

Insurers Must Beat the Customer Engagement Disconnect



Insurers must overcome the customer engagement disconnect

Insurance marketing professionals are striving to beat the customer engagement disconnect.

They know that customer engagement must go beyond internet and social media participation to meet customers where they are — at their cell phones. We live in a world where the mobile phone has become the center of people's lives. Insurers should be taking full advantage of this.

Sure, customers are using their smartphones to surf the net and participate in social media. However, the best way to reach customers personally is through voice mail, text messages and email.

My most recent [blog](#) for [SPLICE Software](#) covers the results of a recent [Marketo study](#) of marketers from many industries across four countries. The study reveals that marketers, in general, know they must overcome what I call the customer engagement disconnect. Not surprisingly, the study also reveals that customers are willing to be brand advocates for companies that demonstrate they care for them.

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Insurance marketers need to find the tools to help engage more directly with potential and current customers. Usually, sales and customer service departments already have such tools. To ensure messaging and branding are consistent, marketers should be partnering with other departments that are contacting policyholders.

While my SPLICE blog centers on personal lines insurers, the study also offers insight for B2B communicators. If you market commercial insurance take note: B2B customers have even higher expectations on brands when it comes to engagement. And note this: they are more willing to be brand advocates compared to B2C customers.

I hope you'll check out the blog. It offers much more specific information to encourage marketers to start thinking about how to topple the customer engagement disconnect.

Why Blog About Insurance? (And How to Get Started)



*Blogging Demonstrates Your Marketplace
 Authority*

Quality blogs can boost insurance content marketing. Demonstrating your subject matter expertise showcases your ability to serve current and potential clients.

And yet, insurance industry marketing and communications professionals find it difficult to convince their experts to invest in blogging. Deploying quality insurance content through blogging:

- attracts more visitors for customer conversion
- demonstrates expertise to become a trusted source
- positions your company as an industry leader
- inspires conversation
- keeps a company top of mind
- provides reference material for sales
- establishes an independent publishing forum
- offers more online reputation control
- enhances social media presence
- generates content for re-purposing (more on that later)
- encourages the customer journey, and
- freshens websites.

Why Companies Do Not Blog

So many potential benefits from blogging. And yet, many companies are not making the commitment. Based on the feedback I receive, here's why (long with my response):

1. **Company management is not convinced.** The above list should help.
2. **Lack of time.** Blogging requires discipline. Regular submissions require that blogging becomes part of bloggers' work schedules and not an additional project that will lengthen the workweek. Let's face it, most professionals have long given up on the 40-hour workweek . They may not welcome another responsibility.
3. **Limited Budget.** If time is an issue, consider [hiring a professional writer who understands your industry](#). It might seem that resources are scarce. More likely, the money exists but priorities need reconsideration. Offering blogs and other great website content to improve insurance content marketing is more important than advertising. Think of it this way: if advertising attracts potential clients who find no substance, you've wasted money and time. Conference booths, snail mail marketing, giveaways and other tactics might need to move to the back burner. And remember, you can get the most from your blogs by **repurposing**

content (more on that below.)

4. **Lack of topic ideas.** To find subjects for blogging, start by asking employees who are in contact with customers — including sales, field and customer service staff — to identify customer concerns. Locate more ideas by searching media and joining LinkedIn Groups and “listening” to conversations.

How to Get Started

1. **Make a list of ideas.**
2. **Develop an editorial calendar.** Look at the next 52 weeks and assign blog topics. Create a bank of “evergreen” topics — just in case. Confirm the blogs are substantive with original unique content. Do not copy other writers’ work!
3. **Establish a blog promotion plan** and continually look for new ways to market the blog. Lack of blog promotion is one major reason why blogging is ineffective. Posting on social media is a good place to start, but there are other ways including offering to post as a guest blogger.

Finally, do not forget to re-purpose blog content. Ways to repurpose content include:

- Using blog text to update the website.
- Modifying the blog for email marketing and newsletters.
- Pulling parts of blogs out for developing eBooks, white papers, longer articles for third party publication, etc.

I hope this post inspires your company to propel insurance content marketing efforts through blogging. You can find more great blogging tips [here](#).

