

MULTIMEDIA
SERIES

Multimedia for Demand Generation

Creative Content Helps Leads Find You



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With the prevalence of easily-accessible information available on the Internet, potential buyers now perform their product research well in advance of sales contact, which now occurs in the **late** stages of the buying cycle. In fact, an average of 70% of a buyer's purchasing decision is now made in advance of any sales contact. This **huge** change in purchasing behavior, realized in just the last five years, transforms how most businesses must now approach their marketing strategy.

Content-Driven Marketing

One extremely successful marketing model employs **creative content** to both drive **inbound** lead generation, and to develop those leads until they're **sales-ready**. This requires the creation (and timely, automated distribution) of relevant and compelling content which will (1) attract and convert leads, and (2) appear as a "result" when prospects search for information online or reach out to their social networks. The primary goal here is to be viewed as a **thought leader** in the industry, by providing meaningful content for **each buyer persona**, at **each stage** of the buying cycle.

Availability of quality **content** affords target customers the ability to **mitigate risk** by developing a better understanding of an industry, product, or service. The development of **creative content** also bolsters sales and marketing efforts by improving overall lead generation, nurturing, and scoring performance.

Buyer Persona Development

Producing and delivering relevant content is made possible through efficient research, leading to the development of **quality** buyer personas, each with its own **intelligent mapping** of pertinent content, and an individually **tailored lead scoring model** (which are discussed later in this article). In the process of building buyer personas, data gathered through interviewing sales reps and product specialists often prove to be somewhat superficial. Enhanced results can be achieved when these crucial fact-finding conversations are conducted with **customers directly**, including those who purchased from **us**, from our **competitors**, or not at all.

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Five Key Insights

It's important to obtain the following key insights when creating a buyer persona: their priority initiatives, their success factors, any perceived barriers, their buying process, and what kind of decision-making criteria are being employed. This research is most effectively accomplished through conducting **unscripted** interviews, where discussions are driven by a specific marketing agenda. The goal is to create **meaningful conversations** and gain real insight. While scripted marketing surveys can yield results that enable the creation of attractive charts, they tend to offer very little information of value.

Buyer persona **consolidation** is important for more effective **cross-industry** marketing strategies. Buyers in varied industries that share similar priorities, barriers, or other criteria can be combined into **single** personas, allowing for more agile, streamlined campaigns.

Customized Content

Once buyer personas have been identified, content unique to **each** buyer type needs to be created, and provided to the prospect at the **correct stage** of the buying cycle.

For example, consider three buyer personas: an Executive, an Engineer, and a Manager. Each prospect will have a set of content tailored and marketed to that specific buying persona. Content is then delivered based on both the **stage** of the sales cycle, and the cumulative **score** of the lead. Let's first look at the stages of the sales cycle and the content associated with each stage.

In the **early** stages of the sales cycle, the goal is to be viewed as a **thought leader** in the industry; provide interesting and entertaining content to build your brand awareness. Examples of early-stage content include infographics, research data, funny videos, curated lists, and other technological or analytical resources. This type of content should be open to **all**, and **not** gated behind a sign-up form.

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During the **middle** stages of the sales cycle, the goal is to provide **tools** that help buyers find **you** when they're seeking solutions. These tools may include buying guides, ROI calculators, white papers, analyst reports, and webinars. This content **should** be gated, requiring access through a sign-up form.

Content provided during the **late** stages of the sales cycle includes pricing, demonstrations, free trials, third-party reviews, and customer case studies, and for the most part should **not** be gated.

Not all of this content is relevant to **all** buyer personas. For example, an Executive may be looking at the ROI, while an Engineer is probably more concerned with the GUI. **Customized** content must be provided to each buyer persona at appropriate points in the buying cycle. This is accomplished by (1) the creation of automated, structured, multi-channel drip campaigns, (2) designed into the content's associated landing pages, and (3) even woven into the content itself.

Content-Driven Lead Scoring

To move potential customers through the various stages of the buying cycle, a **lead scoring model** is designed for **each buyer persona**. Lead scoring is the process of assigning points to rank a specific lead's **level of interest** and assess their overall **sales readiness**.

As leads earn points, additional content is automatically provided (based on a predetermined content distribution model) as they're led through the early, middle, and late stages of the buying cycle. Once they are "sales-ready," leads are handed off to the sales team to create actual opportunities, and ultimately close deals. Customers floated to the **top** of the prospect list via lead scoring are shown to be **significantly** more likely to convert to a sale, both with an **increased deal value** and **faster speed to close**. This also allows sales people to focus on selling, not prospecting.

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To bolster the **veracity** of a lead's status, **weighted scores** incorporate a variety of additional customer demographics, including individual-specific, company-specific, BANT considerations (budget, authority, need, and time-line), relationship status, and behavioral attributes (for example, if they attended a webinar, seminar, or trade-show, or filled out an online form or survey). These scores are then further refined by incorporating **explicit** data (what the prospect tells you) and **inferred** data (what can be observed, or gathered through data mining). Scores also increase when leads **interact** with **content**, or engage the brand via email, telephone, or through social networks. When a prospect's scores reach predetermined thresholds, their statuses are updated, and new actions are initiated accordingly.

Stand Out With Creative Content

There are **significant** advantages to implementing a thoughtfully-designed content marketing strategy, including (1) building better brand awareness, (2) increasing customer acquisition, (3) accelerating lead generation, and (4) improving customer retention and loyalty. However, creating content for the sake of creating content is simply not good enough. Content must be **exceptional** and **unique** to be embraced by users and “go viral.” High quality **creative media** is not only well received by audiences, but also helps to attain preferred rankings within search engine results. As a result, more than 60% of businesses are now **outsourcing** content development to creative design firms which specialize in creating customized, interactive media, with over 25% of marketing budgets allocated for content creation.

Other Resources

- ▶ [The WOW Factor – Multimedia-Enhanced Content](#)
- ▶ [Click, Drag, Engage – Top 10 Tips for Developing Persuasive Multimedia](#)
- ▶ [And the Answer is... Game Shows!](#)
- ▶ [Interactively Convincing – Enhancing the Communication of Ideas](#)