

The beginners guide to content strategy and implementation

How to plan, source, manage and share content that
your prospects and customers actually care about

Unlocking

Potential

Guide

The beginners guide to content
strategy and implementation



Content

1

Write on the topics your buyers care about

2

Workshop ideas with the wider business

3

Capture the reader's attention with storytelling

4

Identify the content already generating leads that close

5

Define an editorial process

6

Share across your buyers' favourite platforms

7

Promote content to your buyers specifically



Introduction

Starting Conversations

The way we see it, the most successful businesses are the ones having meaningful conversations with their clients.

Such exchanges show that you understand who your clients are and what they need. They build trust and foster familiarity. Through the practice of engaging in meaningful conversations with the right people, **you build the relationships your business needs to grow.**

But it's noisy out there, and attracting and connecting with your most valuable prospects is more challenging than ever. If you want to succeed in generating leads that close, **you're going to need content that speaks directly to them.**

Of all the elements that make up an inbound marketing strategy, content is the glue holding everything together. After all, not only will your content be **attracting** and **converting** your prospects, it will be assisting your sales team in **closing** them. Let's not forget how you'll then **delight** those customers with valuable content about using and making the most of your services to turn them into referrers and repeat buyers.

Did You Know – Anywhere between one to three million articles are published online every day.

With so much content being produced and published, generic articles and average-quality video just aren't going to cut it anymore. Even good content is going to struggle. So how do you stand out from the crowd and speak to your target buyers?

This is where your content strategy comes in

Your content strategy is the 'how', detailing the creation, distribution, promotion, and management methods of your content. It will focus on your customers' key goals and challenges and how you use a variety of content forms – written assets, infographics, and video, to name but a few – to address their needs.

Better yet, the insights provided by your content strategy will help you to evaluate the effectiveness of your website copy. Have you really explained what your business does? Do you have enough supporting information available (and accessible) that a new site visitor can understand what you do, how you can help them – and why they should choose you over your competition?



1

Write on the topics your buyers care about

To generate leads that close you need an interconnected web of detailed and informative content on the topics your buyers are searching for.

The content on your website can (and should!) be used to help support your visitors throughout their buying journey. This means it's incredibly important to make sure the user journey is optimised as much as possible by ensuring that your website is easy to navigate and that information can be found quickly.

You'll also need a good SEO strategy to make sure you don't start creating content that is never going to appear in search results or generate your goals. Google's latest shift in their algorithms is towards favouring topic-based content. This favours websites that are content-focused. So how can you ensure that your content is fully aligned to the buyer's journey, presented in a logical order on your website and can help boost your ranking with search engines?

Did You Know – Google is no longer looking at exact keywords but **topic clusters**. Linking relevant content together shows the search engine you have authority on a topic. Over time, you should rank higher and higher for the topic it covers. It effectively weaves your content together and creates a site architecture that is easy to crawl.

When it comes to this strategy, you'll end up dedicating a lot of your time to creating, distributing, and promoting content to your audiences, but if you're looking to increase the number of leads that close, this is exactly what you need to be doing.

Introducing topic clusters

To start ranking for topics, rather than keywords, you will try and rank for an entire topic, rather than a few specific keywords. These topics are formed of pillar pages and cluster content (or subtopics, as we like to call them), long-tail keywords directly relating to the main topic. HubSpot calls these topic clusters.

Pillar pages are web pages that are designed to give you a comprehensive overview of each of the subtopics that surround your main topic. They should also have a clear conversion point, guiding visitors in the right direction towards becoming a lead.

The **subtopics** are articles that go into much greater depth by look specifically at one element of the main topic. For example, if our pillar page was about inbound marketing, one of our subtopics might be marketing automation. By linking up all your relevant content (articles, web pages, landing pages etc.) you are showing Google that you know what you're talking about, and that you do this better than anyone else. Google will reward you with overall authority of that topic, and by having a well connected website, it will make it much easier for the search engine to crawl, which will also help to boost your search rankings.

Remember – We’re not writing content solely for search engines. We’re creating content that will help to educate our audiences and help prospective customers find us.

When we’re looking to make a purchase, and we spend time doing research online, we want to find things easily, and we want to find them fast. Imagine how great it would be if we stumbled across a piece of content that answered our original question. Most good articles will do this, but they often throw up more questions that you’ll want answering, and you’ll have to go back to Google to find the answers.

What if our original article not only gave us the other questions we should be thinking about but might not have considered, but also gave us a quick and easy route to find those answers without having to go back to our Google search results? That’s exactly what topic clusters do.

How to get started with building out topic clusters

By now you might be wondering how you can get started with building out topic clusters for your business. Don’t worry, we’ve got you covered:

1. Identify your main topics

Naturally these should align with what you do or what you sell. For example, ours are:

- Marketing
- Sales enablement
- HubSpot

2. Think about all the different areas that come under these pillar topics

There is likely to be some overlap between topics, and that’s fine, it will actually help to boost your rankings in search engines over time.

3. Do your keyword research

This is important. Make sure that you’ve spent time finding out what your prospective customers are actually searching for. This will also help you to uncover additional content ideas that you can add into your topic clusters

4. Create your 3–6 month content plan

Start by writing all of your pillar pages first, then make a start on each of your subtopic articles, infographics, and videos. Starting with your pillar page will help you to link everything together in a logical order.

