2018

CONTENT MARKETING

Planning Template

Smart Insights

HubSpot

Why You Need A Content Marketing Plan

The popularity of content marketing has soared in recent years. In particular, video content is in high demand with consumers, with 53% of people wanting more through this medium in 2018.

This widespread adoption of content marketing is making it more difficult to stand out from the noise. In order to compete with 'Content Shock', it is becoming ever more important to question your approach, tweak and optimise your strategy, and grab the attention of your potential customers. Planning strategically for content marketing has a major influence on the effectiveness of your efforts.

In a recent study by CMI, they found B2B marketers who had a documented strategy were a lot more effective than those who simply had a verbal one. Of those who had a documented strategy, 60% consider their organisation to be effective at content marketing, compared to only 32% who had a verbal strategy.

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How to Use the Templates

Content planning will undoubtedly have a major impact on the success of both your inbound marketing campaigns and the effectiveness of your content marketing overall. That's why in this guide we've created 4 steps and templates that will help you put together an effective content marketing plan for either your business or those of your clients.

The templates will help you to:

STEP 1: Complete a SWOT analysis on your content marketing efforts and develop a plan to improve them.

STEP 2: Define the right objectives and KPIs for that plan

STEP 3: Brainstorm content ideas and map these across your funnel

STEP 4: Create a timeline for your content plans

How should I use these templates?

To make it easier for you to implement these steps, each one has a standard structure explaining how to use it.

- The benefit of completing the step

- Instructions to complete the step

- An example of what a completed template looks like

- An empty template for you to fill out

Who has created this template?

HubSpot has teamed up with digital marketing planning experts Smart Insights who use a similar approach in their member resources for developing and creating digital strategies and managing digital transformation.

Smart Insights

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Step 1. Review current use of content marketing

Template to use

SWOT analysis of current content marketing efforts.

Why you should do this

A SWOT analysis of your current content marketing efforts is an essential part of creating your plan. It allows you to create a plan of action based not on what you're interested in doing or on your gut-feel, but what you need to do given the situation in the marketplace. It provides a strategic view of the main opportunities and challenges available from content in your market.

The outcome of this analysis should be a high-level action plan of the most important tasks that will impact the success of your content marketing.

How to use the template

To use this template we have broken it down into two really simple steps.

1. Complete a Content SWOT analysis.

Instructions to complete the SWOT analysis:
First, select 3-4 major internal strategic strengths and weaknesses in your current content marketing efforts.

