



Content marketing - strategy to results



THE WORLD'S B2B AGENCY

Content marketing is hot!

That's what we've been hearing

But there is a big gap between hype and reality

This white paper will help you make sense of it all. How to kick off content marketing successfully, and most important: how to benefit from it?

First of all, we have to make a clear distinction between a content marketing strategy and a content strategy.

A marketing strategy determines how we will profile ourselves within a market. A content marketing strategy is the inherent part of it that defines how we will use content to improve interaction with our target groups, and how this can help us achieve our goals.

A content strategy, on the other hand, is a lot more practical in nature. It's the actual way of creating, managing and publishing your content. This being said, it's obvious that we need a good content marketing strategy to start with. Research from the Content Marketing Institute shows companies with a well-documented content marketing strategy:

- Know better how to be effective in content marketing.
- Feel more confident in all aspects of content marketing.
- Can efficiently target groups through content and social media channels.
- Have a better view on the budget they spend on content marketing.
- Can easily provide resources for content marketing.

A good content marketing strategy integrates all content related tactics that we can use to achieve our marketing goals. This includes our owned media such as websites, social media, blogs, landing pages, CTAs, SlideShares and video content ... But also earned media such as the viral effect of our content and of course PR.

The role of PR in the content marketing strategy.

PR involves any activity, online or offline, designed to improve communication and build relationships with audiences that are important to your business.

Typically the following are included:

- Press contacts
- Blogger and community relations
- Media relations
- Crisis communications
- Internal communications
- Media training

Traditional PR uses clipping services in order to monitor publications and measure their ad equivalence. There is nothing wrong with this approach, but we believe that PR can do a lot more! For instance, it has an undeniable impact on range, website traffic, lead generation and customer loyalty. In other words, PR is one of the channels we will use to distribute and reinforce our content. The better we adjust all channels to one another and integrate them into our general strategy, the more chance we have of success.

An integrated approach

Of course, each project is different and therefore it is difficult to create ready-to-use templates. However, this eight-step model can serve as a guide when taking your first steps creating a content marketing strategy.

1. Define your goals
2. Develop personas
3. Define the customer journey
4. Create a content hub and assemble a content team
5. Define a content strategy
6. Create a content calendar
7. Distribute your content
8. Measure, analyse and improve

1. Define your goals

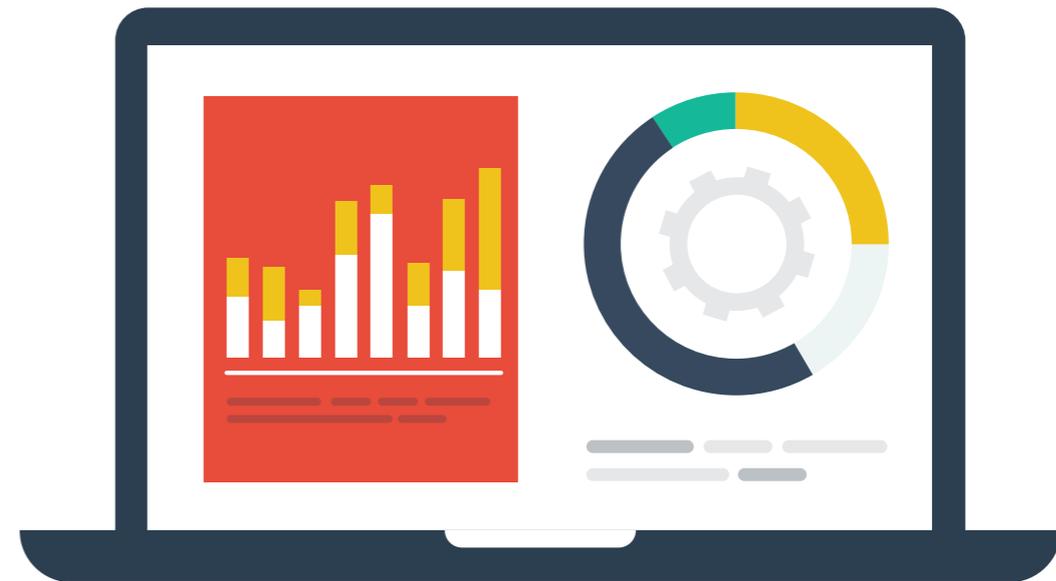
What do we want to achieve by using content marketing?

