

## 8 STEPS TO AN EFFECTIVE CONTENT MARKETING SYSTEM

Produced by

Katie Wilson  
Aspire Internet Design  
[www.aspireid.com](http://www.aspireid.com)  
[@aspireid](https://twitter.com/aspireid)



## 8 Steps to an Effective Content Marketing System

Overview.....	2
1: Set Goals and Create a Set of Metrics for Your Content Marketing Strategy .....	3
2: Identify Your Audience / Develop Buyer Persona(s) .....	7
3: Identify Questions at each Stage of Your Sales Process.....	9
4: Audit Current Content .....	12
5: Map Current Content to Questions and Identify Content Needed.....	13
6: Set-up an Editorial Calendar.....	14
7: Create Content .....	17
8: Monitor, Measure & Make Improvements .....	18
Conclusion .....	19
About the Author.....	20



## 8 Steps to an Effective Content Marketing System

### Overview

---

Technology has changed everything. Communication now takes place digitally more than face to face. Traditional methods of marketing have become ineffective as consumers can easily filter and tune out sales and marketing messages. Instead, information that is important to consumers is sought after on their terms and more reliance is placed on peers and community input in decision making.

This means that marketers can no longer repeat the tactics that were successful in the past, but rather must adapt new marketing methods using a content strategy that is able to reach and engage customers in this new era of socially connected consumers and buyers.

At the core of this new marketing dynamic is building the right content strategy that connects you to your customers and audience. Marketers are now publishers, whether they want to be or not. Content strategies must inspire your audience to seek and engage with you and your business on their terms.

Much of your marketing success depends on building a viable marketing and content strategy that melds your business objectives to your target audiences' needs. A good content marketing system will help you generate more targeted traffic from search and social media, build trust with visitors, strengthen existing customer relationships and loyalty, and drive quality leads and sales.





## 8 Steps to an Effective Content Marketing System

### Set Goals and Create a Set of Metrics for Your Content Marketing System

# Step 1

#### Set Your Goals.

If you're using content to market a business, you need a strategic framework so you can get the most out of your time and effort. To make content marketing work, you need to understand your marketing and business goals. Your blog posts, email marketing, white papers, videos, e-books, podcasts, advertising, etc., all need to fit into a larger picture. The best way to keep visitors engaged with your site and company is to set business goals and then create content that helps you meet them. With your goals in place, you can create content that serves those goals.

#### The following are four of the top business goals that drive content marketing:

##### 1. Build Trust and Rapport with Your Audience

This is the most obvious use of content marketing, and it's a good one. When you create useful, interesting, and valuable content, your audience learns they can trust you. They see that you know your topic. They get a sense of your personality and what it would be like to work with you. Lack of trust kills conversion. An abundance of valuable content builds trust like nothing else.

##### 2. Attract New Prospects to Your Marketing System

Your content has to be compelling enough that it attracts links, social media sharing, and conversation. Why? Because that's how new people find you. No matter how delightful your existing customers are, you need a steady stream of new prospects to keep your business healthy. Remarkable content that gets shared around the web will find your best new prospects for you, and lead them back to everything you have to offer.





## 8 Steps to an Effective Content Marketing System

### Set Goals and Create a Set of Metrics for Your Content Marketing System

---

# Step 1

#### 3. **Move them through the Buying Cycle to Purchase**

The fact is, most enduring businesses thrive because they solve problems. When you understand your prospect's buying process and problems they are trying to solve, you understand how to help them, and you have the core of your marketing message.

#### 4. **Build Your Reputation with Search Engines**

Lots of content creators think this is the No. 1 reason to create content — but if you put this priority in the wrong place, you'll probably struggle with SEO. That's because search engines find you valuable when readers find you valuable. Search engines are looking for content that is valuable to their users. If you create that type of content, your SEO battle is three-fourths of the way done.

By focusing on the first three content marketing goals first, the fourth becomes a matter of relatively simple SEO optimization.

