

ACTUALTECH MEDIA PRESENTS

THE GORILLA GUIDE TO...[®]



Enterprise IT Content Marketing Fundamentals

James Green & Obaid Khan

INSIDE THE GUIDE:

- Learn why and how to start and grow an effective content marketing program
- Understand how effective content empowers all of marketing and sales
- Get tips for creating exceptional content that captivates your audience

**HELPING YOU NAVIGATE
THE TECHNOLOGY JUNGLE!**



ActualTech Media

www.actualtechmedia.com

THE GORILLA GUIDE TO...

Enterprise IT Content Marketing Fundamentals

By James Green & Obaid Khan

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ENTERING THE JUNGLE

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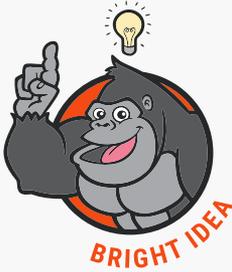
CALLOUTS USED IN THIS BOOK



The Gorilla is the professorial sort that enjoys helping people learn. In the School House callout, you'll gain insight into topics that may be outside the main subject but are still important.



This is a special place where you can learn a bit more about ancillary topics presented in the book.



When we have a great thought, we express them through a series of grunts in the Bright Idea section.



Takes you into the deep, dark depths of a particular topic.



Discusses items of strategic interest to business leaders.

ICONS USED IN THIS BOOK



DEFINITION

Defines a word, phrase, or concept.



KNOWLEDGE CHECK

Tests your knowledge of what you've read.



PAY ATTENTION

We want to make sure you see this!



GPS

We'll help you navigate your knowledge to the right place.



WATCH OUT!

Make sure you read this so you don't make a critical error!



TIP

A helpful piece of advice based on what you've read.

CHAPTER 1

Content Marketing in 2020 and the Future

In This Chapter:

- Inbound vs. Outbound Marketing
- Mastering User Intent
- The Growing Importance of Video

It seems like with every day that passes, consumers demand more and more from businesses. With so many players competing to capture the same market, you have to *earn* the attention of your prospects—not hijack it.

Today, people care less about the actual product that you pitch (and the dreams you gave up to turn it into a reality), and more about the problems that you can solve.





Inbound Marketing

- Focused on drawing the prospects towards your brand
- Places emphasis on providing value to the right person, at the right time
- Executed through content marketing, SEO, social media marketing, email marketing, and sometimes even ads



Outbound Marketing

- Focused on going after prospects using interruptive tactics
- Places emphasis on pushing messages and reaching as many people as possible
- Executed through above-the-line (TV, print, radio, etc.) ads, cold calls, and generic emails

Figure 1: Inbound vs. outbound marketing

This shift from being *self-obsessed* to being *solution-focused* is what gave rise to the concept of “inbound marketing”—a methodology, illustrated in **Figure 1**, that focuses on drawing prospects toward business, instead of actively pursuing them using interruptive/outbound tactics.

As a wise woman once said: “Ain’t nobody got time for that.”

This is especially true in the IT sphere, where, on average, six to eight¹ individuals are actively involved in the buying process (and

¹ <https://blogs.gartner.com/hank-barnes/2017/10/31/personalities-trump-personas/>

buyers complete 60%² of the process before they even approach a vendor).

Don't get the wrong idea—outbound marketing tactics aren't exactly dead. However, the modern audience certainly doesn't appreciate them—especially if you're pitching to enterprises.

As a result, brands are focusing more on pushing insightful, relevant, and creative content that grabs the attention of their audience and compels them to engage.

In other words, brands are focusing more on **content marketing**.

Content marketing is the art and science of creating and promoting content that your target audience finds useful and/or entertaining. While the underlying goals vary from strategy to strategy, content marketing, when executed properly, can boost brand awareness, drive conversions, facilitate customer advocacy, and most importantly, help you establish your company as a thought leader in its domain.



Did you know that 70%¹ of 3,400 marketers surveyed by HubSpot are actively investing in content marketing in 2020? That's just a small reflection of how popular content marketing has become over the years, resulting from changed consumer preferences and buying behaviors.

¹ <https://www.hubspot.com/marketing-statistics>

However, according to the Technology Content Marketing 2020³ report by the Content Marketing Institute (CMI), for 59% of tech marketers, the biggest challenge was creating content that appealed to the multiple roles in target organizations.

² <https://blog.topohq.com/saas-buying-experience-mapping-businesses-buy-software/>

³ https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/1624046/2020_CMI%20Technology_Research_Final.pdf

The world of content marketing isn't constant. Let's have a look at where content marketing stands, how it has changed over the years, and what the future holds—especially for tech marketers.

Mastering User Intent to Create Impactful Content

Content marketing is a user-centric art. The way to go about achieving your business goals through it is to craft creative gems that provide something of value to your target audience.

And the only way to do that is by going all in on **user intent**.

As the name suggests, user intent is the motivation (or the reason) that drives a prospect to seek certain information. Content marketing boils down to providing something (other than your main products) that your audience actually cares about, such as educational content that provides them with solutions to existing pain points, new perspectives, or new approaches to try. This content can be delivered through anything from informative posts to free tools they can use.

The goal is to provide this “value” in a consistent manner that gradually builds up trust, eventually turning qualified prospects into paying customers, and ultimately, turning customers into brand advocates.

The important thing to remember is that it all begins by understanding what your audience wants.

In fact, according to CMI's Technology Content Marketing report, 36% of marketers felt that better understanding or knowing their audience(s) was going to be one of their priorities for 2020, whereas 34% were going to prioritize capturing better data.

The end goal? This will help them focus on creating content centered on user intent, guiding buyers through the entire process, and converting them into loyal customers.

“How can I code quickly and efficiently while remaining secure and compliant?”



“How can I enable my development team to produce more secure code over time?”

“How can we easily audit our enterprise applications for compliance on a regular basis and provide reports to the Board?”



Figure 2: An example of how the user intent varies from role to role within the same target organization

A typical IT vendor has to create content for multiple roles within the same prospect organization, with each role having a different intent (as illustrated in **Figure 2**).

As marketers, you need to ensure that you’re targeting these intents with different content assets, across different channels.

There are many ways you can collect data that will help you understand what your audience is looking for, ranging from utilizing certain online search tools (which you’ll learn more about later) to analyzing the conversations your prospects and customers have with your sales reps.

For now, let's take a look at it from the perspective of a prospect looking up something on Google.

User Intent Is the Same As 'Search Intent'

Over the years, search engine optimization evolved from being a set of activities focused on gaming search engine algorithms to becoming a science that's focused on understanding user intent (or search intent, if you will). When a user types in a query on a search engine, they expect to receive results that match their intent (i.e., the actual motivation/reason behind typing in that query).

For example, a person searching for "what is hyperconverged infrastructure?" doesn't want to see a page that sells hyperconverged infrastructure, or one that doesn't properly define hyperconverged infrastructure.

Search engines are now more than capable of understanding the intent hidden behind different queries and displaying pages that are best-suited to answer them, based primarily on the actual content of the page (along with many other factors).

Therefore, even if you do sell hyperconverged infrastructure, for example, you have a great opportunity to capture attention by creating helpful content on how hyperconverged infrastructure differs from traditional infrastructure, the different types of hyperconverged infrastructure architecture, the kinds of questions to ask a hyperconverged infrastructure vendor, and so on. This will be much more effective than just trying to sell people a hyperconverged infrastructure solution.





The 4 Main Types of Intent

To gain better clarity on intent and craft content that really hits the spot, search engine optimization specialists (folks who are experts at optimizing your online presence so that you show up higher in the results pages of Google and other search engines) classify search intent into the following categories:

- **Informational:** Queries with this intent are usually posed as questions, often beginning with “who, what, when, where, why, how.” The intent here is to find information for purely educational reasons. The ideal content that matches this intent should clearly answer the question(s) while keeping the user engaged. Users consuming informational content are usually at the very top of the marketing funnel. A Chief Technology Officer, for example, might type the query, “What is Kubernetes”?
- **Navigational:** Here, the intent is to help the user navigate to a desired location i.e., a webpage, such as a blog, a login page, and so on. Imagine someone searching for “Facebook” on Google (this is why they’re also sometimes referred to as “navigational brand queries”). As long as you own the brand, you’ll always

show up first in the search results for your brand’s navigational queries. In our Kubernetes example, the query could simply be “Kubernetes” when the user is trying to navigate to The Linux Foundation’s website <https://kubernetes.io/>.

- **Commercial:** When there’s commercial intent behind a query, the user is currently in the process of evaluating different options in order to make a purchase. Or you can say that they’re in the Consideration phase of the marketing funnel. These queries usually include terms such as “reviews” or “best,” and so on. That being said, there is some overlap between informational and commercial intents, as the content that targets the latter also provides information and helps answer questions (the only difference here is how “qualified” the prospect is, as in, how much they already know and how “prepared” they are to convert into a paying customer). A sample search query might be “best container orchestration engine.”

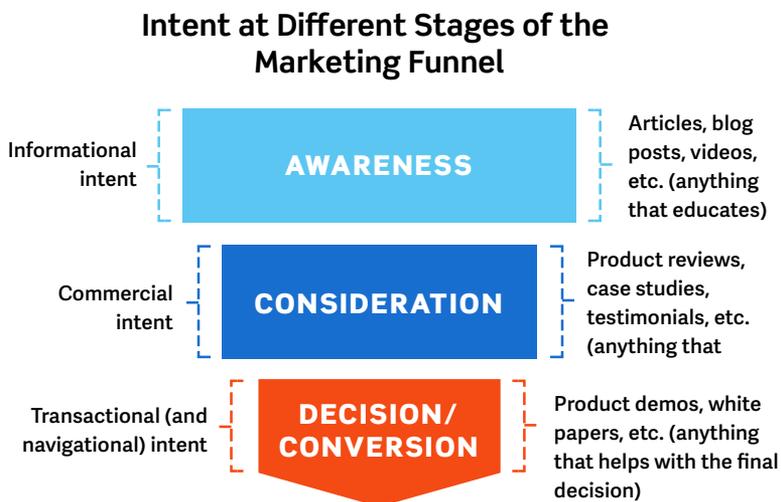


Figure 3: Where intent fits at different stages of the marketing funnel

- **Transactional:** When a user is ready to make a purchase, their intent is purely transactional. This is the final stage of user intent and signifies that they're ready to convert. As a result, this content is usually referred to as bottom of the funnel. At this point, our fictional CTO might be searching for "Kubernetes demo from Vendor X."

Have a look at **Figure 3** to better understand where the different types of intent fit in the marketing funnel.



A "marketing funnel" is a theoretical journey that your customer takes from being a prospect (i.e. someone who fits your description of an "ideal customer") to becoming a paying customer. This funnel can be mapped out graphically to help marketing and sales teams understand what messages to use at each stage.

While marketers use different variations and some marketers will argue that a new model is needed, a simplified version of the tried and true marketing funnel consists of the following three stages:

1. **Awareness:** Also known as the "top of the funnel" (ToFu), the awareness stage is where a prospect identifies a need and seeks to be educated.
2. **Consideration:** This is the intermediate stage, and therefore also known as the "middle of the funnel" (MoFu). At this stage, the prospect begins to evaluate different options that could help satisfy their need(s).
3. **Conversion/Decision:** The last stage—or "bottom of the funnel" (BoFu)—is where the prospect chooses an option, makes the transaction, and converts into a paying customer.

Understanding intent is the first of many steps that will allow you to create impactful content that takes the user to the next step of the funnel. Some brands are taking this to the next level by integrating a personal touch to their content. A classic example from our day-to-day lives is Netflix, which has an advanced algorithm that suggests TV shows and movies based on the user's preferences.

From a B2B tech marketing lens, this could mean anything from sending personalized emails triggered by how they interact with your website to offering custom solutions that suit their enterprise needs.

Whatever the case, at the most basic level, mastering intent will help you come up with fresh and creative ideas for content.

Brainstorming for Idea- and Link-Driven Content Assets

Content creation is a never-ending struggle.

To stay relevant and maintain your brand's position as a thought leader, you need to consistently create content that “wows” your target audience.

As you well know, that's easier said than done.

Thanks to the wide-scale acceptance of smartphones and the ubiquity of faster Internet connections, we're always exposed to some type of content. As a result, we tune lots of content out by default. In such a highly connected world, it's difficult to cut through all the noise and be heard by your prospects.

The only way to do that is by coming up with unique ideas and topics to drive your content efforts.

According to CMI's Technology Content Marketing report, 90% of tech marketers are using metrics like backlinks (the “linked” referrals that you get from third-party websites—more on this later),

number of people who viewed your website, etc. to measure content performance in 2020.

This indicates that tech marketers—like everyone else—are also prioritizing link-driven content.

But the question is: how do you come up with content ideas that, when executed, are good enough to be “linked” to by others?

In other words, what could possibly motivate third parties to say “*This content is great—you should definitely check it out!*” to their own audience?



See Chapter 10 for more on how to create exceptional content!

At the very least, your content ideas should tick the following boxes:

- They should result in assets that your target audience finds entertaining, educational, and engaging.
- The ideas should be relevant to your business and your offerings.



Again, it all starts by understanding the pain points of the user as they proceed from one stage of the customer journey to the next. This, in turn, will help you narrow down your focus and come up with a fresh idea for an asset that could help solve that problem.

Here are some tried-and-tested tips to come up with unique ideas:

- Begin by using keyword research tools to see what your prospects are actually searching for in the first place. Or better yet, talk to your sales personnel and ask them to share their conversations with your prospects and existing customers (like email chains). That way, you can find out exactly *how* your customers are describing their problems, what terminologies they are using for your niche/the solution you're offering, etc. You can shortlist the most commonly repeated terminologies and questions, and work from there.
- Visit the blogs and social profiles of your competitors to see what they've been up to lately—it doesn't hurt to seek a little inspiration from time to time. I mean, a little stalking never hurt anyone (*just kidding, don't be creepy*).
- Check social platforms (especially LinkedIn, Reddit, Quora, and Twitter), to discover trending and relevant content that you can present in a better way or deliver a unique take on.
- Use web analytics tools to see how your audience interacts with your content. If an asset is bringing in a good amount of traffic, or a significant percentage of visitors are engaging with a certain part of your content, try to milk the topics and come up with related content pieces that deliver further value.
- Create a shared idea tank where you and your team members can conveniently add any unique ideas that you have throughout the day.

To establish a repeatable and scalable process, when a content asset performs well, you should analyze it to find out why, create your own

“checklist” of best practices to help future assets perform well, and continue to build on the process as you discover more reasons why your content was successful. This way, you’ll be able to churn out high-ROI content on a consistent basis.

Additionally, your success will largely depend on how well you execute. For instance, there could be more than 10 different ways in which you can discuss a problem and present its solution. The way you approach, package, and present it all will be the deciding factor in whether or not it performs.

Let’s say you’re crafting a blog post about ransomware. To make it stand out, go the extra mile and cover your topic from every angle (as in, understand the user intent behind the topic and provide insightful information on any question a reader may have on it); include helpful, engaging, and visually appealing infographics, videos, and GIFs; and link to any other relevant resources that might help the user dig even deeper.

The type of content that could be useful in this example include case studies of actual ransomware victims, dramatic statistics on what ransomware has cost companies in terms of lost data and revenue, and studies showing how quickly it’s exploded in the last several years.

Remember: educational, entertaining, and engaging. Yet, so many brands choose unoriginal, simple, and, unfortunately, boring. :-(

A safe way to ensure that your efforts gain traction over the long term is to focus on creating **evergreen content**. As the name suggests, evergreen content is any asset which remains relevant over time. Most of the content that we put out receives a stable flow of traffic for a few months (or even years), but then becomes obsolete and loses traction. This is one reason why it’s important to upgrade your best-performing content assets from time to time.

Evergreen Content Is a Link Magnet!

By publishing blog posts/articles centered on evergreen topics, you potentially set yourself up for a lifetime of stable website traffic. Since an evergreen content asset is unaffected by time, people will always look it up, making it highly linkable and a magnet for prospects for years to come.



Here are some great examples of evergreen content:

1. **Cisco’s “What Is Cybersecurity?”**:¹ The content dives deep into the fairly basic topic of cybersecurity, discussing the main components and potential risks involved, making it a timeless asset. As of now, the content has over 1,800 backlinks and receives over 25,000 visitors every month.
2. **Microsoft’s “What Is Cloud Computing?”**:² This is another classic example of an evergreen content asset on a basic topic. The article is actually a supporting asset for Microsoft Azure, yet the product is only mentioned once throughout the actual body, that too, as an example, making it an ideal educational resource. As of now, the page has over 1,400 backlinks and receives over 19,000 visits every month.
3. **Built In’s “What Is Artificial Intelligence?”**:³ With total backlinks exceeding 3,800 at the time of writing and an overwhelming monthly traffic of 63,000 visitors, this stands as one of the best-performing content assets on AI. The content provides a detailed explanation of how AI works, how it’s used, and takes the readers through a historical tour—the perfect recipe for evergreen content.

¹ <https://www.cisco.com/c/en/us/products/security/what-is-cybersecurity.html>

² <https://azure.microsoft.com/en-us/overview/what-is-cloud-computing/>

³ <https://builtin.com/artificial-intelligence>

Great evergreen content, on the other hand, continues to receive traffic and backlinks indefinitely.

Considering the jaw-dropping potential that evergreen content packs, marketers are shifting their focus from creating a high volume of ephemeral assets to a slow, but steady creation of evergreen content that will stand the test of time. However, it's not always easy to come up with topics or ideas that qualify as evergreen, which is why most brands end up producing generic content that doesn't really get them anywhere.

If the topic, for instance, is network security, you could do a series on securing various cloud environments, including hybrid cloud, public cloud, and multi-cloud. The need for that information will not grow stale for a decade or more.

