

Cognism 



The Complete  
Content Marketing Playbook



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## INTRODUCTION

Content marketing is an area of B2B marketing which is growing in importance year on year. And with good reason - it's become an integral weapon in the business arsenal, with its capacity to delight audiences, convert customers and deliver strong ROI.

According to the [B2B Content Marketing 2020 Report](#), commissioned by the Content Marketing Institute and MarketingProfs, nearly half of B2B marketers expect their content marketing budget to increase this year.

Why has content marketing exploded? There's no secret to it - the benefits it can deliver to a business are real and tangible.

- **It builds brand awareness** - content is a highly effective and low-cost way of promoting your brand and attracting customers.
- **It creates backlinks** - if you have quality content on your website, then other websites will want to link their content with yours - increasing your own website's ranking.
- **It's the engine for good SEO** - quality content, fully optimised with relevant keywords, will ensure your company's website stays at the top of a search engine page.
- **It creates loyal customers** - if you keep providing insightful content, you'll build a fanbase who'll keep engaging and coming back to your brand, every single time.
- **It generates new leads and business** - content marketing ensures that your brand will be found by buyers and helps to convert them into customers.

Over the course of this playbook, we're going to share our content marketing secrets with you. You'll read all about the tactics that increased our content leads by 240% and took us to page 1 of Google! And best of all, you'll hear from a world-class panel of B2B content marketers, unmatched anywhere else in the industry.

Welcome to ***The Complete Content Marketing Playbook!***

Happy reading,



Alice de Courcy  
Chief Marketing Officer, Cognism



## 1

## CHAPTER 1: HOW TO BUILD BUYER PERSONAS FOR CONTENT MARKETING



**Ardath Albee** is a B2B marketing strategist, speaker and author. She was named as one of the top B2B content marketing thought leaders by the Content Marketing Institute. In this chapter, Ardath walks us through how to build buyer personas - and use content to activate conversations with prospects and customers.

It's often said in B2B that all products look the same. For a lot of B2B buyers, there's nothing compelling out there. With so much choice available to people, it's harder than ever to make a purchasing decision.

However, there is a secret weapon that B2B marketers can deploy, to make deep and lasting connections between your brand and your audience. That secret weapon is content marketing.

Before you start creating content, though, you need to know who your ideal customer is. Only then can you develop content that compels and converts. The first step in effective content marketing is building a buyer persona. Here's how it's done.

### What is a buyer persona?

Think of your ideal customer. Where do they live?  
What role are they in? Where do they work?  
What challenges do they encounter day-to-day?  
What are they responsible for achieving?  
Already, you probably have an image in your mind.

That, simply, is a buyer persona. A persona is a composite sketch of a target market based on validated commonalities that actively informs content strategy to drive productive buyer engagement.

The key point is that it's not "imaginary" but, rather, based on commonalities and insights culled from your real customers and merged into a composite sketch of who they are and what they care about.

### Why are buyer personas important?

It's marketing 101: how can you market a product if you don't know who will be buying it? Or why they should? Buyer personas will help you understand your customers and prospective customers, and create content that's focused on their needs and desired outcomes.

### The importance of the buying committee

Most of the clients you'll encounter in B2B have long sales cycles. It can take a lot of effort to use content marketing to attract them. That's why building buyer personas is a key step to take, before you start creating content. You don't want to waste a single second!

Another element to consider is that in most B2B companies, you won't be dealing with just one person. There may be an ultimate decision-maker, but they will rely on the advice of a team of people working under

them - or even in adjacent departments that will be affected by the change the project will bring. This is the buying committee.

Depending on the size of the company, there may be 4-25 people in the buying committee. The average is around 11. You will need to develop buyer personas, and content, for each committee member based on their role in the decision.

Conduct research into every member of the buying committee. This research will inform the buyer persona and then the content you'll create. Why is this important? In B2B, consensus is king - the decision-maker won't make a decision if the buying committee isn't on board!

## How to create your content marketing buyer persona

### 1. Look at your current customers

The best first step is to review the customers you have already. What trends do you see? Are there any similarities between one customer and another? Does anything connect them? The goal is to discover commonalities between your best customers and those businesses that you want to target.

Think about when they first engaged with you. What did they like about your product or service? Did they have any comments or criticisms? Use those thoughts to build up a picture in your mind of your ideal customer.

Better yet, ask them. Schedule 30-minute interviews with customers in the role of your persona and find out:

- How they found out about your product.
- What process they used to evaluate their options.
- What criteria were important to them.
- Where they encountered obstacles.
- Why they ultimately chose you.

### 2. Study your database

Analyzing your database will show you which roles you have easier access to reach. If you build personas and then discover you don't have those people in your database, you'll need a plan to acquire them. You'll also need to rethink how your marketing is attracting leads that you can't market to effectively.

Take a look at the forms on your landing pages. Do they include questions that help you identify intent and segment for persona-driven content marketing programs?

It's also helpful to look at your campaign analytics and assess which content and messaging has performed well with the segment of your audience you're building a persona to represent.

When reviewing your database, did you find any surprises? Are there roles you didn't expect to see that could be worthy of a persona? Do you have the right data on your leads to segment effectively?

### 3. Get sales input

One of the best ways of getting information for buyer persona planning is to talk to your sales team. They interact with prospects on a daily basis. They know maybe better than anyone who your customers are and what they're looking for.

Ask your sales department who they're selling to. Are there any types of people who generate the most sales? Who must be in the room or the deal doesn't happen? Which roles are the hardest to convince and tend to create roadblocks? Why? Listen to the sales input and factor it in when planning your buyer persona.

If you do not align your personas to the roles your sales reps engage with, they will not find your leads valuable

to them. Marketing and sales must agree about who their ideal customers are and which roles they have the confidence to engage and motivate.

For example, can your sales reps carry on a peer-to-peer type conversation with the C-Suite? Or are they more comfortable at the director level?

Getting buy-in from sales for the personas you build will help them rally around the process and the content you create and leads generated as a result. They'll find your leads more valuable because they look just like the leads they'd pursue on their own.

## WHAT TO INCLUDE IN YOUR B2B CONTENT MARKETING BUYER PERSONA

### First-person scenario



Write several paragraphs from the prospect's perspective. What are their challenges and what are they trying to achieve? How do they interact with others on the buying committee? What's frustrating them?

### Objectives



What does the prospect want to accomplish?

### Obstacles



What's preventing the prospect from making a purchase?

### Questions



What questions is the prospect asking? Use these questions as the basis for your content.

### Keywords



What terms will the prospect be typing into search engines, when looking for answers to their questions?

### Engagement channels



Where does the prospect spend their time - both online and offline?

### Social media preferences



What types of content does the prospect engage with online? Who do they follow?

### Engagement scenarios



How will you engage with this persona? Think about top, mid, and bottom funnel content, as well as which channels you'll use. Map out what that might look like.

### Content preferences



What content formats does the prospect prefer? Video, blogs, whitepapers etc.

## Tips for using content to activate conversations

### 1. Open up a dialogue

Getting people's attention is one thing good content must do - but then you have to hold their attention. The best content is designed as based on a Q&A - it answers a question the prospects have (such as what motivated their search), but also opens up a dialogue.

Consider how one content asset can be the gateway to the next piece of the story. Connecting the dots is what creates engagement and momentum for your buyers.

Answering a question is just a springboard to arriving at another destination - ideally, as more questions are answered, this means they will agree to have a conversation with a salesperson.

### 2. Use your prospects' words in your content

Research your prospects and their company thoroughly. Take a note of the words and phrases they use when you interview them and on their social media profiles and posts. Bring those phrases into your content. When the words they use are present, the content resonates. It's this kind of attention to detail that will have buyers feel like "they 'get' me."

A good idea is to pull out phrases that crop up again and again. Build up a "prospect vocabulary". Use those phrases across all your content channels.

### 3. Align your content to stages across the buying continuum

Don't settle for creating only top-of-funnel content. The story your content tells must be consistent and continuous from the buyer's current situation or status quo to the time they make a purchase decision.

Your content should also align with sales. This means it should be easy for sales reps to step into the conversation in mid-stream without fragmenting the experience for your buyers. It should support the sales function's need to engage with others on the buying committee who may not engage with your content earlier in the process. This is why you research and build multiple personas; to arm your sales team with exactly the information they need to keep the deal moving forward.

If you're struggling to get buy-in from your sales leaders, try a bottom-up approach.

If your SDRs start using your content in their cadences, and they start seeing better conversations, higher conversion rates and a stronger pipeline, then your sales leaders will quickly see the value of it. Approach it like a proof of concept pilot. Pretty quickly, you'll see the broader sales team want to do the same.



### Get more marketing insights from Ardash

Ardath is the CEO of [Marketing Interactions](#). She regularly publishes advice and guidance for B2B content marketers. Be sure to add her [blog](#) to your bookmarks!

## 2 CHAPTER 2: HOW TO SET GOALS FOR YOUR CONTENT

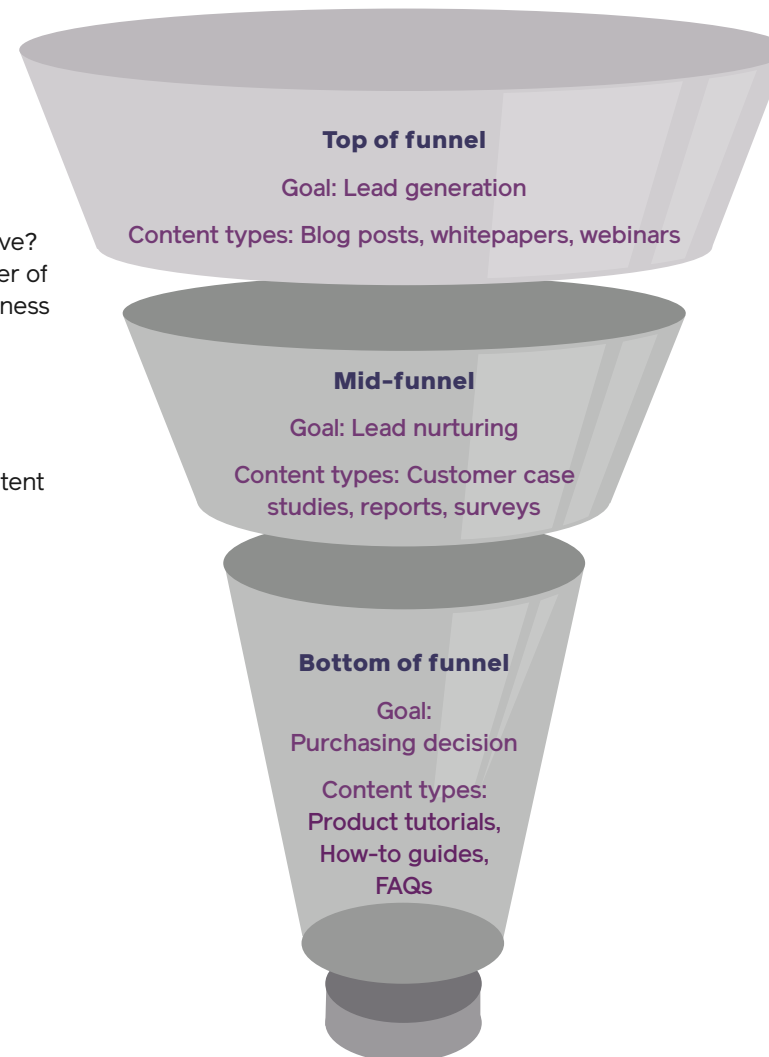


**Karla Rivershaw** is the Head of Marketing at **Turtl**, the interactive content creation software. In this chapter, she's going to reveal her tactics for content marketing goal-setting.