Know what you want your content to do and then create the content that makes it happen.



## 8 Steps to an Effective Content Marketing System

### Set Goals and Create a Set of Metrics for Your Content Marketing System

# Step 1

#### Create a Set of Relevant Metrics.

Now that you've identified your goals, it's important to set-up a tracking system to measure your content marketing efforts and results. You know what your content is supposed to do, but how do you know it's doing it?

One reason content marketing is more successful than traditional marketing strategies is because it's so much easier to measure response rates, conversion rates, and many other aspects. The metrics you measure will depend on the goals you set. However, there are several key metrics that should be monitored on a regular basis.

#### 1. People

- How many visitors or readers does your website have? Think in terms of unique visitors and returning visitors. This is a good measure of the volume of exposure for your content.
- Where did the visitors come from (organic search, social media networks, etc.)
- How many fans, friends, followers, connections, and email subscribers does your business have? How are these numbers changing over time?
- How wide is the influence of your fans and followers?

#### 2. Actions / Engagement

- How many times was the content viewed or downloaded?
- How much time was spent viewing the content? What portion of it was read or viewed?
- Did readers take another action towards engaging with your firm? This includes email newsletter registration, blog subscriptions, contact request forms, white paper downloads, etc.
- Did readers share content with their colleagues via social sharing including Facebook and Twitter? If so, how many?
- Did readers go further into your content or website by following links to related articles and/or products? Did they put products in a shopping cart or contact you?





## 8 Steps to an Effective Content Marketing System

### Set Goals and Create a Set of Metrics for Your Content Marketing System

---

# Step 1

#### 3. Revenue

- How many purchases did the content marketing drive? It's important to have a call-to-action and links to appropriate product pages to make this easier to monitor.
- What is the average order size, both in terms of the number of products and dollar amount?
- What are the revenues per reader?
- What is the conversion rate? How many of the people who took some of the actions earlier in the process actually made a purchase?

#### 4. Expenses

- What did it cost us to drive these sales? Consider all of the aspects of the marketing such as content creation, technical support and media.

This list is a starting point for your content marketing tracking. Don't get intimidated by it. Instead start small and monitor as much as you can while working to expand your analysis.



## 8 Steps to an Effective Content Marketing System

### Identify Your Audience / Develop Buyer Persona(s)

# Step 2

At the heart of an effective marketing strategy is the ability to connect and establish relationships with your target market. To do so effectively requires that you understand who your target buyers are and who you want to reach. You can broadly identify who these buyers are by creating buyer personas or customer profiles. These customer profiles will help you to identify your customers' challenges and needs, and understand how to speak to them using their words and language to address these needs and provide solutions (i.e., your products or services).

#### How to Create a Customer Profile

A great way to get a sense of your customer profile is to identify 10-15 of your best customers and send them a survey (you can set-up a free trial at [Constant Contact](#) and use their survey forms or use [Google Docs Forms](#), which is also free).

For consumers, ask them for the following information:

- Salary
- Age Range
- Gender
- Marital Status
- Job
- Hobbies
- How They Found You
- Why They Bought from You
- What Problem You Helped Solve





## 8 Steps to an Effective Content Marketing System

### Identify Your Audience / Develop Buyer Persona(s)

---

# Step 2

For commercial or business clients, include:

- Industry
- Number of Employees
- Type of Business
- Geographic Scope of Business
- Revenue Levels

Look at the results and write a profile of your typical customer (e.g., "Bill is 45, lives in Denver with his wife and kids, makes \$70,000 per year and works in an office all day. He bought from us because ..."). Describe a real person so you can visualize him in your mind. Find a photo that matches your ideal customer profile. If you have several customer types, create a customer profile for each.

You can also gain insight by listening online. Find and read the publications or blogs your target market reads, or listen in on social outposts to learn what people are saying using Face-book or Twitter. You can also use keyword search tools like Google Adwords to discover the keywords people are using to find your business.