Gamifying Content with Videos and Interactive Elements

Over the years, video content has seen nothing but growth.

Even to this day, video continues to grow in popularity. In fact, according to HubSpot's State of Video Marketing in 2020⁴ report, 99% of marketers who create video content will continue to do so in 2020. And that statistic barely scratches the surface.

Check out **Figure 4** for some more eye-opening figures.

This is mostly due to the fact that we enjoy content that's engaging, immersive, and requires minimum effort to consume—all of which you can easily accomplish with a video.

With great potential in terms of ROI, video remains as the most sought-after content format to date. In fact, some marketers no longer re-engineer written content to videos—it's the other way around now. Video comes first.

⁴ <https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/state-of-video-marketing-new-data>

A Glimpse of Where Video Marketing Stands



Figure 4: A glimpse of where video marketing stands

As tech marketers, you should go all in on telling stories through your videos, and not pushing your brand too hard too soon (again, this goes back to the inbound mindset).

While we can't tell you exactly how to create those videos or what formats to use (as it will vary from reader to reader and business to business), what we can do is advise you on the messaging: Empathize with the audience by showcasing a problem or making them aware of a hidden problem, and then show them exactly *how* to solve that problem (either through video case studies/testimonials, animated explainer videos, or any other format of your choice).

Enterprise IT industry practitioners are hungry for this kind of story given how quickly the cloud, containers, artificial intelligence, and other technologies are changing every aspect of business operations.

In addition to videos, marketers are also heavily investing in other visually appealing and immersive mediums. The two most popular formats include mini-games and interactive infographics (71% of marketers reported using infographics in the past 10 months according to CMI's Technology Content Marketing report).

Optimizing Content for Users and Search Engines Simultaneously

We've already established that inbound marketing is purely user-centric. However, there's definitely more to it than just creating content centered on user intent. Today, the secret sauce to nailing your marketing efforts is to also focus on *user experience*.

But what does user experience have to do with content? Everything.

The way you design, structure, and deliver your content can make or break your efforts. This mainly involves two factors:

- How fast your content loads (53%⁵ of mobile users will abandon a website if it takes more than 3 seconds to load).
- How visually appealing it is (about 75%⁶ of people will judge the credibility of your business by the design of your website, while 38%⁷ will stop engaging if the layout is unattractive).

That stings.

⁵ <https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/intl/en-154/insights-inspiration/research-data/need-mobile-speed-how-mobile-latency-impacts-publisher-revenue/>

⁶ <https://dubub.com/75-of-consumers-admit-that-they-judge-a-business-credibility-based-on-their-website-design/>

⁷ <https://blogs.adobe.com/creative/files/2015/12/Adobe-State-of-Content-Report.pdf>



To create and deliver a positive and memorable user experience, marketers are prioritizing design, focusing on improving page speed (one of the many factors that search engines like Google use to rank pages in search results), and tracking user journeys on their websites to optimize layouts.

In fact, all of this is becoming mandatory from an SEO perspective, as search engines reward websites that provide valuable content, load fast, and keep users engaged.

By optimizing for user experience (UX), you're also, in a way, optimizing for search engines. However, keep in mind that UX is just one essential component of SEO—all of which revolves around content.

Here are some actionable tips that you can start implementing today:

- **Focus on search intent**—create content that helps answer the questions that your prospects are asking.
- **Improve the speed of your website**—use compressed multimedia files (images, videos, GIFs, etc.) on your webpages. “Minify” the code by removing unnecessary whitespace and characters and compress them (you can seek help from a developer for this or install a plugin, such as Hummingbird on WordPress).

- **Link to relevant pages/content**—make sure to link out to any other sources (whether on your own website or an external channel) that you feel are relevant and could provide more value to your users.
- **Use captivating visuals**—incorporate eye-catching designs to all of the content assets that you use.
- **Optimize for mobile**—make sure that your website is properly optimized for mobile phones and tablets. This includes making CTA buttons bigger or smaller (find a balance between making them easy to tap but not too big as to result in accidental clicks), using responsive design (design that adjusts according to the size of a user’s screen), redesigning pop ups for mobile screens, and making sure all text on screen is easy to read.

Promoting Your Content to Infinity and Beyond

You can’t just create content, hit publish, and be done with it. That’s like inviting a bunch of people to a dinner party, cooking up a mean meal everyone will love and devour, and then leaving it in the kitchen.

After going through all the trouble of crafting content, you need to make some active efforts to kick things off and get people consuming. That’s where content promotion with both paid and organic distribution comes in.

Promotion is an essential piece of the content marketing puzzle. You can’t just rely on search engines alone to bring in traffic, after all. Tapping into additional channels—such as social media, email campaigns, and content syndication partners—gives your content a boost and can work wonders in terms of attracting qualified leads. **Figure 5** lists different content promotion tactics.

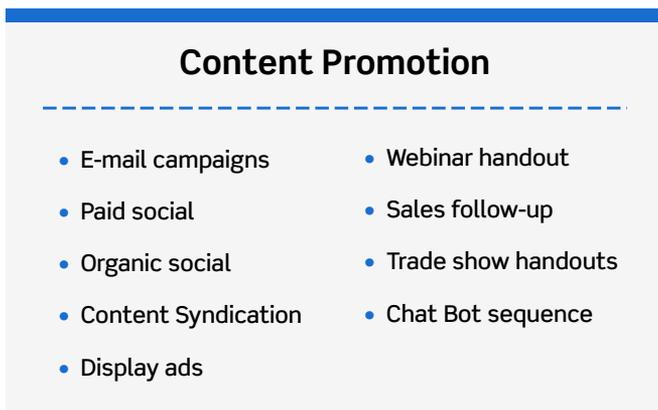


Figure 5: Content promotion tactics

Remember that promotion doesn't necessarily have to betray the essence of inbound. This means that you can promote your content without being interruptive—as long as the people to whom you're pitching care about it (again, this goes back to user intent).

Let's talk about a few of the best content promotion tactics that should work for most brands.

Content Syndication

Even if you publish high-quality content online—keeping all of the best-practices in mind—there's no guarantee that it will perform just as good as you had originally hoped for without a little help. One tactic to instantly gain traction is **content syndication**.

Content syndication refers to publishing the same piece of content (usually an article or a guide) to other websites and databases. As an added bonus to syndication, you may also receive a backlink and a mention on that article, resulting in increased awareness, an influx of web traffic, and new leads.



Don't confuse “content syndication” with “guest posting.” While the basic concept is the same—i.e. posting your content on other websites—there's a key difference when it comes to the actual “substance.”

With content syndication, you essentially “republish” existing content on other platforms (while also clearly stating that the content was originally published on your website), whereas with guest posting, you craft an original asset from scratch to be posted solely on another platform under your name. The intended outcomes and level of effort are different.

This is a win-win situation. The platform where your content is “syndicated” leverages your content to attract traffic, and you leverage the popularity of that platform to increase your visibility.

Some content syndication partners like ActualTech Media guarantee results. When you syndicate high-quality content with our audience, we promise you a minimum number of fresh leads.

Content Repurposing

If you have some high-performing content assets (be it blog posts, an e-book, or even a printed guide), why not tweak or reuse it to reach your target audience through other channels? That's where content repurposing comes in.

Content repurposing refers to changing some or all elements of a content asset and using it on a different channel in the appropriate format.

For example, if you have an in-depth guide to digital transformation, you can “repurpose” it into a video (or even multiple short

videos) that you can use during presentations, conferences, and trade shows. You can also upload the video(s) to YouTube and other social networks and use those clips to drive traffic to the landing page to download the full guide.

Distributing Content on Social Media

You'd be missing a big opportunity if you neglect social media channels today. Select the appropriate platforms that your target audience is active on (for most B2B marketers, the go-to platform is LinkedIn), and determine the ideal times to share content, along with a proper frequency.

Write insightful posts, abiding by the customs on that social network, that provide a glimpse of what your content is about—insightful enough to get the attention of your audience, and suspenseful enough to make them click (what IT pro wouldn't click on the headline "The 5 Biggest Backup/Disaster Recovery Mistakes You're Probably Making," for instance?). If organic reach is limited, leverage paid ads, but make sure to target the right audience.

Reaching out to Other Content Publishers

This tactic involves actively seeking out content publishers/other blog owners who share the same or a similar audience as yours and proposing that they share your content (which will be valuable to your audience).

Obviously if they're going to give you access to their audience, you need to come forward with something super valuable.

To Summarize

The 2020s certainly have exciting things in store for content marketers in IT.

To summarize, the content marketing success for B2B technology companies in 2020 (and the near future) will revolve around:

- Going all in on understanding user intent
- Coming up with exciting content ideas and executing them in a way that helps build backlinks, memorable experiences, more traction, and higher visibility
- Incorporating video/Increasing the use of video and other captivating visual assets to your strategy
- Proper optimization of web content for both users and search engines
- Promoting your content across a variety of channels to maximize your ROI

Now that you understand how prevalent content marketing has become and what best-practices are being followed in the industry, let's take a look at how it fits into the whole marketing puzzle.

CHAPTER 2

How Content Marketing Complements All of Marketing

In This Chapter:

- What Is 'Permission-based' Marketing?
- The Content Funnel for Product Marketing
- The Difference Between 'Above-the-Line' and 'Below-the-Line' Advertising

Modern marketing practices have evolved from being brand-centric to customer-centric, because, frankly, people aren't interested unless you have something special to offer. There's too much else on their plate already.

Reiterating what we discussed earlier, this “need for value” created content marketing—and it plays a big part in a larger inbound methodology.

When you consistently deliver value through your content (or any other asset, such as a free tool or demo) to a clearly defined target audience, you'll eventually build a loyal following.

People will come to you for advice, turn into leads, show their interest, and, eventually, convert into paying customers.

That being said, content marketing isn't a standalone practice, but rather a piece of the puzzle that fits perfectly into the modern marketing picture.

In this chapter, we'll dive deeper into how content marketing can complement your overall efforts (and how to get the most out of it).

Permission-Based Marketing Trumps Interruptive Marketing

In a perfect world, your prospects welcome your efforts with open arms, actively engage with your content, and even go as far as taking the particular action that you wanted them to.

Unfortunately, things don't always work that way in the real world!

However, while building a loyal following that actually cares about your marketing efforts can be challenging, it is certainly possible.

By continuously pushing out educational, entertaining, and engaging assets, your readers will get hooked to your content and sign up to receive updates for new stuff—bringing that idea of a “perfect world” closer to reality.

All the efforts that you make to establish this system and deliver content falls under the umbrella of “permission-based” marketing.



As the name suggests, “permission-based” marketing involves sending personalized marketing messages (whether purely informational, promotional, or a combination of both) to people who have explicitly agreed to receive said messages. The most popular channels for reaching *consenting* prospects are email and newsletters (both print and digital). This is inbound marketing at its best!

In permission-based marketing, your target audience essentially gives you the green light to keep them in the loop by becoming leads. Having people sign up for your content is a privilege that not every

brand has. And it almost goes without saying that it has major perks, as you can see in **Figure 6**.

Intuitively, you can imagine how, compared to the interruptive tactics of traditional marketing (which rely heavily on ads that your target audience doesn't necessarily want to see), permission-based marketing is highly effective.

Benefits of Permission-Based Marketing

1. Cost Efficient

PM employs low-cost online tools (social media, search engine optimization, emails, etc.). By only marketing to consumers who have expressed an interest, businesses can lower their marketing costs.

2. High Conversion Rate

As the targeting audience are those who has expressed an interest to the product, it is easier to convert the leads into sales.

3. Personalization

PM allows businesses to run personalized campaigns. Target specific audiences according to their age, gender, geographical location, etc.

4. Establish Long-Term Relationships with the Customer

Through the usage of social media and emails, businesses can interact and build long-term relationships with the customers.

5. Maintains Marketing Reputation

PM only sends information to those who are anticipating the information. Therefore, prospects who receive the information do not feel discomfort (they are not bombarded with marketing messages).

Figure 6: The benefits of permission-based marketing

You don't have to take our word for it—according to one source,⁸ with personalized emails, you can experience a 14% increase in click-through rate and a jaw-dropping 10% rise in conversions over generic ones. Here's another angle: 81%⁹ of consumers have exited a webpage due to a pop-up ad, which is a classic example of interruptive marketing.

That's all fine and dandy, but, how does permission marketing work (and what does it have to do with content marketing)?

Here's a quick, two-step breakdown:

- **Establish a process:** Start by creating a system or a framework for a lead generation process (i.e. through which people can consent to receiving future updates and promotional messages). Usually, this is done through smart CTA/short form placements on your landing pages that are linked to an email/newsletter subscription platform.
- **Offer an incentive:** Setting up a framework is easy. The hardest part is gaining consent from your target audience and getting them to convert into leads. To get people to sign up, you need to offer them an incentive to sign up—a gated piece of content, special discounts, a demo, or anything that's so good that they have no option but to give up their contact information and hit that subscribe button.

When folks start consenting to receive content from you, it may be tempting to bombard them with your messages. DON'T DO IT.

That's the marketing equivalent of having a good first date and then straight up spamming them with text messages all night.

⁸ <https://www.campaignmonitor.com/blog/email-marketing/2018/12/70-email-marketing-stats-you-need-to-know/>

⁹ <https://www.weidert.com/blog/14-statistics-that-make-the-case-for-inbound-marketing>



The casual follow-up is where content marketing comes into the picture.

With a strong content framework in place (one built on in-depth research, content planned and crafted around user intent, engaging and entertaining content delivered through different formats, SEO best-practices, and organic distribution/promotion tactics), you can send bits of highly impactful and personal content—increasing engagement and their chances of conversions in the process. *And you won't be creepy. Bonus!*

While this might seem challenging at first, it gets easier over time—especially if you have an in-depth resource like a Gorilla Guide from which you can extract these tidbits of content (hint, hint)! We'll talk more about repurposing content later.

Using Content Marketing for Product Marketing

Product marketing is a special subset of marketing and we need to approach it a bit differently. Excellent content can help significantly. The typical goals for any product marketing strategy include:

- Understanding user preferences, objections, and pain points

- Aligning the wants and needs of a target audience with a product's offering(s)
- Identifying gaps in the market
- Increasing awareness about any new offering
- Increasing revenue tied to a specific product
- Reviving declining products by introducing a new feature

Traditionally, the go-to approach for marketing a product is by creating a solution that addresses a real problem, going all in on highlighting the features, and what makes it stand out from the competing players. That's pretty straightforward.

However, as we've made abundantly clear, those tactics aren't enough, especially if you're pitching to a buying group where each stakeholder has a different set of concerns and motivations. Your ideal prospects need to know exactly what your product can do for *them*, how it can solve their problems, and interestingly, what the social implications or choosing your product might be.

If only there was an existing approach that ideal for doing just for that...a strategic way to educate and inform your prospects...

Oh, wait. There is!

Content marketing, if done right, can help you achieve (or get closer to achieving) your product marketing goals, regardless of where you stand in the product lifecycle. Though product marketing and content marketing are separate things, they go together like peas and carrots, as you can see in **Figure 7**.

By incorporating content marketing into your product marketing strategy, you can:

- **Create a demand for your product:** If you're launching a cutting-edge product that addresses a unique problem (something that your prospects aren't aware of), you'll need to create demand

for it. By producing content that discusses their existing and *invisible* pain points through articles, blog posts, infographics, and other content assets, you can make your prospects “problem-aware,” forcing them to look for a solution.

- **Position yourself as the perfect solution:** By creating content around the pain points you’re attempting to solve, over time, you’ll establish authority over your niche. After having done that, when your prospects think about solving a particular problem, who do you think they’ll turn to? That’s right—you!
- **Spark conversations and gather insights:** By engaging with your paying customers, you can gather critical data that can help you improve your product and keep it relevant.

All in all, content marketing efforts can make your product shine while strategically guiding your prospects through their buyer’s journeys.

Product Marketing Roadmap In the Content Marketing Funnel

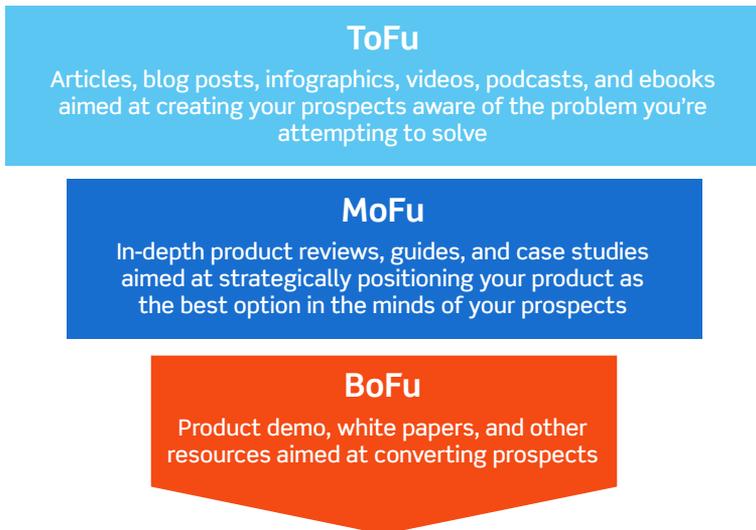


Figure 7: A general product marketing funnel

The Relationship Between Media Buying and Content Marketing

B2B brands are ditching traditional paid marketing tactics/media buying in favor of a more permissive content marketing approach. In an effort to make them seem *less interruptive*, the concept of native ads (promotional/sponsored messages that are designed to fit right into the platform they appear on) emerged. Reddit ads are perfect examples (see **Figure 8** for a perfect example from Adobe).