Unfortunately, this logical question is too often neglected. Yet it is crucial for the further development of your strategy and for the measurability of the execution. Some typical objectives are:

- Increase in brand awareness
- Lead generation
- Lead nurturing
- Customer retention / loyalty
- Thought leadership
- Sales (up-selling & cross-selling)
- Stimulation of engagement

It goes without saying that every goal requires a different approach with adapted channels and timings.

Although this does not mean that there can't be some overlap when working simultaneously towards multiple targets.



2. Develop personas

Really understanding who we are talking to

What are his or her needs?
Why should he or she care about us?
What do we have to offer?

By creating personas we can optimise and personalise our content, and significantly increase our chances of success.

Personas:

- A semi-fictional representation of your ideal customer.
- Based on real data and personal experiences.
- Where demographic characteristics, behavioural patterns, motivations and objectives are all combined.



3. Define the customer journey

What do we communicate? And where and when do we say it?

It mainly depends on the stage of the buying process or the buyer's journey the persona is in. In everyday life, we communicate differently with a stranger than with a neighbour, an acquaintance or a friend. The way we address one another, what we do or do not say, and what we are likely to accept from each other... It all depends on how familiar we are. Why should that be different in a business environment?

Awareness stage

- Analyst reports
- Research reports
- eBooks
- Articles
- White papers
- Educational content

The prospect is experiencing or pointing out a problem or opportunity.

Consideration stage

- Case studies
- Best practises
- Webcasts
- Podcasts
- Video content
- Comparative studies

The prospect has clearly identified the problem or opportunity.

Decision stage

- Sales comparisons
- Product comparisons
- Trial download
- Product information
- Conferences

The prospect chooses a strategy, method or approach to solve the problem.

4. Create a content hub and assemble a team

The content needs to be well crafted and relevant for personas

Though most companies have created and gathered a lot of content over the years, they often find it hard to make this content attractive, relevant and interesting for everyone. That is, of course, because it wasn't created for everyone in the first place. Consciously or not, most content is created with a particular persona in mind, even if we hadn't defined that persona yet.

By adjusting your content to a particular persona, you make it much more personal and relevant. Sending the same message at the same time to everyone is terribly outdated in this context and looks a lot like old-fashioned advertising...

Tailor-made content, however, does not always mean we have to start from scratch. It is often a matter of rewriting and remodelling existing content into clear and digestible pieces for each persona. Therefore, it is crucial that we put together a dedicated team of specialists with the required knowledge, skills and authority to create customised content.