Got questions? Please ask in the comments section below or send an email to annmarie@lipoldcommunications.com.

Facing the Insurance Quality Content

Dilemma - Part 2



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Quality insurance content is the foundation for reaching potential markets.

[Last week](#), I wrote about the choice insurance marketing and communications executives often face when looking for public relations and marketing services. They can either rely on insurance subject matter experts who are not effective communicators or public relations and marketing firms that do not understand insurance.

Then the question becomes, how can insurance industry companies deal with the Hobbesian choice?

The answer is hiring the rare find: a communications firm that understands insurance. Too often, however, insurance industry public relations and marketing executives either cannot find this rare breed or do not have the resources to acquire such talent.

As a result, insurance company marketing and communications personnel, along with vendors that offer industry services, end up exploiting and frustrating internal subject matter experts or hiring public relations and marketing companies that provide assistance on the cheap.

***The best Search Engine Optimization approaches
in the world cannot overcome fluffy content
that lacks substance.***

The first approach can become a human resources problem. The second approach could risk your company's online reputation by publishing materials that will actually turn potential customers away from your business.

This is happening more than the penny-wise and pound-foolish financial professionals want to believe. They don't understand that potential clients have become more sophisticated and expect more from content, such as insight and problem-solving strategies. I used to write such content full-time as a journalist, but few publications can support expert reporters.

Once potential customers decide to ignore your company's marketing emails and social media posts, reversing this rejection becomes very difficult. Reputation damage is much more expensive and difficult to overcome than establishing a credible presence in the first place.

Budget Restraints

But Annmarie, you say, true insurance experts who are also schooled in public relations or journalism can be expensive. Sure, they cost more, but you will not be paying for them to become educated about insurance. Further, the expertise of a quality professional should be reflected in the content and marketing strategies.

With a minimal budget, focus on quality over quantity. I have long told my clients that it is better to publish less often and offer higher quality than to publish a lot of junk. What you want is to see your company's name associated with must-read content.

To produce quality insurance content, re-evaluate all the marketing and communications channels and even cutting back in some areas.

Begin by maximizing the company website. There is no point in investing in social media and other digital marketing approaches if the content bread crumbs will just lead to a unappealing website. The best Search Engine Optimization approaches in the world cannot overcome fluffy content that lacks substance. Then there are the ever-changing Google algorithms that strive to reward the best content available and punish those offering content garbage.

Think about it. You get frustrated by wasting your time on shallow content produced by novices. What makes you think your potential customers are any different?

Evaluate the website and ensure that everything adheres to what I call The Credibility Factor. That means:

- getting rid of all the fluff and telling your potential customers what they need to know to ease the buying process. Simple websites are more effective than fancy and complicated ones.
- considering the structure and how often a viewer has to click to find what they really want to know.
- looking beyond the latest and greatest in design and stick with what works.

Once the website is scrubbed of hype, begin planning magnetic content. To ensure quality insurance content, get started by:

- creating an editorial calendar.
- approaching internal subject matter experts and freelance writers with the topics and schedule.
- producing several evergreen pieces first — just in case the schedule falls through - and it will.

Now that your company's website is top notch, your content rocks and your blogging schedule is consistent, return to social media one venue at a time. As you offer online content breadcrumbs, you want them to lead to your company's website and ultimately its call to action piece.

For commercial lines customers, you'll get better results from LinkedIn and Twitter than Facebook. Make sure you have maximized both before moving forward to Facebook. As a tip, I am amazed at how many visitors I get from Google Plus. Be creative on how to use other social media sites. Personal auto and homeowners' insurers can benefit from Pinterest and Snap Chat with the right approach.

***Get rid of all the fluff
and tell your potential customers
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Once you have established substantive content, you can repurpose it as the core of what must be a fascinating and engaging video.

Personally, I am not a fan of videos. Since younger audiences like to watch videos, I am including

them.

Here's why I give them a lower priority. First, I can read faster and would rather not spend two-to-three minutes on a video. Second, videos tend to be very superficial. Video production is not cheap and it requires another set of expertise to be effective.