Well-executed native ads blend of content marketing and paid advertising and can be highly effective. This modern approach to distributing content is likely to be more effective than generic PPC. According to CMI, content marketing can help generate more than 3X¹⁰ the leads that paid search ads can.

Native ads perfectly illustrate the fact that paid marketing is not inherently bad, and demonstrate that high-octane content marketing need not be organic!

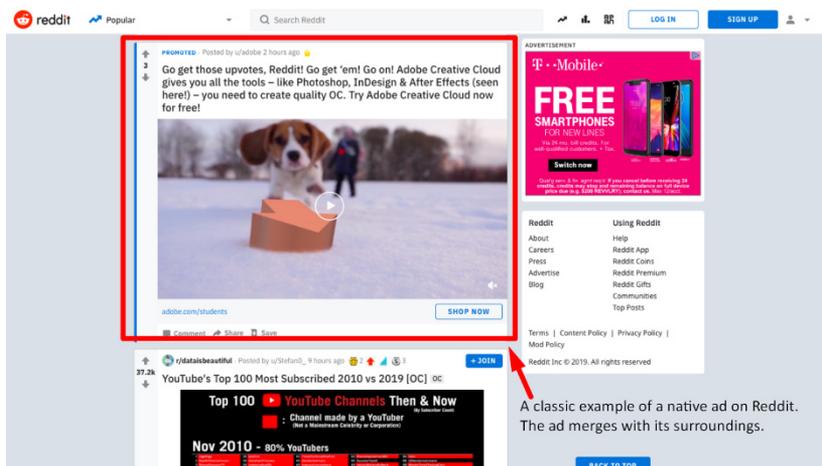


Figure 8: An example of a native ad on Reddit

¹⁰ <https://contentmarketinginstitute.com/2017/10/stats-invest-content-marketing/>

Defining ATL and BTL

“Above-the-Line” (ATL) is an advertising term that refers to the type of advertisements that target a broad audience with no discrimination. TV, radio, and billboard ads are classic examples of ATL advertisement.



On the flip side, “Below-the-Line” (BTL) advertisement is more targeted, and therefore, reaches a comparatively smaller audience. The ads you see on social networks and search engines are the best examples of contemporary BTL advertisements.

While considering the traditional definition of inbound marketing, using ads to deliver your messages might raise a few eyebrows. However, as long as you respect the underlying goal of helping your target audience, you’re good. In fact, when done right, you can convert your paid media into temporary, yet high-value content assets that can quickly hit those KPIs like it’s no one’s business.

Here are some quick tips to help you do that:

- Craft messages that address core issues or gaps that you’re capitalizing on. Avoid blatant promotions or empty messages that don’t deliver any concrete value. You can do that with both online/BTL and traditional ATL ads.
- Get as specific as possible when targeting your prospects. Use the targeting tools provided by most online advertising platforms to reach the right people with appropriate messages. Additionally, incorporate a “tracking pixel”—a special code that goes on your website, collects fresh user data, provides insights on how they behave, shows you what content they engage with, and creates “sub-audiences” based on that information. Every advertising

platform has its own pixel (such as the “Facebook Pixel” and the “LinkedIn Insight Tag”). For instance, there will be some people who make it to your sales page, but leave without proceeding/filling a contact form. A tracking pixel (let’s say, LinkedIn’s Insight Tag) can help you “retarget” those prospects with relevant ads and special messages later on.

You can go one step further and do A/B testing to see which of your messages resonate well with your audiences. Again, your chances of success go back to your ability to craft impactful content in the first place.

Whether it’s in supporting product launches or as an extension of paid advertising, you can see how content marketing is a permanent fixture in the big picture marketing playbook for most organizations.

CHAPTER 3

Using Outreach for Content Marketing

In This Chapter:

- The Role of Link Building
- Why Link Quality Is More Important than Link Quantity
- Email Outreach: Not Dead Yet

To recap, so far, we've discussed the essentials of content marketing and how it can seamlessly integrate into your overall strategy. However, most of the principles, best practices, and examples highlighted only cover one aspect of content marketing: the actual creation of content.

In this chapter, we'll dive deeper into another part that is equally critical and can make or break your strategy—outreach and promotion.

If you're like most of the marketers ActualTech Media works with, it's unlikely that you'll engage in the very "tactical" steps described below. But the goal of this chapter is to help you grasp the nuances and the essential do's and don'ts of the entire process of outreach and link building so that you're better equipped to lead your team. At the end of the chapter, we'll discuss how to chart a course for your team.

Creating Buzz

Marketing, like most things in life, is a popularity contest. Whether you're selling cookies in your neighborhood or pitching your software to global enterprises, the more you get acknowledged and recognized with a positive sentiment, the more likely you are to succeed in achieving your business goals.

From the lens of an SEO-focused content marketer, this involves getting other websites to link to your website, a practice known as “link building.”

By acquiring hyperlinks (or backlinks) from other websites, you can attract relevant audiences from similar or related sources to your own website. This way, others will essentially be endorsing your brand or content.

However, the primary purpose of link building is to increase your odds of ranking higher in the search engine results pages (or SERPs). Google and others see backlinks as “votes of confidence” and

Link-Building Efforts Play a Major Role in Determining Your Success!

Link building is the primary component of any “off-page” SEO strategy that involves using different tactics to acquire hyperlinks from other websites that link back to you (also known as “backlinks”). These links help both users and search engine crawlers (programs that scour the Internet for webpages, analyze them, and then add them to their search engine's index), navigate from website to website. The more links you “build” for your content, the more likely it is to show up on the first page in the search engine rankings for relevant keywords.



PageRank (an algorithm that Google uses to rank pages in the search results) considers the quality and number of backlinks a major ranking factor.

Why Does Quality Matter When Creating Backlinks?

Once upon a time, link building was all about acquiring as many links as possible by doing whatever it took. SEOs didn't care much about *where* they were generating links from, and they were only concerned about hitting their monthly targets by leaving comments and publishing sub-par content on other websites to generate a backlink.

Today, the *quality* of your links matters more to search engines than the quantity.

But what does quality even mean in this context? Quality here refers to acquiring backlinks from domains that are considered trustworthy by search engines and are known for publishing popular content.

How do you know if a website is worth getting linked from? A tried-and-tested way is to look at its domain authority (DA, also known as domain rating)—a score (from 0 to 100) that's calculated using the number of links and the quality of linking sources. It reflects the chances of a website to rank higher on the Search Engine Results Pages (SERP): The higher the DA, the greater the chances of ranking even for the most difficult keywords. It's important to remember that



DA itself isn't a direct ranking factor, but a good indicator of a website's overall standing or "reputation." That being said, your ultimate focus shouldn't be to increase your own DA score, but rather to get high-DA websites to give you links.

Think about it: Whose word holds more weight? A well-known, seasoned professional with a reputation talking about their area of expertise, or a nobody with no significant experience or reputation speaking on the same subject?

Of course, you'd bet your money on the first option (unless you enjoy losing bets—we're not judging).



To solidify everything, here's a question: If website A has 100 backlinks and website B has more than 300, which one of them would have a better chance at ranking?

The answer: It depends. Remember that it's not just the volume of backlinks that counts, but also the quality. Website A could win out if the quality of its links is significantly higher.

Search engines work in a similar way while analyzing the backlink profiles of websites.

"If website A is trustworthy and is sending me to website B, it must mean that the latter is trustworthy, as well." This is an over-simplified way of explaining how search engine algorithms work while analyzing links. Considering that, the more links you have from high-DA websites, the more credible and trustworthy you'll appear.

Here are some of the top-ranking, high DA websites that you could consider acquiring backlinks from:

- G2¹¹
- Enterprise CIO¹²
- Fast Company¹³
- BizTech Magazine¹⁴
- eWeek¹⁵
- PCMag¹⁶
- TechCrunch¹⁷
- InformationWeek¹⁸
- Data Center Knowledge¹⁹
- VentureBeat²⁰
- MIT Technology Review²¹
- The Next Web (TNW)²²

¹¹ <https://learn.g2.com/>

¹² <https://enterprise-cio.com/>

¹³ <https://www.fastcompany.com/>

¹⁴ <https://biztechmagazine.com/>

¹⁵ <https://www.eweek.com/>

¹⁶ <https://www.pcmag.com/>

¹⁷ <https://techcrunch.com/>

¹⁸ <https://www.informationweek.com/>

¹⁹ <http://www.datacenterknowledge.com/>

²⁰ <https://venturebeat.com/>

²¹ <https://www.technologyreview.com/>

²² <https://thenextweb.com/>

- WIRED²³
- Forbes²⁴
- Gigaom²⁵

To keep track of everything, search engine crawlers pass some of the PageRank (equity or value) from the linking domains to the linked sources—a process that’s sometimes jokingly referred to as “link juice.” It’s this *link juice* that search engines consider when determining rankings.

As illustrated in **Figure 9**, links essentially work as “pipes” to transfer equity or juice. This concept also applies to internal links, which is

Valuable Liquid Commodity

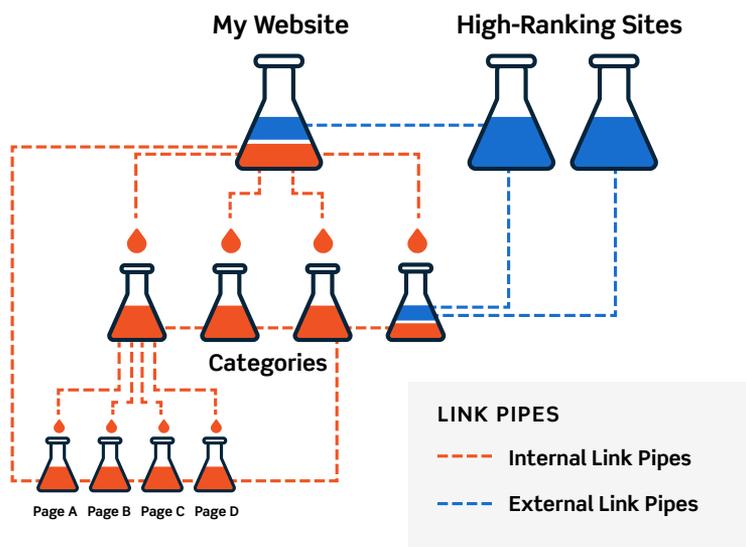


Figure 9: How link juice works

²³ <https://www.wired.com/>

²⁴ <https://www.forbes.com/innovation>

²⁵ <https://gigaom.com/>

one of the reasons why it's crucial to branch out and connect your webpages with each other.

While acquiring a link from any website, make sure they don't use the "nofollow" attribute. This attribute is added to the hyperlink in the HTML source code and prevents search engine crawlers from passing any equity.

To find out if a website adds the nofollow attribute, you can either simply ask the person managing it or access the source code of any page on your browser and look at an external link.



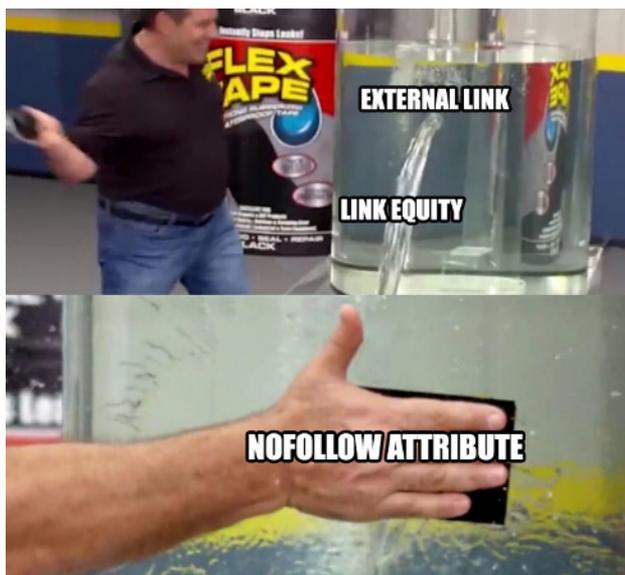
"Nofollow links" aren't necessarily *bad*. When clicking on them, the users don't notice any difference and can use them to navigate to the linked destinations. Keeping that in mind, if you're able to acquire a link from a website that receives hundreds of thousands of visitors on a monthly basis, it doesn't matter if it impacts your backlink profile, as you'll be setting yourself up to potentially receive a decent chunk of that traffic.

Additionally, analyzing your backlink profile with tools such as Ahrefs²⁶ and SEMrush²⁷ will also tell you which links are follow and nofollow.

Adding the nofollow attribute to external links is a way of telling search engines that you don't trust the linked source. It is, therefore, advised that you try your best to acquire links from websites that don't use this attribute by default.

²⁶ <https://ahrefs.com/>

²⁷ <https://www.semrush.com/>



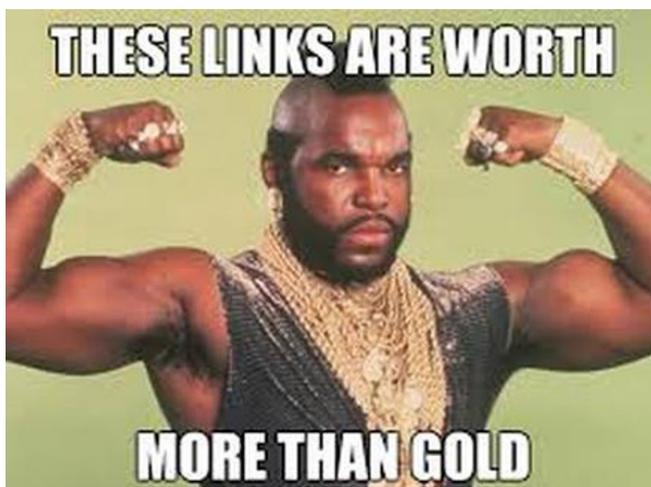
How Do You Get Links? Create Linkable Content!

There are many tactics that you can use to generate links to your website. It all depends on the level of resources that you have.

A few tried-and-tested techniques that work for most businesses include:

1. **Guest Posting:** This refers to publishing original content on other websites as a contributor. In exchange, you get to place a link or two (either in your bio or within the actual content) back to your own website. Try to contribute on major publisher websites and tech journals since they tend to have high DA scores (now you know one of the main reasons behind marketers and PR firms obsessing over becoming contributors to sites like Forbes and Entrepreneur). If you're a SaaS company, you can consider writing for software review websites, such as G2.

2. **Broken Link Building:** This is a fairly quick way to get a link. It involves finding a relevant webpage with a broken link (a link to a page that's no longer available or moved to another location), creating similar content (or selecting an existing asset that's a perfect replacement), and requesting the owner of the website to replace the broken (dead-end) link with your fresh and available resource. There are many online tools that can help you instantly find broken links on any domain or page.
3. **Repurpose Content:** If you've published an in-depth blog post, you can *repurpose* it into an infographic (or any other format), publish it on a popular third-party platform, and link back to your original post. Or you could share slides from a recent presentation.
4. **Reclaim Lost Links:** Over time, you can lose some of the backlinks that you've made along the way. Instead of getting upset over it, you can investigate why you lost those links (did a competitor sweep in and take your place?), contact the person managing the linking website, and either request them to give you the link back or provide them with a fresh content asset that they could consider linking to through a separate page.



Now that we've gone over some different link-building tactics, how can you ensure that you'll get linked to in the first place?

You'd be right if you guess that you do this by creating exceptionally valuable content. (Perhaps you're sensing a theme here ...)

To be more precise, to increase your chances of getting backlinks, you need to make your content *linkable*.

There's no universal definition of a linkable content asset. A content asset that might seem worthy of linking to one person might not be good enough or even relevant to another. However, there are a few elements that, when incorporated while crafting your asset, can increase your chances of getting links. Some of them include (you don't necessarily have to include all of them):

- **Original Data:** Statistics and other data on your industry that you collect yourself (or have someone else collect on your behalf) through surveys and studies can help you gain links from related websites over the course of many years.
- **Custom Illustrations and Charts:** To increase the *shareability* of your content, you can include custom illustrations, charts, and infographics that help to get the point across.
- **Word from the Wise:** Another great way to make your content linkable is by asking industry leaders for their opinion or advice on a relevant subject, and including them in your asset. That way, other content publishers, when discussing the same subject and referring to their quotes, will mention your brand and link to your content.
- **Unique Take and Concrete Advice:** Last, but not least, taking a unique approach when covering a subject or a topic that has already been covered countless times by other publishers will help. Others will see this fresh perspective as an original thought. Furthermore, be sure to include actionable advice (like an insider secret) that your audience can use right away.



Figure 10: The different goals for email outreach

Using Classic Email Outreach to Get Noticed and Build Authority

Earlier, we mentioned using outreach tactics to distribute content and build links in the process. To recap, *outreach*, in the context of content marketing, refers to reaching out to influencers, bloggers, and publishers through cold emails (or utilizing existing relationships), asking them to share a piece of (relevant) content on their website to provide you with a link.

There are many ways you can approach content publishers for this purpose, such as with an original idea/data/content or an asset that they can share on their website, to name a few. See **Figure 10** for some examples.

While it may be difficult and time-consuming, email outreach, when done right, can help you create some really high-quality backlinks for your website, establish long-term relationships, and get new leads in the process.

Here are some of the best practices and insider secrets to help you hit the ground running:

Find the Perfect Prospects

Your outreach efforts should begin by creating a list of potential prospects to reach out to. After all, you can't just reach out to any website that you come across, right? That would be like throwing darts in the dark hoping that you hit the bullseye.

To make your efforts count, you need to go after the right prospects, i.e. those who would be interested in covering your content and whose coverage would send meaningful attention your direction.