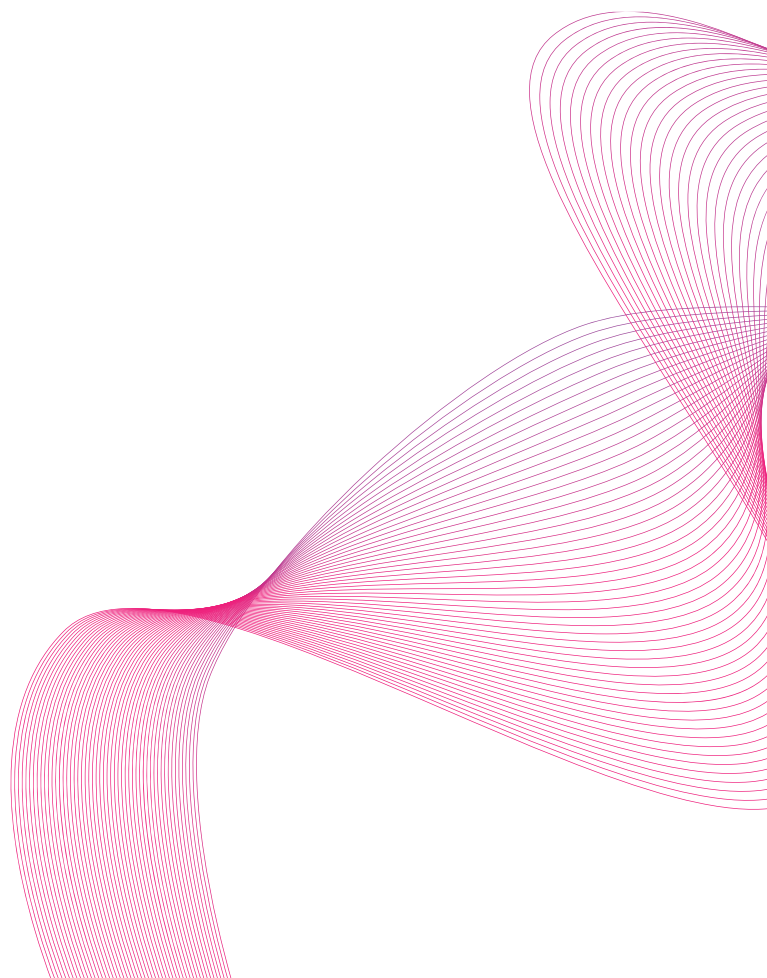
5. Review, measure and iterate

Make sure that you are regularly reviewing your content for relevance, making changes to it so that it stays up to date and visible in the eyes of the search engines. Written content is usually easy and quick to update. Visual assets like infographics and video can require more time and resources, so plan these carefully.

Better nurturing leads to close with informative hubs

Changing your marketing focus from keywords to topic areas will be incredibly beneficial for your business. Not only will you make it easier for people to find you, but you’ll also be able to give them more reason to stay instead of heading back to Google to find more answers.

We appreciate it can be a daunting task to put together a plan for the next three to six months, but if you’re serious about wanting to generate leads that close, stick at it. Having a good content strategy is crucial for getting to that lucrative first position in search engine results pages, nurturing leads to close, and ultimately for growing your business.



Workshop ideas with the wider business

To generate leads that close, you need standout content. Navigate this challenge by leveraging ideas, inspiration, and expertise from across the business.

Getting buy-in for content and inbound marketing is often a challenge for businesses, especially larger ones. By encouraging different teams, departments, and business units to brainstorm and share new content ideas, you involve them in the creation process from day one.

Leveraging these departments will allow you to be transparent about your business in the content you produce, demonstrating authority and helping you to build trust.

Did You Know – If you can answer a prospect's concerns about your products or services in a clear and impactful way before they have even connected with a member of your sales team, it's much more likely they will become a lead that closes.

These are the questions we are most frequently asked when preparing for a content workshop with a client, as well as tips for putting together your own successful workshop and ensuring that you come away with lots of great ideas.

1. How long does a content workshop take?

In our experience, a small company of 10-20 employees can usually get through everything in half a day, but for larger organisations, you may need to book out one

or two days to keep team sizes manageable. Schedule enough time to run through everything you need to and answer any questions your colleagues may have.

2. What do you need to run the workshop?

For a workshop to be successful you'll need to have a clear idea of what you want to cover, so it helps to create a presentation to keep you on track. At a minimum you should include:

- An explanation of how the power has now shifted to the buyer
- An introduction to inbound
- A short explanation of how Google and other search engines work
- A brief overview of the buyer's journey with examples of content for each stage
- A list of the benefits for both the business and the staff
- An explanation of what you are looking for and what you hope to achieve
- Your smart goals

On the day, you'll need to have:

- A laptop and projector screen
- Separate areas for small teams to work (if relevant)
- A whiteboard or flipchart and different coloured markers to write down ideas

In our experience, running a workshop over the lunch period is a great way to get the team together. Order in some pizza to help people engage with and feel excited about your workshop.

If the workshop is going to run over one or two days, make sure that you have scheduled time for coffee breaks too, so that you can all stay focused.

3. What outcomes will a content workshop deliver?

This depends on what you are looking to achieve. If you are simply looking for a way to get questions and ideas out of your colleagues, then this will really help, but you'll be missing out on some serious opportunities for success.

During the session, try to get your colleagues to put themselves in your buyer's shoes. What would they be likely to search on Google? Which social media sites would they be most likely to use? Would they rather read an article or watch a video?

Remember – By considering these details as well as pulling out common pain points and questions, you will be better positioned to join the buyer's journey at an earlier stage.

You should also get everyone to create a list of all the questions they can think of surrounding your products and services. Every single one of these is a potential article or video subject and will help you to think from a different perspective which will be more useful to your prospects than specifications.

But why stop there? If you're lucky enough to have a team who are really enthusiastic about what you've taught them, why not ask them to draft some articles themselves? That way you'll have a steady stream of content waiting to be edited and then published.





3

Capture the reader's attention with storytelling

Stories excite us in ways that facts and statistics can't and that's incredibly powerful, especially when you've got your content cap on.

I want you to think back to the last time you heard a story. I'm willing to bet it was today. We hear them on the radio when driving to work in the morning; we tell them at the office first thing on a Monday; we read them in the papers or on our phones at lunch; we watch them in the evening when we crash on the sofa. They're on the backs of cereal packets and the front of billboards, they're under our beds at night and in our sleeping heads.

Here's the thing – Stories are how people make sense of themselves and the world around them, giving context and meaning to information that would otherwise be forgotten hours, minutes, or seconds later.

They can be told across a variety of forms, from articles and case stories to engaging videos. Most importantly in my opinion, they appeal to our emotions, and for this reason if nothing else they belong in all areas of marketing.

Let me tell you a story

A few weeks ago, I was speaking with a prospect who wanted to improve the performance of her team's content and its wider impact on the business.

She'd heard how storytelling could be the key to an **effective content strategy**, and she totally got it – people love stories! – but that's where she was stumped. Her situation reminded me that while for many salespeople and marketers storytelling comes naturally, for others it's unexplored territory.

The problem? Telling a good story is hard, and most of us are out of practice.