The first question to ask when setting goals for content marketing is: what are you looking to achieve? Content marketing can be used to support a number of purposes, whether they be increasing brand awareness or growing your customer base.

A good way to look at it is to align your content marketing goals to the wider marketing funnel. This will give you a broad view of what you want to achieve using content - as well as the different content types that will support your goals.

Here's how I manage this at Turtl:



Once you've aligned your content to your business goals, there are three things you can do to improve the process.

### 1. Audit your content

Before you start creating, perform an inventory of your content library and channels. What content do you have available to you right now, and what are you missing?

Take a look at your competitors. What types of content are they regularly producing? Can you produce something similar - or better? Alternatively, can you spot any gaps in their content that you can fill?

Always talk to the other departments in your organisation, especially sales. Your salespeople are on the front line, engaging with prospects and customers every day. They will have ideas for content that will help them achieve their goals - booking demos and closing deals! If your content can assist them in doing that, you will be their hero.



## 2. Repurpose your content

Repurposing is an easy way to generate quality content, quickly. You don't always have to create something new.

In today's B2B marketing landscape, content is measured the same as everything else - in terms of the leads it generates and the revenue it creates.

The problem that many content marketers encounter is the pressure of time, of not having enough hours in the day to produce the amount of content that's needed.

Repurposing is how you can alleviate that time pressure, while still delivering value. Here's an example:

Say you've hosted a webinar, which is often a good lead generation source. What you can do next is use the content in that webinar in a variety of different ways. Create a report or whitepaper based on the webinar. Gate it and promote it. Write and publish a series of blog posts based on the webinar.

You can see how one piece of content can generate more pieces of content - driving even more leads to your business!

## 3. Get content buy-in from sales

Sales and marketing alignment is crucial when it comes to content planning and creation. Here are some ideas that have worked very well at Turtl:

- **Schedule regular meetings with your sales leaders.** Make them aware of the content you're planning and producing, and what you want to achieve with it. Remember that an overriding function of content is to support the sales funnel.

- **Send a weekly update to your sales team,** informing them of the content that you've published.
- **Create a shared drive for content.** Ensure that all your content is labelled accurately and sorted into folders. Your shared drive must also be searchable. Alternatively, you can use Turtl to create a [centralised repository for sales](#) and assemble your collateral in a matter of clicks!
- **Post all your content in your sales/marketing Slack channel.** This will make your sales team aware of your content once it's launched.
- **Listen back to sales pitches and demos.** Ask your SDRs/MDRs for recordings. Use the insights from these to inform your content - for example, the questions that prospects may ask could become blog titles!

## Conclusion

Content can be difficult to quantify, which is a challenge when the business only cares about the bottom line. Many content strategies can take months or years to bear fruit.

The trick is to prove the value of content marketing to the business. Setting goals at the start, and being upfront with management as to what you hope to achieve, is your best route to doing just that!



## 3 CHAPTER 3: HOW TO PLAN YOUR CONTENT



**Tom Bangay** is Director of Content at **Juro**, the contract collaboration platform. In this chapter, he's going to divulge the top strategies for B2B content planning.

Here is the typical content strategy for a tech startup that starts to become moderately successful and achieves some growth.

**Co-founder 1:**

"Let's start a blog!"

**Co-founder 2:**

"YEAH! What we say is so interesting."

**Co-founder 1:**

"You know it bro! Okay, it's live. I've written a post about why we started the company."

**Co-founder 2:**

"Awesome! I'm writing one about what we're doing with our seed money."

**Co-founder 1:**



Fast forward three months and what happened to the blog? Ah. It's a wasteland. No new posts. As an experiment, check out the homepages of ten startups that are between seed and Series B and look for the date of the last blog. August 2018 maybe?

Blogs, and content platforms in general, are started and abandoned because while they're fun and ego-boosting in the beginning, they ultimately give way to activities deemed to be more crucial to driving revenue. Building the product, closing deals, hiring people - these understandably get prioritised. And if we're honest, those running the blog run out of interesting ideas, get bored, and give up.

The fact that there are a huge number of blog wastelands out there is as frustrating as it is unnecessary. You shouldn't be abandoning a blog in pursuit of activities that drive revenue growth, because the pursuit of revenue growth should be what drove you to start the blog in the first place. If you didn't plan your content with a clear and vigorously interrogated strategy as to how it will make your company money, then you were always destined to fail.

Don't start with a content platform, some random ideas, and then work out a way to link it to growth. Don't start at the bottom and work up - this doesn't work in product and it doesn't work in sales, so why would it work in content?

Instead, start at the top and work down.



### Dollars first, ideas second

Every quarter when it's time to review and update the company's content strategy, I start with 'why?' and draw a rough pyramid on a piece of paper. At the top of the pyramid is a dollar sign.

This is because I work in the marketing function at a commercial business. The only goal of marketing is to help our colleagues in sales close more and bigger deals, so the ultimate goal of what I do as Director of Content is the same as anyone else in the revenue-facing part of the company: revenue growth.

There are tonnes of other metrics that make your world more complicated - they measure traffic, or engagement, or conversion, or search equity. Other organisations that don't have revenue growth as their goal might instead be aiming at member growth (for an NGO or charity) or traffic (for a public body).

But the reason why a company is prepared to pay you, a content writer, to write stuff is that they believe it can help them make more money. This should always be at the top of your pyramid.

The subsequent layers, from the top down, look like this:

- **Company-level goal:** stated more expansively than just a dollar sign, this might be 'increase annual revenue of the company'.
- **Content objectives:** if the dollars are the main objective, then what are the objectives your content needs to have to support this? Some examples might be 'attract and capture relevant leads'; 'increase search visibility of website'; 'Enable sales team to nurture pipeline with targeted content', and so on.
- **Target audience:** this might be at the level of industry ('software companies') or it might be the type of company ('venture-backed scaleup').
- **Buyer persona:** if you aren't talking directly to your ideal customer profile almost all the time, then you're wasting your time. Tech startups are particularly guilty of writing stuff that they think looks cool to other startups. Okay, so you wrote about the innovative tech stack you put together to run the company - do you really think any potential customers care that much? Focus on creating value explicitly for the job titles who buy and use what you're selling. Everything else is probably vanity.
- **Themes:** the themes you choose to write about should be dictated by the hopes, fears, ambitions that your perfect buyers think about every day. The hashtags they follow on LinkedIn, the newsletters they subscribe to, and the companies they wish would hire them. If you don't know what they are, then you haven't spoken to enough customers. These might be broad themes like '**B2B lead generation**' or 'legal operations' or 'building culture', or they might be more specific - but you won't know unless you ask.

- **Pain points:** a level down from themes, you'll find the pain points that really grind the gears of your target audience day-to-day. These can be blunt and personal: "the sales team hates me," or "I have an MBA and I spend my time copying data between spreadsheets," or "I've just been hung up on for the fifth time today." They don't necessarily need to be problems that your company or product can solve, but you need to know them inside out to be able to meet your audience at their level and build trust.

Only once these are all mapped out are you ready to get more specific in planning your content activities. Personally, I arrange the levels below like this:

- **Big rocks:** the biggest content projects you'll undertake, from which lots of value can be derived. An obvious example is an eBook, from which you can create smaller whitepapers, infographics, blogs and social activity.
- **Distribution channels:** these will include things like gated landing pages, email marketing, PR, owned and third-party blogs, organic and paid social, network and community, and events and webinars.

Alongside this, it's useful to map out:

- **Any immovable events** that would affect when you'd produce content: for example, a product launch, a funding announcement, an acquisition, and so on.
- **Any unfair assets** you might have: for example, a huge conference your parent company is putting on, or an amazing thought leader who's a friend of the CEO and will write for you.

Here's what my content planning pyramid looks like:



Finally, after doing all this work, you are ready to actually plan out some content ideas, with this defined structure in place. The point of doing all this work is so that whatever your idea is for a blog post or article, you can look back up through your strategy and ask:

Does this idea...

- have a distribution channel through which it can succeed?
- sit under a Big Rock which we know will move the needle?
- respond to a known pain point?
- play into a theme that's front-of-mind?
- work for a persona we know could buy our product?
- work for a company we know we can serve?
- meet a defined content objective that will ultimately...
- ...help us to make money?**

If you can't follow your idea for a blog all the way up this chain to a dollar sign at the top, then stop, check yourself, and think again - because you're probably wasting your time.



## 4

## CHAPTER 4: HOW TO APPROACH THOUGHT LEADERS AND INFLUENCERS



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Getting industry thought leaders and influencers to contribute to your content is an essential part of building credibility and trust around your brand. [Joe Barron](#), Content Manager at Cognism, explains how to form a process around this.

Here's an interesting stat for you. [Marketing Donut](#) has highlighted that only 2% of sales are closed on the first meeting; the other 98% will buy only once a certain level of trust has been built up.

To get higher close rates, you need to build up trust around your brand. Content marketing is your path to getting there. How, I hear you ask?

What you need to do is bring in experts to front your content. Find influencers and thought leaders in your industry, people who other people respect and listen to. Connect with them, set up interviews with them, and use their insights in your blogs and gated content.