In these two boxes you want to identify what's working well and what weaknesses you have. If you have yet to begin content marketing for your company, you can still complete this. For example, one of your strengths may be expertise in a topic your target audience is extremely interested in, and a weakness could be a lack of a dedicated resource to begin producing that content for you.
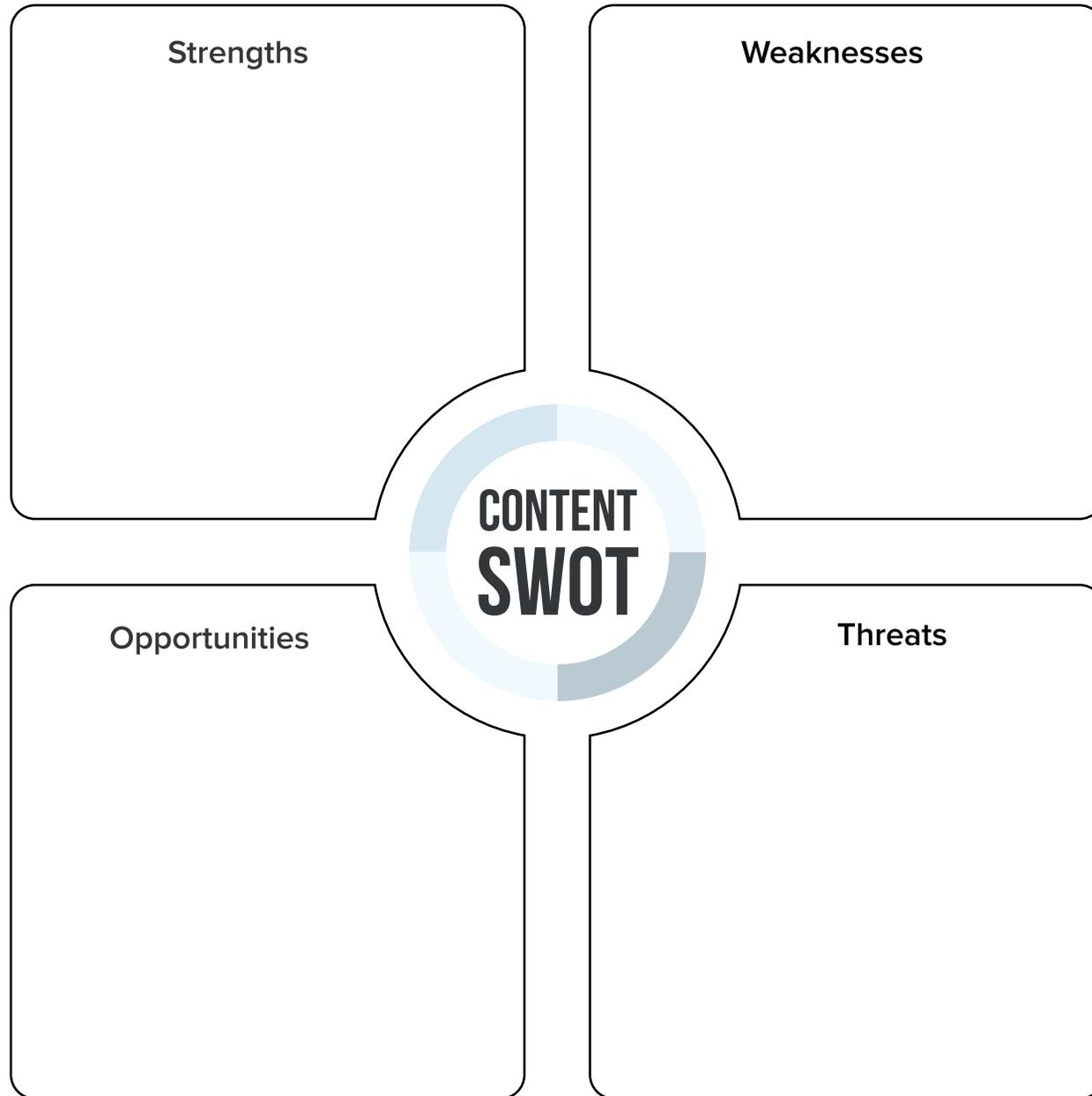
Next, you identify both the opportunities and threats that can apply to anyone working within your market.

Example

In our example, the addition of paid social media distribution is an opportunity. It can be used to further promote our content plus it's less competitive (and costly) than Adwords. On the other end of the spectrum there is a potential threat to our successful whitepaper strategy. Competitors can easily replicate this, as its success is heavily reliant on well-optimised Adwords campaigns.

Strengths

Whitepapers are well recognised in our marketplace and perform well for lead generation.

Well-defined blogging strategy and established editorial calendar that continue to grow.

Relationships with partners through which we can promote content to generate additional traffic.

We optimised Adwords campaigns for content distribution that are proving extremely cost effective.

Weaknesses

Our content assets focus on initial lead generation only, they are weak for lead nurturing.

Current efforts are not proving effective for SEO traffic.

Limited relationships with influencers to perform outreach.

Inability to track ROI from current efforts.

Very limited personalization capabilities for returning leads.

CONTENT SWOT

Opportunities

Paid social media distribution does not currently appear to be as competitive as Adwords.

Animated video explainers of product could improve conversion rate from lead nurture programs.

Long form 'how to' content would help generate traffic at the top of our funnel.

Threats

Competitors can easily replicate current strategy around whitepapers, as it's heavily reliant on Adwords.

Competitors can develop a better resource centre to increase their traffic from SEO.

Competitors could establish better relationships with influencers to further promote their content.

2018 CONTENT MARKETING PLANNING TEMPLATE

Strengths

Weaknesses

CONTENT
SWOT

Opportunities

Threats

Smart Insights

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Now you've completed the SWOT analysis of your current content marketing efforts it's time to use that information to create an actionable plan. This actionable plan should be based upon the strengths and weaknesses you've identified from your current efforts, it should take advantage of opportunities in the market and also account for potential threats to your current strategy.

Example

Below, you'll see a Content Marketing SWOT Action Plan example.

✓ Begin testing of paid social media distribution for existing content that has performed well and roll out to new content if results are good.

✓ Create lower funnel assets (explainer videos) to improve the performance of our lead nurture programs.

✓ Leverage partners to create a resource centre full of free content that will help increase new organic visits to our website.