We invest years getting our heads down for MBAs. We spend twice that 'in the field', obsessing over KPIs and metrics and planning and meetings and who is delivering this report and why did no one reply to that email and where are the coffee pods?

We sit in siloed departments and break down businesses into revenue streams and forecast figures used to populate vast spreadsheets, all because we need to tick off a task before we dash off at five to catch the bus/beat the traffic/hit the pub – and we lose sight of the bigger picture. What does the customer want? How can your business help them get there? And what are the stories that bring this relationship to life?

Getting story ideas

It can be frustrating trying to find inspiration for new written or visual content. One solution, in my experience, can be finding ways to leverage the insight and creativity of the sales team. Whether you end up speaking to sales people individually or in a group meeting, here's how you can collect their thoughts and ideas, quickly and effectively.

1. Ask them what content they want

Dive straight in. It's likely that they're struggling to fit the content you're producing into their introductory and follow-up emails - or they might not even be aware of the content you've created.

Run through the content already available to them and ask if there's anything missing, or if there's something in particular that could really help them close a deal faster. Put yourself in the position where you're helping them to do their job better.

I can guarantee there will have been times when a member of the sales team has said 'I really wish I had xyz to send to this prospect!', so get them to share these insights with you.

2. Get them to share customer and prospect questions

A salesperson's inbox will be an absolute goldmine for content ideas. Ask them to bcc you into their email correspondence so you have a constant stream of ideas for blog titles. This is also a great way to find out which questions keep coming up. When you find one, craft an article to answer it and encourage your sales team to link to it in their emails.

It's likely that they'll have a few different ways to answer the question, and you can improve your article based on their feedback. Doing this will also save them time, and they'll be able to see the benefits as soon as they've used your article in their emails.

Of course, there's every chance they might not be too comfortable sharing their emails with you - so an alternative could be ask them to send you a list of all the questions they were asked that day, week or month. This is a little more time consuming, so point out that bcc'ing you is the quicker option.

3. Schedule meetings for sales and marketing alignment

This is another one that is dependent on time, but if both sales and marketing teams are able to schedule a meeting once a week (or even once a month) it will help to keep everyone up-to-date and provide another opportunity to surface new content ideas.

Sales and marketing alignment meetings are also a great place for both teams to discuss:

- **The efficiency of the sales process**
- **Lead scoring and sales qualification**
- **Mapping your existing content to the different stages of the buyer's journey**
- **How well specific pieces of content are performing**
- **If any improvements can be made**

Sales and marketing teams should aim to be in constant communication with each other. That way, you can always ensure you're all working together towards the same goal.



Interview the experts

Whether you're interviewing sales, customer service, or John from Product Innovation, it helps to be able to get the information you're looking for as quickly as possible. And it's often just customer queries and support questions that you'll uncover.

Some tips for when you assume the journalist position:

- **Who are the experts? The movers, the shakers, the product makers? (John, that means you.) Experience often comes hand-in-hand with stories.**
- **Confidence is key. Don't be intimidated by seniority, although I appreciate that's easier said than done. Learn how to carry yourself in an interview.**
- **Record, record, record! Whether you're producing a full-scale video interview or you want to catch all the details of an audio for transcription later, consider how you're going to do this. (Always ask permission before recording someone.)**

Everyone has stories. By taking the time to engage someone from further afield than marketing, you're creating opportunities to listen for those stories. If you listen closely, and you have an ear for it, you might just hear something special.

How to tell a story

Storytelling isn't easy. We've all read a book or watched a film and been disappointed. If the story doesn't hook you in the first few minutes, you'll find your mind wandering. If it takes a turn that doesn't make sense to you, you'll feel confused. Inconsistencies in the narrative can break the illusion and damage your faith in the story. If it doesn't end in a satisfying way, you'll probably leave a negative review somewhere.

As a starting point, we recommend you pay attention to these four key areas when drafting a piece of narrative content.

1. Character

In the buyer persona chapter, I touched on marketers' tendencies to put their company or brand centre stage in their content. This is probably one of the biggest reasons why businesses new to content marketing struggle. Nobody wants to read a piece of content about your brand. That's an advert.

To tell an engaging story, put your target buyer centre stage. This shouldn't be difficult, if you've been thorough with your buyer personas. You know them inside out. Make it as easy as possible for the reader to imagine themselves in the scenario you're relating and they'll be engaged to the end.

2. Conflict

You have your character. Where is the conflict? What is the tension? What is happening to make the story interesting, surprising, or cautionary?

By building your personas' challenges into their stories, you are including challenges that you know your reader can relate to. Now they're not only imagining themselves in the story, they've invested in it. They feel the character's struggle and they want to see it resolved.



3. Story arc

Stories have beginnings, middles, and ends. This is how we experience stories and this is how we expect them to unfold. By building this arc clearly into your content, you provide a familiar framework that the reader understands and can follow.

You can use story arc in more creative ways, too. Consider offering a gated resource, checklist, or some other download as the resolution to the story. If it's a logical next step in the story you're telling and the reader is invested, then they're more likely to convert.

4. Keep it real

Reality is not something we always immediately associate with stories, but even fiction depends on it to engage the reader. If the representation of a character isn't convincing, for example, the story's hold often breaks. If their emotions don't seem genuine, we don't relate.

In the context of narrative content, this comes back to trust and plausibility. Root your content in something tangible and relevant to the buyer persona's situation, like a real-life case study, and the reader is far more likely to engage with it. Use real-life details and examples to maintain authenticity.

It's important to take your reader on a journey, from the moment they arrive at your homepage right up until they decide to reach out to you for help. And increasingly, as traditional SEO becomes less relevant and search engines become smarter, stories are your way of connecting with a prospect, of starting a conversation.

Identify the content already generating leads that close

There's a strong chance your content is already generating leads that close. A content audit will highlight this, giving you visibility over your most valuable assets.

There will be some content in your business already. You may have created some articles, white papers, or case studies and that's only looking at the online content – what about the brochures and collateral being used by the sales team?

Doing a content audit will help you to:

- 1. Get clear visibility of the content already in your business to understand what is missing, what should be binned and what could be repurposed.**
- 2. Ultimately, save time and resources by not having to start from scratch.**

Now you're on board, let's dive back in.

Let me tell you a story

It's time to create an inventory of both your online and offline content. First, create a spreadsheet to keep track of everything. We'll go through all of the columns you'll need throughout this article but start off with the name.

