



CONTENT MARKETING 101 FOR B2B DIGITAL MARKETING



Introduction

B2B marketing campaigns are constantly adapting to the rapidly shifting needs and demands of the modern business world, but one factor remains constant: A well-designed content marketing strategy can elevate a business from good to great. It's how you create an effective message and build a genuine connection with your audience. Today, in fact, **69% of B2B marketers** use a documented content marketing strategy to grow their businesses; it's become one of the go-to strategies to help marketers reach target audiences and convert higher quality leads.

But content marketing as a whole encompasses a wide range of micro-strategies, assets, and use cases. It goes beyond more than just a blog post or a singular video. In this white paper, we take a comprehensive look at B2B content marketing—from what it is to how you determine its success.



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What is Content Marketing?

According to [Hubspot](#), content marketing “is the process of planning, creating, distributing, sharing, and publishing content to reach your target audience.” At its core, content marketing is designed to attract prospective customers and engage current customers by providing valuable, useful information. Typical assets used in content marketing include blog posts, white papers, case studies, e-books, webinars, videos, and even podcasts—more on that below.

What Does Content Marketing Do?

Content marketing is the paramount method of telling an engaging narrative. If executed successfully, it can create brand awareness, drive interactions, boost sales and reach, and build loyalty among potential and current customers. It’s truly the king of top-of-funnel demand. The actual role content marketing plays, however, will depend on your goals and KPIs—which will need to be set before any content marketing strategy is executed.

Common Types of Content Marketing

Various types of marketing collateral fall under the umbrella of content marketing, including:

- Industry-related blog posts
- Case studies detailing a solution to a common industry problem
- Industry-specific white papers
- Buyer’s guides and product brochures
- Infographics showing data in a consumable, digestible format
- Videos and podcasts

Choosing the type of asset you’ll use for your B2B marketing campaign is often deemed overwhelming (there are a lot of options), but it’s a problem that can be easily solved. Start by defining your buyer persona and target audience, then ask the following questions:

- Where does your audience spend most of their time?
- Why is your product or service necessary for their business?
- What solutions are you bringing to the table?

From there, you’ll be able to determine what type of content will be the best fit for the audience. Remember, for the best ROI, content marketing requires different content formats for different targets. Would you tell a story to your boss the same way you’d tell your friend? The gist would be similar, but the flourishes and details would differ. It’s the same thing with content marketing; content meant for a CEO’s consumption will vary—in messaging and in creative asset—from content targeted to the director of sales.



Content marketing **generates 3x more** organic in-bound leads than traditional marketing tactics.

The Role of Content Marketing in Demand Generation and Account-Based Marketing Campaigns

Content marketing is a central tenet of both demand generation and account-based marketing (ABM) campaigns; each leverages compelling, scalable content in order to engage select groups of audiences and support the overall strategy. Directly selling to the audience isn't encouraged (or impactful) for longer buying cycles, and content marketing assets work to help buyers navigate the entire decision-making process and make the most informed determination

According to a study conducted by MDG Advertising, 70% of consumers look to gain knowledge about products from content versus traditional advertising methods.

Quality versus quantity is the repeated content marketing mantra in demand generation and ABM. Creating a large portfolio of content simply for the sake of doing so is ill-advised. B2B content marketing assets should always do one of two things: detail how a particular product or service solves a specific problem or educate your audience about what exactly your company offers. "You're not going to influence savvy business minds by choosing some 'psychological' background color," writes Founder and CEO of Venture Harbour Marcus Taylor, "[you're] going to influence these people by addressing their needs as a buyer and showing that you can solve their business problems." At the end of the day, the key to employing content marketing for ABM and demand generation is producing tailored, quality content that will push targeted accounts further down the sales funnel.

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How Content Marketing Works in the Sales Funnel

Content marketing can be used in a variety of ways in order to reach audiences at any stage of the sales funnel—from awareness through evaluation. The secret to success, however, is understanding what type of content will be most effective and where in the sales funnel the audience will be most likely to engage.

The Awareness Stage

According to the [Content Marketing Institute](#), over 80% of marketers list the ability to generate leads at the top of the funnel and drive brand awareness as their top reasons for employing a content marketing strategy. That’s because content marketing is the most impactful at this stage.

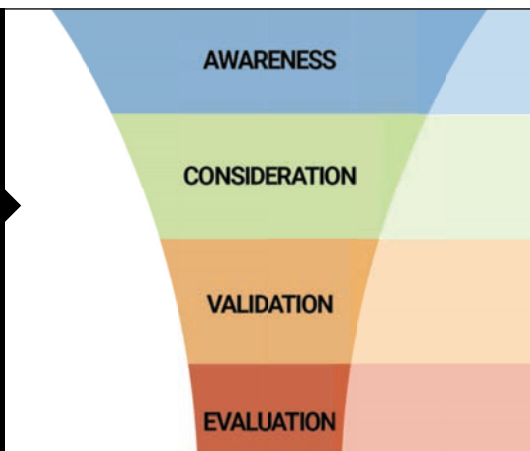
Content marketers can use a variety of different assets, but when it comes to increasing brand awareness, CMI found that blog posts were 73% effective at moving leads to the next stage of the sales funnel and creating more brand awareness. On the other hand, case studies were only 18% effective at capturing more top of the funnel leads. Long story short: When it comes to increasing brand awareness, customers are piqued by more easily digestible, broader materials (such as blog posts or e-books) and are less interested in the more specific collateral such as case studies or white papers. Save those for the next stage of the funnel.