Here are some quick tips to help you get started:

- Use Google search operators to find bloggers or publishers that may be interested in providing coverage. Put your keywords in quotations while searching or use the `"inurl:website.com keyword"` operator to see if a particular website has recently published any post that's relevant to your topic.
- Check the backlinks of your competitors for similar content. You can use any SEO tool, such as Ahrefs, for this purpose. Websites linking to similar content may also be interested in publishing content that you have to offer.
- Check over the latest content on the website. Just because a potential prospect covered a topic similar to what you have to pitch a few years ago doesn't guarantee that they'd be interested in doing the same again. Analyze their posts to see if they'd be interested in covering similar content at the moment.

Use Compelling Email Subject Lines

Vetting recipients and sending out the emails is the easy part.

Why? Cause it's all under your control.

When the ball is in your prospect's court though, there's no guarantee that they'll even bother opening your email in the first place. In fact,

the average open rate for emails in all industries is just 17.92%²⁸ (in other words, you're probably going to get ignored).

For that reason, you need to write the perfect email subject line—one that grabs attention and compels the recipient to open your email.

Here's the secret recipe for composing a compelling email subject line:

- Make it personal by adding the name of the website to your subject line.
- Avoid anything that gives off the impression that you're spamming the recipient. Keep the subject lines descriptive and realistic, but also brief.

Writing the Perfect Email Body

Last, but not least, make the actual email body count. Just because you get a prospect to open your email, doesn't mean that they'll definitely consider the content you're pitching. One wrong move can put them off and send your email straight to the trash folder. Or worse, mark you as spam.

In effective outreach, both parties (the content marketer and the prospect) have something to gain. However, the prospect has the upper hand in this transaction, as they're probably getting approached by hundreds of other marketers with similar pitches.

To make sure that you stand out, do the following:

- Make it personal by mentioning a piece of content that the prospect has recently published, and is preferably relevant to what you're about to pitch. This gives the impression that you've done your homework and piques the interest of your prospect. (*Who doesn't like receiving praise? Just be sure it's genuine.*)

²⁸ <https://www.campaignmonitor.com/resources/guides/email-marketing-benchmarks/>

- Using the personal element as a foundation, proceed to mention the content that you're about to pitch and provide the link to it (it could be an e-book, a video, a whitepaper, or any other asset). However, don't be abrupt, as you don't want to seem desperate. Make sure that the transition from the personal element to the actual point is smooth.
- Avoid beating around the bush. Don't make your email long-winded. Get to the point as quickly and naturally as possible.
- Finally, make it clear that if they find it interesting, they're welcome to share/cover it on their website.

Using User-Based Websites for Distributing Your Content

Besides promoting your content on platforms that monitor and approve every piece of content that gets published, you can also look toward websites that invite user-generated content.

Classic examples of such websites are Reddit and Quora. These websites allow you to publish relevant content whenever you want and are essentially self-moderating. However, due to the freedom that these platforms offer, your posts should be able to stand out from the crowd or they'll quickly be buried.

For instance, when answering questions on Quora, make sure to be as descriptive, empathetic, and helpful as possible. Don't try to blatantly place links and push your agenda. Instead, channel your inner content marketer: Answer questions related to your area of expertise by leveraging the content that you've already published, build authority, and then watch that goodwill roll in.

When you publish content on a regular basis on these websites, you can acquire an appreciable amount of links. However, most of these will have the nofollow attribute.

Nonetheless, they pack serious potential in terms of bringing traffic to your website.

In addition to these avenues, you can find relevant forums and go all in on helping the community and build your brand in the process.

Create a Solid Program for Content Outreach and Link Building

If you're not going to be the one actually implementing what was discussed in this chapter, the final piece of the puzzle is to build a scalable program for content outreach and link building—a framework based on the resources you're willing to put in.

There are two ways you can go about creating one:

1. Create and Run an In-House Program (Which May Include Contractors)

Your first option is to create an in-house team that handles all of the content outreach and link building efforts.

Of course, this will entail recruiting a team from scratch, probably consisting of at least the following roles:

- **Content Marketers:** It goes without saying that you'll need to hire expert content marketers who can not only produce outstanding content assets for your brand, but are also well-versed in the art of outreach, email marketing, and other link building tactics. In a very technical field like IT, finding an experienced content marketer who can adequately “talk the talk” can be expensive.
- **SEO Analyst(s):** For most teams, a single SEO analyst is more than enough. This individual can assist your content marketers with their content creation and link building efforts by identifying promising topics and scoping out third-party websites to go after, in addition to keeping an eye on your backlink profile (a

“portfolio” of all the websites linking to your domain, making it easier to identify good links and bad). Additionally, they can assist you with other, “on-page” SEO-related efforts.

Once you create a team of experts, the next step is to set some goals for them. If you’re just starting out, it’d be better to stick with simple objectives. You can always count on the S.M.A.R.T methodology, which states that your goals should be *simple, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound*.

Here are a few examples of S.M.A.R.T goals for a content marketing team:

- To create X number of links from 60+ DA websites in Y months
- To increase the DA-score of our website by 10 in X months
- To boost the organic traffic coming from external websites by X% in Y months

Finally, if you’re creating a program from scratch for the first time, it’s best to approach already experienced marketers for recruitment and test them on the best-practices of content marketing, outreach, and/or SEO prior to hiring them. Once everything’s set and you’re cruising, then consider developing a training program and hiring fresh talent you can train to do it your way.

2. Outsource the Whole Job to an Agency

While having an in-house program gives you more control over your efforts, it’s not always feasible to build one from scratch. Money, time, and expertise often stand in the way.

If you don’t have the resources to create an in-house outreach and link building program, you can always outsource to a content marketing/link building service.

Fortunately, there are agencies (and solo freelancers) out there for almost every budget.

Beware, though, as there are plenty of services with cheap, pre-made “packages” that will do more harm than good.

Here are some quick, to-the-point tips on choosing an agency/freelancer that offers content outreach and/or link building services:

- **Avoid Pre-Made Packages:** A quick and easy way to narrow down your options is to avoid services with pre-made packages. For example, if an agency claims that they’ll help you build X number of links in Y dollars—run! That’s because if the goal is to create “high-quality” links, it’s nearly impossible to guarantee a fixed amount of backlinks. The volume of quality backlinks they can generate is also highly dependent on how good the content you give them to work with is. Therefore, reputable agencies tend to work on a retainer basis.
- **Hit Two Birds with One Stone:** Opt for agencies that can not only help you with the promotion and distribution of your content, but also with its production. It’s best to do a quick Google search for something like “IT content marketing agency,” and then find the ones ranking at the top (evidence that they know SEO by getting themselves ranking for a highly competitive term). Great content and great promotion expertise are synergistic and the outcome is often greater than the sum of its parts.

Once you’ve shortlisted the agencies you think would be a good fit, reach out to them, spark up a conversation, and see if their services align your goals and budget.

As an illustration of great content and how you can deploy it for everything we’ve discussed in this chapter, the following chapter will introduce you to Gorilla Guides—a custom book series published by ActualTech Media.

CHAPTER 4

An Introduction to Gorilla Guides

In This Chapter:

- What Are Gorilla Guides?
- Why Gorilla Guides Are Effective
- Gorilla Guides vs. the Competition

In an age where gimmicks and intrusive promotional tactics no longer work how they used to—especially in a highly competitive B2B landscape—a sure-fire way to get noticed, hit your MQL quota, and have prospects coming to you with their challenges in droves is to publish and promote content that:

- Educates and informs your target audience about potential issues and their solutions
- Helps you establish authority in your domain

Pretty simple, right?

Unfortunately, that's easier said than done. Crafting and pushing out high-quality content on a day-to-day basis can be challenging. For that reason, IT vendors with limited in-house resources often either don't create enough content or end up publishing sub-par assets by outsourcing to freelancers who may not completely understand and relate to the pain points of their prospects.

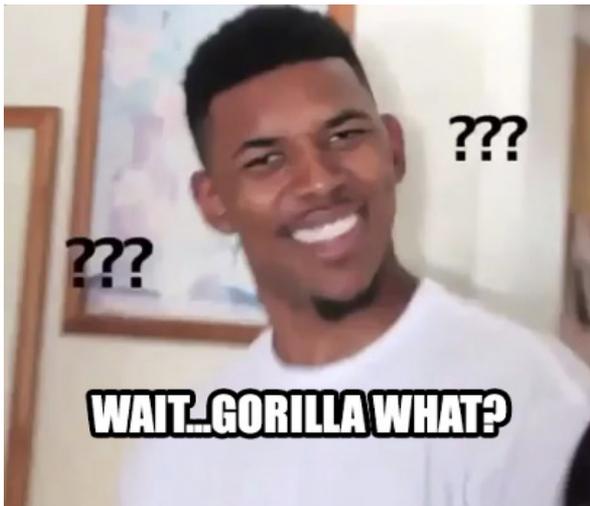
Considering that, how does an IT vendor manage to attract relevant prospects with high-quality content without compromising on writing quality or technical depth?

Enter: Gorilla Guides.

What Are Gorilla Guides?

Gorilla Guide is a respected brand of in-depth and highly detailed printed and electronic books, by ActualTech Media (*that's us, by the way—hi!*), that help educate, convince, and convert IT buyers on the behalf of solutions vendors (our clients). Each Gorilla Guide helps its readers understand various IT challenges and present compelling solutions, as well as how a certain vendor's technology can help overcome the obstacles at hand. These guides dive deep into the technicalities of the topics, leaving no stone unturned and paint a comprehensive, 360-degree picture for the readers.

Kind of like this guide you're reading right now.





By leveraging Gorilla Guides, a vendor can give a boost to their demand generation funnel—not only by using the Gorilla Guide itself, but also by using the Gorilla Guide as source material for delivering other ready-to-go messages/assets (reports, how-to-guides, newsletter copy, ad creative, and more).

A typical Gorilla Guide is anywhere from 40 to 100-plus pages long.

The number of ways a Gorilla Guide can be deployed is astronomical. Your Gorilla Guide will come with a permanent, unlimited, and unrestricted use license, giving you complete freedom to make use of the content however you deem fit. Want to distribute your guides to prospects and stakeholders in trade shows? Sure! Planning on generating new leads by gating the content? You got it. Want to extract tidbits of information for your email marketing campaign? Do it! Want to publish each chapter of the book as individual blog articles on your website? Great. Perhaps you'd like to use the diagrams for the book in some ad creative. Good idea!

Once we finalize and hand over your Gorilla Guide, the content is yours to leverage in as many ways as you can think of. And because

you've already vetted the content during the publishing process, sourcing new content from the already-approved Gorilla Guide shortcuts the process to creating more!



You might be wondering: “What makes these Gorilla Guides so special?” Well, it’s the fact that we actually get the content! Every Gorilla Guide is crafted by a recognized author who is well-versed in the technology that it discusses. Having spent years in the industry, our technical writers and editors understand the challenges that IT leaders face on a day-to-day basis and the nuances of technical writing. Our broad knowledge of different enterprise technology allows us to cover your solutions and topics of choice in great depth, while steering clear of technical errors. Compared to your average content outsourcing outfit, we stand head and shoulders above the rest when it comes to understanding your audience and your product without needing you to hold our hand.

To top it off, we’ll promote your finished Gorilla Guide with our engaged audience of avid readers and showcase it in our full library at gorilla.guide.²⁹

At the time of writing, we have more than 100 Gorilla Guide books either in the market or in production, all on advanced IT topics, such as Hyperconverged Infrastructure, Enterprise Security, Oracle Licensing, and End-User Computing, to name a few.

Why the Name “Gorilla Guides?”

We get this question all the time.

²⁹ <http://www.gorilla.guide/>

What's in a Name?

We love “Gorilla Guide” because there are so many ways that the series can be viewed. The term *guide* in this context can be a printed or virtual book, or it can be thought of as being led on a journey of discovery by a fun, friendly, and familiar gorilla as a guide. And we love our gorilla as well. He's strong, yet approachable. He's highly intelligent, yet not egotistical. He's exactly the kind of guide you want as you're learning about new technologies!



We first got the idea of starting the Gorilla Guide series when a client asked us if we could create a follow-up asset—a sequel of sorts—for a previously published book in a different series. This deeper book would dive further and discuss the “next part of the story.” In short, they wanted an asset that took the next step in the education journey and brought the reader another step further down-funnel.

We, being the how-can-we-make-this-great-idea-work-for-lots-of-clients marketers that we are, ran with it and decided that, rather than just write them a standalone book, we'd write for them the first book in a brand-new series.

We held brainstorming sessions to try to find an alluring, alliterative appellation that we could couple with a disarming, distinctive mascot. Many pixels gave their lives as we went back and forth in Slack to come up with a name. Given our love of animals, on June 3, 2015, the name “Gorilla Guide” was uttered.

And the rest is history.

Gorilla Guides are one-of-a-kind, top-tier content assets that discuss what are often highly technical subjects with just the right depth, helping readers navigate the dense technology jungle. In fact, about

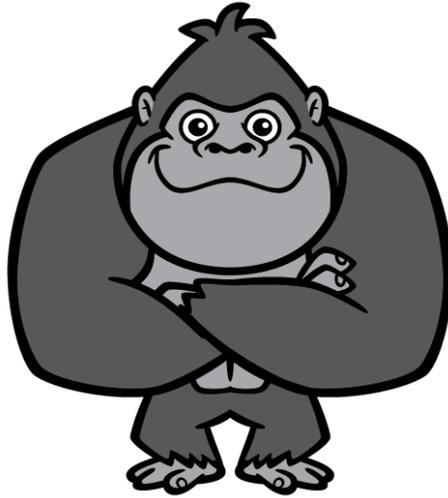


Figure 11: The only thing our gorilla loves more than bananas is educating your audience and guiding them through the complex IT jungle!

90% of our readers say that out of all the different assets they read, the Gorilla Guides went into the perfect technical depth for them.

To make the seemingly overwhelming information easy to digest, we came up with an endearing gorilla mascot, who became the face of the series (**Figure 11**). The gorilla pops up with helpful advice and additional learning opportunities throughout the book via callouts, helping readers solidify their understanding of the topics and enabling them to come up with bright new ideas.

Gorilla Guides Drive Results

While Gorilla Guides are meant to be shared as whole, comprehensive, educational, and evergreen assets with prospects, what makes them special is that they can provide you with a solid foundation for many additional content marketing efforts.

Let's See What the Audience Has to Say!

Don't take our word for it. Here's some positive feedback that we've received from our clients and audience over the years:



- “I assume the Gorilla Guide is written to a technical audience, but the same can't be assumed for a [competing] book.”
- “I prefer to be thought of as knowledgeable and capable; I don't get that feeling from [competing] books.”
- “The Gorilla Guides are usually more to the point [than other books], and more concise. Plus, it has a gorilla on the front, and everybody knows gorillas are cool.”

A single Gorilla Guide can easily include enough substance to fuel your content marketing efforts for a whole year. You can instantly get the substance for your messages by extracting relevant information and using it to engage your audience segments through different touchpoints.

The success of these guides speaks for itself.

Since we started the series, we have successfully helped clients generate *noteworthy* pipeline time and time again. For example, one of those clients was a leading Hyperconverged Infrastructure vendor, who generated \$2.54MM in sales opportunities directly attributed to a Gorilla Guide.

Gorilla Guides vs. the World

While there are quite a few “learning-made-easy” brands in the market that address technology topics, no other book series addresses the complex world of IT like the Gorilla Guide brand does.

In terms of depth, technical accuracy, and tone, Gorilla Guides take the cake.

Instead of producing assets on virtually every content area, we focus on the one thing that we know best: the business and technology of IT.

This laser focus on one area and “doing one thing better than anyone else” allows us to double down on our abilities and make full use of our collective knowledge—making us the go-to brand in our niche.

CHAPTER 5

Developing a Strong SEO Foundation

In This Chapter:

- An Introduction to SEO
- The Mysterious Google Algorithm
- Top SEO Ranking Factors

Now that we've introduced our Gorilla Guide series (and content subscription model) as a promising catalyst to your content marketing success, the upcoming chapters, including this one, will dive deeper into the different tactics and actionable tips on how exactly you can leverage ActualTech Media content to drive your efforts.

In this chapter, we'll paint a complete picture of the art and science of SEO, why it's vital for B2B success, and how your team can lay down a solid foundation.

Let's dive in!

A Sneak Peek into the Vast World of SEO

Search engines are easily one of the best things to happen to humanity. As key features in the age of information, they're used by consumers and businesses alike to get instant access to any content that can help answer their questions.



On average, Google processes around 40,000¹ search queries every single second! This translates to over 3.5 billion searches per day. This is a small glimpse of just how much we rely on search engines for finding information and discovering new things.

¹ <https://www.internetlivestats.com/google-search-statistics/>

In laymen’s terms, search engines like Google are Internet directories that index and fetch information (webpages, images, videos, news, and more) that is most relevant to whatever you type in.

Of course, how it all works is a lot more complicated than that. While they might make it seem simple, there are complex algorithms that work behind the scenes to display the most relevant results each time you type in a query—based mostly on the content that those sources have published.

Search engines analyze (or “crawl”) billions of live webpages on the Internet, store what they’ve learned about them in a database (a process called “indexing”), and then decide which order to rank them in for various search queries. Ranking, as you’ll soon see, depends on a bunch of different factors. The search engine’s goal is to surface and rank the content that is most applicable to your query.

With potentially hundreds of websites producing content on similar topics and fighting to grab the attention of the same segments, businesses in every industry are collectively spending a fortune on understanding ever-changing search engine algorithms and experimenting with different tactics to appear on the first page of search results—a practice that we all know and love as *search engine optimization*, or *SEO*.

B2B Marketers Are Going 'All In' on SEO!

If you haven't been focusing on SEO lately, you're missing out on some serious conversion potential. Don't believe us? Here are some eye-opening statistics on just how much effective SEO is in the B2B battleground:



- Approximately 45%¹ of enterprise businesses were investing roughly \$20,000 in SEO in 2017. That figure has likely increased over the past few years.
- Nearly 57%² of B2B marketers claim that SEO generates more leads than any other marketing initiative. Whoa!
- 62%³ of business buyers say that they make their purchase decisions by online content alone.