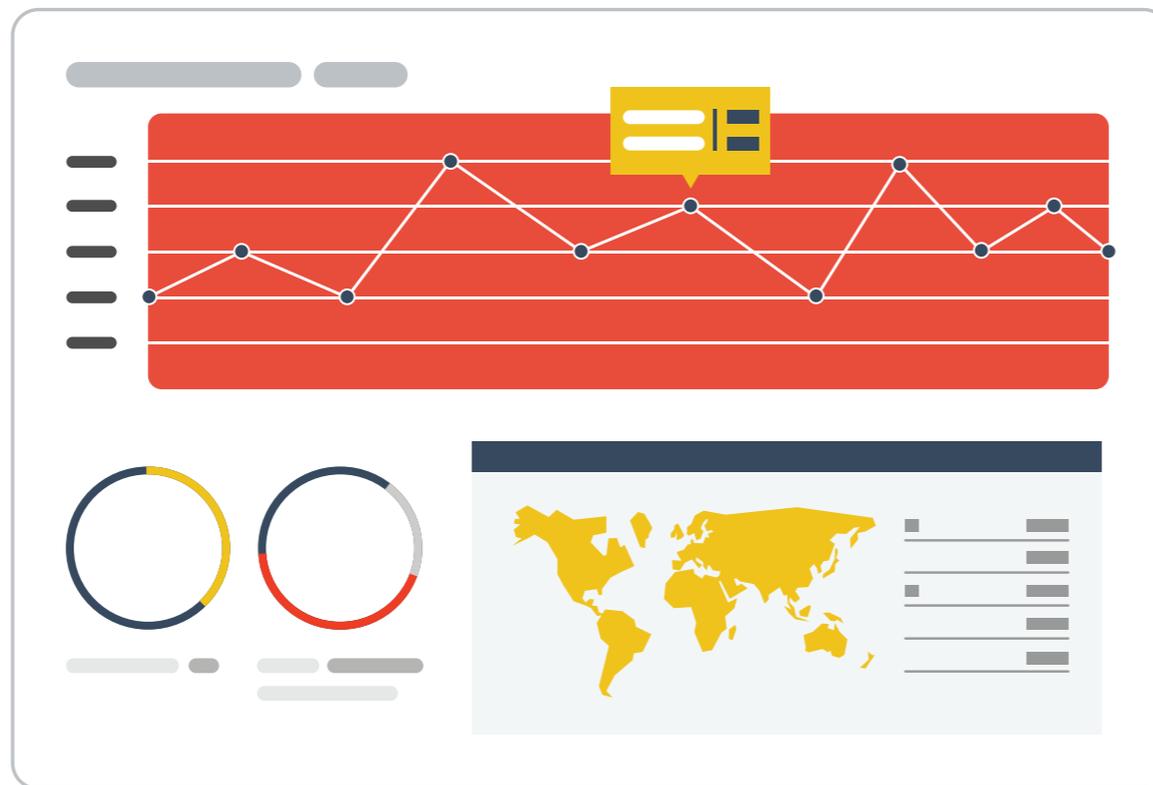
5. Define a content strategy

Mapping communication flows

Once we have defined our goals, created personas with customer journeys and put together our content team, we can really get started.

What content should be (re)created for whom and when and where are we going to distribute it?

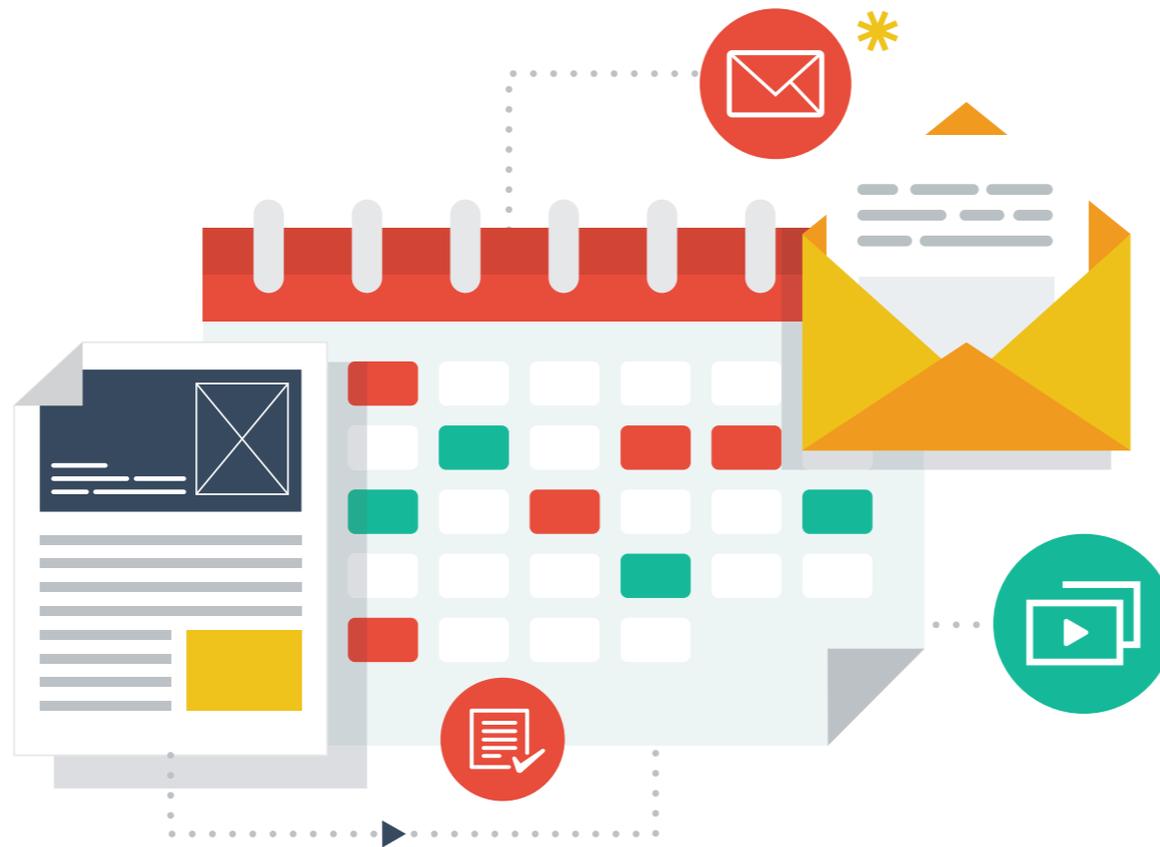
By visualising the various communication flows, we can literally map out our strategy.