There are three benefits to using contributors in this way:

- **It gives you regular, relevant content to publish** - and it doesn't cost you anything to produce!
- **It helps to quickly build brand awareness** - influencers bring their own audiences with them.
- **It will build that all-important trust around your company** - which means that prospects will be much more likely to close deals with you.

Getting thought leaders to contribute to your content isn't as difficult as it sounds. Someone who's achieved influencer status in their career is unlikely to reject a request to help influence even more people - there are people keen for the spotlight in almost every industry vertical.

That said, it is important to build a process around this. Here's how I've done it since starting at Cognism.

### 1. Block out time in your calendar

As with any content marketing activity, the more time you put into it, the better your results will be. The first step in finding influencers is to dedicate some time to it.

Block out a couple of hours every week to find and connect with thought leaders in your industry. Make it a consistent, regular task for yourself.

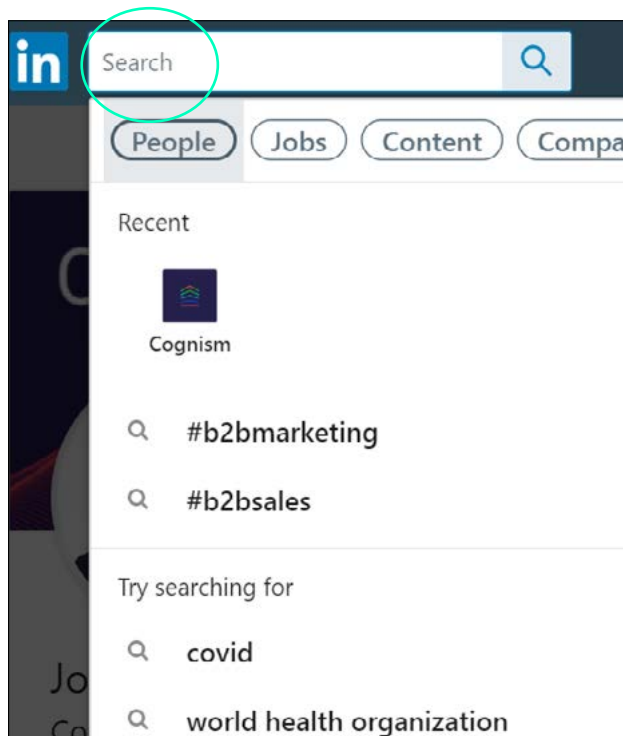
Here are some steps to take that can help you out with this:

- **Review your content calendar.** Identify those pieces that would benefit from having an influencer's contribution.
- **Create an Excel or Google sheet.** Record the names and LinkedIn profiles of thought leaders that you'd like to work with. Match the names to themes on your content calendar (e.g.: sales, marketing, data). Build out an address book of contributors, who you can then contact in your weekly sessions.
- **Analyse your current customers.** Log into your CRM (if you have one!) and study the clients you've got already. Are there any people on your client lists who would make good contributors? Add them to your wishlist.

## 2. Conduct LinkedIn research

It almost goes without saying, but **LinkedIn** is the ultimate resource for finding industry professionals. You can use the social network to connect and engage with potential contributors.

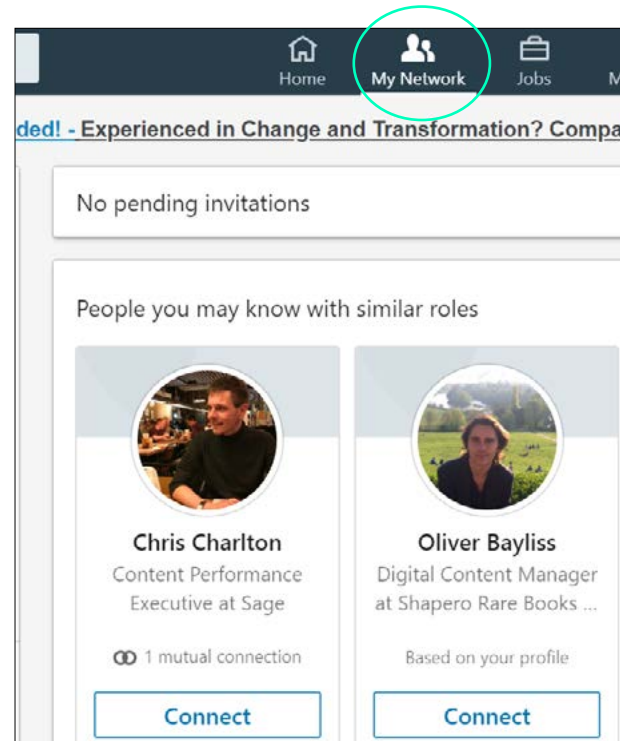
The first thing you can do is run a search. Click on the "Search" bar in the top left corner.



You can search for "People", if you have specific names in mind, or for "Jobs", if you want to look for people with relevant job titles (e.g.: Social media managers).

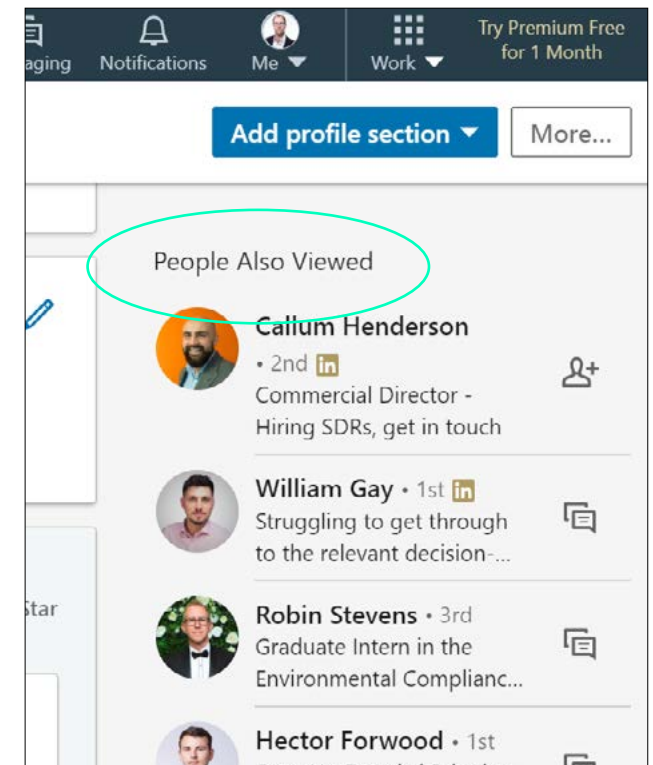
LinkedIn will then give you either the profile of the person you're looking for, or a list of people that you can work through.

The second thing you can do is get LinkedIn's own suggestions to grow your network. Click on "My Network" on the top menu tab.



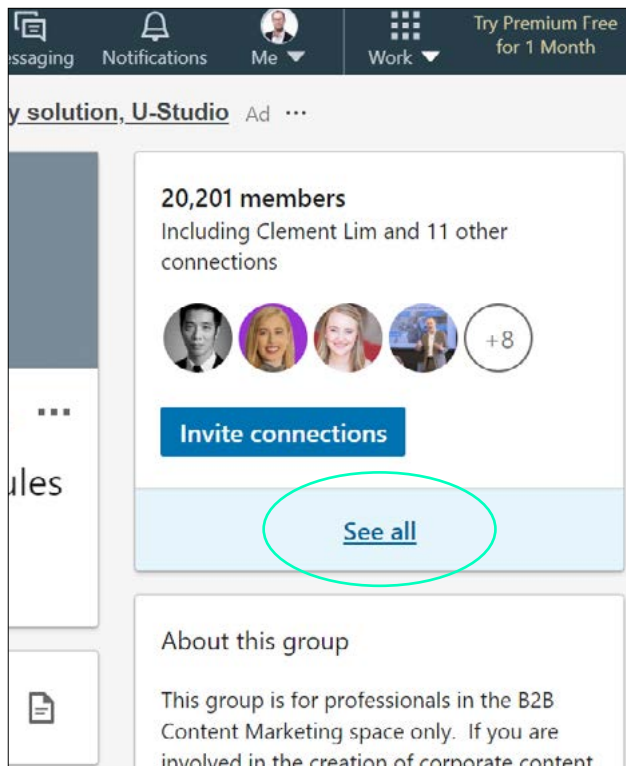
LinkedIn will generate profiles of people with similar roles to yours, people working in the same industry and area as you, and recommended people based on who you've followed already.

Another quick way to grow your network is to check the "People Also Viewed" list on any LinkedIn profile. When you click on a profile, scroll to the right. You'll see a list of people that LinkedIn users have been searching for. You can identify potential contributors here.



The last thing you can do on LinkedIn for contributor research is to look at the membership of any groups you've joined.

Go to "My Network" and click on "Groups". Select a group and then scroll to the right. You'll see how many people are members of that group. Click on "See all" to get a full membership list.



### 3. Identify high-profile customers

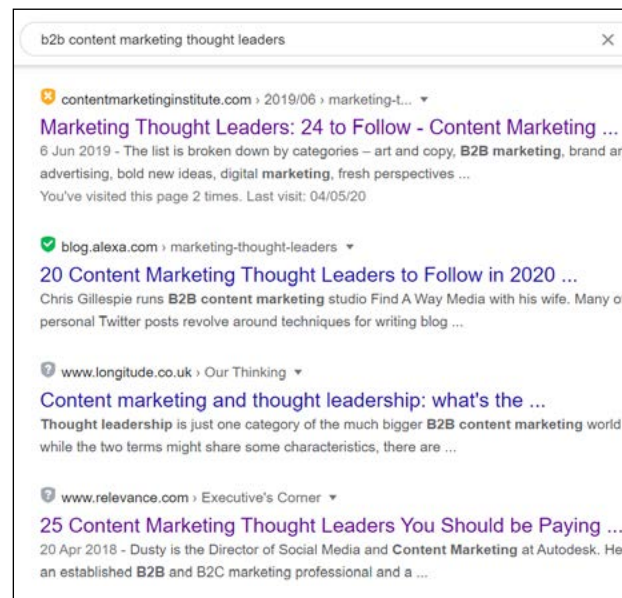
Are there any clients of yours that can contribute to your content? Identify those customers that have high-profile personal brands - a good indicator is the number of followers they have on social media.