¹ <https://medium.com/@21stRenaissance/the-state-of-enterprise-seo-in-2017-de7ae1f5e318>

² <https://junto.digital/blog/seo-stats/>

³ <https://www.bluecorona.com/blog/b2b-marketing-statistics/>

SEO is an experimental practice. A certain set of tactics that work for one website may not necessarily work for another.

Google has told us that rankings are based on hundreds of factors, but has never revealed (and will never reveal) exactly what those factors are.

As a result, marketers have spent years trying to figure out (by experimenting) those ranking factors and how the algorithm works. See **Figure 12** for an illustration of Google's confirmed ranking factors.

Components of Google's Ranking Algorithm

(Based on SEO analysis of top 90 ranking domains from 10 industries and 3 markets in January 2020)

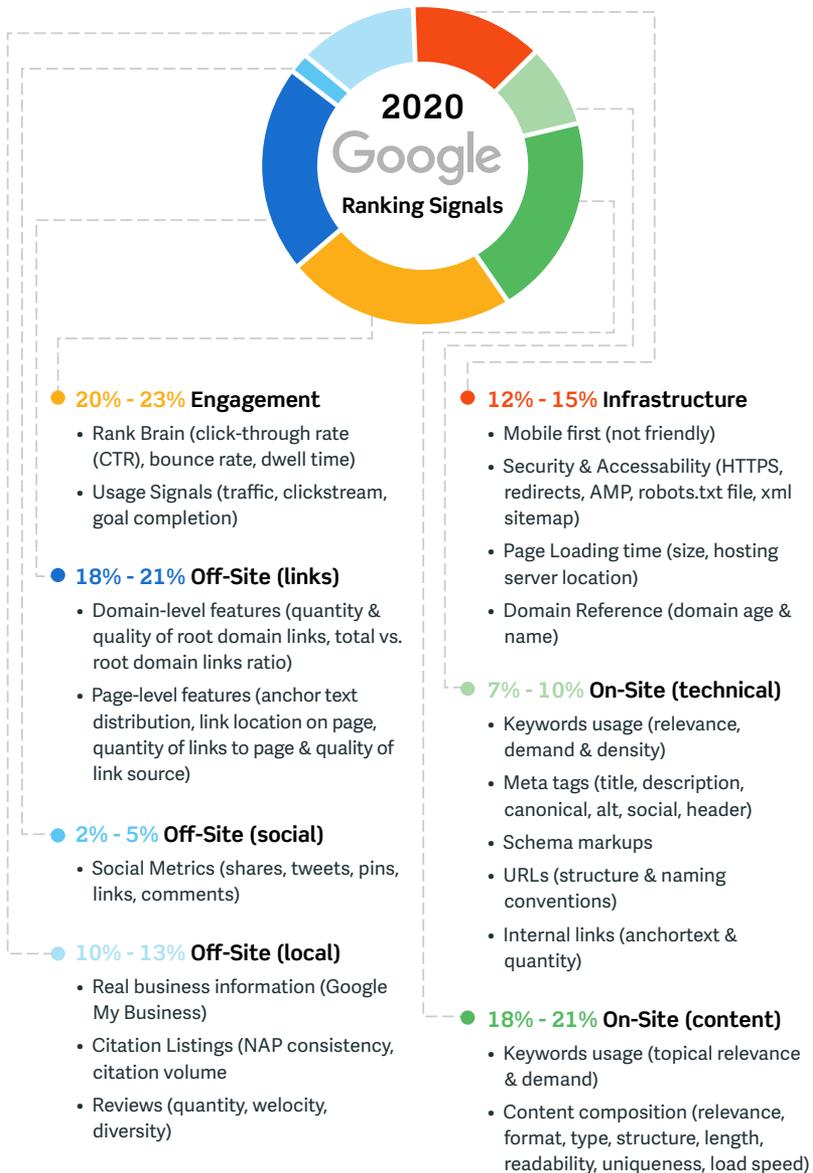


Figure 12: Known components of Google's ranking algorithm (Source: *Uptimiser* – <https://www.uptimiser.com.hk/seo-google-ranking-factors/>)



The fact of the matter is that modern SEO is more about understanding the *users*, and less about trying to wrap your head around how the search engine algorithms work (:lightbulb:).

This is something that even the search engines have been struggling with for years. Google and other search engines roll out tons of algorithm updates throughout the year that bring them closer to understanding the search intents behind queries and the type of content that would be best suited to answer them.

At the end of the day, understanding search intent is an AI and Big Data problem. That's why companies like Google love to collect data. More data to train AI with means more accurate search results.

While there's still a lot of ground to cover, search engines have certainly come a long way. Today, a Google search almost always returns results that satisfy the intent a user had when conducting the search.

All of this implies that, if you want prospects to visit your websites in droves, it's time to buckle down and focus on SEO.

Google Rolls Out Close to a Thousand Algorithm Updates Every Year!

To stay on top of the search game, Google rolls out nearly 1,000¹ algorithm updates every year. Needless to say, this keeps the global SEO community on its feet, as some of the more major updates have huge implications for websites in terms of rankings. That’s why SEO isn’t a “set it and forget it” kind of deal.

Remember: The end goal of nearly every algorithm update is to improve the UX. A recent example of this was the 2019 rollout of the natural language processing model “Bidirectional Encoder Representations from Transformers” (or “BERT,” if that’s a mouthful), which helps Google continue to better understand the actual intent behind different searches.

¹ <https://www.stanventures.com/blog/google-algorithm-update-2019/>



Breaking Down SEO

Generally, SEO can be split into the following two categories:

- **On-Page SEO:** This refers to all of the efforts that you make to post content to your website, tweak its source code to offer a smooth experience, and design your pages to deliver a memorable experience and make the users stick around.
- **Off-Page SEO:** This includes all the efforts you make *outside* your website (hence the name “off-page”) to generate links and boost the visibility of your content on different third-party platforms.

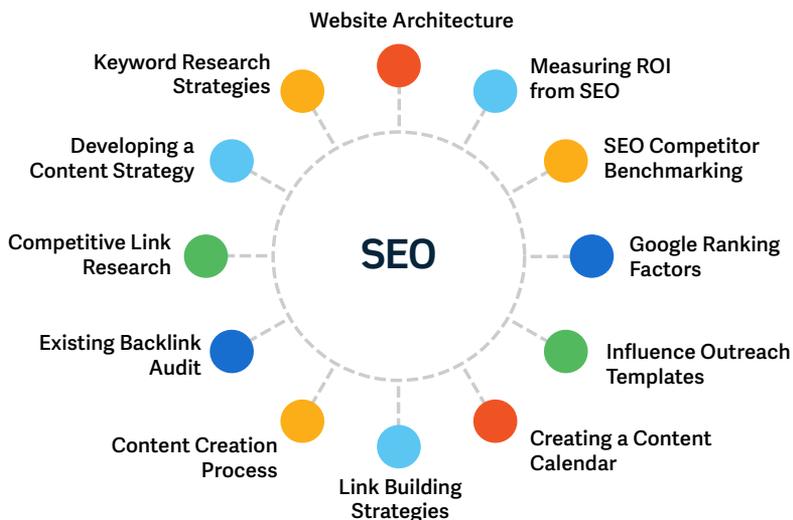


Figure 13: The basic building blocks for a typical SEO strategy

Check out **Figure 13** to learn more about the basic building blocks for any SEO strategy.

Since we’ve already discussed off-page SEO at some length in Chapter 3 on link building, for now, we’ll keep most of the discussion limited to on-page SEO.

As we pointed out earlier, there are several factors (more than 200,³⁰ at least) that can affect the chances of your pages showing higher up in search results. A few of those that fall under on-page SEO include:

- **The Content Itself:** The depth and overall quality of your content matters a lot. The deeper you dive into a topic and produce content with user intent in mind, the more time your visitors will spend engaging with your website.
- **Keyword Usage:** The way you sprinkle your primary and secondary keywords (phrases that your target audience searches for)

³⁰ <https://backlinko.com/google-ranking-factors>

throughout your content matters a lot. We'll dive deeper into keyword technicalities shortly.

- **Site Speed:** The speed at which the website loads can make or break the positive experience that you wish to deliver. Did you know that a delay of just 100³¹ milliseconds in the loading speed of your website can decrease conversions by 7%? Amazon and Walmart reported a 1%³² loss in revenue from a 100 millisecond delay. Ouch!!
- **Mobile Optimization:** Starting in 2020, Google will implement mobile-first indexing for all websites. Under this approach, while indexing and ranking pages, the search engine will first look at how well they are optimized for mobile users. For that reason, if your website doesn't load properly on (or isn't optimized for) mobile devices, now would be a good time to get on that.
- **URL Structuring:** Pages with shorter and memorable URLs, that also include the primary keywords, generally have better chances of ranking than pages whose URLs don't tick those boxes.
- **Security:** Google takes security seriously, and for that reason, it rewards websites that use secured socket layer (SSL) certificates.
- **Internal Links:** If a page has a good amount of internal links from well-performing pages pointing toward it, its chances of ranking higher increase (*remember link juice?*).

And that barely scratches the surface.

While improving any factor brings you one step closer to ranking higher in the SERPs, one thing that you absolutely can't compromise on (or can't even get anywhere without, for that matter) is, you guessed it, *content*.

³¹ <https://unbounce.com/landing-pages/7-page-speed-stats-for-marketers/>

³² <https://www.webfx.com/blog/internet/website-page-load-time-conversions/>

The Must-Have SEO Stack for the Modern Marketer

Equip your team with the tools they need to plan out and execute their SEO strategy.

Some of the hottest resources include:

- **Ahrefs:**¹ One of two go-to platforms for top-of-the-line SEO tools (such as keyword research, link building, site audit, and more) and resources for millions of marketers around the globe.
- **SEMrush:**² The other go-to platform. A one-stop solution offering an extensive suite of SEO, PPC, and social media marketing tools.
- **BuzzSumo:**³ An online tool that scours the Internet for trending content and helps you discover new ideas.
- **Exploding Topics:**⁴ A free tool that lets you identify topics with trending potential from different industries.

¹ <https://ahrefs.com/>

² <https://www.semrush.com/>

³ <https://buzzsumo.com/>

⁴ <https://explodingtopics.com/>

You can have the fastest website with all of the technical variables taken care of, but if it doesn't have highly valuable content, it won't rank. (And that's no bueno.) Even if—by some cosmic accident—it does rank, you won't be able to engage, convince, or convert prospects.

That being said, let's look at the process of how you can create highly valuable *and* SEO-optimized content assets, from keyword research to actual creation.





The Speed at Which Your Website Loads Matters!

In a fast-paced world, it only makes sense for your website to not take longer than a few seconds to load. Search engines reward websites that load quickly, and, of course, your visitors will love you for it.

Here are a few things that you can do right now to optimize your website to load faster:

- Compress all images and videos on your website.
- Minify your CSS and JavaScript by removing unnecessary characters and whitespace.
- Use a content distribution network (CDN) to accelerate delivery of pages.
- Enable browser caching on your website. This way, every time a user *revisits* your website, their browser won't have to load all the content from scratch—cutting down on the loading time.
- Keep checking the overall health of your website on Google PageSpeed Insights. This tool scores your website on a scale of 0 to 100 and provides actionable tips on how you can improve it.



Keywords, Keywords, and What? Keywords!

First and foremost, you have to start by discovering, identifying, and selecting key phrases that are closely related to what you do and what your ideal prospects usually search for—known as “keyword research.”

This is the most basic aspect of SEO and lays the foundation for any comprehensive content strategy. Surprisingly, this also happens to be one of the things that most marketers get wrong. Since keyword research is an integral part of any SEO strategy, the practice has also evolved over the years. It deepened from only focusing on the individual keywords to understanding the reasons behind why anyone would search for it in the first place. See **Figure 14** for a quick comparison.

By identifying the right keywords, you’ll get a roadmap (or topics) for your on-page and off-page content efforts. Here’s a complete breakdown of the keyword research process:

How Keyword Research & Usage Has Evolved Over the Years



- Emphasis only on search volume
- Keyword stuffing
- Relevance with content wasn't important



- Emphasis on intent and topical relevance
- Using relevant keywords for different stages of the buying cycle to target the right intent

Figure 14: The evolution of keyword research

1. Create a List of Generic Topics

Before anything else, start by brainstorming topics that you feel are related to your niche. For now, don't worry about digging deep—just think of the terms that your target audience could search for off the top of your head.

For instance, if you offer hyperconverged infrastructure solutions, a few base topics could be:

- HCI architecture
- Edge computing
- VDI and DaaS

2. Discover Actual Keywords to Target

With a list of base topics at your disposal, it's time to pick out specific keywords that you wish to target. Before we discuss the actual steps, it's important to familiarize yourself with two of the most critical metrics that you'll come across while conducting keyword research:

- **Keyword Difficulty (KD):** Measured as a percentage, keyword difficulty reflects how challenging it would be to rank for a particular keyword. Websites with high DAs usually find it easier to rank for high difficulty keywords, whereas others have to craft out-of-this-world content and garner good backlinks to even come close. KD is calculated using factors such as the quality of the existing content, the DAs of the websites currently ranking for them, and the number of people searching for that keyword.
- **Search Volume:** This shows how many times the keyword is searched for by users (usually on a monthly basis). The higher the search volume, the more potential a keyword packs for bringing in that sweet, sweet traffic.

Get Base Topic Ideas from Gorilla Guides

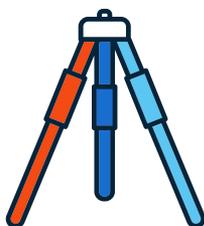
While you can extract complete articles from one, a Gorilla Guide that discusses your areas of specialty in great depth can also provide you with some great ideas for base topics for SEO efforts. A quick overview of the table of contents can help you identify promising starting points for your keyword research process.



With that in mind, it's often useful to target keywords with low difficulty scores and high search volumes.

Unless you already have a stellar DA, you don't want to go after keywords with 40+ KD scores. At the same time, you don't want to write content on stuff that no one is searching for in the first place. To find the perfect difficulty-to-volume balance, use the Tripod Rule shown in **Figure 15**.

The Tripod Rule of Keyword Research



The ideal keyword must be:

- **Popular**
The keyword has a high-enough search volume
- **Rankable**
The SEO difficulty isn't too high
- **Relevant**
The search intent complies with your content

Figure 15: The Tripod Rule of keyword research

With that out of the way, it's time to plug in your base topics to the keyword research tool of your choice and extract related keywords. To help you narrow down your focus even further, here is a quick breakdown of the main types of keywords by length:

- **Short-Tail:** Also known as “head” or “broad” keywords, these are really short keyphrases (one or two words long) that are usually the main topics within a niche (e.g. “VDI”). These keywords are very difficult to rank for and have high search volumes.
- **Long-Tail:** As opposed to short-tail, these keywords are longer (four words or more) and are more specific in nature (e.g. “how to do 3D modeling in VDI environments”). Long-tail keywords are queries that usually begin with words like who, what, when, why, how, and so on. Due to their specific nature, long-tail keywords are generally less competitive and usually have lower search volumes than their short-tail counterparts, as illustrated in **Figure 16**.

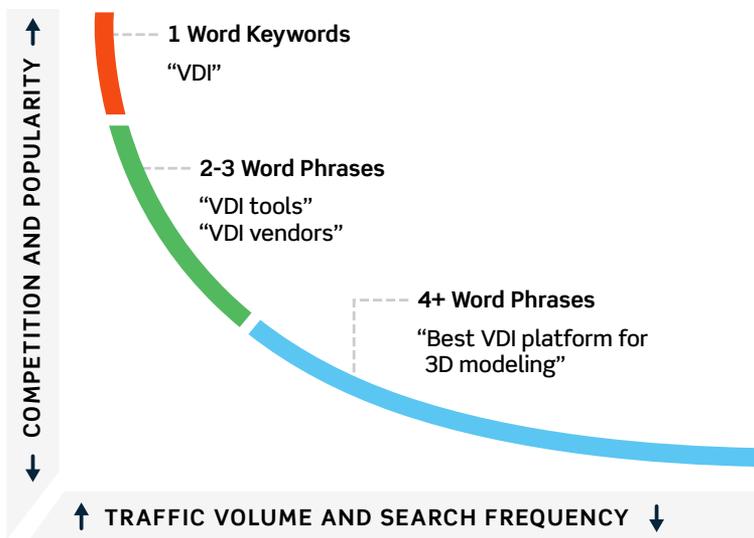


Figure 16: How keyword difficulty and volume varies by keyword length

If you already have existing content assets at your disposal, you can potentially stumble upon long-tail keyword ideas that you can elaborate on. For example, the callouts in our Gorilla Guides might help turn up great long-tail keyword material.

It's worth mentioning that, at one point, marketers were obsessed with Latent Semantic Indexing (LSI) keywords. These are words that are closely related to your keywords. However, John Mueller, a Webmaster Trends Analyst at Google, came out and said that LSI keywords weren't a thing.³³



Moving on.

Since search engines have become smart enough to understand the intent behind search queries, they look for any relevant phrases that might help them in displaying the perfect results.

For instance, “networking” can either mean building profitable business relationships or a system used to transmit bits of data over wires. Including words like “TCP/IP” and “computer” will let the search engine know that the content is about the latter. The search engine will then use this information when deciding to show results each time a user types in a relevant query.

³³ <https://www.seroundtable.com/google-lsi-keywords-27970.html>

Bonus: Look for Keyword Ideas on Other Platforms

At times, when you're digging for new keyword/topic ideas, the typical keyword research tools don't cut it. That's because these tools focus on just numbers. Sometimes you need inspiration!