And finally, please do not produce another boring "teaching" video that mimics a typical classroom experience. The video must personify your company's brand and insurance is already considered boring enough.

Do you agree with my blog or would you care to share one of your own best practices? Please let me know by responding in the comments section or contact me directly at annmarie@lipoldcommunications.com.

Facing the Insurance Quality Content Dilemma (Part 1)

To offer expert insurance content, insurance marketing and communications executives find their options are



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hiring agency counterparts who do not deeply understand the intricacies of insurance or internal subject matter experts who do not want to become writers.

The dilemma is the direct result of two primary factors. First, there are few professionals who offer insurance expertise and possess audience-focused communications training and experience.

Second, effective marketing heavily relies on producing magnetic and substantive content. Amidst intensifying online competition, the C-Suite asks their internal marketing and communications departments to become publishers of brand journalism without the additional resources to support the effort.

Often, the C-Suite commonly does not want to accept that publishing is expensive. But it is. This is why so many newspapers and magazines, even those offered online, no longer exist. In a world of free content as a marketing approach, there is no option to sell advertising to underwrite the expense of professional communicators.

[Without understanding the audience, inbound marketing will fail.](#)

Those who appreciate and understand insurance tend to be professionals whose aspirations didn't include becoming writers. Experts in claims management, underwriting, risk management, actuarial, statistics and other disciplines often despise writing. They began their careers not knowing that branding and digital marketing would introduce the publish-or-perish mentality that academics have struggled with for decades.

Such professionals are being asked to work beyond their skill sets while trying to maintain their core competencies through endless hours of continuing education. So it is not surprising that producing content by writing white papers or blogs becomes a hassle amidst their already busy days.

These experts find the writing process to be quite frustrating. After staring at a blank screen for seemingly hours, their material is often unorganized or too complicated, making it difficult to read and understand. As a result, the marketing and communications department must invest in heavy editing and re-writing. It's a time consuming and difficult process that can breed resentment on both sides.

Further, this approach is likely more expensive. Asking highly-paid professionals to write diverts their time and focus away from meeting client needs or rainmaking. Unfortunately, the C-Suite often does not take all these factors into consideration.

Lacking Insurance Expertise

The other option is to hire public relations, marketing and other communications firms. Usually, these well-intentioned companies lack deep and thorough insurance expertise.

The reality is that it takes years to understand the nuances of insurance. The industry not only has several disciplines, but several functions and a multitude of insurance lines. This makes finding expert insurance content writers even more difficult.

Workers' compensation, for example, involves understanding different subjects including health care, the claims process, return-to-work and disability coverage. Additionally, each state has its own regulations and expectations. Personal auto, the largest property/casualty insurance line, focuses on

consumers so the approach is different compared to commercial lines such as general liability or business interruption coverage.

Further, the traditional insurance paradigm is evolving to a data and analytics model. Insurance executives, who tend to be conservative in nature, are still learning to maximize predictive modeling so it extends beyond underwriting and pricing to addresses claims management practices and marketing techniques. Forward-moving insurers are focusing on obtaining business intelligence through predictive modeling, which is quite difficult to understand without insurance expertise.

Other disruptors, including artificial intelligence, changing regulations and policy sales via Internet are also having a great impact on insurance companies and the vendors that serve them. Vendors that want to expand into the insurance industry also struggle with understanding what insurers really need, industry nomenclature or the right point person to contact.

Meanwhile, each insurance line faces its own struggles. Auto insurers see promise in telematics when many consumers want personal privacy. Then there are “preoccupiers” such as Uber and Lyft and driverless cars.

***...the C-Suite commonly does not want to accept
that publishing is expensive.***

Then there is the problem of truly understanding the needs of each customer type. Insurers are vying for a greater piece of the growing demand for cyber coverage. However, policies are inconsistent. Buyers - and even their agents - are struggling to know what should be included in their coverage. The market potential for cyber insurance is enormous, but developing the right policy per each specific customer profile remains a challenge.

For business insurance, a smaller company that lacks a risk manager or a really awesome agent or broker will purchase based on price. Larger companies see the value of services and are sophisticated enough to know that price is just one part of the equation. They want to know how an insurer's services will support risk management, claims processing and other areas. They also need to be sold on the technology. All of this requires expert insurance content.