The Consideration and Validation Stages

As target audiences advance through the sales funnel into the consideration and validation stages, the assets that influence their decision-making will change form. At this stage, customers are now aware of your business and they’re determining if the product or service is the best solution for them. They want to learn about how your company has previously helped companies similar to theirs; your expertise must be fully apparent. Here, case studies become much more effective, pushing prospective customers to the next stage in the funnel **42% of the time**.

The Evaluation Stage

Once your target audience reaches the evaluation stage, the buying committee will require content that outlines specifics; the marketing assets you provide them must address all remaining questions and concerns accurately and reliably. When they’ve reached this phase, assets such as product brochures or product infographics can



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Targeting with Content Marketing

Once your content is created for each stage of the funnel, it's time to execute your campaign—and that starts with targeting. Targeting is a crucial aspect of guaranteeing the success of B2B content marketing, as it allows marketers to focus their efforts on engaging smaller, concentrated audiences, rather than an entire market. With accurate targeting, content is only consumed by the most relevant audiences, resulting in a higher ROI of ad spend. There are multiple targeting strategies, including targeting by industry or by a specified list of accounts, that can be employed to maximize the effectiveness of marketing assets.

Understanding Intent Data

You cannot understand targeting without having a grasp on intent data. At its most basic level, intent data is “data that is collected about business web users’ observed behavior... that provides insights into their interests and from this indicate potential intent to take an action.” (Bombora)

Intent data can include search history, cookie data, time spent on a particular website, recent purchases, and even what page of your website a prospective customer spent the most time on. Marketers use this data to understand what products target audiences are actively searching for, what type of assets they regularly engage with, and what their buyer journey looks like—all to craft unique marketing campaigns with a high likelihood of engagement and conversion. Intent data is a valuable tool employed by marketers at every stage of the funnel.

Targeting by Industry

Targeting an audience based on industry allows marketers to cast a wide net and garner engagement from a larger group of relevant targets. This form of targeting seeks out accounts in a specific industry based on demographics, products and services offered, and internal research. Utilizing these filters optimizes ad spend by ensuring that marketing assets are only being delivered to customers in a particular industry, e.g. SaaS or FinTech. Additionally, targeting by industry can be effective in differentiating your business’ products or services from competitors and building greater brand awareness.

Targeting by Account List

Targeting an audience using a specified account list provides marketers with greater control over whom their assets reach. Lists of target audiences are built based on a conjunction of sales intelligence, third-party intent data, and first-party data from audiences actively engaging with your content. By utilizing a specific account list, marketers filter out audiences that are either not appropriate for their business or that do not have the power to make purchasing decisions within their respective organizations; from there, content can be customized to ensure target audience relevance. The ability to target in-market decision-makers with tailored content as they move through the consideration and evaluation stages of the funnel is immeasurable.



How to Determine Success of Content Marketing with Account Scoring

How do you know if your content marketing is successful? Enter account scoring. Account scoring is a way in which companies gain heightened insight into the quality of the accounts that are engaging with marketing assets. An account score is based on a prospective customer's level of interaction and engagement with your business' marketing assets and collateral either directly on your website (first-party data) or indirectly through your various campaigns across the web (third-party data). If your content marketing strategies are successful, you will see high scoring accounts advancing through the sales funnel.

First-party data is the data collected when an account interacts directly with your website. This data is important for understanding a prospective customer's journey and what action needs to be taken to convert them. Some of the first-party data marketers examine when creating an account score include:

- **Page Views:** Marketers look at which of their webpages are most viewed, who is viewing them, and how much time is spent on each page. Additionally, specific pages on your website will be scored higher than other pages because of the level of interest indicated. For instance, visiting a product page gets scored higher than visiting the home page; visiting a resource page gets scored higher than visiting a blog page. It is important the various page categories (product, resource, landing) are differentiated and scored appropriately according to the level of interest and intent indicated by interactions.

- **On-Site Interactions:** Marketers also score accounts based on their level of direct interaction with your website. Examples of on-site interactions include call-to-action clicks, asset downloads, form submissions, redirect clicks, or even interacting with your on-site chat. When a prospective customer performs these actions, they receive more points toward their account score because they become a more valuable target account based on the level of interest they have displayed.

- **Campaign Interactions:** Account scores are also based on an account's level of interaction with marketing campaigns across the web. Scoring campaign interactions depends on where the account is in the sales funnel (awareness, consideration, validation, evaluation). As an account moves closer to the evaluation stage, their score increases, indicating they are a higher value prospect than an account in the awareness stage of the funnel. This means an account searching for your brand by name will receive a higher score than an account searching for relative industry terms; a branded search typically means the customer has moved beyond the awareness stage of the funnel and onto the consideration stage of the funnel, and they're closer to converting.