6. Create a content calendar

Timing is crucial for a successful content strategy

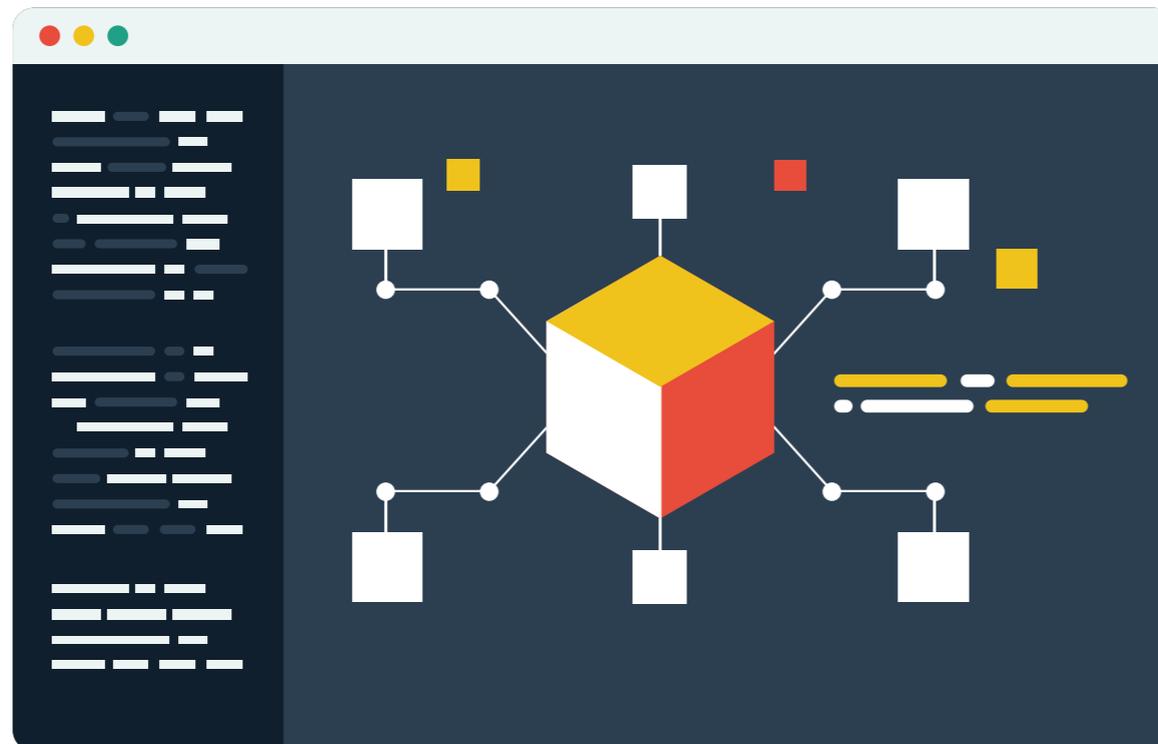
A detailed schedule ensures that all actions are planned and well-coordinated. It is recommended to share this calendar with everyone from sales and marketing, so outbound campaigns or other communication flows can be taken into account. As mentioned earlier, content marketing should be part of your marketing strategy.