If you're in a niche like software-defined storage for containers, chances are, you don't have hundreds of thousands of people searching for the keywords that are related to your business. However, that doesn't necessarily mean that those keywords aren't worth chasing after.

To discover these untapped opportunities, look for themes and trends on other platforms that aren't primarily meant for keyword research.

A few of these include:

- Quora
- Reddit
- Google Trends
- Tech journals

With a little research, you'll be able to discover emerging, low-competition topics that might be of interest to your target audience.

Craft Content with SEO Best Practices in Mind

With a list of keywords and potential topics at your disposal, it's time to get to work and craft quality content that will rank higher in the SERPs.

Here are some not-so-secret secrets for crafting content that will rank:

Focus on Quality—Not Length

A common mistake that most content creators make is thinking that longer content will always perform better than shorter assets.

While this may be true for certain topics that demand a good few thousand words to do them justice, hitting a certain word count should be the least of your concerns when writing most content.

The thing is, a lot of *good* content goes in-depth and covers everything relevant or related to a topic in detail, providing unique perspectives and insights along the way. This just ends up making the content *longer*. Folks sometimes overlook this and just aim to create long content.

Therefore, instead of *length*, you should focus more on **quality** and **depth**.

Here are some quick tips to help you do that:

- Find new and interesting angles to cover a topic compared to everything else out there. At the very least, cover everything in an engaging and entertaining way.
- Analyze the top-ranking content from your competitors on the same topic. What makes their content so great? How can you make it even better? If possible, try providing something that others can't replicate—such as original data, custom infographics, videos, or your own unique analysis.
- Write with search intent in mind. What does the user expect to see before clicking on a link? What's the best way to satisfy that intent while also accomplishing your underlying goals?

- Focus on aesthetics. Don't compromise on the design of your content (or website, in general, for that matter). It does matter when it comes to engagement.

Be Smart with Your Keywords

While crafting your content and certainly before hitting publish, there are a few things that could give you that extra push and help you cross the finish line.

Sure, your content needs to be written naturally, with the first priority being satisfying the user intent. However, the proper usage of your focus keyword is still super important in getting the content to rank. In most cases, you should include your main keyword in:

- The title tag (see **Figure 17**)
- In the first 100 words of your content
- The meta title and description
- In other low-level header tags (H2 and H3)

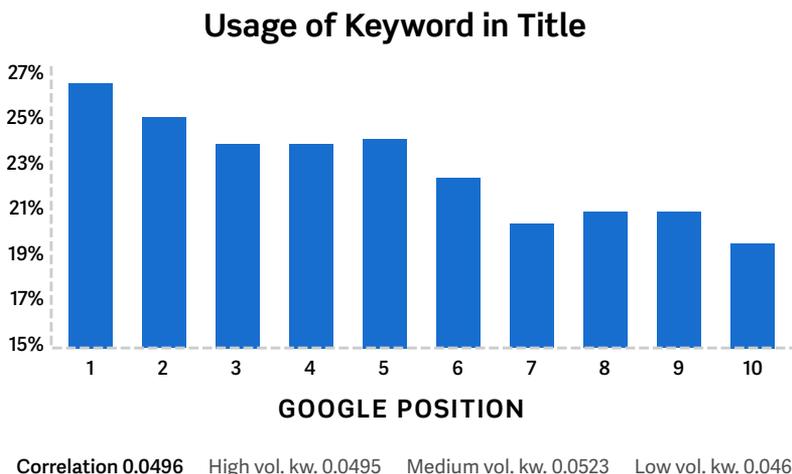


Figure 17: The correlation between usage of keywords in titles and Google rankings

Optimize for Page Speed

Once you hit that publish button, run over to Google PageSpeed Insights³⁴ to check for any speed issues. Some potential issues (and their fixes) include:

- Large media files (compress all images and videos)
- Large scripts (minify the CSS and JavaScript)
- Poorly written plugins (remove/replace them)

Psst ... Repurpose the Content in Your Gorilla Guides!

Again, creating blog posts and articles from scratch can be difficult. However, if you have content assets that are already performing well (such as a video, podcast, or an e-book), you can repurpose them into content meant for SEO.

With an in-depth Gorilla Guide, for example, generating content for specific SEO goals becomes a lot easier.

You can extract ready-to-go reference articles (or at least, big chunks of ready-to-use information), optimize them for SEO, and publish them on your website or any third-party platforms, such as Medium, for link-building purposes.

If you're gating your Gorilla Guides for lead generation, don't worry about the reference articles cannibalizing your lead gen efforts. It's a common concern, but in practice, it doesn't happen.

If anything, the reference content will help you set the main stage for the actual Gorilla Guide, spark interest, and potentially bring in more prospects who will convert into leads.

³⁴ <https://developers.google.com/speed/pagespeed/insights/>

By carefully extracting just the right amount of content for your articles and embedding enticing CTAs that compel your readers to check out the entire Guide, you can potentially kill two birds with one stone by ranking for competitive keywords and getting new leads in the process. See **Figure 18** for all kinds of ways that you can deploy and repurpose a Gorilla Guide. You'll see that SEO and paid search support are just a few of the myriad ways.

Your Action Item: Perform an Audit

If you don't have an existing blog or other resources on your website, feel free to skip this section.

For everyone else, performing a quick audit can reveal some amazing opportunities to further perfect your existing content and plan out your future assets.

Furthermore, this will also help you decide which content assets to keep, which ones to update, and which ones to remove.

Here's how you can go about doing this. It may only be three bullets, but completing this audit is a major feat.

- Create a list of all your existing content on a spreadsheet. This should also include the keywords they're targeting and currently ranking for. You may have to leverage a third-party tool (like SEMrush or Screamingfrog) for this purpose. Download and use this detailed template³⁵ by Buffer to organize the data (you can modify it to your liking).
- Next, extract and slot in data that reflects the performance of your content. Some essential numbers that you should look at include rankings, organic traffic, bounce rate, average time spent on page, and page speed. If you have an analytics tool set up, such

³⁵ <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1WQJp8Fprx-qKAcbzVe3dHJ9Qmn2LhEze1hFsLF2pOE/edit#gid=0>

How to Use Your Gorilla Guide Book Throughout the Buyer's Journey

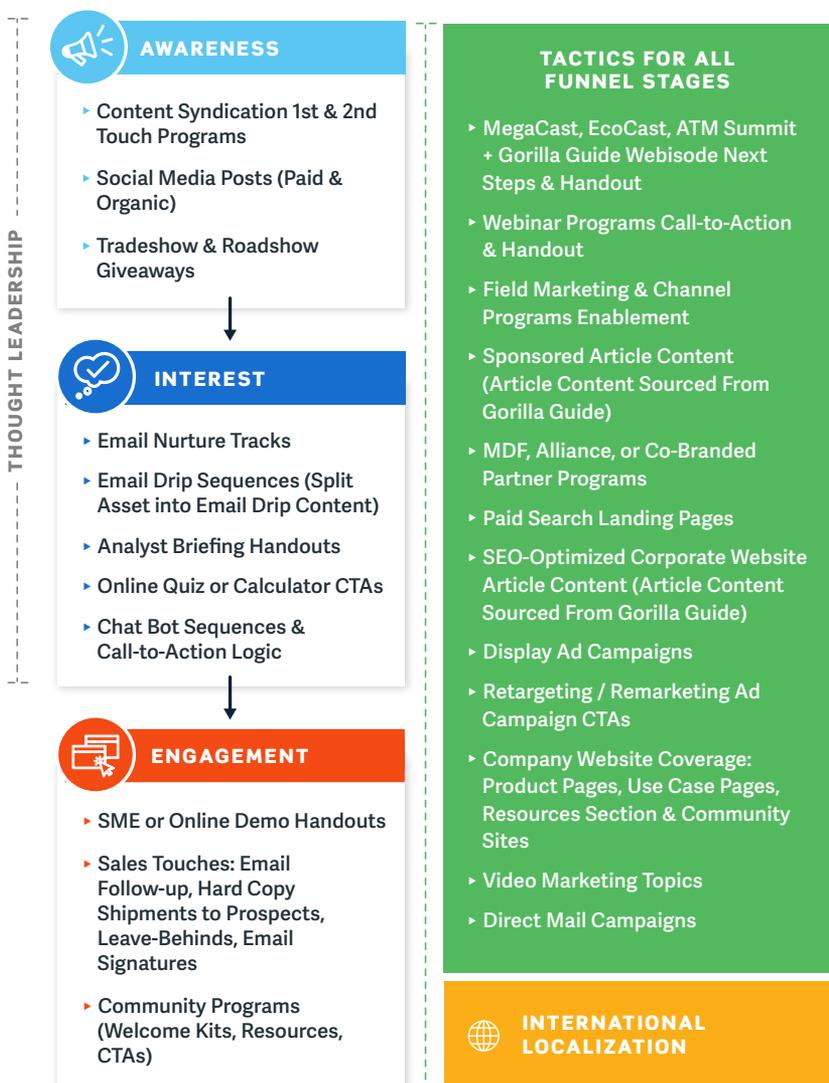


Figure 18: Ways to repurpose Gorilla Guide content throughout the buyer's journey

as Google Analytics, you'll easily collect this information. If not, you can acquire the historical data from a conventional SEO tool (such as the Traffic Analytics³⁶ feature of SEMRush).

- Categorize and deal with your content pieces on the basis of their “health.”
 - Leave your best-performing content assets untouched.
 - Consider updating the content assets that perform well, but not as good as you'd hope for.
 - Remove any assets that don't bring anything to the table.

Performing a content audit like this on a regular basis gives you the data you need to make informed decisions about your SEO strategy moving forward.

³⁶ <https://www.semrush.com/analytics/traffic/>

CHAPTER 6

Catalyst to Your Sales Success

In This Chapter:

- Properly Aligning Sales and Marketing
- Listening to Prospects: Your Secret Weapon
- How Gorilla Guides Can Help You Find Prospects

Perhaps one of the biggest challenges that all B2B companies face is ensuring the alignment of sales and marketing. A lack of coordination and discrepancies between the end goals of the two can result in squandered sales potential.

The struggle is real, and it's costing businesses valuable resources. In fact, nearly 60% to 70%³⁷ of content produced for B2B marketing is never used by sales (LOL, why?).

There could be a number of reasons for that, but top candidates include lack of internal awareness about the content and content having low relevance to individual sales contacts.

Whatever the case, if you can successfully share amazing content with the sales organization, content can be the catalyst to your sales success. Let's find out what it all means and how Gorilla Guides can help.

³⁷ <https://contentmarketinginstitute.com/2015/02/moneyball-content-sales-team/>



Tunneling Between Sales and Content Marketing

The most prominent characteristic of modern B2B buying is that it's mostly research-based. On average, B2B buyers spend a *significant* amount of time consuming content before they even talk to a sales representative (71%³⁸ of B2B buyers begin the buying process with an unbranded or generic Google search).

That makes content marketing more important than ever.

However, that's also not to say that sales is becoming redundant (*don't worry sales, we got you!*). If anything, sales is becoming even more critical in this new exciting age. It's just that the face of sales is changing.

The goal is to align your sales and marketing team around a consistent narrative and buyer's journey. Content can improve your sales efforts by answering the right questions, with the right messages, at the right time.

Marketers, when focusing on the big picture, tend to over-generalize. Since your sales personnel are the ones actually listening to your prospects and understanding their pain points, they can offer some

³⁸ <https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/consumer-insights/the-changing-face-b2b-marketing/>



Figure 19: How sales and content marketing can help each other

truly valuable first-hand information (queries, special problems, and so on) that would, otherwise, be difficult, or even impossible, to turn up with SEO tools and such.

Your marketing team can make use of that information to create better MoFu and BoFu content—the foundation of which they can easily get from Gorilla Guides!

Additionally, using that information, marketing can also help sales understand how their content assets can help them nurture prospects in different stages of the buying cycle and clear the way for the next step down funnel. Over time, consistent efforts will result in better-informed prospects and well-equipped sales personnel, resulting in more sales. See **Figure 19**.

Again, the survival of this cycle depends on the level of collaboration between these two teams, or departments.

Catalyzing Direct Sales Efforts

With top-quality and in-depth ToFu and MoFu content, your B2B buyers will already have most of the information they need by the time they approach a rep. However, they'll still need you to guide them through the next step.

That's where your sales team steps in.

The inbound methodology discussed in the earlier chapters also applies to sales. And it doesn't stop once the prospect approaches you—that's where all the real work begins, in fact!

Instead of focusing on closing another sale, hopefully your reps focus more on sincerely listening to the prospect's pain points and genuinely striving to solve their problems by offering the best solutions at their disposal.

Use Gorilla Guides to Nurture Prospects

By leveraging the existing content in your Gorilla Guides, you can create different presentations/videos, whitepapers, and briefs for your sales team. Over time, you can even consider tweaking them by including real-life scenarios and pain points of your different prospects.

You could even consider having your sales reps share an ungated Gorilla Guide in its entirety with certain target organizations; that could help the key decision makers there wrap their heads around a core concept/problem that you can solve.

If you have a sales force that is doing lots of face-to-face engagement, you could also consider stocking them with printed copies of Gorilla Guides to leave behind as food for thought for promising prospects. Gorilla Guides are really useful for getting those gears turning!



And what better way to become trusted advisors than supplying the prospects with ultra-high-quality content that helps them frame and then resolve their challenges?

By working closely with sales, marketing can develop content based on real-life scenarios. Furthermore, with the information collected by sales, they can create laser-focused, buyer-centric content assets that hit different personas and help convert them.

The Subtle Art of Indirectly Pitching Your Content & Nurturing Prospects

To boost the nurturing process, have your sales team share valuable content assets with prospects, even if they don't ask for it. Because they probably won't come right out and ask.

Here's one quick, non-interruptive way to accomplish such a feat:

- Have your sales personnel use graphic email signatures and place a CTA that leads recipients to the download page of the Gorilla Guide
- For attribution purposes, leverage Urchin Tracking Module (UTM) parameters in the signature links and see the effectiveness of your sales team's efforts

However you decide to do it, your best content assets, whether that's a Gorilla Guide, presentations, videos, or a set of FAQs, should be easily accessible to the sales team. If your sales reps can't access valuable B2B *gold* to answer the technical queries of prospects in a matter of seconds, you'll risk losing easy wins. As a final thought: Investing in a decent CRM platform can help here, too. It would allow you to automate the delivery of your best assets at the right time.

CHAPTER 7

The Emergence and Importance of Thought Leadership

In This Chapter:

- How To Become a Thought Leader
- Long-Term Benefits of Thought Leadership
- Developing Great Thought Leadership Content

If you think about it, one of the primary goals of B2B content marketing—besides generating more revenue, of course—is to establish yourself as the go-to brand for resources related to your industry. Having a *reputation* does a lot to grease the skids on sales.

Let's assume that you offer enterprise security solutions.

You're well-known for regularly publishing top-quality content around topics related to your domain, such as the modern threats to businesses, security mistakes that could increase your exposure, tips for raising impenetrable walls to protect your data, and so on.

Who do you think decision makers will think of first when considering new enterprise security solutions?

Yes, you!



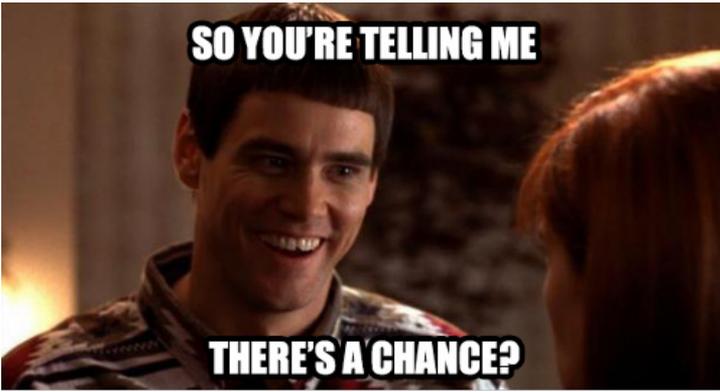
Figure 20: The different strategies of marketing that build thought leadership

The day your prospects begin to recognize, recall, and/or recommend your brand is when you’ve successfully established yourself (or your brand) as a thought leader. However, there’s more to it than just hitting the publish button (see **Figure 20**).

Making the Marketing Philosophy Great Again

In an age where every single one of your competitors is publishing content, things have certainly become diluted. The only brands able to stand out are the ones who have been in the game for a long time, have been publishing out-of-this-world content, or both.

Whether you’re a veteran or a new player in the market, by developing a thought leadership mindset, your content can get you noticed and have prospects flocking to your website and social channels for more.



But what does it mean to create content that’s “thought leadership material?” Here are a few boxes you need to tick:

- The content needs to be 100% original. Look beyond the usual worn out discussions and identify emerging topics by talking to your current clients and prospects. (Remember that vital connection to sales?)
- It should answer the difficult questions your audience has that none of your competitors are addressing.
- You have to find *new* and interesting ways to cover the “hot-topics” in your industry. Unless you have something new to add to the discussion, you might find it difficult to stand out.

By publishing this kind of content, you can pave the way for new discussions, provide insights about emerging topics before they gain traction (and become one of the first companies to talk about them), build a loyal following, and even ignite new industry trends (**Figure 21**).

One tip, though: Make very sure that what you’re publishing with the goal of “thought leadership” is actually that and not “thought followership.” If you’re just doing more of what’s already being done, you’re not leading anything; sadly, you’re probably wasting valuable time and money.