Secondly, make sure that you look in all areas of the business. Here are a few examples of the types of content you could find just in marketing and sales:

- Blog Posts
- White papers / ebooks / Guides
- Checklists
- Case studies
- Videos
- Infographics
- Podcasts
- Newsletters Webinars
- Brochures
- Proposals
- Presentations
- Price Lists
- Product specifications.

If you have a lot of customer testimonials, you might want to track these in a separate tab in your spreadsheet, noting where they are currently used. They will act as a really useful resource when you are creating content in the future.

Put the content into groups

Add columns to denote the format of the content. That might be an article, white paper, video, or infographic. The list goes on. My main advice would be to keep it consistent and simple, so that you can filter by type at a later stage.

I mentioned before that you will have already sorted out your topics. If you haven't, I'd recommend revisiting Chapter One as this will make it much easier to marry up your existing content with that which you'll be creating from scratch going forward.

Who and what is each piece of content for?

There are three areas in particular we are looking at during this stage:

1. **Persona**
2. **Stage of the buyer's journey**
3. **Purpose**

This is the part which will give you some really interesting insight into the content. It may be that it was created before you looked into personas and the buyer's journey, so don't worry if it straddles a few, just make sure that it's all noted down.

Knowing the purpose of a piece of content is crucial as even if it seems like it's unnecessary to you, another person in the business could find it invaluable for a reason you hadn't considered. Make sure you interview the people who actually use the content to understand its purpose.

Here are a few examples of what a purpose could be for a piece of content:

- To convert a website visitor into a lead
- To demonstrate past results and expertise
- To inform a prospect about a specific product in more depth
- To get over a common objection during the sales process

At this stage, you will also want to take note of where it's located. Is this something which only gets sent out directly to prospects by the sales team? Is it gated on your site or is it sat open for anyone to read?

How is it performing?

An effective content strategy depends on content that delivers on its goals. To really understand the role of each piece of content, you need to see how it's performing. But you'll likely have a lot of content in your inventory, with lots of different goals or objectives, so it wouldn't be fair — or helpful — to review them all using the same performance metrics.

Instead, look at appropriate metrics for each piece of content. For example, if you have a gated guide created to generate leads, look at the conversion rate of its landing page and the click-through on its calls to action. If your articles are aiming to raise brand awareness, look at visits and traffic metrics (and potentially the conversion rate to subscriber).



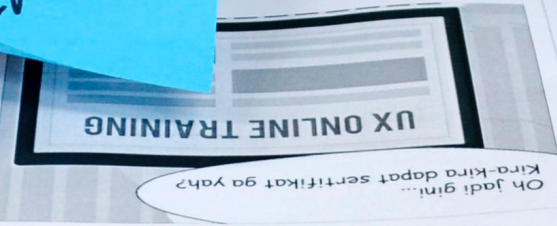
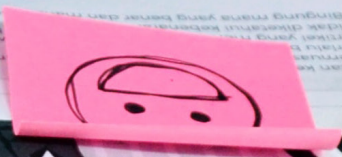


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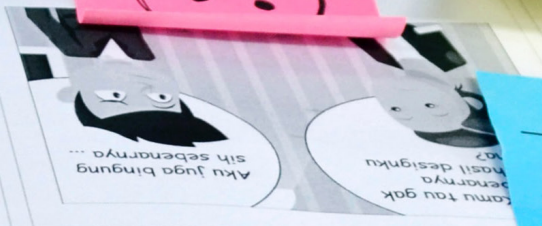
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What next?

Now that you've discovered, categorised, and analysed your content, it's time to start working out what to do with it. Not everything will need to be kept, so aim to attach one of the following categories to each piece of content:

- **No change needed** - This piece of content is working really well and doesn't need changing at all.
- **Delete** - It could just be badly executed or it could be so old that it no longer makes sense for your business. Either way, it's not staying.
- **Update** - You see promise in this piece of content, it just needs a few tweaks to get it right. That could be adding some up to date information or doing a quick copy edit.
- **Completely rewrite** - If you need to make significant edits to an article, you can add an editor's note to the bottom to say it was originally published on X date but has been updated, and re-publish it. That way, you've basically got a new piece of content and it's showing that you're keeping up to date with things rather than just churning out content for the sake of it.
- **Repurpose** - You might have an infographic that's been floating around - consider putting it into an article and making more of it, then sharing out on social media with sections of the infographic as preview images. If you find a valuable piece of ungated content that's currently in a PDF, consider turning it into an article that could really help you to be found via organic search with a great conversion point.

- **Combine** - Now you've got a clear view of your content, you might have identified five articles that could be combined into a guide and used for lead generation, for example. As you write more and more around clusters of related topics, the potential for related articles and other short-form content to be combined into a longer-form piece increases.
- **Break apart** - The opposite is also true. That twenty-page white paper could be neatly broken down into a series of shorter articles and used to promote the larger content offer on your blog or via a nurture sequence. Sometimes a piece of content just doesn't work because it's too much to absorb in one sitting or the story arc is too complex or the subject is too technical without going into much more detail. Tackling it as shorter, more accessible or specific articles could be a fast, effective solution.

Remember, with so much content out there, yours needs to be high quality. Make sure that if something isn't hitting that mark, you mark it as 'needs work' or even consider getting rid of it - articles that come in at 200 words and just announce an award you won? Maybe it's time to delete it and add a section to your site which displays the awards you have won instead.

Prioritise and make a plan

So by this point you'll be looking at your spreadsheet and thinking one of two things.

1. **'There's basically nothing on this, we really have a long way to go.'**
2. **'So. Much. Content. Tom, why did you make us do this?!'**

Either way, don't panic. If you haven't found very much, then go ahead and work with what you've got but also invest some time in finding out what content you need. You've probably made a great start at identifying those gaps by talking to others in the business.