Ask your CS team if they've had a good experience with your product or service. If the answer's "yes", chances are they'll be willing to engage with you.

### 4. If in doubt - Google it!

Alongside LinkedIn, Google is the B2B content marketer's best friend.

Go to Google and type in your industry followed by "thought leaders" or "influencers". Like this:

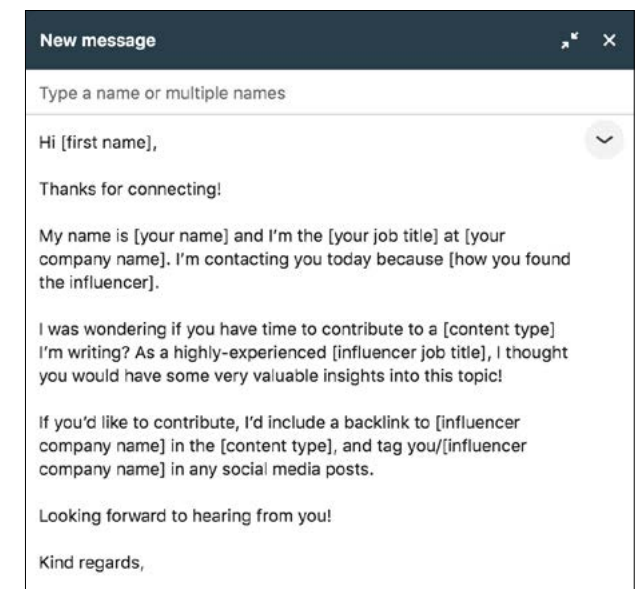


The search engine will call up a list of blogs and articles based around that topic. I've found that most industries have their "celebrities", and they're often mentioned in blogs. A lot of the time, the blogs will contain links to the influencers' websites and/or social media.

### 5. Contact your influencers

Once you've built out a list of thought leaders, it's time to connect with them! You can either do this by sending them a LinkedIn message, or via email if you have their address.

Here's an example message that I've sent before:



You'll find that if you keep your tone respectful, and show that you've done your research into the thought leader's career and industry, they'll be more than willing to share their knowledge with you.

There are plenty of people in your industry who'll want to support your content. Follow the steps I've outlined to find them. Good luck!

## 5

## CHAPTER 5: HOW TO CREATE THE PERFECT B2B CONTENT MARKETING BLOG



MIKE THE WRITER

*Mike Albert* is a content writer specialising in producing articles for B2B and SaaS businesses. He's been writing articles for Cognism for almost two years now. In this chapter, he's going to explain how to put together a blog for B2B content marketing.

### What does a content writer do?

What I do is allow business owners and marketing chiefs to publish content at scale. A lot of my clients are good writers, but they don't have the time or the bandwidth to devote to writing content - that's where I come in.

On a typical day, I might write five or six articles for many different clients. How do I do it? I've got a system which has taken a few years to refine. Next, I'll explain my system for content production, as well as how you can create good content for your business, faster.

### How to come up with blog ideas

When thinking of what topics to write about for your business, there's one golden rule: it's not about you. An article is worthless if the reader skips to something else after the first paragraph, and there's nothing more likely to lose a reader than someone going on about themselves. Your reader must be front and centre of every piece of content you produce.

Visualising your reader is an excellent place to start. Firstly, who are they? Your ideal reader should match your content marketing buyer persona (see Chapter 1).

Next, what would they like to read? Here are some ideas:

- What problems are keeping them up at night, right now?** Can you offer them a solution in your content?
- Are there any developments in your reader's industry that you can offer a perspective on?** For example, being a B2B writer, I wrote a lot of articles about GDPR in 2018.
- How can you make your reader's life easier?** Your content must answer the questions your target customers are currently asking.

You could also look at your competitors' content. What are they doing at the moment? Have they published an article recently that received a ton of engagement on LinkedIn?

Could you write something on the same topic? Don't plagiarise it though. Write something from your unique perspective. Alternatively, are there any gaps in your competitors' content that you could fill?

### Planning your blog

Once you have decided what your blog is going to be about, you need to plan it. You can't just start writing it straight away, or your article will jump around and make little sense to your reader.

Firstly, you need to research your topic. Even though your subject may be second nature to you, it never hurts to read about your topic from some different perspectives.

When I'm writing, I will read at least three other articles about the subject, making notes as I go. I may not use everything in the final piece, but it gives me enough of an understanding so I can write with some authority.

Next, think about the layout of your blog. A good blog should take your reader on a journey. You want them to travel smoothly, from start to finish, absorbing all the brilliant information you impart, while also being entertained. Then, once they're finished, you want them to execute on your call to action. For this, you need a structure.

Here's how I structure my B2B content marketing blogs:



### Paragraph 1: Introduction

Draw your reader in and give them a taste of what they might find out when they read on.



### Paragraph 2: The main point of your article

Here's where you put the one thing that you want your reader to absorb.



### Paragraph 3: Extra information

Back up the point you made in the previous section.

### Paragraph 4: Free choice

Present a counter-argument to the points you've made so far in the article.



### Paragraph 5: Conclusion

End the article by summing up and offering a final opinion.



### Call to action

What do you want your reader to do next?

What I usually do next is make bullet points of everything I want to say in the article (based on my research), and write a number next to it, signifying the paragraph I want to say it in. I do this with a pen and paper - but I am a bit old school! You might want to use a computer.

Finally, you should also consider how long you want your blog to be. Generally, mine are around the 800-word mark. You can't say much in less than 500 words, while anything over 1,000 can drag a bit. 800 is the sweet spot.

### Writing your blog

OK, once you've made your plan, it's time to get writing. Get a blank page up on your screen and start filling it. You've chosen a structure and made a plan - just work your way from top to bottom and enjoy yourself!

Of course, it isn't always quite as easy as that. So many people, when they start to write, seem to get possessed by the ghost of Charles Dickens and use flowery language and obscure terms. I don't know; maybe they think it makes them sound clever?

Remember your reader and how they want to read. Try to write in the language that they would use. In most cases, you can't go wrong if you write like you talk.

Here are some more writing tips:

- **Have a great headline.** Your headline will be what shows up on Google or your site's blog page. Make it an advertisement that gets your reader to click.
- **Use short sentences.** They're easier to read.
- **Break your text up into shorter paragraphs.** Remember, your reader may be reading this on a tiny phone screen. They don't want to be confronted by a giant wall of text.
- **Bullet point lists** (just like this one!) are an easy and digestible way to impart information quickly.
- **Avoid industry jargon and buzzwords** - these will age your article. They also make you sound like everybody else. The word I currently run a mile from is 'key'!
- **Be enthusiastic** - if you, the writer, can't get passionate about your subject, you can't expect your reader to either.

In no time at all, your article should be finished, ready to inform and entertain your target reader.

## Beyond the words

As a writer, it pains me to say this, but not everyone wants to read my fantastic prose in one sitting. Where you can, add images that bring your article to life.

Infographics are a fun way to include statistics in your article. They provide some relief from the percentages and decimal points.

Adding video to articles is also really popular at the moment. If you can include a video to boost some of the points you make in your text, so much the better. The average user will spend **2.6x more time** on pages with video than ones without.

## Blog writing tools

Although, as I mentioned, I use a good old pen and pad to sketch out my articles. I do use some examples of tech in my writing process. Here they are:



### Microsoft Word

The best writing software out there, bar none!



### Hemingway

A free app that checks your writing and gives it a grade depending on how easy it is to understand.



### Grammarly

An excellent piece of software that checks your work for spelling mistakes, grammar errors and repetition.



### Copyscape

A free plagiarism checker that scans your work for duplicate content.

## Find out more

I hope these tips help you create more great content for your business.

If you want to find out more, why not [connect with me on LinkedIn?](#)

Or, you can visit my website at <https://www.mikethewriter.co.uk/>

## 6 CHAPTER 6: HOW TO OPTIMISE YOUR CONTENT FOR SEO



**Claire Brenner** is a Content Marketing and SEO Manager at **G2**. She is a specialist in creating and optimising content to increase organic site traffic. In this chapter, Claire shares her top tips for SEO optimisation.

SEO is at the heart of content marketing. Without it, your blogs will never get seen, prospects will never find out about your company, and all those sales opportunities will be lost.

For some people, SEO can be a bewildering concept. It is, after all, a very broad topic, with lots of different areas to explore. But I've found that if you get the basics right, then the rest will quickly fall into place.

What follows is my SEO playbook for content marketing. These are the steps my team at G2 takes to optimise blogs and boost their search engine rankings. There's no great secret to it - just a simple set of steps, applied as a rigorous process.

### ✓ 1. Keywords

The primary goal of SEO is to increase organic traffic. Therefore, you need to know the terms that people are using to search for your content.

#### Identify content themes

Start by determining the broader themes that your business wants to talk about. Collaborate with your business leadership on this. Establish a couple of general themes or topics, which you can then use to drive your keyword research.

A good way of doing this is to align content themes to your company's initiatives. For example, if you have a new CRM integration launching this quarter, then you can focus on "CRM software" as a theme.

The content theme - in this case, "CRM software", will also give you an idea of the persona you should be targeting with your content. Work with your sales team in developing a buyer persona, which you can refer back to when carrying out the following steps.

#### Conduct keyword research

There are many tools that can help you with keyword research. **SEMrush** is one, **Ahrefs** another. Use them to discover which keywords are popular and which ones you stand a chance of ranking for.

Take a look at G2's list of **SEO tools** to find the one that's right for you!

Another good tactic is to study your competitors. Identify their top-performing blogs. What keywords are they ranking for? Is there an opportunity for you to rank for those keywords too?

#### The three things to check during your keyword research are:



##### Search volume

The number of searches for a particular keyword during a selected time frame.



##### Keyword difficulty

How difficult it is to rank in Google's organic search results for a specific term, expressed as a number.



##### Search intent

The purpose of a person's online search.

### Create a keyword map

The next step is to develop a keyword map. This is a chart tracking all your keywords and how they relate to the content you'll publish.

Here's what to include on your keyword map:

- The keywords you're targeting.
- The search volume and keyword difficulties of those keywords.
- The suggested blog titles that correspond to each keyword - a good way to express these is as a problem to solve or a question to answer. Including this can help guide the writer on the search intent (if you're not the one writing the article).
- The blog URLs you'll use, matched to each keyword.
- 5-10 secondary keywords, which you can use in blog headings and subheadings.