#### **Use Your Customer Profile to Guide All Your Marketing Efforts & Content**

Once you have your customer profile, use it when creating any website content, email newsletters, blogs, social media posts, etc. The goal is to speak directly to your customer profile and become relatable to Bill or Jane. Put yourself in his or her shoes and ask yourself, "If I were Bill and I came to my company's website (or blog, Face-book page, etc.), what type of content would I want to see?"

Use your customer profile to guide all of your marketing efforts and content. This will take the focus off of your marketing message and onto your customers' needs and desires. Doing so will have a tremendous impact on your ability to connect with new and existing customers and establish long-term, win-win relationships that can ultimately help you grow your business in a cost-effective way.





## 8 Steps to an Effective Content Marketing System

### Identify Questions at each Stage of Your Sales Process

# Step 3

Content marketing works best when it's delivered to the right target, at the right time, using the right message to drive interest and sales. Now that you've created a buyer persona, it's important to identify the stages of your buying process and the key questions for each stage of your sales process. Doing so will allow you to start mapping out the type of information and content needed at each stage of the buying process and nurtures the buyer all the way through to the close of the deal.

**Although each buying process is different, there are some commonly shared stages:**

1. **Awareness**
  - Recognize needs
  - Define characteristics and quantities
  - Develop specifications
2. **Discovery / Consideration**
  - Search for companies / suppliers
  - Solicit proposals or quotes / research price
  - Evaluate proposals (B2B)
3. **Decision**
  - Supplier / company selection
4. **Validation**
  - Performance evaluation and feedback





## 8 Steps to an Effective Content Marketing System

# Step 3

### Identify Questions at each Stage of Your Sales Process

#### Map Your Content Marketing Strategy to Questions in the Buying Process

For each stage of the buying process, identify the most frequently asked questions or information prospects are seeking. For each question, provide answers and topics (these answers will drive the focus and direction of your content strategy). Finally, determine the best formats for delivering these answers (i.e. social media networks, email, blog posts, e-books, webinars, etc.)

As an example, the discovery and consideration phase is often where content can make the most impact. Content at this stage should be sales-neutral, offering unbiased industry information. Such content could take the form of infographics, blog posts, webinars and videos that educate your audience — giving them confidence to move to the next stage. The most important thing to consider during this phase is to keep content interesting and highly targeted to your consumer base.

Create a content map that matches each of the buying stages to the questions, answers, and formats ([Download a Content Map Template](#))

Buying Stage	Questions	Answers / Topics	Formats / Channels
Awareness	1. 2.	1. 2.	1. 2.
Discovery / Consideration	1. 2.	1. 2.	1. 2.
Decision	1. 2.	1. 2.	1. 2.
Validation	1. 2.	1. 2.	1. 2.



## 8 Steps to an Effective Content Marketing System

### Identify Questions at each Stage of Your Sales Process

---

# Step 3

#### Identifying Where Prospects are in the Buying Process Stage

There are four ways to effectively identify where your buyers are in the buying process. Leveraging the use of technology will help with all four approaches.

1. Analyze the prospects' behavior during their website visit(s). Did they attend a webinar? Were they looking at pricing or product pages? Did they search for your company using certain keywords?
2. Ask what stage the buyer is in on a landing page form or via social media interactions.
3. Make various unique offers commensurate with the stages of your buying process such as webinars, phone consultations, and self-assessment checklists to gauge your prospects' responses.
4. You can also analyze how your current customers moved and interacted online with your company throughout their buying process to determine how your content would correspond to each phase.



## 8 Steps to an Effective Content Marketing System

### Audit Current Content

---

# Step 4

#### Gather Information for the Audit

Gather all of your company's current content (sales brochures, sales sheets, videos, demos, past blog posts, etc.) , look at each piece and ask the following questions:

- Does it focus on answering a relevant question within the buying process?
- Is it high-quality content?
- Is it simple and engaging?
- Does the information need to be updated, refreshed, or reformatted?
- Does it contain a call to action?
- Does it tie in to the next piece of content in the buyer process?
- Is it optimized for the keywords you are targeting?