Another limitation is that marketing companies often approach digital marketing from a business school rather than a journalism school approach. They lack professionals who understand how to effectively produce materials. They are not trained in first rule of journalism, which is to understand the audience. I often encounter companies that do not want to invest in determining customer needs and pain points. Without understanding the audience, expert insurance content for inbound marketing will fail.

So what is the solution? Check out [Part 2 of Facing the Insurance Quality Content Dilemma](#).

In the meantime, please offer your comments below or drop me a line at annmarie@insurancecommunicators.com.

Tips for Hiring and Working With Freelance Writers



By Petr Kratochvil (Public Domain)

Freelance writers vary on experience, professionalism, expertise and quality. Finding one who will truly meet an organization's needs requires a lot of consideration.

A quality writer can help boost your content marketing efforts and search engine optimization. As promised in an earlier [blog](#), I am offering my thoughts on hiring freelance writers. This perspective is based on my experience as a paid writer and public relations professional for more than 40 clients during the past 25 years.

Here's what you need to know:

- **Be clear about business objectives.** I've had potential clients who wanted an article, a blog or web text, but could not identify the ultimate goals. As a result, I worked with some of them on business plans, marketing plans and value propositions so they could re-think what they really need. Be wary of writers who will do a job without understanding the purpose or desired results.
- **Finding the best freelance writers requires some research.** If you enter "freelance writers" on a search engine also add the desired subject expertise.
- **Look for writers with proven publishing success.** Always examine the writer's content, which should be easily available online. Here are some questions to ask yourself:
 - Do I like the writer's style?
 - Is there evidence of quality content that will draw readers to your business?
 - Where has the writer been published?
 - Are there online references? If so, are they specific about what they like about the writer?
 - Can the writer show evidence he or she can handle the assignment? Writing news releases is easy. Producing magazine features, booklets or annual reports requires specialized experience.

- **Only hire freelance writers who express interest in your audience.** If writers do not ask about the intended audience, they have missed the most important element of effective communication. It shows their priorities are more focused on producing work and being paid than meeting their clients' needs. For some clients, I have provided some informal market research and customer interviews to better identify the audience and their needs.
- **Check out the writer's LinkedIn profile.** Does the writer's network include an impressive array of professionals? Are any of them in your network?
- **Know the assignment details ahead of time.** Can you provide subject matter experts or will you also be paying for research? When is the assignment due? How long is it? What's the repurposing plan? How about corporate style? Is this a one-time only project? Know this ahead of time instead of making vague inquiries.
- **Do not expect writers to start work immediately.** The best writers are busy. Ask when they can be reasonably available to start and finish the project.
- **Be sure you can be available to answer questions and help the project move forward.** Often, writers will not realize the full scope of a project until they are fully engaged in it. They will likely have follow-up questions necessary to complete their assignment. Quality writers will also offer advice on editorial packaging.
- **Ask how they want to be compensated.** By the word? By the hour? By the project? There are pros and cons to these approaches for both the writer and the customer. Some writers will even barter for products or services.
- **Compensate fairly.** I remember one potential client who wanted to pay me \$10 per hour. I declined. Not only was that less than the minimum wage after I pay taxes, but I had not worked for so little (practically free) since I was in college writing articles to build my portfolio! Proven publishing experience and expertise should translate into a better product that is less hassle to produce. Reliable, quality freelance writers that make your life easier are worth their weight in gold.
- **Pay in a timely fashion.** Payment in full within 30 days is customary, but everyone appreciates being paid sooner.
- **When the project is over, ask the writer how it went.** Finding a writer you enjoy working with is not just a matter of professionalism but personality. Ask the writer for feedback on their experience can help you decide to hire them again or clue you into internal issues that hampered progress. Offer them the same courtesy. Let the writer know if you intend to hire again and explain why.

What other tips would you offer to someone looking to hire a writer? Please share in the comments section below.

Leader's Edge Feature Offers Digital Marketing Insight and Advice



Question: When there is so much Internet noise, how do you make sure your company stands out? Answer: Digital marketing.