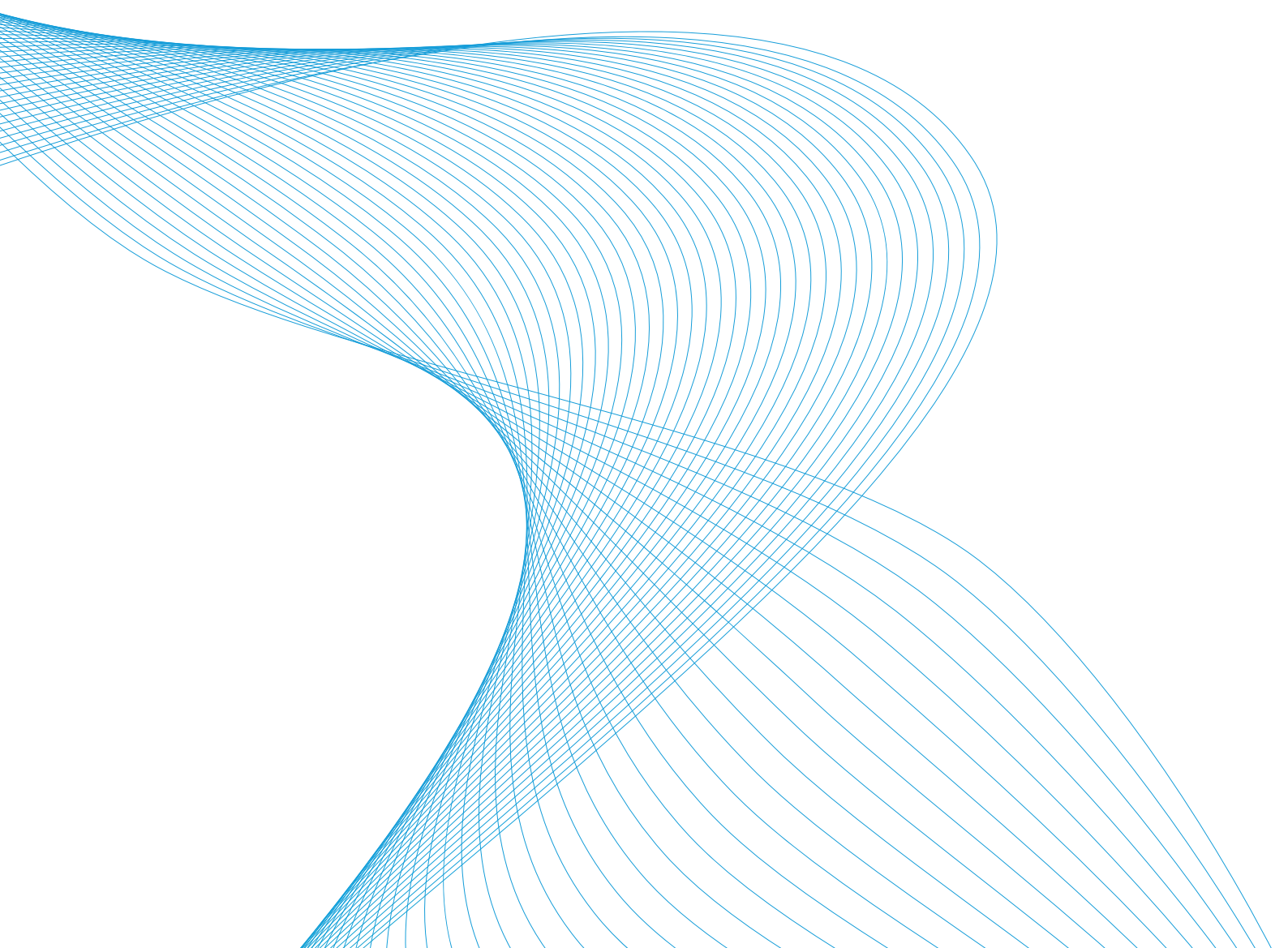
Found lots and wondering where on earth to start?

Not everything can be done at once, especially when you will also need to be creating new content to fill the gaps that you are starting to notice.

- What can be changed quickly to make a big impact? Go through your newly populated spreadsheet and work out which of your next steps will need the smallest effort to see the biggest results. Start there.
- Creating a content calendar to plan in your decided next steps with this old content, and to schedule pieces of new content can be a great way to draw everything together and make it seem more manageable.

You've now got all the steps you need to audit your content and make a plan of action for how to tackle each piece.

I know it can seem like a challenging task, particularly when some of that content might be hidden in the in box of the sales department, but honestly, it will be worth the time when your content starts delivering leads that actually close.



Define an editorial process

You're writing more like a publisher, but are you running like one? Defining and working to an editorial process is often a company's biggest content challenge.

The biggest content challenge often isn't the content production itself but the process of getting it reviewed, edited, uploaded and either scheduled or published in a timely and efficient way.

'Timely' and 'efficient' are not two words that come to this process naturally, especially during the early stages. Businesses are realising they need to start acting more like publishers with regards to the content they produce but forgetting that this comes with processes of its own that must be followed and adhered to if the content production stage is going to prove cost-effective and sustainable.

Fortunately, there are steps you can take to improve the way you manage the content side of your marketing. When implemented correctly, an editorial process is the lubrication in the content marketing machine, ensuring the stories and videos you need to attract and close those leads are produced efficiently and consistently.

Creating a content calendar

In order to keep up with their fast-paced publishing cycles, newspapers and magazines keep an editorial calendar or a schedule of who is writing what - and when.

Using this editorial calendar, editors can know what's coming up well in advance, ensuring a smoother and more organised publishing process. Imagine how chaotic everything would be without it a scramble for subject matter, editorial approval, missed deadlines, and late or poorly written articles. It's an editor's nightmare.

A clear, easy-to-use content calendar works in the same way. Here's how to create one.

1. Start with your end goal in mind

Whether this is driving blog subscriptions, capturing personal details, or something else besides, this is the point you are working towards.

2. Align the goal with your buyer personas and where they are on the buyer's journey

This will provide strong indicators of the form you should be writing in - articles, case studies, how-to guides, listicles, and so on - or whether or not you should be writing anything at all (do they respond better to video and infographics, for example?).

If your goal is lead capture, it will also reveal the kinds of resources you could test as hooks. Work these into the calendar to give a comprehensive overview of the content that needs to be created, by whom, and when.

3. What topics are your buyer personas interested in (content they will value)

And how can you align these with your value propositions and company stories to create more engaging, personalised narrative content? This is an effective way of writing about the subjects your audience is interested in, in a distinctive way that will help to elevate your content above that of your competitors.