A basic keyword map would look something like this:

	A	B	C	D	E
1	Title	URL	Primary Keyword	Secondary Keywords	
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					
12					
13					
14					
15					
16					
17					

If you have a number of blogs that share a common theme, you can cluster them together on your map. A topic cluster is typically 4-6 articles that are linked by a theme. Doing this will come in useful later, when you get around to building a pillar page.

At G2, we usually map out 30-50 articles for each half. Then it's over to our content creation team to get writing!

### 2. On-page SEO

The number one thing that Google prizes is quality content. When optimising a blog for SEO, keep that thought foremost in your mind. Offer the highest-quality content that you can!

Beyond that, though, there are a few things you can do to make your blog even more attractive to Google's algorithms. This is called on-page SEO.

Before you publish your blog, review the following elements:

#### Interlinking

Include approximately five internal links in your blog. That's not a strict cap - the amount may be less or more depending on the topic or the length of the blog. But five is a good number to aim for.

Be thoughtful about your interlinking. Every link you include must be relevant and beneficial to the reader. You should be enhancing their experience and providing even more value.

A good strategy is to base your links on the topic clusters from your keyword map. Make sure all the articles in each cluster are linking to each other.

#### URL

The blog's URL should almost always include the main keyword. For example:

/crm-software-trends

The URL should be as descriptive as possible. You can't always control the anchor text that external sites use to link to your articles, but you can control the URL and how it represents your content.

#### Meta description

Within the SEO industry, there are mixed feelings about meta descriptions. Some people feel like you should summarise the article or answer the question; some prefer to be a little more vague. Personally, I believe in a mix of both.

Your meta description should read like ad copy; it's what's going to appear on Google when users run a search. Match your meta description to the user's search intent - what question will they be asking?

That said, you don't want to summarise the whole blog! Create a sense of curiosity and entice people to click on the link.

#### Headings and subheadings

Don't include your primary keyword in every heading or subheading - it looks unnatural and forced. Write quality content first of all and insert your keywords naturally in the text.

Always avoid keyword stuffing; Google can penalise your content for this. Your headings should be an accurate, logical description of the blog content. Only include keywords in headings where it makes sense to do so.

## Images

If you embed images into your blog, always optimise the image alt text. Originally, the alt text was designed to describe images to the visually impaired. This is a good system to follow. Accurately describe the image in the alt text.

Just like interlinking, only include an image if it's beneficial to the reader. Too many images on a page can clutter it and slow down your page speed - which has become (and will continue to be) increasingly important.

Sometimes, even if you only include a single image, the file size can be too big for the page to cope. Again, this will slow down the page's loading speed. Ensure your images are small enough to stop this from happening.

## 3. Pillar pages

A staple in SEO is to create pillar pages surrounding your topic clusters. This is a step to take after you've published all the blogs in the cluster.

A pillar page is a long-form page, usually 2,000 words or over, which summarises a specific topic. Refer back to your keyword map. If you've clustered your blogs by topic, then you'll have a good idea of which pillar pages you'll need to create.

Link out to all the individual blogs from your pillar page. This is very good for internal linking. It also encourages the reader to engage with your content and, hopefully, will prevent them from bouncing off your website!

## 4. Backlinks

On-page SEO is important but it's also good to focus on off-site SEO as well. A key part of off-site SEO is building quality backlinks to your content - this can increase referral traffic and drive topic authority. Because of this, it's critical to place a strong focus on content promotion and distribution.

Be warned, though - when it comes to backlinks, quality is more important than quantity. Be selective about the external sites you chase. Start with trusted or respected sites in your industry.

## 5. Content reviews

Best practice is to evaluate your content quarterly. Study the **B2B data** on your blogs. If you're seeing your monthly organic traffic start to decline, that's a sign that you need to make some changes.

Go back into your old blogs and refresh them. Add in new links, update the headings, sharpen your meta descriptions and optimise the images.

A/B test different approaches. Refresh a blog and let it run for a quarter. If doing this makes no difference to its organic traffic, upgrade it again. Track it for another quarter. Which version of the blog performed better? Use those insights to refresh the rest of your content.

The bottom line is - be data-driven in everything you do with SEO!

## My key takeaway

My number one tip for SEO is: don't overthink it! Hear me out - I look at SEO in the same way as diet plans - there are always new fads, but every plan works the same. If you eat fewer calories, you'll lose weight.

SEO is similar. At the end of the day, SEO success comes from quality content, always. Every tip listed above - and all of the others that are constantly circulating around SEO Twitter - is simply a step toward creating quality content.

## 7

## CHAPTER 7: HOW TO ACTIVATE YOUR CONTENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA



agora  
pulse

Writing a blog is one important step in content marketing; optimising it for SEO is another. The next step is promoting your content on social media and getting as many people as possible to engage with it. [Jennifer Watson](#), Social Media Manager at [Agorapulse](#), shares her knowledge.

For a lot of people, social media sounds easy. You write a post and you publish it, right? But just doing that over and over again won't help you build up an audience and grow your brand.

Good social media marketing must be data-driven and laser-focused on your target audience. You need to know the goal behind every one of your social media posts and the purpose of everything you do.

Unsure about where to start? Here are my top tips for social media success!



### 1. Create a social media calendar

Before you even start writing posts, take some time to build out a social media calendar. Block out all the time slots you want to post per month. Your calendar should include:

- Your content pieces (e.g.: blogs, videos, whitepapers) and when you expect them to land.
- Any national holidays or observations that you can build posts around.
- Any fun or relevant dates for your business - for example, did you know January 6 is [National Technology Day](#)?

When creating your calendar, don't just plan posts for the sake of it. There must be a reason, a purpose behind every post you publish. Which brings us neatly onto...



### 2. Know your goals, know your audience

When you're putting together a social media strategy, it's good to have a destination in mind; after all, if you know where you're going, it'll make the journey so much easier!

Consider the goals behind your social posts. What's the drive? Where do you want to get to? For a lot of B2B companies, increasing engagement is the end goal for social media. If that's the case, then you need to think about: how do I get my audience to engage?

Alongside the broader goals, you also need to know your audience. Study the demographics of your followers. Where are they based, what size of companies do they work in and what seniority are they? Take those insights and use them to inform the types of posts you publish.

The 2 questions you need to keep in your mind when working out your social media marketing goals are:

- Is there a reason to post?
- Am I engaging my audience with this post?

If the answer to both of these is "no", then don't post!



### 3. Catch people's attention

It's been calculated that on average:

- 500 million Facebook stories are shared daily.
- 500 million tweets are sent per day.
- 2 million posts, articles, and videos are published on LinkedIn every day.
- 95 million photos and videos are shared on Instagram per day.

What these stats tell you is that your social media posts have to instantly grab people's attention, or there's a real risk they'll get lost in all the other online noise!

Here's my checklist for creating an attention-grabbing social media post:

- ✓ Spark the emotion or excitement of your audience. The first 3-5 words of your post are all-important in preventing people from scrolling on!
- ✓ Include a powerful, eye-catching image.
- ✓ Don't sell! Instead, be an invaluable resource for your followers. Share free tips and knowledge.
- ✓ If you're scheduling multiple posts on a similar theme, try threading a cohesive message through them. Tie them all together and take your followers on a journey.

#### 4. Ask questions

One common mistake that companies often make on social media is to talk more about themselves than about their audience. Instead of sparking conversations, they talk about their products and their company culture. This is definitely the wrong approach if you want to build a loyal following.

A good tactic to counteract this is to ask questions! This will help to get people talking. It also means that you'll quickly learn even more about your followers, what they're interested in and care about. Again, you can bring those learnings into your social media strategy.

For example, if you're launching a new product, try running a Q&A to go along with it. Ask your followers for their feedback. People always appreciate it when they're heard.

Above all - be human and relatable! Talk about things that are important to your audience, in the language they use day-to-day, and you'll quickly see your follower numbers start to go up!



#### 5. Build a community

One goal of social media marketing is to build a community around your brand, a loyal base of followers who will come back to your feed again and again.

Here are 2 tactics for doing this:

- **Invite influencers and thought leaders to contribute to your social media efforts.** Chances are, you'll have some popular people in your company already. One thing that works very well at Agorapulse is when our CEO does a social media takeover/Q&A session.
- **Highlight other companies in your social media posts.** If they're featured in your content, tag them! Create connections between your followers and bring people together through your social media channels.

When your community is in place, you'll have a dedicated group of "superfans" who will comment on and share your posts, day in, day out!



#### 6. Activate your employees

If your colleagues don't care to share your content, then there's a problem! There are some things you can do to get your team more engaged with your social media channels. Try out these ideas:

- **If your content includes a member of your team,** tag them in your posts and ask them to share.
- **Create a Slack channel specifically for social media sharing.** Invite your whole company to join and share links to each post you send out. Ask your team to like and share!
- **On LinkedIn, you can use the "Notify Employees" button once a day.** This will help you get more impressions by notifying your co-workers of your VIPs (Very Important Posts!).



#### 7. Try A/B testing

Testing is how you arrive at a better result. Develop a testing strategy for your social media channels. Try out different types of posts and see which perform better. Try out posts with images and those without. Post at different times of the day. Do you see higher engagement at certain times than others?

4-6 weeks is a good time period for an A/B test. At the end of the test, study your **B2B data**. What do the results of the test tell you? Write down the results and make some recommendations for your future social media strategy.

As well as your own data, keep an eye on the wider social media trends. What are people in your target audience talking about? What hashtags are trending today? If you spot a gap in the trends, make sure it's your company that fills it!



#### 8. Choose your channels wisely

Always be very selective about the channels you use; I've found that what works on one channel may not work on another. Twitter, for example, is good for breaking news, but less so for long-form content (you only have 280 characters to play with!).

It's also worth exploring different types of content on your social media platforms. Live videos are a growing trend in social media marketing. They're a popular way to build rapport and increase engagement.



## 9. Timing is everything!

The timings for your social media posts will vary depending on your industry and your audience. My advice is to check your analytics and look at the times for your most popular posts in a given week or month (Agorapulse's content report makes this easy!). Then, use that time as the benchmark for your postings going forward.

Agorapulse published a blog on [the best times to post on social media](#); do give it a read for more information on this!

If your company has a global audience, consider publishing posts for different timezones. Just bear in mind you might have to tweak your messaging for different cultures!