Long-Term Benefits of Thought Leadership



1

Early Stage

More inbound inquiries
More short listing



2

Middle Stage

Faster sales cycles
Higher close rates
Bigger deal sizes



3

End Stage

Increased customer loyalty
Higher lifetime value

Figure 21: The long-term benefits of thought leadership

There is a time and place for emulating things that have been successful for competitors and deploying the Skyscraper Technique.³⁹ But thought leadership is neither the time nor the place.

Establishing Thought Leadership with Gorilla Guides

Even if you have amazing thoughts to share with your target audience, the problem lies with maintaining the consistency of your content creation and promotion efforts using the limited resources at your disposal.

Investing in a Gorilla Guide program will equip you with a cornerstone content asset or seven, each meticulously crafted with in-depth information, original ideas, and helpful advice.

SEO aside, you can borrow the content from your Gorilla Guides and repurpose it for your thought leadership efforts. And, of course, if done right, these efforts will also compel your readers to check out the rest of your Guide, which is likely gated. Boom! New lead.

³⁹ <https://backlinko.com/skyscraper-technique>



Here are some easy ways to re-deploy existing Gorilla Guide content to boost your cred:

- **Extract Gorilla Guide content for ghostwriting contributed articles:** Having your thought leaders (executives in this case) featured on sites like Forbes Technology Council⁴⁰ is a great way to exhibit thought leadership. Sourcing article ideas and content snippets from your Gorilla Guide will make preparing these articles easier and faster.
- **Repurpose into LinkedIn Posts:** Standard LinkedIn posts offer a quick and easy way to share your thoughts and engage with your connections/followers in 1,300 characters (or 700, if you're using your company's profile to post). Extract snippets of interesting information from your Gorilla Guide, and leave your followers wanting more.
- **Create a Slide Deck:** Using tidbits of content from your Gorilla Guide, you can create a "promo" slide deck. You can then upload it on different platforms, such as Slideshare,⁴¹ and embed it with CTAs leading to the landing page of your choice. Slides are great for folks who are trying to wrap their head around a new idea

⁴⁰ <https://councils.forbes.com/forbestechcouncil>

⁴¹ <https://www.slideshare.net/>

quickly. While they're in that mode, you have a chance to become their thought leader!

- **Publish Medium Posts:** Leverage your Gorilla Guides to craft top-tier Medium posts, potentially rank for some competitive keywords, and invite readers to download the entire Guide. Because Medium is somewhat self-moderating, content that does well on Medium has great thought leadership credibility.
- **Create and Share Videos:** These don't have to be high-budget assets. You could record a heart-to-heart conversation with an industry expert on a relevant topic (*and sneak in your content asset during the conversation!*). You can then add closed captions to that clip, upload it to your LinkedIn page, share the download link in the comments, and promote the post.



When you want to share a link through a standard LinkedIn post, avoid including it in the body of the post. Instead, share the link in the comments of that post. Within the actual post, invite your followers to download and read the rest of your Guide. Here's an example that you can edit and integrate into your posts:

"Interested in learning more? Download the complete Gorilla Guide To XYZ. Link in the comments!"

Use the right hashtags to give the post an extra boost and spend a few bucks to promote it.

CHAPTER 8

Building Attention-Retaining Drip Campaigns

In This Chapter:

- Overview of 'Drip Marketing'
- Properly Nurturing Your Leads
- Building a Step-By-Step Drip Campaign

Lead nurturing is a slow process that requires a lot of patience, and of course, good content that brings your leads further down the funnel. Marketers have to be extra-careful with how frequently they interact with their leads and with what messages.

A promising (and steady) way of accomplishing that is through a technique known as “drip marketing.”



A Brief Introduction to Drip Marketing

Also known as a “drip campaign” and “lifecycle email marketing,” drip marketing refers to strategically sending out snackable content assets to your leads—usually through emails—with each meant to build interest and motivate them to take the next step in the buying cycle.

As shown in **Figure 22**, these small snippets of information are most commonly sent out either over a fixed period of time (as “scheduled emails”) or based on how the leads interact with certain landing pages on your website. This can also be a combination of both—it’s completely up to you to decide.

The question is: What makes drip marketing so special that it deserves an entire chapter?

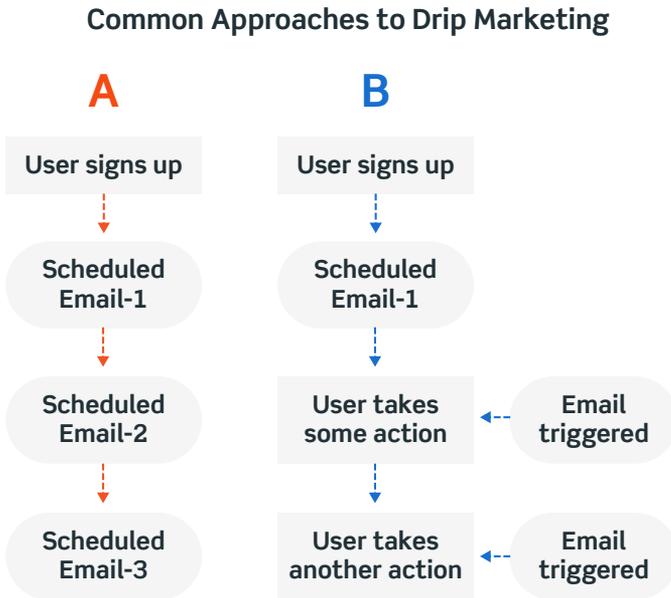


Figure 22: The two main approaches to drip marketing

For one, it enables you to freely reach out to your prospects who consented to receiving your marketing messages and updates.

Furthermore, it allows you to create and control the flow of how you want your leads to proceed from one step to another with hyper-targeted content, resulting in more conversions. According to a survey, businesses with good drip marketing campaigns experience 80%⁴² higher sales than those without one.

However, how do you create the perfect drip marketing campaign in a world of short attention spans? More importantly, how can you best utilize your Gorilla Guides to make building the campaign easy?

The Secret Sauce to Successful Drip Campaigns

Let's get one thing straight: Lead nurturing isn't the only goal of drip marketing. There's a lot that you can accomplish using this tactic, including, but not limited to:

- User onboarding
- Renewals
- Customer engagement
- Shopping cart abandonment and retargeting (for IT vendors, this could refer to abandoning demo request forms)

However, we'll keep the rest of our discussion limited to nurturing.

“Nurturing” refers to building lasting relationships with your leads/prospects, by sending out relevant messages/content at different stages until they convert into paying customers, as illustrated in **Figure 23**. You might recognize this as essentially the standard marketing funnel. Lead nurturing slowly coaxes leads further down funnel by giving them exactly the content they need at the stage they're at.

⁴² <https://martech.zone/email-drip-campaign/>

For any drip campaign, you're going to need the following essential ingredients:

- **A Landing Page:** First and foremost, you need a place where users can provide their email addresses, turn into leads, and willingly enter your drip marketing campaign. Of course, you'll need to offer something in return to get them to sign up, which brings us to ...
- **Your Drip Offer:** This is usually a gated e-book or a report that you give to users as an incentive for signing up. However, it could also be the promise of an educational/informative journey (or a course) that you intend on offering through your drip emails.



Lead Nurturing

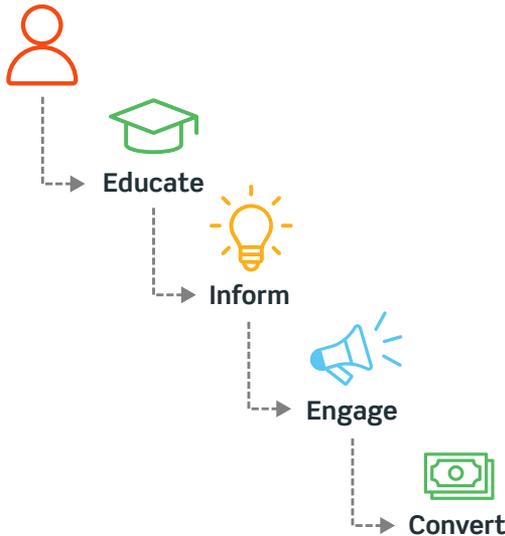


Figure 23: Lead nurturing

- Map Out the Nurture Flow:** The next step is to map out all of the possible journeys a lead could experience in your drip campaign. This involves looking at the different “triggers” or “steps” that a lead could take, all leading to an end-destination that nurtures them. For instance, the drip could start with you sharing a whitepaper. Depending on whether or not they opened it, you could either send them an e-book, or an engaging video that summarizes everything. From there, you can branch out even further. See **Figure 24** to for more clarity.
- The Actual Emails:** Prepare the actual content and the design of the emails that you’ll be sending out to your prospects.

Once you have all these essential ingredients, it’s time to get to work and bring your drip marketing campaign to life.

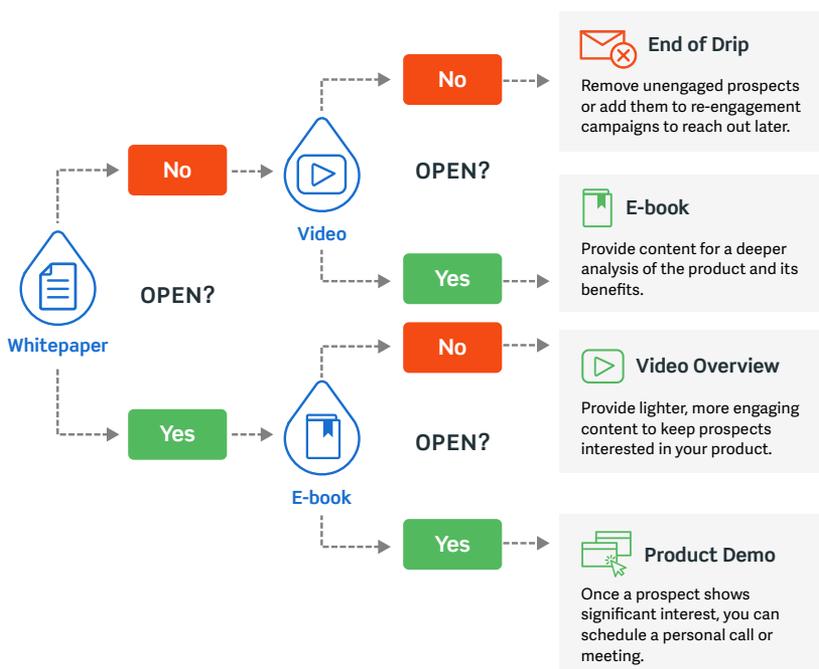


Figure 24: Email drip campaign

To do so, follow these steps:

1. Craft the Emails

You might expect that it would make the most sense to create the landing page first, and then work on developing your messages.

However, the bottom-to-top approach works well for drip campaigns.

This is where things might get tricky: You'll have to decide *how* to utilize your content resources. For example, if you have a comprehensive asset like a Gorilla Guide, it makes sense to use it as the drip offer.

Alternatively, you could use that Gorilla Guide to extract out the actual content for your drip emails, and use something else as the incentive. Think carefully about how you want to proceed.

Also, each email should be crafted with a clear end goal in mind. Ask yourself what you hope to accomplish with the particular message you're creating.

- What stage of the buying cycle is it meant to target?
- Is it meant to educate your leads about a problem they might not be aware of?
- Do you want to introduce them to a solution and invite them to visit a certain landing page?
- Is there a particular action you'd like readers to take?

Craft the right messages, strategically place your CTAs, and decide on the frequency and/or triggers for your emails.

2. Build a Landing Page

With your drip emails locked and loaded, it's time to build the landing page.

This is where your future leads will begin their journey with your brand—so it's important to make a good first impression. Make sure that the CTAs are visible and the offers are clear.

If you're giving a single content piece as the drip offer (a video, Gorilla Guide, and so on), give users the choice to opt for receiving updates (i.e. your drip emails).

In case you're offering an educational experience through daily emails, give them a compelling and concise reason to sign up. Perhaps something along the lines of:

“By the end of this X-day journey, you'll understand ...”

You can use any platform, such as MailChimp, to create a custom landing page for this purpose.

3. Measure the Effectiveness of Your Campaign

Finally, you should have a system in place that helps you measure the effectiveness of your drip campaign.

While there are many metrics that you could use for this purpose, you should mainly focus on the click-through rate (CTR).

“But, how do you ... well, measure it?”

It's simple—by using UTM codes in the URLs that you plan on sharing in your drip emails.

These codes will help you track the source of the traffic coming to certain landing pages, allowing you to see how much of it came through your drip campaign. See **Figure 25**.

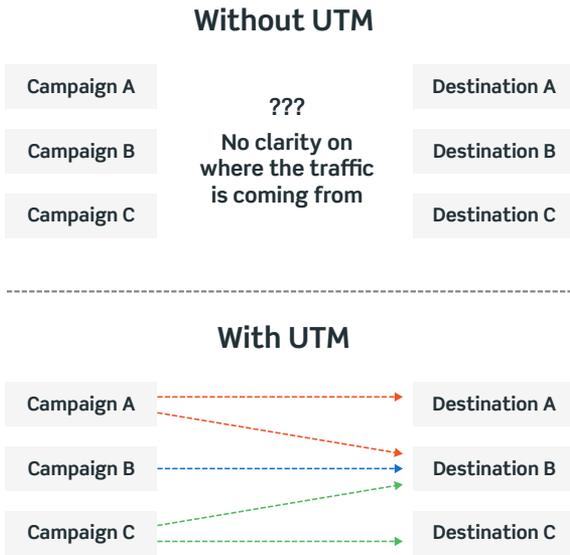


Figure 25: How UTM helps you pinpoint the exact source of traffic coming to your destination pages.

Some Quick Tips

Setting up your drip campaign isn't the problem. The real problem is kick-starting it (and gaining traction). See **Figure 26** to see how an automated drip campaign works.

Here are some quick tips from our marketers to help you hit the ground running:

- Opt for daily drips if you're serious about establishing that top-of-mind awareness. Now, don't get us wrong—this is easier said than done, and then some. It takes a LOT of great content to pull off a daily drip. But if you manage to pull this off, the long-term benefits will be worth it.
- Leverage LinkedIn lead generation forms to instantly collect information and build a database. These are customizable forms that you can use in your sponsored posts or message ads and

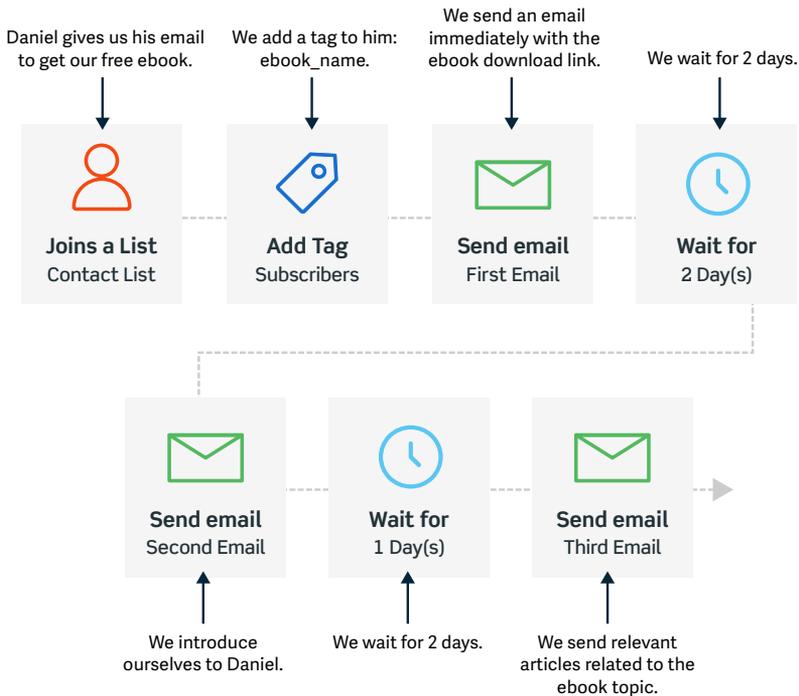


Figure 26: An example of an automated email drip campaign

can be pre-filled with the information of your users. Target your audience with appropriate parameters and link these forms with your drip marketing platform (at *ActualTech Media*, we use *Zapier*⁴³ for the heavy lifting).

- Include CTAs in every message/email, leading users to a certain landing page.

Finally, if you're offering a mini-resource (such as a PDF handout from a webinar, a report, or a smaller guide) in one of your emails, consider copying and pasting the actual content in the body of the email (if possible), along with attaching the resource as a separate PDF file. Some folks find that people don't want to *leave* their inbox to read your content, so putting it right in the body of the message ensures that it gets read.

⁴³ <https://zapier.com/home>

CHAPTER 9

Gorilla Guides as Content Marketing Vehicles

In This Chapter:

- Leveraging Gorilla Guides for all They're Worth
- Using Gorilla Guide Content for Email Blasts
- Next Steps for Your Content Marketing Plan

So that's it! You're now versed in the fundamentals of content marketing. Now that you know what you're doing, you need some content to pull it all off.

Whether you're wrestling for the No. 1 spot on the search results or nurturing your leads through carefully crafted emails, our Gorilla Guide program can provide you with a scaffolding for your content marketing efforts.

As you saw throughout the book, Gorilla Guides can not only provide you with ready-to-go content to be used on different touch-points, but they can also act as catalysts for your other campaigns (such as lead generation).

Getting the Most Out of Your Gorilla Guide

All in all, by making good use of these comprehensive, potentially evergreen content assets, you can cut through the noise in your industry and guide your prospects through the different stages of the B2B buying cycle.