7. Distribute your content

Get your mix of channels right

As the range of available channels is increasing every year, you have to make choices. Don't struggle to be everywhere, but consider your personas and buyer's journey. Try to find a good mix of visual and textual channels and make sure that your content can be easily shared. The "virtual potential" of your content will strongly influence its distribution and will have a beneficial effect on your SEO.



8. Measure, analyse and improve

If you don't measure, you can't improve

The main advantage of (digital) content is, of course, its measurability. Instead of vague assumptions or dubious estimations about the audience, you receive clear, precise data with KPIs you can determine yourself.

In that way, you can measure and know at all times which content, times and channels are the most effective. So you don't need to wait until your campaign is over (and your money runs out) to make adjustments. Obviously, good measurement instruments and clear reporting are a must. Also keep in mind that it requires the necessary software and man-hours.



Why stop here?

Let's go back to step 1: defining your goals. Lead generation and nurturing can be an explicit goal, but it can also be an implicit part of your strategy. After all, content marketing is the basis of every inbound strategy and therefore perfect for collecting data and generating leads.

The next logical step is to convert these leads into customers, which can be facilitated by modern techniques, such as marketing automation. It would be a shame if the effort you put in creating good content was not rewarded with leads and satisfied colleagues from the sales department.

If you would like a copy of our free e-book on:
Driving Marketing ROI with Marketing Automation.
[Click here](#)

Customer experience: Down with the silos!

Most companies have different departments: sales, marketing, customer service, IT, finance... All these departments often operate like silos, independently, using other software platforms and communicating separately to the market. From their point of view it seems perfectly normal, but the customer knows only one brand or product. For him, it doesn't matter if he's approached by sales, marketing or customer services. Non-matching, overlapping or even conflicting information from the same company will be experienced as odd, disturbing or confusing.

Therefore, we are increasingly using a CX (customer experience) approach, transcending the marketing level. When mapping content from a CX approach, we will automatically tune and harmonise the content that is typical for marketing, sales and customer service. Furthermore, we will also reduce the silo thinking pattern and work towards shared goals using shared platforms. It goes without saying that this increases efficiency and results in a better ROI.

Talent is the key ingredient.

As mentioned before, this white paper is intended primarily as a guide. Nevertheless, every theoretical approach, no matter how accurate and detailed, is and remains subordinate to the quality of the execution. Every minute, more than 33 million messages, photos and videos are posted on social media. So it's important that your content really stands out. Make sure to adopt copywriters, bloggers, designers and creative talent in your team who can lift your content to a higher level.



What is BBN?

A network that behaves like one agency

It's a big world. Make it yours.

BBN has over 800 B2B specialists in 29 locations, working across 23 different B2B sectors. Across every country and every city, we share the same proprietary BBN tools and processes which results in real-time collaboration for global clients across every discipline from B2B marketing and advertising, to digital, media, research and PR.

The global presence of BBN is built upon independently strong local offices, each with experienced Owner-Managers. This drives the culture and ethos of BBN globally, helping us to deliver the award-winning B2B marketing and creativity that sets our agency apart.

Our vision is to be the number one B2B marketing communications organisation in the world, and we want agencies with the ambition and talent to share this distinction. This journey is already well on the way, and the hard facts already demonstrate a strong business case for prospective agencies.

Being part of BBN brings some immediate gains. With a gross annual income of €125m, as a BBN agency, this gives you serious credentials. But the organisational development opportunities are where businesses really win big. BBN agencies get access to well-proven tools, techniques and processes that help to win and keep major accounts, and a fit for purpose learning and development programme to train your staff in them. This successful model is strengthened by international support from BBN peers, enabling multicultural creativity that crosses borders and opens new markets. Our symbiotic methods have already won global clients like Dow Seeds, Schneider Electric and Pfizer.

**Our B2B
specialists can
be called upon
at any given
time to work as
integrated teams
across borders**



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