Whatever posting times you choose, try to be consistent with them. If you schedule certain posts at a certain time of day or week, then you'll build anticipation among your audience. People will learn to click on your feed at that time, to see what you have in store for them!



## 10. Track your metrics

You can always improve what you do through data!

My process is to spend 30 minutes every day to check up on my accounts. That way, you can see what's working and what isn't, and make quick adjustments to your strategy.

These are the metrics I look at for standard social media posts:



### Sentiment

The positive or negative feelings that are expressed about your brand on social media.



### Engagement

The total number of followers' interactions (likes, comments, clicks and shares) with a social media channel for a selected period.



### Comments

The volume of comments your posts receive is a good indicator of engagement.



### Shares

This is a very powerful overlooked metric. If others share your content, it shows how valuable it is.

If you broadcast a live video, these are the metrics I would track:



### Retention rate

The percentage length of your video that viewers watched.



### Peak live viewers

The highest number of viewers who watched your video while it was live.



### Greater than 1-minute views

The number of viewers who watched your video for longer than 1 minute.



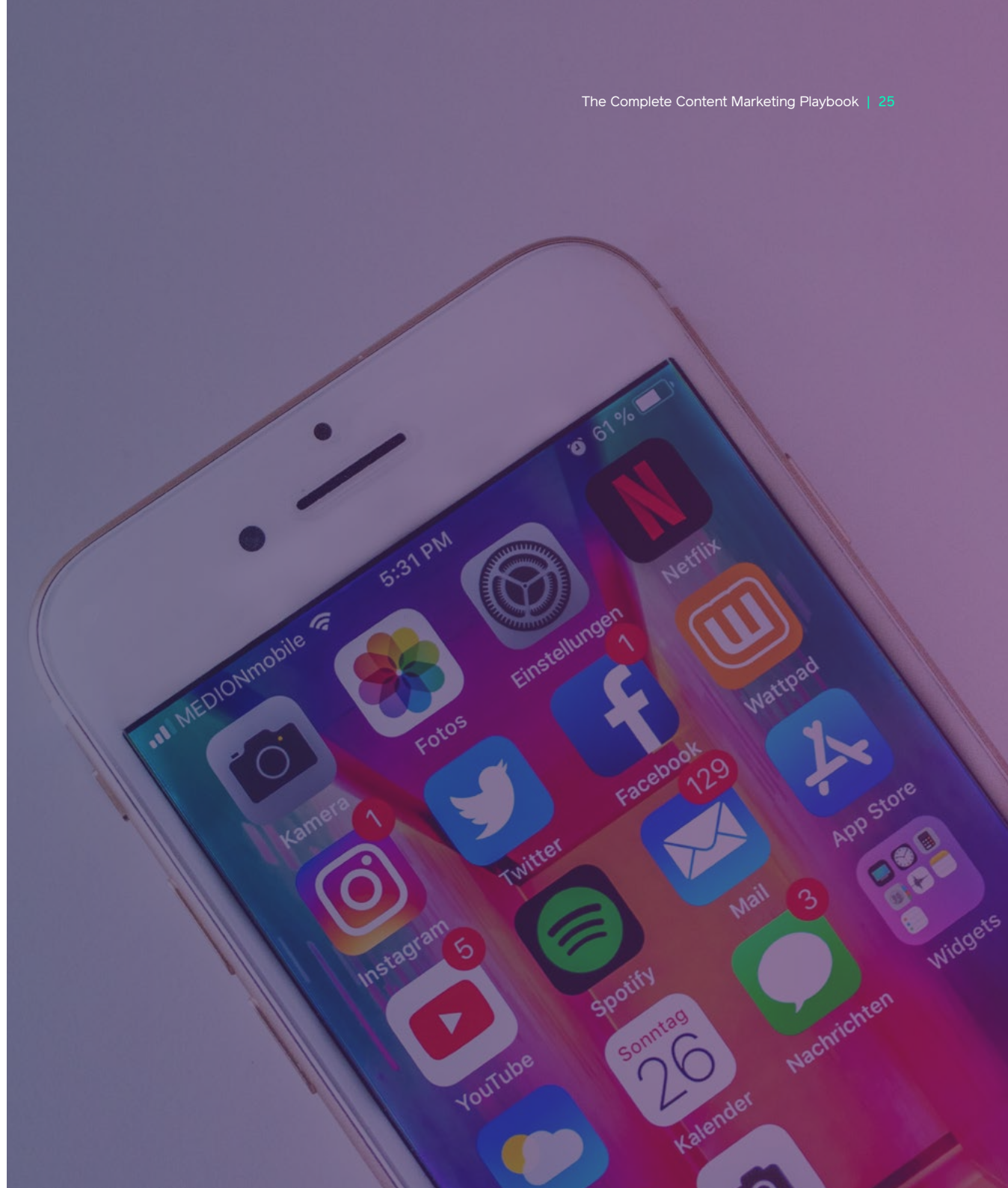
## Final thoughts

Everything is always changing in social media. New features and platforms are coming out all the time. As social media marketers, we're all learning together.

My top tip is to connect with other marketing professionals in your industry. Join groups on LinkedIn and grow your personal network. Ask each other questions and share your knowledge.

Whenever a new feature or a new platform comes out, jump on it! You don't have to post straight away. Just set up a profile, wait and watch. Learn from how others use the platform and try out a few posts of your own. If you get good engagement, do more of it!

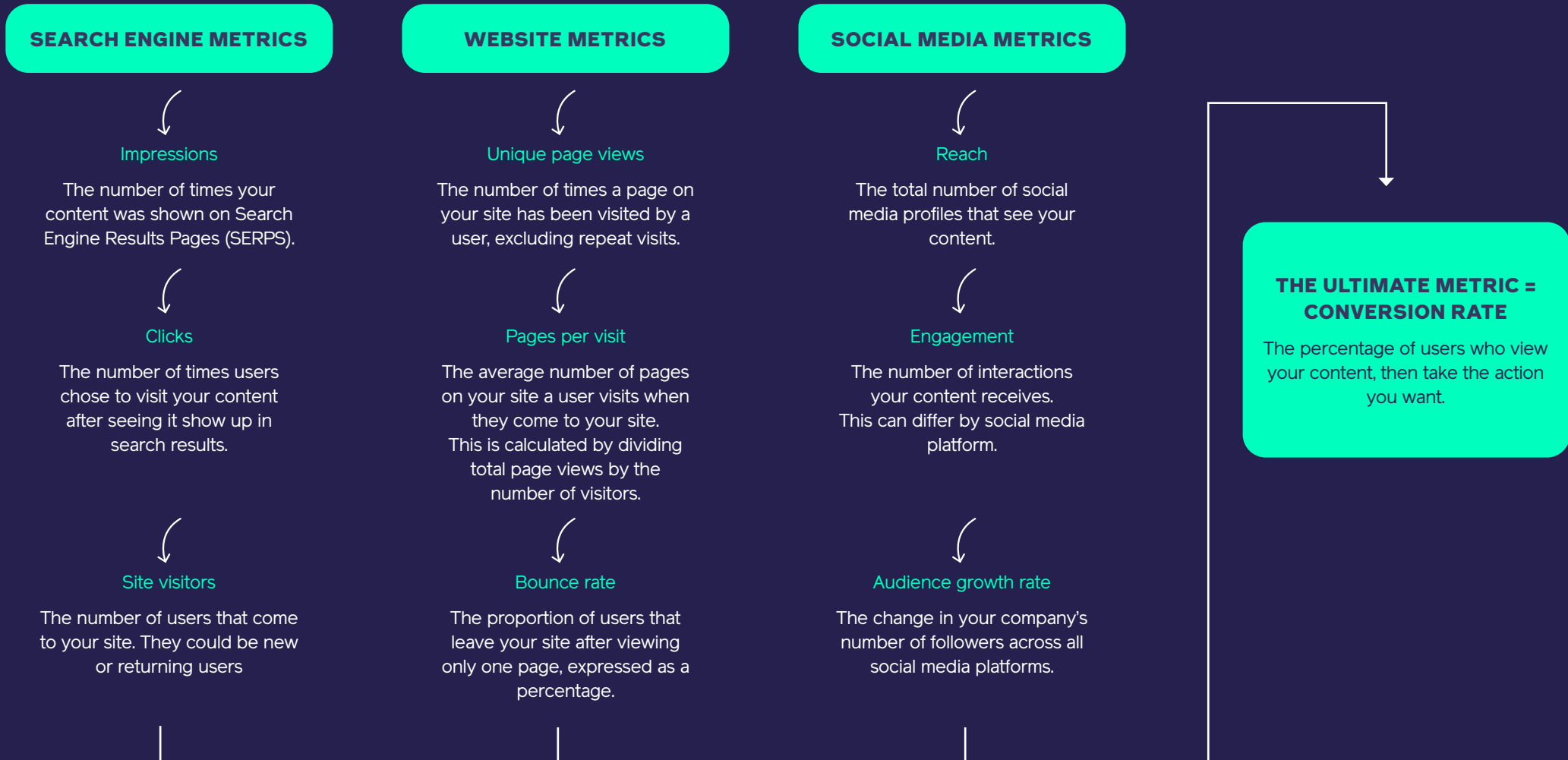
Be led by the data in everything you do - that's the best way to achieving success on social media!



# 8 CHAPTER 8: HOW TO MEASURE THE SUCCESS OF CONTENT MARKETING



Last year, we interviewed *Emily Byford*, Content Marketing Manager at *SaaSStock*, about the content marketing metrics that matter. In an exclusive for this playbook, we've put Emily's metrics into a useful infographic.



## 9 CHAPTER 9: HOW TO REPORT ON B2B CONTENT MARKETING



What are the best methods for reporting on the success of your content marketing? **Joe Barron**, Content Manager at Cognism, describes his process.

At Cognism, we track content marketing across 5 areas:

- LinkedIn engagement.
- Blog engagement.
- Keyword tracking for the UK and USA.
- Closed-won deals from content in the UK and USA.
- SQOs from content in the UK and USA.