As I explain in my recently released *Leader's Edge* article, "[From Buzz to Bucks](#)," digital marketing encompasses everything from social media marketing to links, search engine optimization (SEO), video, advertising and other channels.

In general, the insurance industry is behind other sectors when it comes to mastering digital marketing. Digital marketing is not a replacement for all traditional marketing techniques, but it a crucial part of a marketing plan.

The article includes interviews with digital marketing experts and agents and brokers reaping positive results from digital marketing. Their advice can help nearly any company. There is also a sidebar devoted to determining [return on investment](#) (ROI) and another covers [social media](#).

Some Digital Marketing Tips

Getting started in digital marketing is just like any other form of marketing or public relations strategy.

- Define your customer, their interests and pain points to develop appropriate messaging. I don't believe you can know enough about potential or current customers.
- Surveys, focus groups and asking readers for follow-up are important tools for better knowing customers. A lot of companies skip this step to their peril. Don't make that mistake. Hiring an outside firm is a good idea to assure objectivity. At the very least, make sure sales staff keeps track of lead origination. They should be asking - and keeping records — about how customers heard of the company, what prompted them to contact the company and content of interest.
- Also, take a close look at your website. Since about half of viewers use their mobile devices to look up information, at the very least, the website needs to be responsive so it's easy to read and navigate.

I believe that any new marketing strategy should be approached humbly...

- Make sure call-to-action buttons are well placed to transform readers to leads.
- Re-evaluate your social media strategy. Are you on LinkedIn, Facebook, GooglePlus and Twitter? If so, post on a regular basis to keep your company top of mind. If not, get signed up!
- The secret to great SEO has much more to do with content than fancy programming techniques. Make sure the information is written for readers as search engine algorithms try to mimic what people want to read. Speaking of search engine algorithms, Jayson DeMers, one of the experts quoted in my article, published a piece on [***Entrepreneur***](#) this week explaining how Google's future algorithm change on April 21st will "revolutionize the way mobile friendliness is determined." It's worth checking out. Regardless of algorithm changes, [**quality content**](#) continues to be more important than ever. (Please see the "quality content" tag on this blog to learn how to produce it.)
- Make sure your material meets your customers' needs.
- Re-evaluate your website and other content for SEO. Do not stuff content with searchable words. Search engines hate the practice and give sites that do it lower rankings.
- Blogging is another way to provide quality content. It requires a time commitment, but regularly introducing quality content - at least once per week — through blogging is very effective for boosting SEO and keeping your company top of mind. Post it on social media sites including LinkedIn.
- Take the best sentences and points and feed them into Twitter. To ensure originality and be rewarded by search engines, avoid companies that sell pre-packaged content. Yes, it's cheaper, but it might not fare as well with search engines. Quality content can be developed by company subject matter experts, guest bloggers and freelance writers.
- Graphics play a critical role in presenting content. The right picture can be worth a 1,000 words. Since many people prefer to get information by watching rather than reading, video also plays a role in digital marketing as well. I believe that any new marketing strategy should be approached humbly because the arena continues to evolve. Each company should track every tactic they pursue to see what is most effective. For example, an agent or broker who sells both personal and commercial lines might find that Facebook postings are more effective for selling personal lines and LinkedIn works better for commercial lines.

Which digital marketing tactics are working at your company?

Know Thy Competitors

Professional football players literally go head-to-head against their competition.

To win, they and their coaches have to know their competitors as intimately as possible. They take notes on play patterns and the strengths and weaknesses of each player on the other team.

Too often, however, business professionals become so focused on the greatness of their product, service or concept that they lose sight of the playing field.

I often remind my readers and clients that knowing your audience is the most important rule of effective communications and marketing.

But to beat your competitors, you need to know them as well. This includes indirect competitors too.

We all know this, but I have seen too many business plans and marketing strategies so focused product/service/concept greatness that they do not pay enough attention to the “others” who are trying to reach the same buyers.

You can't develop a strong value proposition, which states uniqueness, without knowing the playing field.

You cannot develop effective messaging without knowing what others are saying.

You cannot know which features to sell without knowing what is selling for the “others.”