**Update and refresh the content using these questions as a guide and with your content marketing goals in mind.**



## 8 Steps to an Effective Content Marketing System

# Step 5

### Map Current Content to Questions and Identify Content Needed

Using the content map grid from [Step 3](#), fill in the grid with the content you currently have and identify the formats in which this content will be distributed in (i.e. e-books, blog posts, white papers, webinars, videos, etc.).

Identify the gaps or holes in your content map grid and make a list of the new content that will be needed to complete your content marketing system.

Buying Stage	Questions	Answers / Topics	Formats / Channels
Awareness	1. 2. 3. 4.	1. 2. 3. 4.	1. 2. 3. 4.
Discovery / Consideration	1. 2. 3. 4.	1. 2. 3. 4.	1. 2. 3. 4.
Decision	1. 2. 3. 4.	1. 2. 3. 4.	1. 2. 3. 4.
Validation	1. 2. 3. 4.	1. 2. 3. 4.	1. 2. 3. 4.



## 8 Steps to an Effective Content Marketing System

### Set-up an Editorial Calendar

# Step 6

An editorial calendar is the key to organizing your content marketing system. It ties all of your content goals to a detailed plan-of-action. Ideally, you'll want to set-up an editorial calendar six months to a year out. If it makes sense for your company and goals, organizing the content around a theme, topic, or event will simplify the content creation process. A spreadsheet or Google Calendar are both good tools to use to create the editorial calendars.

**If using a spreadsheet, create a tab for each month. Within each tab, include the following details:**

- The month's theme / topic
- The question(s) being answered for this topic
- The buying process stage this topic falls in

**For each piece of content, include:**

- Content Headline  
Make sure the headline is keyword focused and engaging.
- Content Type  
The format (e.g., blog post, video, e-book, email, etc.)



**Theme:** How to Create a Content Marketing System for Your Business  
**Question Answered for Prospect / Client:** "How Do I Consistently Mar  
**Buying Process Stage:** Discovery / Consideration

Content Headline	Content Type	Buyer Persona	Due Date
Step 1: Set Goals & Objectives for Your Content Marketing Strategy	Blog Post	<a href="#">View</a>	5/31/2012
Step 2: Identify Your Audience / Develop Buyer Persona(s)	Blog Post	<a href="#">View</a>	5/31/2012
Step 3: Identify Questions at each Stage of Your Sales Process	Blog Post	<a href="#">View</a>	5/31/2012
Step 4: Audit Current Content	Blog Post	<a href="#">View</a>	5/31/2012
Step 5: Map Current Content to Questions & Identify Content Needed	Blog Post	<a href="#">View</a>	5/31/2012
Step 6: Set-up an Editorial Calendar	Blog Post	<a href="#">View</a>	5/31/2012
Step 7: Create Content	Blog Post	<a href="#">View</a>	5/31/2012
Step 8: Measure	Blog Post	<a href="#">View</a>	5/31/2012

June 2012 / July 2012 / August 2012 / **September 2012**



## 8 Steps to an Effective Content Marketing System

# Step 6

### Set-up an Editorial Calendar

---

- Buyer Persona  
Who will this content target?
- Due Date  
When does it need to be completed by?
- Creator  
Who will create this content?
- Editor  
Who will edit the content?
- Distribution  
How will the content be distributed? (e.g., website, blog, Facebook, Twitter, email, etc.)?
- Accompaniments  
What other pieces of content will be associated with this content? For example, you might be writing a blog post on the benefits of using an editorial calendar. An associated piece of content might be a step-by-step video on how to create an editorial calendar in Excel.
- Keywords  
Focus on incorporating keywords that are in high demand and, ideally, have a low to medium popularity ranking. You can find this info by using Google's free Keyword Analytics tool (<http://adwords.google.com/o/KeywordTool>).
- Publish Date  
When will this content be published / go live?