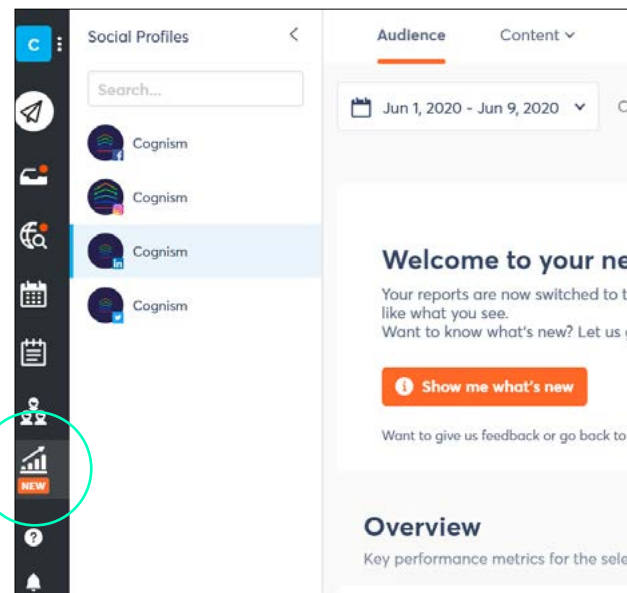
I'll show you how to track each of these in turn - and provide a reporting template you can use in your business.

### 1. LinkedIn engagement

The social media scheduling tool we use at Cognism is Agorapulse. The platform includes a very useful reporting function. Most social media schedulers will include something similar.

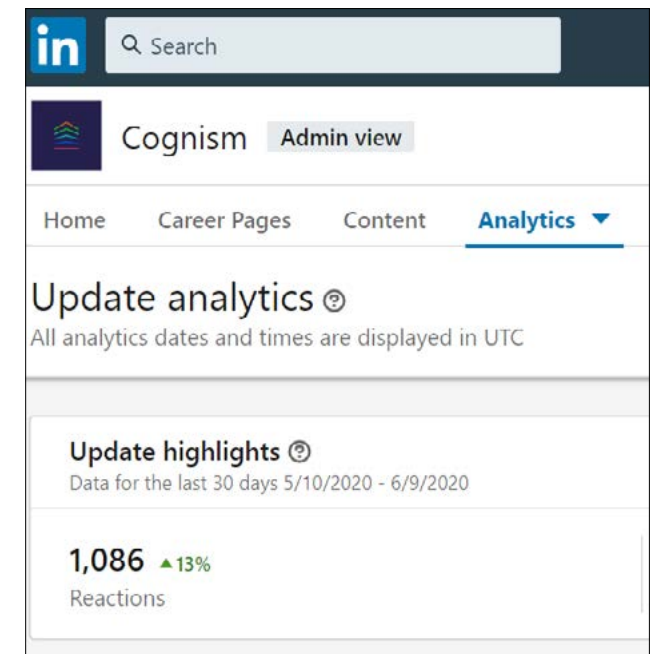
To access the reporting function on Agorapulse, simply click "Reports" on the left-hand side menu bar. The report will open up. Select the social profile you want to track (in our case, LinkedIn) and the dates from the drop-down tab.

Once you've done this, the report will populate with data on your followers, your engagement and impressions. The engagement rate is the metric to look at.



You can also use LinkedIn's own Analytics function to discover social media engagement on a more granular level.

Go to your profile and select "Updates" from the "Analytics" drop-down menu. Update the time range for the dates you want to track and then the report will populate. Choose "Engagement rate" from the "Metric" drop-down to look at this specifically.



You can also export the report as an Excel sheet, which is particularly useful in sorting individual posts by engagement rate. This way, you can easily get a Top 10 list of your most popular LinkedIn posts.

## 2. Blog engagement

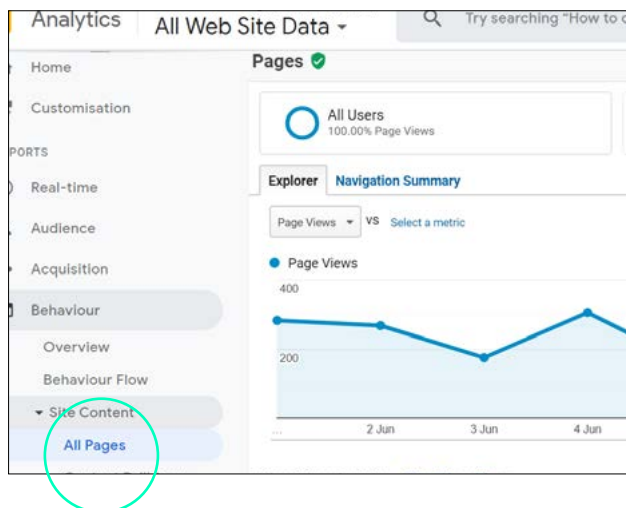
To monitor your blog engagement, you'll need a [Google Analytics](#) account.

Once you've got this setup, select the following from the "Reports" menu on the left-hand side:

**Behaviour → Site content → All pages**

From here, Google Analytics gives you plenty of options. Here's how to track blog engagement specifically:

- Choose the dates you want to track from the right-hand side drop-down.
- Type "blog" into the search box below the explorer.
- Then, scroll down to see the data for each of your blog posts.
- Click "Unique Page Views" to sort the blogs in order of views.



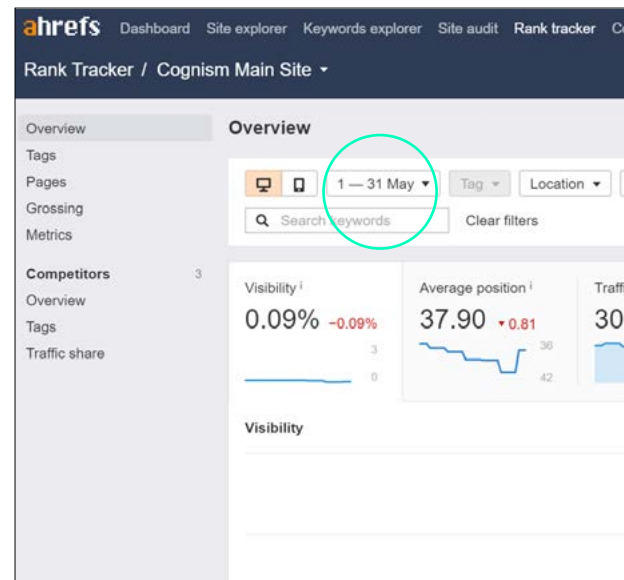
If you've done this, you'll now have:

- A Top 10 list of your most popular blog posts for your chosen time period.
- The total Unique Page Views your blog has received for your chosen time period.

## 3. Keyword tracking

The tool we use for keyword tracking at Cognism is [Ahrefs](#).

To get an overview of your target keywords using the platform, click on "Rank tracker" from the top menu. Select the time period you want to investigate and then the report will populate.



The main metrics to track here are:

- **Position** - shows the position that a target website/ URL holds in organic search results for the selected keyword.
- **Volume** - the average number of monthly searches for the target keyword in the selected country (e.g.: the UK and USA).
- **Traffic** - Monthly estimated search traffic to the webpage from the tracked keyword.
- **Keyword Difficulty** - An estimation of how hard it would be to rank in the Top 10 organic search results for a given keyword in a given country.

## 4. Closed-won deals from content

For this step, you'll need access to [Salesforce](#) or whichever CRM your company uses. If your UTM tracking is setup correctly across your content, you'll be able to create a dashboard showing the closed-won deals that were generated from specific content pieces.

On your content report, you can include the highest-value deals first, and the total value of all the deals in a given month.

## 5. SQOs from content

Repeat the process above to get a picture of the SQOs generated from your content every month.

Sort the SQOs by the content piece on your report. Start with the most popular pieces first.

## Cognism's content report

Once you've amassed all this data, you can put it together in a monthly report. Here's the content report template we use at Cognism:



### Get the content report

Download our report today and adapt it to your needs. Let us at Cognism know if you found it useful. If you'd like to discuss content reporting in more depth, do connect with me on [LinkedIn!](#)



## 10

## CHAPTER 10: HOW TO CREATE THE ULTIMATE BIG ROCK FOR CONTENT MARKETING

It's the final piece in the content marketing puzzle. *Alice de Courcy*, Cognism's Chief Marketing Officer, returns to show us how to build a content marketing big rock.



Cognism 

If you work in content marketing, chances are you've heard of the term "big rock content".

*Jason Miller*, current Head of Brand EMEA at Microsoft, popularised the big rock concept when he was Group Marketing Manager at LinkedIn. While there, he created the *Sophisticated Marketer* franchise, which started out as a guide to marketing on LinkedIn and over time grew into an empire consisting of eBooks, webinars, podcasts and magazines.

In interviews, Miller has defined big rock content as "the definitive guide to a problem you solve for customers." It can take any form - guides, playbooks, manuals, reports - but there are a number of things it must be:

- **It must be relevant to your audience** - your big rock must answer the questions that your target customers are asking.
- **It must be comprehensive** - the clue is in the title - your big rock must be big! It should be an all-encompassing content piece that people simply can't ignore.
- **It must be compelling** - your big rock must contain a variety of content types, from the written word to infographics, templates, statistics, quotes and videos.

- **It must be gated for lead capture** - think of your big rock as like launching a new product. If you create and promote it well, it'll bring lots of new customers to your door.

### How can big rock content benefit my business?

You can expect to see four main advantages if you produce an outstanding big rock for content marketing:

- **It's a lead magnet** - if your big rock is relevant, comprehensive and compelling, it will attract new people to your brand and feed your sales team with leads for months (if not years!) to come.
- **It increases brand awareness** - a big rock gives you plenty to talk about and promote. Your social media followers, engagement rates and unique page views will skyrocket!
- **It positions your company as one to trust** - so many businesses are desperate to achieve that hallowed "thought leader" status; your big rock is the pathway to getting there.
- **It creates future content** - a big rock can be chopped up and repurposed in hundreds of different ways. It's a content marketer's dream - the content piece that gives birth to new content!

### How we created the ultimate big rock at Cognism

What we're going to share with you now are the steps we took at Cognism to build our own big rock: *The Ultimate Guide to Hacking B2B Lead Generation*. If you're daunted or mystified by the idea of creating a big rock piece of content, then our guide will provide clarity and insight.

Here's how we did it...



#### 1. Research your keywords

At Cognism, all our sales and marketing decisions are powered by **B2B data**. We select metrics, track them regularly and make judgements based on what the evidence tells us.

It was no different when we came to creating our big rock. We started by researching the SEO keywords that our content was already ranking for. Our mission was to find a keyword or phrase that...

- Was relevant to our target audience (B2B salespeople and marketers).
- Was a popular search term among our target audience.
- Had the potential for us to rank even higher.
- Gave us lots of scope for content creation.