Here are some distribution and promotion tips that will help you make the most out of your Gorilla Guide assets:

- **Send out an Email Blast:** If you just published your Gorilla Guide, send out an email blast informing your existing leads about your new asset to gain some traction.
- **Retarget Visitors:** Create different display ads for your Gorilla Guide and retarget the users who visit certain landing pages (but don't take the desired actions). At ActualTech Media, we prefer using Adroll.com⁴⁴ for this purpose.
- **Leverage Your Chatbot:** If you use an automated messaging app, like a chatbot, on your website to engage visitors, consider adding a message to the conversation flow where you recommend downloading one of your Gorilla Guides and share the link. We like Drift.⁴⁵
- **Promote on Social Channels:** Share the download link on your company's social pages, and request team members to do the same. Wherever possible, consider "pinning" the shared link at the top, making it the first thing that people see when they visit your pages.

⁴⁴ <http://adroll.com/>

⁴⁵ <https://www.drift.com/>

- **Use Cross-Registration:** In the lead generation forms for your other gated assets, add an option (a checkbox) to also download the Gorilla Guide with those content assets.

Remember—a Gorilla Guide Is Just a Piece of the Puzzle

Gorilla Guides are highly in-depth, stand-alone content assets that are more than sufficient for your marketing goals. However, for the complete, 360-degree planning and development of assets for an entire year, you can always opt for our content subscription program which provides enough fuel for your entire program with a steady cadence!

What Are the Next Steps?

Now that you know the importance of B2B content marketing, how to do it, and how Gorilla Guides can support you, the only thing left to do is to get in touch with us so we can plan our world domination together!

We'd love the opportunity to answer any questions you've got, have a few good laughs, and further discuss how our content can help you grow your business.

To reach out, simply email connect@actualtechmedia.com or call 888-741-7900.

To learn more about Gorilla Guides and check out a library of our high-performing books, visit gorilla.guide.

APPENDIX I

How to Create Exceptional Content

Content Marketing.

It's the **art** of really good copy that moves someone emotionally combined with the **science** of where and how to use it.

Which distribution channels the content is leveraged on and which demographics and audience personas are targeted are some of the more scientific bits. When the mushier side of old school advertising makes a baby with hardcore data-driven marketing, and you build relationships by delivering valuable content, you get Content Marketing.

The 3 E's of Exceptional Content

Every content creator wonders at some point, “**How can I create better content?**”

In a nutshell, these are three key ingredients to creating content that performs really well. The content must be...

1. Entertaining
2. Educational
3. Engaging

... and in that order of priority.

This 3 E's mnemonic is a helpful way to remember each ingredient.

It Must Be Entertaining

We all have access to such a wealth of content these days that we don't have time for reading something that isn't entertaining.

You know this to be true.

Even if you *KNOW* you need to glean the information contained in a boring article, you still struggle to make it through.

You get distracted.

Check your email.

Your mind wanders.

In the sea of content in which we all live, our pleasure-seeking brains only have time for content that is actually enjoyable to read.

That's why it's so critical that, as content marketers, we focus not only on creating content that is helpful and converts (the next two E's), but that is legitimately fun to read. None of the other elements will matter if the content is boring.

It Must Be Educational

Most audiences content marketers target are going to read their content primarily for education. They're trying to learn. It has been said that "most of the value that someone gains from content is through the retention of new knowledge."

One of the reasons that educational content is so important to content marketing is that seeking to answer a question is one of the primary ways that people stumble upon new content. Remember "user intent?"

They head to their favorite search engine (let's be honest, they head to Google) and they search for their question.

They click on results that are likely to have the answer to their question.

It stands to reason that if you want your content to 1) be found, and 2) perform, then it should help people answer questions that they have.



There is potentially value in a piece of content that is strictly entertaining. You could probably foster some brand loyalty by just being fun and giving people a much-needed reprieve from their daily grind. But the opportunities to do this and do it well are few and far between.

Not just in a buyer's journey sort of sense where your content answers questions a prospect would have about your product. It doesn't need to be nearly that self-serving in many cases. It merely needs to be helpful.

For example, educational content for a car dealership looking to get you to buy a minivan doesn't need to be "10 Reasons You'll Never Regret Buying a Minivan." In fact, often it should NOT be so self-serving.

There's likely more to be gained from your would-be minivan buyers from producing the article, "Top 5 Leasing Mistakes You Should Never Make" and giving them seriously helpful advice about how to not screw themselves on a new lease.

The goodwill that strong educational content builds with your prospect is invaluable.

Educating someone without asking for much or anything at all in exchange also leaves them in your debt. If you do an above-and-beyond job of educating someone when they *don't* need something from you,

they'll surely remember you fondly when they *do* need whatever it is that you're selling.

It Must Be Engaging

Finally, all of this content creation is for naught if the content isn't engaging. "Engaging" means that it moves the reader to engage *with it*. To do something.

Effectively, this means responding to a call to action.

That could be anything from moving on to another article, all the way to a long form fill where they share a bunch of personal information in exchange for even deeper and more valuable content.

As content marketers, the art we create isn't worth much by itself; it must also convert.

However, if you can measure results that show that the art you create engages with humans on an emotional level that moves them to take action, you'll be a highly successful content marketer.

APPENDIX II

ActualTech Media at a Glance

ActualTech Media is a one-of-a-kind content creation and lead generation company, with a focus on IT. We are in the business of connecting IT buyers (C-level executives, other key decision makers, and influencers) with vendors who are best-suited to solve their problems.

Our clients are IT vendors who are looking to boost their visibility, generate leads, and experience high(er) conversions in the long run.

What We Do

Our services are broadly broken down into two categories:

- Content development
- Lead generation through webinar events and content syndication

Our Services

The following sections provide general overviews for each of our services.

Multi-Vendor Webinars

	 MEGACAST <small>BY ACTUALTECH MEDIA</small>	 ECOCAST <small>BY ACTUALTECH MEDIA</small>	 ENTERPRISE VIRTUAL SUMMIT <small>BY ACTUALTECH MEDIA</small>
MINIMUM LEADS	800	400 (150 for vertical events)	1200
VENDOR PARTICIPANTS	5 to 8	2 to 6	7 to 12
PRESENTATION LENGTH	20 minutes + 5 minutes Q&A	20 minutes + 5 minutes Q&A	20 minutes + 5 minutes Q&A

Figure 1-27: An overview of ActualTech Media’s most popular event types



MEGA RESULTS WITH MEGACAST

68% of our audience say they use MegaCasts as their primary way to learn about different vendors technologies

- **High** Minimum Lead Guarantees
- **Exceptional** Live Attendance Rates
- **Highly Responsive** Audience = Qualified Prospects
- **Low** Effective CPLs
- **Consistently** Exceed Min Lead Goal by Live Date!

Single-Vendor Webinars

Single-Vendor Webinars are exclusive one-hour events. It’s the client’s hour to structure how they see fit, be it a PowerPoint presentation, product demonstration, or an interactive Q&A webinar with one of our industry experts.

We provide an expert event logistics coordinator to help clients understand exactly how the event works. We host the registration page, as well as the presentation platform. We provide the client with a video of their final presentation to use as they like after the event.

Nurturing Webinars

Nurturing Webinars are a paid follow-up opportunity added on to any MegaCast or Summit event. How it works: During a client's MegaCast presentation we'll ask the audience via a poll question if they would like more information on that client's company. For those that respond, we'll invite them to a Nurturing Webinar that will be scheduled just after the MegaCast or Summit. This is an excellent opportunity for a client to take the next step with these hyper-interested attendees.

Gorilla Guide

Gorilla Guide is ActualTech Media's premier content brand, and with 100-plus books in the market and plenty more in production, it's a growing content opportunity.

Every Standard Gorilla Guide includes:

- 40- to 70-page print and e-book (Kindle and EPUB included)
- 1,000 printed copies of this 5.5" x 8.5" book delivered right to you for sales tools, trade shows, and other in-person events
- Blog post about the book launch with social promotion
- *Permanent, unlimited, and unrestricted rights to the e-book. No annual renewal fees!*
- A-Z production: full writing, editing, and layout/design services

Gorilla Guide Express Edition

ActualTech Media's Gorilla Guide Express is a PDF and small form-factor book that helps you get the word out on a targeted topic or technology area.

Gorilla Guide Express e-books are the perfect snackable asset for content syndication, gated programs, events, sales tools, and more.

Gorilla Guide Express is available as:

- An e-book only (and, as with the Gorilla Guide, we grant an unrestricted license to you to use the book in perpetuity)
- A mini print book (500 copies) + e-book bundle

Gorilla Guide Silverback Edition

When a topic needs more attention than 60 or 70 pages can allow, we have our premier Silverback Edition Gorilla Guide with the following:

- 100+ page print and e-book (Kindle and EPUB included)
- 1,000 printed copies of this 5.5" x 8.5" book delivered right to you for sales tools, trade shows, and other in-person events
- Blog post about the book launch with social promotion
- *Permanent, unlimited, and unrestricted rights to the e-book. No annual renewal fees!*
- A-Z production: full writing, editing, and layout/design services

Tech Briefs

Tech briefs are four- to six-page short-form assets that provide readers with an introductory overview of where client companies and solutions fit in the market. They can also be a look at the general architecture that defines client products.

Blog Posts and Blogging Program Management

We're also expert bloggers and, between all of us, have written well into the thousands of blog posts with our individual earliest work published as early as the year 2000. So, you could say that we've been around the blogging block!

We're also experts at helping clients devise entire blogging programs that get results. So whether a client needs a bundle of individual blog posts or they need someone to manage their entire blogging program, we're up for the challenge!



To reach out, simply email

connect@actualtechmedia.com or call 888-741-7900.

To learn more about Gorilla Guides and check out a library of our high-performing books, visit gorilla.guide.

GLOSSARY

A

A/B Testing: A “conversion rate optimization” tool/practice that allows you to test multiple variations of a webpage or a piece of content on the same audience to gain insights and find out which one works best.

Above the Line (ATL): A term that refers to the type of advertisements that target a broad audience with no discrimination. TV, radio, and billboard ads are classic examples of ATL advertisement.

B

Backlink Profile: A report that shows the overall quality and quantity of inbound links pointing to your website. You can improve your backlink profile by building high-quality links (i.e. those acquired from high-DA websites relevant to your niche).

Backlinks: Inbound links (i.e. links coming from external websites) pointing to your website.

Below the Line (BTL): Refers to the type of advertisements that are more targeted and, therefore, reach a comparatively smaller audience when compared to ATL. The ads you see on social networks and search engines are the best examples of contemporary BTL advertisements.

Buying Cycle: The entire process that a customer goes through when purchasing a product or a service. It involves different stages, including awareness, consideration, and purchase.

C

Call to Action (CTA): Any button and/or copy on a webpage, email, or any other content asset that compels the user to “click” on it or take any other desired “action.”

Chatbot: A software that conducts online chats with customers through automated responses, removing the need for human support.

Content Marketer: A professional who is well-versed in crafting content assets keeping the needs of a target audience (or multiple audiences) in mind and promoting those assets.

Content Marketing: The art and science of creating and promoting content that your target audience finds useful and/or entertaining.

Content Repurposing: Refers to changing some or all elements of a content asset and using it on a different channel in the appropriate format.

Content Syndication: Content syndication refers to publishing the same piece of content (usually an article or a guide) to other websites that receive a decent amount of traffic.

Conversion Rate Optimization: The art and science of tweaking webpages and content assets (using data and actionable insights) to drive more people from your target audience(s) to take desirable actions (such as clicking on a CTA button).

Crawling: A process through which search engines discover webpages on the internet.

D

Direct Ranking Factor: An element that is directly linked to your chances of ranking higher in the search engine results pages.

Distribution: The process of sharing your content on different platforms so that it reaches more people.

Domain Authority: A ranking score (developed by Moz) that shows the overall “authority” or “influence” of a website in its niche. The higher the DA score, the more likely the website is to rank for different keywords on search engines.

Domain Rating: A ranking score (developed by Ahrefs) that is similar to DA. DR shows the overall authority of a website by assessing its backlink profile.

Drip Marketing: A communication strategy (that is mostly conducted through automated emails), drip marketing sends out pre-planned and/or scheduled bits of information to people who have signed up for it. The goal of drip marketing is to slowly take a prospect through different stages of the buying cycle.

Drip Offer: A drip offer is anything that you promise to offer through your drip campaign (such as weekly insights, lessons, or reports).

E

Evergreen Content: A piece of content that stands the test of time and stays relevant for several years.

External Linking: This refers to linking out to an external website/resource.

F

Funnel: A “funnel” is a mapped-out representation of all of the steps that a customer takes from being a prospect to becoming a paying customer. Funnels may vary from company to company, but usually, it begins from the awareness stage (where the prospect finds out about a problem or your brand), moves on to the consideration

stage (where the prospect evaluates their options), and then finally to the conversion stage (where they convert into a paying customer or become a lead).

G

Gorilla Guide: ActualTech Media's brand of in-depth e-books that explore different IT-related topics.

I

Inbound Marketing: A marketing methodology that focuses on drawing prospects towards a business, instead of actively pursuing them using interruptive/outbound tactics.

Indexing: The process that involves search engines storing webpages/content (which they find during crawling) to their databases.

Internal Linking: The process of linking to another page on your website within your content.

K

Keyword Difficulty: A score (from 0 to 100) that reflects how difficult it is to rank for a certain keyword.

Keyword Research: The process of discovering and shortlisting key phrases to be used in your content.

Keyword Volume: The estimated number of people searching for a certain keyword on a monthly basis.

L

Landing Page: A webpage on your site that is designed to convert visitors into leads. Landing pages usually include a form that enables visitors to exchange their information for an offer, such as a downloadable e-book, a whitepaper, etc.

Lead Generation: The process of collecting the information of prospects who are likely to sign up for your service, purchase your product, etc.

Lead Magnet: An asset (e-book, whitepaper, report, template, etc.) that users can download in exchange for their information. These “magnets” are helpful in converting visitors into leads by providing them with a source of value.

Lead Nurturing: The strategic process of building long-term relationships with your prospects by engaging with them at every stage of the funnel.

Lead: A person that has provided their contact information.

Link Building: The strategic process of building high-quality and relevant backlinks for your website.

Link Equity (Link Juice): The equity or the “vote of confidence” that flows from one page to another via a link.

M

Mobile Optimization: The process of making your website run smoother and function properly on mobile devices.

MQL: A marketing qualified lead is any lead who, according to your marketing team, shows ample interest in what you have to offer or is likely to become a customer.

N

Native Ads: Promotional/sponsored messages that are designed to fit right into the platform they appear on.

Nurture Flow: The possible journey(s) a lead could experience or the different stages a prospect goes through in your drip/email marketing campaign.

O

Off-Page SEO: This includes all the efforts you make outside your website (hence the name “off-page”) to generate links and boost the visibility of your content on different third-party platforms.

On-Page SEO: This refers to all of the efforts that you make to post content on your website, tweak its source code to offer a smooth experience, and design your pages to deliver a memorable experience to encourage users to stick around.

Outbound Marketing: The “traditional” marketing methodology that relies on interruptive tactics to push your messages to an audience (TV and billboard ads are classic examples of this type of marketing).

Outreach: In the context of content marketing and SEO, outreach refers to reaching out to different people who’d be interested in sharing your content on their website (providing you with a backlink in the process).

P

Page Speed: A score that shows how fast one of your webpages load. Page speed is a direct ranking factor.

Permission-Based Marketing: A type of marketing in which prospects willingly sign up to receive offers and other messages.

Prospect: An individual who shows interest in your business and what it offers.

R

Rank: This refers to where your website stands in the search engine results for a specific keyword.

Retargeting: A marketing tactic that targets a prospect—who came close to converting/taking a desirable action on your website (such as signing up as a lead or filling out a form), but left without completing said action—with special ads and offers.

S

Search Engine Algorithm: A complex set of instructions or a process that search engines use to analyze and rank webpages/content.

Search Engine Crawlers: Special programs (also known as “search engine spiders”) that analyze new or updated webpages/content to be indexed by search engines.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO): The art and science of optimizing your website/content and building high-quality backlinks to increase your chances of showing higher up in the search engine result pages for targeted keywords.

Search Engine Result Pages (SERPs): These are the pages you see after you type in a query on a search engine.

Search Engines: A special program that stores information in a database and retrieves it whenever someone searches for anything that’s remotely relevant (Google, Bing, and Yahoo! are search engines).

Search Intent: The intent with which a user looks up something on a search engine.

Site Speed: A score that shows how fast your website loads. Like Page Speed, Site Speed is also a direct ranking factor.

SQL (Sales Qualified Lead): These are the MQLs that are recognized by your sales team as individuals who show great interest in your business offerings.

SSL: SSL refers to “secured sockets layer” and is a form of encryption that protects the communication between a user and a web server. Search engines encourage website owners to use SSL certificates on their websites.

T

Thought Leadership: The ideal scenario where a brand is seen as the go-to-source for helpful information or final verdicts on certain topics.

Tracking Pixel: A special code that goes on your website, collects fresh user data, provides insights on how they behave, shows you what content they engage with, and creates “sub-audiences” based on that information for retargeting purposes.

U

User Experience (UX): The overall experience or “feel” that you deliver to a user through your website, content, campaign, or your product.

UTM Parameters: Special parameters that are used by marketers to track the sources of incoming web traffic, making it easier to attribute their success to specific campaigns/efforts.

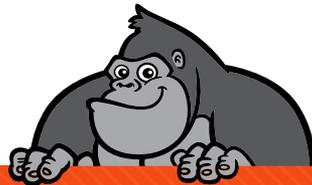
ABOUT ACTUALTECH MEDIA



ActualTech Media is a B2B tech marketing company that connects enterprise IT vendors with IT buyers through innovative lead generation programs and compelling custom content services.

ActualTech Media's team speaks to the enterprise IT audience because we've been the enterprise IT audience.

Our leadership team is stacked with former CIOs, IT managers, architects, subject matter experts and marketing professionals that help our clients spend less time explaining what their technology does and more time creating strategies that drive results.



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