***...business professionals become so focused
on the greatness of their product, service or concept
they lose sight of the playing field.***

And perhaps most importantly, you cannot outsell the competition without knowing why buyers are purchasing from them.

You need to know their customers as well.

Finding out all of this requires dedicated research time, but often, business professionals go off the marketing strategy tangent, so in love with the hot “it” that they lose perspective.

But remember, it's far more important that potential buyers believe it is hot. Knowing the competition helps you to show how your product will help clients be more competitive.

How do you research the competition?

Pretend you are a student who has to write a report on the competition. Check out everything you can from the customer's point of view.

Since I have an investigative reporting background and am a rabid genealogist, I first exhaust written every source possible because sometimes the smallest piece of information that does not seem useful at first can be very important later.

When doing genealogical research, you don't just write down family members' names and ages. You keep a copy of the whole page because neighbors can matter. When discovering a new ancestor, I noticed an older woman who was living with the family. Gathering other clues, I was able to go back another generation.

For business-to-business competitive research, start with the Internet. Search news articles. Give more than a quick look at websites. Be sure you know their messaging, value proposition, pricing and top features.

Find the key players on the Internet. Collecting annual reports, marketing materials and, when

possible, buy the competitors' stuff and try it out.

Don't forget outreach. The best outreachers are well connected in the industry who are not necessarily direct salespeople. Show up at conferences, meetings and parties and for goodness sakes, use social media to ask questions or glean more information.

And be sure to find the customers of your competitors. If you have a well-connected source and you are doing business-to-business marketing, this does not have to be difficult.

Call me old-fashioned, but I am still a big believer in focus groups, doing lunch and offering questionnaires because they work. Since human contact has been sacrificed to the immediacy of mobile technology, I believe personal interaction makes a more lasting impression.

Is it a lot of work to be sure, but if professional football teams invest in due diligence for the sweet taste of victory, so should you.

How do you research your competitors? Please leave a comment. Browns fans are especially welcome!

Like what you see? Then follow me!

[The Latest Trends in B2B Content](#)

More evidence that providing quality content is the name of the social media marketing game.

This is a great infographic available on a Hubspot blog, How Does Your Company Stack Up? The Latest Trends in B2B Content. To check it out, click [here](#).

Here's the beginning of the blog:

One of my favorite things in grade school was that whole "gold star" system. Remember it? You do something well in the classroom and you get a shiny gold star next to your name on a chart of your whole classmates. So, at any given time, you can look around and see how you're stacking up against the rest of the class.

But once you get out of that grade-school classroom, the gold-star system often goes away. You can't see how you stack up against your competitors and peers because you don't have access to their data.

That's why benchmark studies, like one recently released by Content Marketing Institute, Marketing Profs, and Brightcove about [the current state of content marketing](#), are just so darn awesome.

Take a look at the latest trends to find out if your company deserves a gold star or not. Trust me — it'll be just as exciting as the time you got a gold star in the fourth grade.

[Brainstorming Ideas for Blogs, Articles and Other Written Materials](#)

With so many opportunities to showcase expertise online, sooner or later, you will probably need to write something. It could be a blog, a newsletter article or a thought piece. Perhaps the marketing department approaches you for content or you want to build your reputation through Internet or print publishing.



<http://www.superbwallpapers.com/cartoons/curious-george-11960/>

Whatever the case, you need ideas but do not know where to find them. You've tried freethinking — the exercise of writing whatever comes to mind on screen or paper — but it goes nowhere. Your brainstorm becomes a drizzle.

It might surprise you to learn have more ideas than you realize. You just need to train yourself to see them. You can become so good at it that you have my dilemma of more ideas than time!

From whence will inspiration come?

1) **Conversations.** Many of my blog and article ideas come from conversations with colleagues or customers. It can be an unrelated remark, a question or a story.

2) **Reading.** News, blogs, social media discussion groups and other sources mention issues that you can give more attention. Take time to discover your unique approach to it.

- Did someone miss an important aspect of a problem or story?
- Do you have a totally different perspective?
- Is there another angle to cover?
- Is there a different way to approach the subject?
- Did you reach different conclusions?
- Is there any new research or conditions that will affect your clients?
- What questions are left unanswered?