With these parameters in mind, we conducted our research and quickly homed in on **B2B lead generation** as our “title keyword”. What made us choose this keyword?

- It's hyper-relevant to our business and target market - B2B lead generation is the service that we provide to our 500+ customers every day!
- It's a popular enough search term, with 3,500 searches every month.
- It wasn't a highly competitive keyword. In the UK, we were already on page 2 of Google for it as a result of our focused SEO efforts to date; the big rock offered us the possibility of getting on page 1.
- “B2B lead generation” is a broad enough topic that it could be split into smaller parts, covering both sales and marketing approaches.

Before we move onto the next step, you might be asking exactly how we carried out our keyword research.

**Ahrefs** is the paid tool we use at Cognism, although if you don't have the budget, we can recommend the following free tools:

- **Ubersuggest** - a powerful free tool designed by the marketing entrepreneur and SEO expert Neil Patel.
- **Wordstream's Free Keyword Tool** - enter your website URL and discover the keywords that your site is ranking for.
- **Answer the Public** - find out which questions your ideal buyers are typing into Google.

## 2. Brainstorm ideas

Armed with our title keyword, Cognism Marketing scheduled a brainstorming session to agree on the format of the big rock.

The idea was to create five smaller books based around topics relevant to “B2B lead generation.” These five books would target different segments of our audience. They would be self-contained enough to work on their own, but when combined they would become a much larger book - the “ultimate guide” to B2B lead generation.

During this session, we agreed on the titles and the audiences we would be targeting with each book:





**Demand generation: How to create demand that drives growth** - targeting B2B/SaaS growth hackers and content marketers.

**B2B outbound: Building predictable growth** - scaling strategies for B2B sales leaders and business development professionals.

**ABM (Account-based marketing): Beyond the hype** - a step-by-step guide to ABM, designed for B2B/SaaS marketers.

**B2B technology: Tools to power your lead generation** - a manual for implementing sales and marketing tech, focused on B2B/SaaS founders and decision-makers.

**B2B data: The fuel for your growth** - everything that B2B startup sales and marketing leaders need to know about B2B data.

Altogether, the five mini-books would make up *The Ultimate Guide to Hacking B2B Lead Generation*.

### 3. Set goals

As well as agreeing on the content of the big rock, it was also important for us to agree on the goals. Doing this gave us things to work towards when it came to designing and launching the big rock.

Our big rock goals touched on all areas of our marketing function and the wider business, from lead gen targets to SEO and paid ads. These were our goals for the big rock:

- Get on page 1 of Google for “B2B lead generation”.
- 1,000 leads in the first month of the campaign.
- 30 organic leads per week.
- CPL of under \$10.
- 10% conversion rate from lead to SQO.

### 4. Decide on roles and timescales

A big rock content piece is a heavy lift that requires the whole of your marketing team to be working in sync. After agreeing on titles and goals, we had a separate meeting to work out roles for the various deliverables and timescales for completion.

These were the areas we focused on:

- **Who was in charge of the project?** Someone had to manage the process and keep an eye on deadlines and expenditure.
- **Who was going to write the big rock?** We anticipated a month or more of writing time before it was finished.
- **Who was going to design the big rock?** Designing six eBooks in total would need our in-house and freelance graphic designers working in tandem.
- **Beyond the eBooks**, what were the other graphic design assets we would need? The big rock would be launched via a multimedia mix of blogs, landing pages, email newsletters and videos.

How were we going to promote the big rock? We wanted to create an element of virality around our big rock marketing.



Then, once the different roles were agreed upon, we set dates for the different stages of the big rock (copywriting completion, graphic design completion, landing page completion, final launch date). The dates were added to everyone's calendar and progress was tracked in our weekly team meetings.

Now it was time to get to work...

### 5. Create an outline

Before you put finger to keyboard, it's important to draw up a detailed outline of your big rock. It should include all the sections the big rock will contain, plus any ideas you have for using infographics, templates and quotes.

We found a useful way of structuring a big rock outline was to think of every section as answering a question. For example, the central question for our ABM eBook was "How do I run the perfect ABM campaign?" Then the content of the eBook would be answering that question - literally providing a step-by-step guide to launching a successful ABM campaign.

Another tip for putting together your big rock outline is to think of it like the instructions that come with flat-pack furniture. It should make logical sense, with each section flowing seamlessly into the next.

When we finished our outline, we shared it with the rest of the marketing team. This saved us a good deal of time, as graphic design and promotional creatives could be worked on while the big rock was being written.

### 6. Put it together

Creating a big rock content piece can take a fair amount of time, depending on the resources you have at your disposal. At Cognism, we had a large volume of **blog content** that we could repurpose for our big rock. Our concept was to take the blogs we had already published, reshape and restructure them, and then put them together in a book format.

In fact this was exactly how we had planned our content calendar to work in 2019. Below you can see exactly how we planned this out in 2019:

Commercial objective (\$\$\$): increase Cognism MRR month/month by growing customer base				
Scaling B2B lead generation (this will be the big rock)				
Outbound	ABM	Technology	Data	Lead Gen
Objection handling playbook	6 Steps to getting started with ABM	How AI technology can help you scale your business	B2B marketing KPIs: what to track	Growth hacking: what it is and how to get started
5 sales emails that get responses	ABM: what to track	B2B marketing: how to build the right technology stack	B2B data cheatsheet: a simple guide to b2b data	How to use content to close deals
Top cold calling scripts (inbound, outbound, marketing follow-up) [templates]	ABM: planning template [template]		Tops tips for data enrichment	Scaling a sales team: a guide for B2B sales leaders
Cadence template: sales leader	WP: Account based marketing: a complete guide		How to run a b2b marketing experiment	5 metrics B2B SaaS marketers should measure

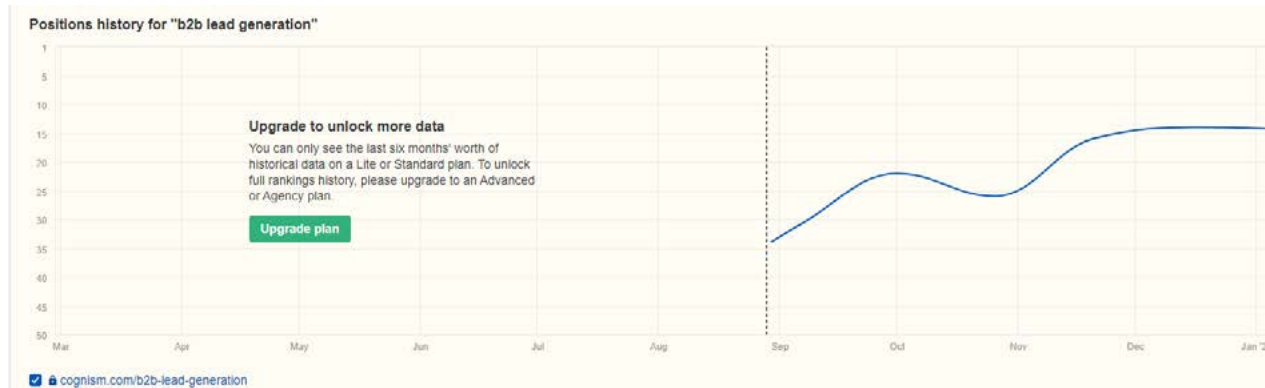
And here you can see the impact of this content plan on our chosen search term before even launching the big rock:



## 7. Launch the big rock

When the big rock copy and design was all approved, our marketing team got together again for a launch meeting. We collated all the materials and creatives we had and decided on a launch date and action plan for each team member.

With the final launch date in everyone's diaries, and finishing touches being put to landing pages, videos, social media images and more, it was now only days until the world was introduced to *The Ultimate Guide to Hacking B2B Lead Generation...*



We recommend this as a good course of action for creating the ultimate big rock for content marketing. The blog was our testing ground, where we could experiment, build up our authority and gain a loyal following. The big rock was where we could take everything we'd learned to date and publish a definitive statement.

Here are some tips that helped us when we were assembling our big rock:

- **Don't just copy-and-paste your blog content.** It must all tie together and flow in a meaningful way for the reader. If necessary, write new introductions and conclusions for each section.
- **Try to make your big rock as visual as possible.** Include images, infographics, templates and bullet lists. Always think about how information can be conveyed visually, rather than through text. Remember that human beings are hardwired to process and respond to visual data - **90%** of the information transmitted to the brain is visual.

- **If you have quotes from external people on your blog or previous gated content, use them throughout!** Just make sure to contact the contributors again to get their approval, and also prime them for the launch of the big rock.
- **Always include a CTA** at the end of each big rock section, same as you would on any blog post.
- **Proofread both the finished copy and the design proofs.** If possible, send the big rock to someone outside your team and get feedback.

### Download our big rock today!

Would you like to see the fruits of our content marketing labours? Cognism's big rock is available now! It's a complete playbook for scaling sales and marketing, using a range of B2B lead and demand generation strategies. Learn all the scaling tips, tricks and hacks from the best minds working in B2B and SaaS globally.





## Conclusion

Content marketing is all about innovation. Our final tip is to always keep up-to-date with what's happening in the industry.

Join LinkedIn groups, sign up to webinars, listen to podcasts, talk to other content marketers and share knowledge.

Here are some resources to get you started:

- [Content Marketing Institute \(CMI\)](#) - their mission is to advance the practice of content marketing through online education, print, and in-person events.
- [The B2B Content Marketing Group on LinkedIn](#) - a community of 20,000+ content marketers working in B2B.
- [The Business of Story Podcast](#) - the brightest content creators in the industry show you how to make your marketing stand out.

Good luck - and keep creating!

## Contact Cognism today

Cognism can help you solve a number of marketing challenges. Our accurate, compliant and intelligent **B2B data** can be used to:

- Identify new audiences.
- Run data-driven campaigns.
- Boost email deliverability.
- Increase audience match rates.

Here's what some of our marketing customers say about us:



***"I would recommend Cognism to anyone looking to develop laser-sharp targeting and engage with their ideal leads."*** - Cranfield School of Management



***"Using Cognism has helped us reach out to the right audience and grow our brand recognition globally."*** - Launch Academy



***"We're always looking to trial new partners and we tested Cognism against some competitors; in terms of data quality and quantity, Cognism surpassed them every time."*** - Dennis Publishing

Request your demo

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