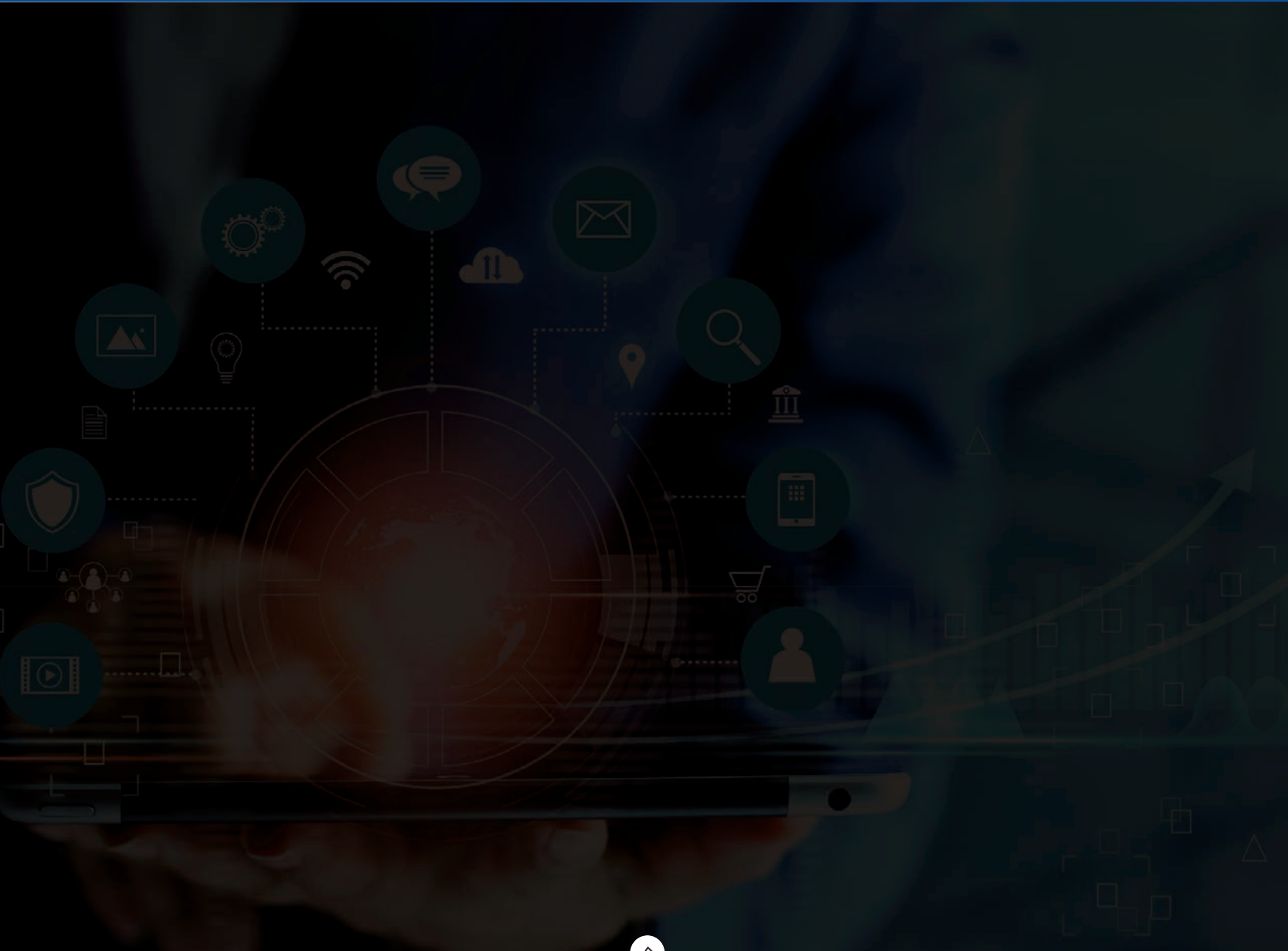
Third-party data is equally as important as first-party data to an account score because it provides insight into prospective customer intent based on the customer's interaction with searches or websites that match your company's profile. Third-party data is valuable for reaching audiences that are not engaging with your business directly but are actively shopping in your industry. Marketers use a **third-party data** aggregator, such as Bombora, in order to consolidate intent data from across the web. The ability to identify prospective customers based on third-party data, provides "insights into company buying cycles and [helps] identify ideal buyers before they talk to one of your competitors."

Combining first and third-party data points, you can assign a numeric score for target accounts and then rank accounts accordingly; the higher the score the more likely the account is to be converted into a sale. The goal of account scoring is to fill your funnel with high-scoring accounts, leading to higher conversion rates, lower bounce rates, and repeat customers in the future

Conclusion

Content marketing is a powerful strategy used to reach an audience and increase conversions. Blogs, white papers, e-books, buyer's guides—these are all assets employed in a content marketing strategy in order to engage the buying committee within a targeted organization. As the B2B marketing industry continues to evolve, the impact of a well-designed content marketing campaign remains essential.





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