Note – At this stage, it is important to be self-critical. It is easy to create a calendar that ‘sounds right’ or that you can imagine being effective. Cross-reference this against the personas. Better yet, put yourself in your personas’ shoes. Would that article benefit you? Why would you read it over the thousands of similar articles already published?

4. Don’t forget to research suitable keywords to support your content

While it is arguably more important to create content that will engage your readers, offer them value, or encourage deeper thinking, keywords should be used where natural and appropriate to provide greater organic visibility and search relevancy to the content in your calendar.

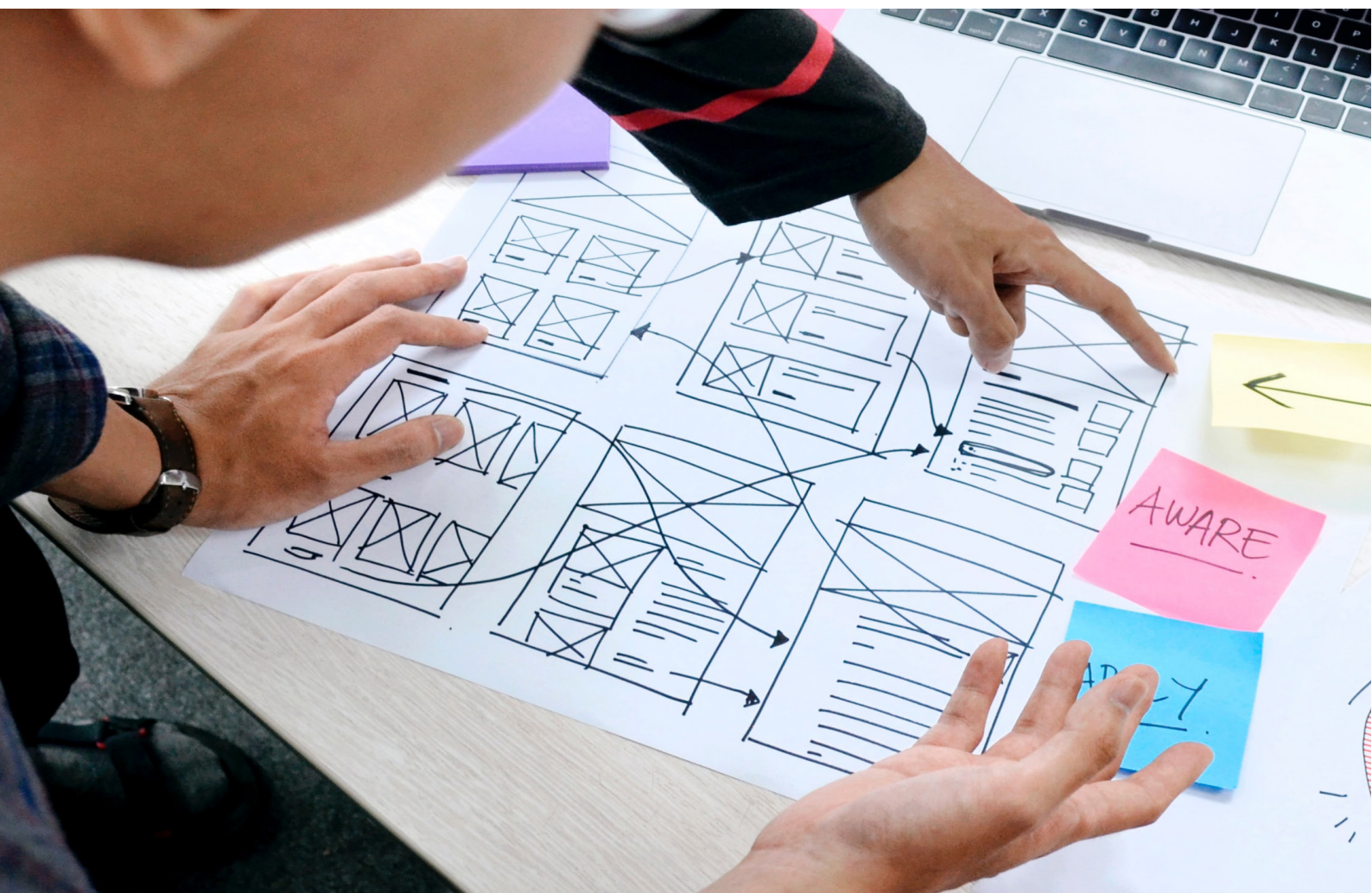
5. Input all of this information into a calendar format

