

To Write Successful Marketing Content, Think Like A Journalist



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To write successful marketing content, think like a journalist. This approach certainly works for my clients and my company.

The primary goal of content marketing is to provide “organic” content — as opposed to advertising — to boost Search Engine Optimization (SEO) to attract potential customers.

While executives can get excited about the bells and whistles of technical SEO, the truth is that content remains king. After all, if the written material does not attract search engines to your website, what’s the point?

So it’s curious to me that many companies do not make the necessary investment for unique and useful content that is more likely to garner the all-coveted higher search engine rankings.

You no doubt see the results every time you do an Internet search. Since anyone can publish on the Internet without editorial scrutiny or peer review, the cyber world is filled with a lot of distracting and frustrating written refuse. There’s too much content “noise” on the Internet: material that is too generic, doesn’t answer reader questions or even worse, is duplicative from other websites.

The explanation for Internet noise is simple. Content marketing is a form of self-publishing. And yet, much online copy is not produced by publishing professionals. That is why thinking like a reporter will help you write successful marketing content.

To write successful marketing content and become an awesome content marketer, therefore, you need to think more like a quality-minded publisher or journalist. Consider this: just as a byline is the journalist’s brand, the material your organization publishes reflects its brand. Some experts call this [brand journalism](#).

Publishers and journalists understand they must thoroughly [know their audiences](#) to offer content so compelling that busy people will sacrifice their time to read it. Yes, I mean sacrifice. By publishing a piece, you are asking the viewer to read your stuff instead of doing something else.

Frankly, I am always amazed at the marketing hype that gets published by people who don't want to spend their precious time reading the hype of others.

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that someone would actually pay
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I've also been equally shocked by how many professionals are not well acquainted with their customers' needs and situations. Such information is necessary for producing quality content that will best serve customers. Investing in interviews, surveys or focus groups is a great way to know your customers better. (And by the way, you'll also get great content ideas.)

The key is to *show* - not just *tell* the customer - why your firm is unique and how that equates to better products and services. That means no direct sales material or the *blah, blah, blah* about your company's greatness. Ways to *show*, instead of *tell* are: publishing expert advice and insight, providing testimonials and case studies that solve common problems.

Professionals with publishing backgrounds understand that to make money, they must produce material that is so credible, useful and compelling that a person would buy it (through subscription) or it will attract enough readers to sell advertising.

Ask yourself a question. Is your company's content so awesome that someone would actually pay for the privilege of reading it? If so, they will keep coming to your website for more!

Your organization's content should showcase your expertise and build credibility with your potential and current clients. This is another reason why I recommend a journalistic approach. Strict journalistic standards push out the hype and sloppy content because the writer must justify every sentence. Therefore, to write successful marketing content, think like a reporter.

Such journalistic standards include:

- **Knowing the reader.** This cannot be emphasized enough!
- **Assuring accuracy.** Fact-check and double fact check when referencing other authors or sources. That means that proper nouns must always be correct or they are factual errors.
- **Clarifying** the purpose of the article, blog or other material and ensuring it answers the famous: who, what, when, where, why and how questions.
- **Being specific.** Instead of writing, "according to a study," you name the study, the organization that published it and provide a link.
- **Anticipating and answering reader questions** about the subject.
- **Presenting material** in its appropriate "editorial package" by considering the appropriate use of graphical elements such as bullets and art.
- **Staying concise.** That does not necessarily mean keeping material short. Search engines do reward thoughtful and longer pieces. Aim for smaller sentences, tighter and active wording (for example, overusing the phrase "of the") and phrasing that compels further reading.

Applying such standards for producing unique and high-quality content takes a lot of time and

adjustment. So what are you to do?

There are several approaches. You can:

- **Buy generic material** about insurance that is pretty affordable. Since it is not original, it is more likely to be pushed down by the search rankings.
- **Produce content in-house**, making sure that you have an editor who will approach the article journalistically.
- **Hire a freelance writer** with a journalism background. Writers with solid reputations, years of experience and who know the subject matter (or know what to ask) will likely cost more. Just think of the time it takes subject matter experts, consultants and executives to produce well-written material. Compare that to the cost of hiring a seasoned writer. Besides receiving quality and unique content, you should also benefit from ideas for re-purposing, new stories, different angles and approaches and creative ways to present material.

Conclusion

Publishing unique and quality content is more important for boosting SEO than technical SEO enhancements. By approaching a subject like a journalist, you will enhance your organization's brand to build trust and credibility that should attract potential customers.

To write successful marketing content, try a journalistic approach. For more tips regarding marketing and communication, please click [here](#).

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