✓ Leverage technology to improve personalization for returning leads to further improve our lead to customer conversion rate.

✓ Make whitepapers more valuable for social promotion by developing an influencer program and adding expert commentary to maintain our thought leadership.

✓ Create content ROI reports to better understand the return on our content marketing efforts.

2018 CONTENT MARKETING PLANNING TEMPLATE

Step 2. Define content marketing objectives and KPIs

Template to use:
SMART goal setting and strategy alignment templates

Why you should do this:
Many businesses don't have a strategic approach to content marketing. This results in a lack of clarity around both the goals and KPIs that the plan is trying to achieve. If you're unsure of either of these elements, it's impossible to know if your content marketing plan is on track or not.

This template helps to solve that. They will allow you to plan specific objectives and KPIs structured around the customer lifecycle. This template makes objectives actionable by defining strategies to help you reach these objectives.

In the example below we are using a customer lifecycle based on the Smart Insights RACE Planning model. This stands for:

REACH: This stage is focused on the top of your funnel. Its aim is to increase brand awareness and visits to the company websites, apps and social network sites.

ACT: This stage is focused on increasing the number of visitors who interact with your content and who then convert into leads.

CONVERT: This stage focuses on increasing conversion rates from leads to sales.

ENGAGE: This stage is focused on increasing long-term customer engagement and loyalty leading to repeat sales and advocacy.

You can modify the template to suit your funnel. For example, the Hubspot inbound marketing funnel is broken out into attract, convert, close and delight. Read more about the inbound marketing funnel here.

How to use the template:
Work through each row for the different parts of the customer lifecycle – Reach, Act, Convert, Engage. For each row, define SMART objectives and detailed KPIs that will show how effective your strategies are.

This template builds on what we completed in step 1. You will see in the example below the action plan we devised from our SWOT analysis is included in the third column. Don't worry if your initiatives don't map across all stages of the customer lifecycle. It's ok to focus your efforts on a particular part of the funnel.

Example

In the following example you will see a one-page summary of your content marketing strategy linking SMART objectives in the left column to how they're achieved, as well as detailed KPIs to review if you're on track.

You can use the SMART template we provided as part of this download to create your own goals for this template.

Customer lifecycle stage and aims	SMART objectives	Strategies to achieve goals	Key performance indicators
Reach Increase brand awareness and visits to company websites, apps and social network sites.	Increase new monthly visits to the website by +25% in 12 months	With help of partners, create a resource center filled with free long form content on topics relevant to our audience	New organic visits to site %
Act Increase audience interactions with content on company-owned media platforms to generate leads.	Reduce our average cost per lead by 5% in the next 9 months by increasing the amount of traffic we get from organic and reducing traffic from paid Generate 10% more leads from each whitepaper created	Make whitepapers more valuable for social promotion by developing an influencer program and adding expert commentary to maintain our thought leadership. Paid social media distribution for whitepapers	Number of leads per whitepaper created
Convert Increase conversion rates from leads to sales volumes achieved online or offline.	Increase our lead to customer conversion rate from 2.3% to 4% in 12 months	Create lower funnel assets (explainer videos) to improve the performance of our lead nurture programs. Leverage technology to improve personalization for returning leads. Create content ROI reports to better understand the return on our content marketing efforts.	Lead to customer conversion rate %
Engage Increase long-term customer engagement and loyalty leading to repeat sales and advocacy.		Leverage technology to improve personalization for returning leads.	

2018 CONTENT MARKETING PLANNING TEMPLATE

Customer lifecycle stage and aims	SMART objectives	Strategies to achieve goals	Key performance indicators
Reach Increase brand awareness and visits to company websites, apps and social network sites.			
Act Increase audience interactions with content on company-owned media platforms to generate leads.			
Convert Increase conversion rates from leads to sales volumes achieved online or offline.			
Engage Increase long-term customer engagement and loyalty leading to repeat sales and advocacy.			

Step 3. Content GAP Analysis

Template to use: *Content Marketing Matrix*

Why you should do this:

In the first two steps you've successfully completed a SWOT analysis, created an action plan of top priority tasks and mapped this across your customer life cycle. This step focuses on identifying any possible gaps in your current content marketing efforts.

The content marketing matrix is used to map relevant content in two ways to help identify the suitability of content to:

1. Support the purchase process. In the example given you can see we are mapping content from awareness to purchase (left to right). You want to identify what content you have available to your audience to attract them to your site and help them move across your funnel.