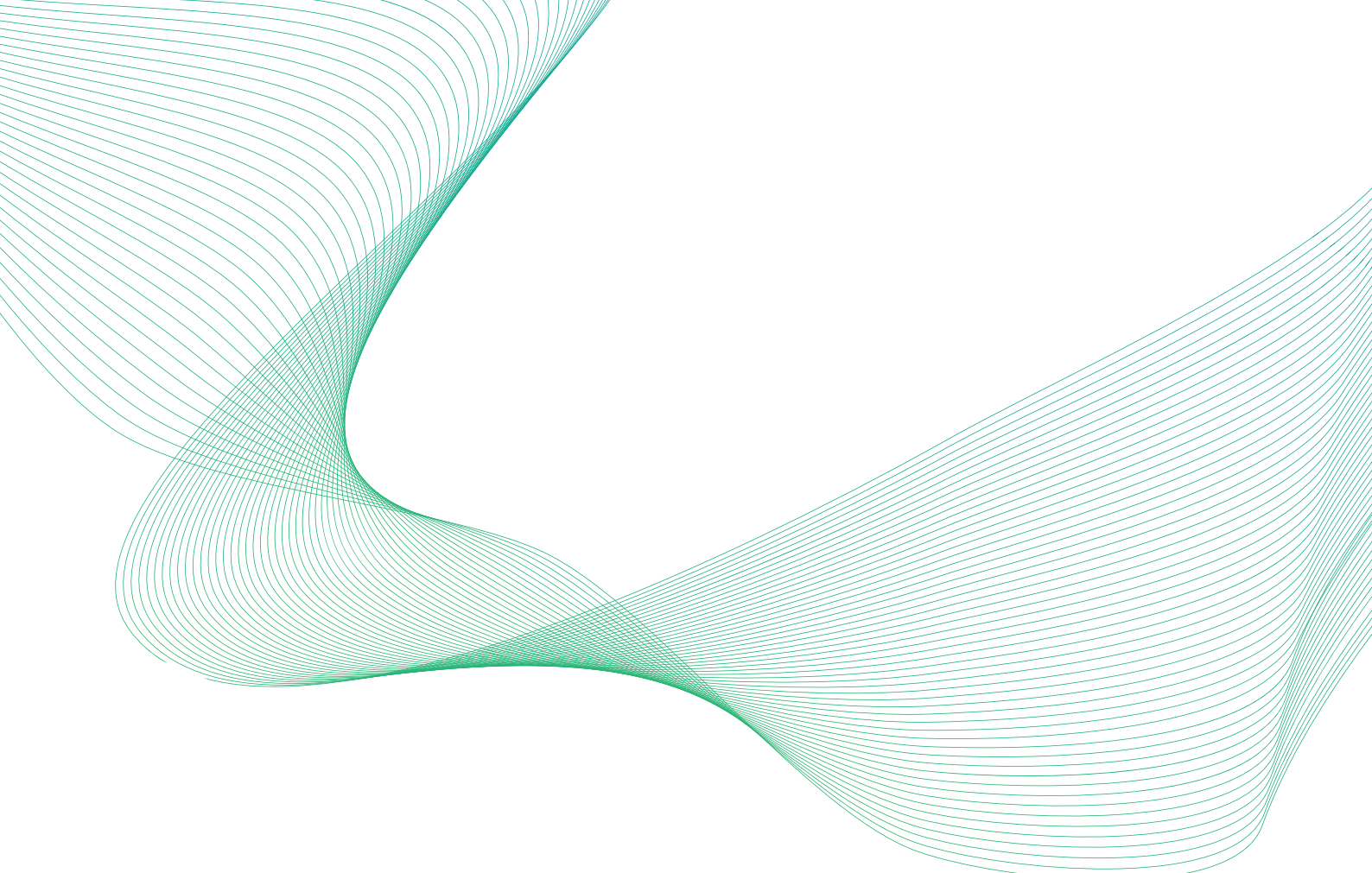
The calendar should be clearly set out and easy to access so that the team has no excuse not to work from it. Consider when the articles will need to be published,

as well as the dates by which first drafts should be completed. Who will be responsible for creating the content? When will they need to be briefed? What form will the content be? Have you linked to any important resources, and does the calendar state the aim (how the content should help the reader) and objective (what you want the content to achieve) of each entry?

6. Implement

Once the calendar is up and running, all you need to do is follow your own routine, adjusting when needed, based on resources, feedback and, hopefully, growth.





Our process goes basically like this:

- 1. Brainstorm new stories for calendar**
- 2. Write, edit and edit some more**
- 3. Publish and evaluate**
- 4. Repeat**

The drafting, editing, and approval stage

This is an important stage in any content marketing process. Content should always be reviewed before going live. Even the most stringent copywriters will make mistakes from time to time, and while editors are often described as being eagle-eyed, this is, in fact, just a metaphor.

As a result, establishing an approval stage between content production and publication helps to maximise accuracy and maintain a healthy working relationship between all parties involved.

To make this stage as efficient and painless as possible, we recommend the following.

1. Define the workflow

Establish who will be writing or creating content and who will be reviewing it. The more complex this gets, with multiple editors or multiple levels of approval, the more challenging the approval process becomes.

When multiple parties begin editing a piece of work, feedback can get complicated and publication can be unduly delayed, with repercussions as far up as engagement metrics. In extreme cases, content production can grind to a halt, limiting the company's ability to engage with the leads it needs to grow.

2. Work to a common goal

A small but important point. Make sure the person editing the content is familiar with the campaign and its goals. These factors will often influence the way a piece of content grows out, so the more familiar the editor is with these elements, the fewer questions they should have with the content.

Share across your buyers' favourite platforms

Look for the social media sites and forums where your target buyers spend their time and set about sharing useful, relevant content with them there.

I want you to think back to how you found this ebook. Did you spot it on your LinkedIn newsfeed, or was it recommended to you by a colleague or contact? (Bonus points if you're a subscriber or you found it via organic search.)

The way we see it, the secret of worthwhile social media distribution is to make sure you take the time to understand where your target buyers are spending their time and what works best on the various platforms. You could just share all your content across all channels, but you'll get better results (and save a lot of time) if you take a more strategic approach.

You can find these places by searching for them (not just via Google, but also through Reddit, Google+, Facebook, Quora and LinkedIn).

Instagram - has high rates of user engagement with brands, but 90% of users are under 35, so this platform is probably only worthwhile if your target audience fits into this demographic. You can pay to promote your content, and there are lots of targeting options, including by job title. An obvious but-still-worth-mentioning-point is that Instagram works best when your company has a well-defined visual identity.

Facebook - is currently the most cost-effective channel, allows narrow targeting, and currently boasts the most sophisticated AI capabilities, but do some research first to make sure it is relevant to your sector, as it is still perceived by many as one of the more informal platforms.

There is a lot to know about getting content promotion right on **LinkedIn** and it is worthwhile researching it in more depth. One feature that needs a special mention here though is the site's SlideShare tool, which is great for packaging up content in an easy-to-digest format.

Twitter - is a competitive platform, because of its high-volume low-value traffic. Your posts disappear fast- with a median lifespan of 18 minutes according to Moz. That might make you want to reuse each tweet multiple times, but your audience will pay more attention if you keep them fresh. Other options where your audience might be found include online magazines, biogs, or specialist forums.

Learn the local customs

When you've found the digital dive bars where your people hang out, the next step is to get down with their lingo and customs.

Don't just share your content and leave it at that. Your efforts will be much more effective if you spend some time understanding the 'etiquette' of groups, add your own insight and analysis on other's content, pose questions to others and make use of influencers.

If you're active on Facebook, for example, considering setting up an automated chat bot to answer any questions your content raises. The immediacy and accuracy of your pre-programmed responses is an excellent way to further engage the casual reader and encourage them to read more of your content. (See Chapter Eighteen.)



The raw power of influencers

Find and reach out to industry experts and influencers, then ask for their opinions and encourage them to share your article with their peers if they found it useful. B2C is the obviously example of this kind of marketing, with the best-known examples being famous vloggers who review products to large bases. In a nutshell, fans sit up and pay attention when a vlogger they trust makes a product recommendation.

