attendees, who must complete a

Blogs, videos and white papers are increasingly used by marketers in building a following for your products and services

registration form with qualifying information. Webcasts produced by you are extremely cost effective.

The webcasts act as strong lead generator, brands the company as thought leader and gets the product or service in front of the decision makers without sounding like sales.

White papers

White papers are an important tool for demonstrating thought leadership to your buyers. Whitepapers usually discuss one or more topics in depth and provide a perspective for the buyer to help his decision making. These are generally between 5 to 10 pages.

E-newsletters

These tools are used to communicate regularly with current and potential customers by providing content that is targeted to their information needs. An e-newsletter provides a brief paragraph or links to articles on your website (typically). They are distributed weekly or monthly and the customers need to provide permission to the sellers so that they can send these to them (permission based marketing). These help in maintaining key relationships, a strong lead generation tool, consistently keeping you in front of the customers.

Business Blogs

Business blogs are short notes and typically represent the author's viewpoint on selected topics. Blogs play an important marketing role by enabling honest dialogue with the customers who are concerned about the company and its products. Business blogging is an important component of content marketing strategy.

Video series

You can add video series to your web site, newsletter or digital magazine. It enables to convey complicated content simply.

Podcasts

A podcast is usually an audio file that you can listen simply on your computer. Podcasts are usually distributed as syndicated feeds. Podcasts are generally 10 to 30 minutes long.

Means of Content Propagation

The content that you generated, as discussed in the section earlier needs to be leveraged effectively. The content needs to be combined with marketing promotion and linked to marketing automation channels, since the content without promotion is nothing since no one knows about it. Here are some of the promotions and distribution activities that you can consider integrating into your overall action plan.

1. Search engine optimization

SEO is the process of improving your ranking on search sites such as google etc. Fresh content, when marketed well helps in improving visibility in search engines.

2. Search engine marketing

SEM refers to pay per click (PPC) on the right side of the search page result. Having indigenous and fresh content allows you to use variety in your SEM efforts. PPC is an effective method of driving the customers and prospects to whitepapers, e-books etc.

3. Social media marketing

Social media sites can be categorized in to social media networks (facebook), social web application (dig.com) and virtual worlds such as secondlife.com. Sites such as youtube and facebook can be leveraged to promote the content marketing initiative.

4. Using email campaigns

Fresh content can be used to keep your email newsletters readable and offer something meaningful to your customers at all times. This helps in keeping lead nurture programs effective.

5. Website lead capture mechanisms

Having effective content also goes a long way in improving effectiveness of website based lead capture mechanisms. You can forward the link of the content artifact to potential customers and interested customers will download this data based on a registration mechanism which captures their demographic data.

Summary

Having effective content also goes a long way in improving effectiveness of website based lead capture mechanisms. You can forward the link of the content artifact to potential customers and interested

About Xenia Consulting

Xenia Consulting is focused on offering outsourced marketing services to technology companies (software products & services) serving the B2B market space.

Xenia uses an optimum blend of marketing automation tools, internet marketing and our own unique methodologies (based on our rich experience) to deliver measurable results in your marketing operations. We understand your tight budget situations and have various engagement mechanisms to meet your budgetary requirements.

Xenia offers services in Demand generation (Lead generation, Nurture, Qualify), Marketing Content Management (Content creation, propagation, analysis). Xenia also offers services in event planning, event management and co-ordination. This is for managing both physical as well as digital events (webinars).

Through our experience, we have successfully handled marketing programs for a variety of enterprise solutions that are targeted at a number of industry verticals.

For more information, please visit

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