3) **Just doing your job.** So many potential topics arise when you are just doing your day-to-day job.

- Did you find a creative way to solve a problem?
- Did you hear about a new issue that calls for further exploration?
- Can you address a customer pain point in a new way?
- How did a new law, regulation or process change create new opportunities or headaches?

Generating ideas boil down to being curious. Think critically about everything you see and hear.

Generating ideas boil down to being curious.

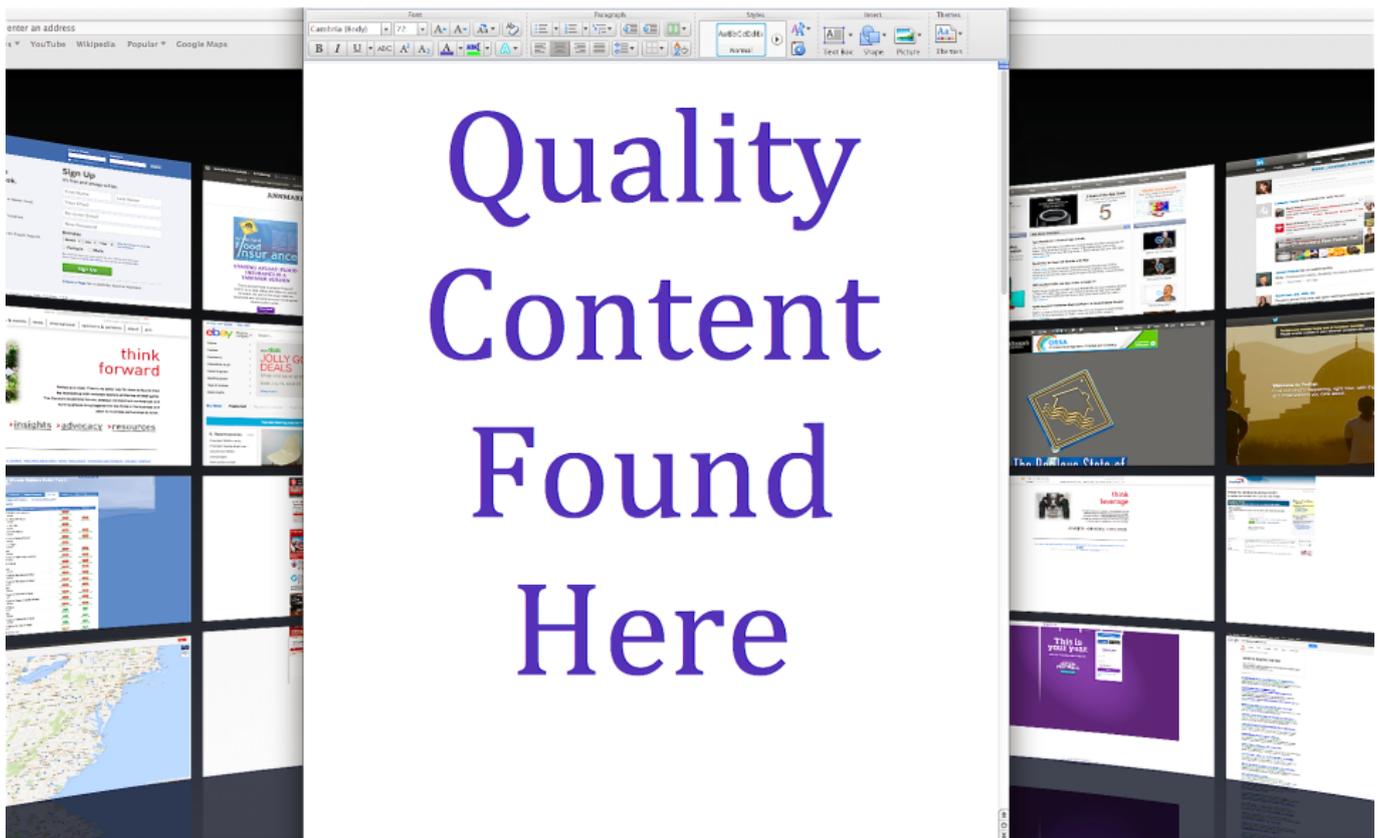
Consider information as reporters do. Ask yourself if the information matters and if so, to whom? Consider its impact, usefulness and limitations. Practice these suggestions and the ideas will start flowing.