## 8 Steps to an Effective Content Marketing System

### Set-up an Editorial Calendar

---

# Step 6

- Status  
What is the current status of this content? (i.e. in production, under review, awaiting feedback, etc.)
- Call to Action  
What is the call to action for this piece of content? What do you want the reader / viewer to do next?
- Notes  
Provide any relevant notes.
- Metrics  
What are the key metrics for this content? What will determine the success of this piece of content?



## 8 Steps to an Effective Content Marketing System

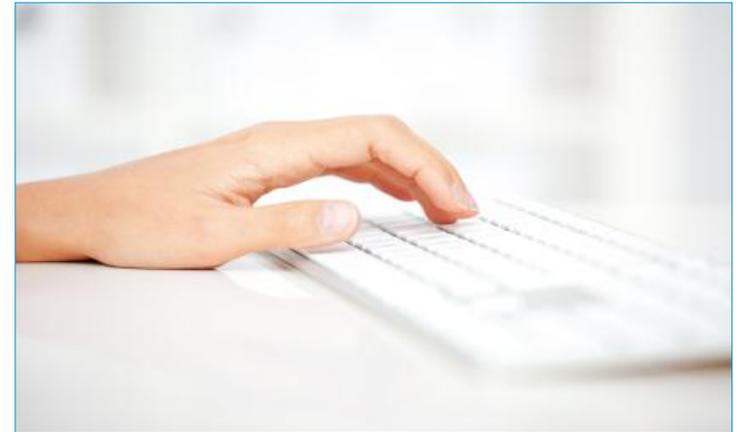
### Create the Content

---

# Step 7

Now that you have established your content marketing goals, identified your audience and created buyer personas, focused on questions that need to be answered at each stage of your sales process, mapped your current content to the questions, identified the content that needs to be created, and set-up a detailed plan-of-action via the editorial calendar, the process of creating the content becomes much simpler and less overwhelming.

You now have a plan and know what needs to be done to execute this plan. If you don't have the resources to create content, finding professional copywriters, video production companies, web design professionals, etc. may be a good way to go. Now that you know exactly what is needed to execute your content marketing strategy and when it's needed, communicating your needs to content creators and designers will be straight-forward and goal-focused, which will directly result in saving you time and money.





## 8 Steps to an Effective Content Marketing System

### Monitor, Measure & Make Improvements

---

# Step 8

Once the content marketing system has been set-up and executed, remember to measure the results against your goals and objectives using the set of relevant metrics you identified in Step 1.

Measure on an ongoing basis. These metrics will provide you with valuable information on what's working and what can be improved upon.

The metrics will also provide insights into developing new opportunities for engagement and content delivery, and will guide your strategy and content marketing system moving forward .





## 8 Steps to an Effective Content Marketing System

### Conclusion

---

Creating a content marketing system doesn't have to be complicated. What's needed is an efficient and simple process, the right systems and tools, and the right talent to get the job done. Using the content marketing system outlined in this e-book will enable you to build the right content strategy that connects you to your customers and audience, and melds your business objectives to your target audiences' needs.



## 8 Steps to an Effective Content Marketing System

### About the Author

---

Aspire Internet Design is a Web design and Web marketing firm based in Denver, Colorado. Since 2002, we have helped hundreds of small businesses succeed through the development of goal-driven online marketing strategies that enable them to engage and build relationships with new and existing customers, promote brand awareness, and meet their business objectives.

#### Connect with Aspire Internet Design:

Website: [aspireid.com](http://aspireid.com)

Twitter: [twitter.com/#!/aspireid](https://twitter.com/#!/aspireid)

Facebook: [facebook.com/AspireInternetDesign](https://facebook.com/AspireInternetDesign)

LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/aspireid](https://linkedin.com/in/aspireid)

YouTube: [youtube.com/user/aspireinternetdesign](https://youtube.com/user/aspireinternetdesign)

Email: [info@aspireid.com](mailto:info@aspireid.com)