An equally strong, if not stronger, story exists for the case of influencer marketing in the B2B space. Think about it: as business buyers, we are far more likely to look for recommendations from peers and even competitors than we are to go in blind. If your target buyer is looking to make a significant investment in a marketing platform, CRM, new phone system, or even book a team night out, they are going to be wanting to reduce risk by seeking recommendations from others who have done the same before them.

Whichever side of the fence you're on, asking experts for their thoughts on your soon-to-be-published articles is a solid starting point. With their (hopefully insightful) quotes added in, there is a good chance they will then share the finished product, handily exposing your article and wider blog to their audience.

Repurpose with purpose

Tweak your content to make it suitable for LinkedIn, Medium or other relevant sites and you can squeeze a few more miles out of them. You don't have to do a total rewrite - just adjust to fit. For example, if you are posting to LinkedIn Pulse, you may want to shorten your article and provide a link back to the original.

If you spend 30% of your time creating content, we recommend spending the remaining 70% on its promotion. As long as your content is strong, this is when you will really start to climb above your competitors and engage relevant traffic, which is essential if you're generating leads that actually close.

Promote content to your buyers specifically

At first glance this title looks like it goes against everything we've been saying. Surely the interruptive technique of paid advertising can't work with inbound? Well actually, not necessarily.

The essence of inbound focuses on your personas. Those semi-fictional representations of ideal customers are the foundation upon which everything else grows. Marketers are no longer simply thinking about a product. We're thinking about the people to whom we're talking.

If implemented using this same logic, paid advertising can be a valuable asset, particularly to the attract stage of the buyer's journey if rooted by the fundamental inbound principles.

There are three forms of paid advertising that lend themselves particularly well to this: paid search, sponsored posts, and retargeting. At its simplest, paid search enables you to advertise your pages to users actively searching for your keywords, sponsored posts sit natively within social media feeds alongside content viewers have already chosen to see, and retargeting shows your products or services to users who have already visited those pages. With all of these forms of advertising, the paid element is simply expanding the reach of your content in a targeted way that makes sense for the customer, rather than just those footing the bill.

Make the most of content sharing and amplification platforms

The use of content amplification platforms is a paid tactic that will extend the reach of your content to your most valuable prospects. It allows you to put your content (still

retaining your branding) in front of your target audience across multiple channels, including websites, social media sites, and other properties.

Examples include:

StumbleUpon - A discovery engine that finds and recommends content to its users. It allows people to discover and rate content that is personalised to their interests.

Flipboard - A content aggregation platform that allows you to create a custom 'magazine' that users can find, share and subscribe to. Include a mixture of your own content and articles from external sources.

Outbrain - A content amplification platform. Articles are promoted to relevant websites based on the topic of the article. Outbrain's algorithm finds the best sites to position your content to ensure the maximum number of conversions.

Perfect Audience - A content retargeting platform. Use Perfect Audience to build adverts that appear on other sites once your visitors have left your website. As part of your blog strategy, you should aim to create an advert that relates to the original article but contains a relevant content offer.

Inbound.org - An on line hub bringing together content and ideas on inbound marketing from all over the world. A great place to get feedback on what you're doing.

Syndication, the drug of a nation

Actually, syndicated content has no narcotic qualities as such. But who doesn't enjoy a good rhyme in a subhead?

Syndicated content, which is another paid service, can be seen at the bottom of website pages under headings such as 'from around the web'. Basically, syndicating your content

means that you are paying to form alliances with partners who have high traffic, therefore hopefully putting your content in front of an audience that, if it became leads, would be more likely to close.

The inbound approach to paid advertising

Here are five ways to align paid advertising with inbound and see results.

1. Always have your buyer persona in mind

Social media sites make it easy to target your ads based on a variety of different metrics from job title and company size to skillset and groups they belong to. Keeping the persona in mind also ensures that you're targeting the right platform. After all, there's no point pouring money into Twitter Cards if your persona predominantly spends time on LinkedIn.

2. Make sure that you apply the same rules as any other piece of content

It needs to be remarkable and offer something to the reader, whether that's helping them to understand a particular problem or giving them ideas on how to solve it.

3. Focus on the right stage of the buyer's journey

You've learned a great deal about how your target buyer is searching, and paid advertising is another opportunity to draw from this to deliver a more relevant and personalised experience.

Wherever your target buyer is along the [buyer's journey](#), make sure the content you're advertising reflects this. If you're not able to target someone at a specific stage, the safest (and most customer-centric) approach is to deliver top-level content designed to inform or inspire. Anything overly sales focused will instantly get passed over by a reader if they are just researching and are not ready to make a decision just yet.

4. Test!

Inbound is all about learning from failures and improving every time. You could even run two very similar ads with small differences, and see what gains the best response. Don't just think that when an ad is published you need to stick with it. If it's not working, find out why and change it for the better.

5. Link to a landing page

Think of paid advertising as a way to draw prospects into the inbound methodology, connecting the two rather than having them run independently. Once a prospect is on your site you always want to be drawing them to submitting a form to find out more about them and take them from a number to a person.

So really, the question of whether paid advertising and inbound can work alongside one another is not as clear-cut as it once appeared. By keeping it customer-centric and focusing on being helpful rather than pitching the hard sell, there's no reason why the two can't work well together.





About BabelQuest

Need a hand setting up your inbound marketing strategy?

BabelQuest was formed from our belief that businesses need to focus on generating leads that close if they want to grow in a predictable, scalable, and repeatable way. That's why everything we do revolves around achieving this. Central to delivering on this promise is the understanding that beneath the **strategies**, the **technology**, and the implementation of sales and marketing **activity**, we're working to start **conversations between our clients and their customers**. It's as simple and as complicated as that.

If we've done our job well with this guide, you'll recognise by now that meaningful conversations aren't possible if you don't know who you are, what your prospects care about, and how to communicate with them in a consistently engaging way.

We hope this guide helps you to define these core aspects of every effective inbound marketing strategy, whether you're challenged by your value proposition, your buyer personas, your communications strategy, or the key activity you need to be completing to drive predictable, scalable, repeatable growth, month on month.

If you'd like to talk to us about any of the points discussed here, [drop us an email](#) and we'll happily have a chat with you at your convenience, even if that's early morning, in the evening - or on a Saturday.



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