Make sure you do not forget all these great ideas. Keep a file, perhaps in your smart phone memo, to jot ideas down as you go.

As the ideas lead to others, develop a file and keep them. You will be surprised how quickly it will fit up. Categorize them by topic and you might just develop the key points of your written piece. You might even realize a new product or service for your company to boost its uniqueness in the marketplace.

This should get you started. If you have other great brainstorming ideas, please share below.

Ten Attributes of Quality Content



Do you find that too many bloggers publish more for their own edification than yours?

How about blogs and web content that are just trying to sell you something?

Readers like me are demanding better content — and rightly so. You are busy and do not want to waste precious time reading lousy blogs. If someone is reading your blog, you should feel honored.

If you want to build credibility for your business, everything published should be top quality. Put it another way, it should pass the news editor's smell test. Editors have to be very picky about what they publish. Editors know publishing garbage is bad for business. This applies to any organization.

I was also thinking about quality content when I recently worked tirelessly on a magazine feature article. I am paid by the article so I could have made more money by not putting in so many hours. However, I need to be proud of it, so I dig deeper to give my readers the value-added. My byline is my brand, so publishing good stuff is important for my professional reputation. (If you want to see some of my magazine articles, please visit the ["Work Samples"](#) page.)

Given this, my simple rule for quality content is: Don't write anything you would not want to read.

Here are, in my opinion, the attributes of quality content:

- 1) **Value.** If you cannot answer the reader's "what is in it for me?" question, stop writing until you can.
- 2) **Uniqueness.** I wrote a blog on [tweeting quality content for live events](#) because other blogs focused more on the technical aspects of tweeting than on the content. What good are technical skills with lousy content?
- 3) **Newness.** Provide new information or offer a new perspective.
- 4) **Show, don't just tell.** Give readers a picture of what you are communicating. Explain how a concept or product works. Give examples.
- 5) **Cleanliness.** Meaningful content obeys the rules of grammar. It is not wordy or redundant. Use a fog index to find sentences that are too long.
- 6) **Easy-to-understand.** The old journalism rule of writing on an 8th grade level is still a good one. Microsoft Word offers a readability index. Use it.
- 7) **Use graphics** to reinforce your point.
- 8) **Accuracy.** Your readers should feel they can take what you said to the bank. If not, you are not building credibility and trust.
- 9) **Be real.** Don't blog like you are writing a term paper. Your genuine voice makes for much better reading.
- 10) **Conversation starter.** Don't just write into a vortex. We all benefit from the conversation social media offers and nobody knows everything.

Here's the truth: quality blogs take time. Do not start blogging until you can make time to dedicate to it. I've been blogging for about 18 months. I've learned that writing quality blogs once a week and keeping up with comments takes about four hours a week. Blogging is a discipline and consistent posting is necessary to attract Google's attention.

***Editors know publishing garbage is bad for business.
This applies to any organization.***

Here are the hallmarks of bad blogging:

- 1) **Poor writing.**
- 2) **Blatant marketing pitches.** Social media is about contributing to the Internet community. People are not stupid. They will see through your intentions pretty quickly.
- 3) **Sensationalism.** Some bloggers in the insurance industry would be better fodder for “News of the Weird.” I’ve seen too many blogs relating to sex or bizarre circumstances. It’s unprofessional and insulting, so don’t do it.
- 4) **Blogs that do not deliver** what headlines promise.
- 5) **Plagiarism.** When I got behind on my blogging, a writer friend of mine suggested I lift the works of others and run that. That is called plagiarism and it is one of the deadly sins of writers. If others have covered the topic, do it better. If you can’t, refer your readers to the better blog.

Why is there so much crappy content out there? I blame it on communications and marketing professionals who emphasize blogging as a marketing tool. Consistent blogging with great content should attract customers by building credibility, but bad blogging does the opposite. For the sake of your credibility, do it right or don’t do it at all.

What do you think?