2. Achieve audience engagement using different types of psychological engagement from emotional to rational. In the example given, you can see we are mapping content from emotional to rational (top to bottom).

How to use the template:

The Content marketing matrix originally developed by First 10 and Smart Insights can be used for two key tasks:

BRAINSTORM NEW CONTENT

Review your own content marketing efforts to identify any weak points. What are potential gaps that your current plan is not accounting for? Do you lack content that will convince an audience of your brand or service, or maybe you haven't invested any time or effort into content that will simply entertain.

You can then begin to brainstorm content ideas to fill those gaps.

COMPETITOR ANALYSIS

Review the content marketing efforts of your competitors by using the same process. Identify what areas your competitors are weak on so you can start to put a plan in place to exploit these weaknesses.

2018 CONTENT MARKETING PLANNING TEMPLATE

AWARENESS → **PURCHASE**

EMOTIONAL

ENTERTAIN

INSPIRE

COMPETITIONS

QUIZZES

VIRAL

GAMES

WIDGETS

CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENTS

VIDEOS

COMMUNITY FORUMS

REVIEWS

ARTICLES

EBOOKS

ENEWS

EVENTS

RATINGS

INFOGRAPHICS

PRESS RELEASES

DEMO VIDEOS

INTERACTIVE DEMO

PRODUCT FEATURES

CASE STUDIES

CHECKLIST

PRICE LIST

GUIDES

TRENDS

REPORTS & WHITEPAPERS

CALCULATIONS

EDUCATE

CONVINCE

RATIONAL

AWARENESS → **PURCHASE**

EMOTIONAL

ENTERTAIN

INSPIRE

EDUCATE

CONVINCE

RATIONAL

Step 4. Create a content plan timeline

Template to use
Content Marketing Plan Timeline

Why you should do this
In this last step you will create a realistic timeline for your content plan. You want to ensure you have a clear timeline of when different parts of your plan will be completed. This timeline can be used not only for your internal team, but also senior management and anyone else within your company who has an interest in those plans.

How to use the template
In the example below, you will see we have put together a one-month timeline for our content plans. We have broken the template out into two parts:

CONTENT CAMPAIGNS
These are the different content campaigns you are going to be launching throughout the year. In our example we are going to be launching a number of whitepapers.

To help promote those whitepapers that will generate leads for us, we are going to publish some blog posts, SlideShares, infographics and expert interviews. All of those content pieces are designed to help us attract traffic and promote our whitepapers.

CONTENT DISTRIBUTION
These are different tasks we are doing to help us better promote the content we are publishing. As identified in step one during our SWOT analysis, we want to test social distribution. We are first going to trial this with existing content and then start using for all new campaigns we launch. We will continue to invest in Adwords campaigns to promote our whitepapers but will also be focused on improving the organic visibility of our resource centre. Finally, we will be taking the product videos and using them to improve our existing lead nurture campaigns.

Example template
The example shows how you will get better engagement through time if you develop a series of different types of content assets for each campaign based on repurposing. So as the example shows, you may start with a whitepaper, but repurpose this into an infographic or SlideShare or break it down into different blog posts.

Month: January

CONTENT CAMPAIGNS

Type	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
White Papers: Original 3 Revamp 1					■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■							■	■	■	■	■	■						
Blog posts: Original 6 Revamp 3					■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■							■	■	■	■	■	■						
Slide share: 1																			■	■	■	■	■	■						
Infographic: Original 1 Spinoff 0					■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■																		
Expert Interviews 3													■	■	■	■	■	■												
Product Video 2																										■	■	■	■	■

CONTENT DISTRIBUTION

Type	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
Social Media Distribution (existing assets)	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■						
Social Media Distribution (new assets)																						■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Adwords			■	■	■	■																■	■	■						
SEO																						■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Email Offers			■	■	■	■																■	■	■						
Lead Nurturing																		■	■	■	■	■	■	■						

2018 CONTENT MARKETING PLANNING TEMPLATE

MONTH:

Type	CONTENT CAMPAIGNS																													
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30

Type	CONTENT DISTRIBUTION																													

Thank-you for Reading.

HubSpot offers a full stack of software for marketing, sales, and customer success, with a completely free CRM at its core. They're powerful alone — but even better when used together.

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Let Smart Insight's help you build your

Content Marketing Strategy

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