



# BEST BET

The top 7 reasons you should go all in on content marketing by Fran Thomas



WHEN IT COMES TO SPENDING YOUR MARKETING dollars, it may seem like you're making blind bets, hoping the cards are stacked in your favor. Traditional advertising can be a gamble, but content marketing—distributing engaging, valuable information to a clearly defined target audience—may be your ace in the hole. Read on to discover the reasons why.

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**BUYERS' BEHAVIORS HAVE CHANGED, REQUIRING MARKETERS TO ADAPT.**

Today, consumers have complete control over which marketing messages they accept or reject—whether it's by fast-forwarding through commercials on a digitally recorded TV show or clicking "close" on an online ad. As a result, traditional tactics are no longer as effective.

To capture consumers' attention amid a slew of advertisements, it's essential for marketers to develop and distribute compelling content—whether that takes the form of a Web site, magazine,

newsletter, or social media outreach. "Just for the opportunity to have a conversation with customers ... brands need to develop content that is so valuable, consumers actually choose to raise their hands and request the brands' marketing content," says Joe



**“ There is no better way to keep a customer than to continue to deliver valuable, relevant, compelling content that solves customer problems.”**

Pulizzi, coauthor of *Get Content Get Customers* and founder of Junta42, a custom publishing client-vendor matching service.

Traditional push marketing requires you to rent someone else's content space, interrupt what readers or listeners are really after, and hope consumers take note of your message. However, if you're engaging in content market-

ing—especially if you have an online opt-in audience from RSS and e-mail subscriptions—you're more likely to have captive readers. "The next time you have a product launch, you can tell your biggest fans first and encourage them to tell their friends," says Adam Singer, creator of The Future Buzz blog on media, marketing, and PR. "In fact, you don't even

need 'news.' You just need to have a story worth telling."

Instead of intruding on your customers so they'll buy or use your product, start brainstorming ways you can encourage them, positioning yourself as the expert resource, Pulizzi adds. "Content marketing takes a different mind-set," he explains. "It's not easy, but it's certainly necessary."

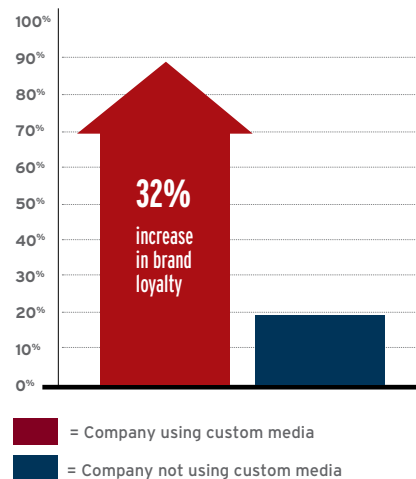
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**IT HELPS DAVIDS COMPETE WITH GOLIATHS.**

Because content marketing can be cost effective—especially when distributed online—it helps level the selling playing field for small companies. "A David can match forces, even surpass the buying power, of a Goliath with a top-notch content strategy," Pulizzi says.

With today's inexpensive, easily accessible, and easy-to-use technology like social media, e-mail, and Web sites, multimillion-dollar marketing budgets aren't always necessary. With quality content, smaller companies can take a bigger share in the market.



\*ACCORDING TO THE ASSOCIATION OF PUBLISHING AGENCIES



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### IT BUILDS RELATIONSHIPS WITH CUSTOMERS.

It's no secret that developing a good relationship requires you to give—not just take. It's no different in business. “In order to develop relationships with

customers so that they will ultimately choose to buy from us, we need to give the gift of content through a variety of channels that customers prefer,” Pulizzi says.

Over time, quality content can lead to favorable relationships with customers. In fact, in a recent Roper Public Affairs & Media and a Custom Publish-

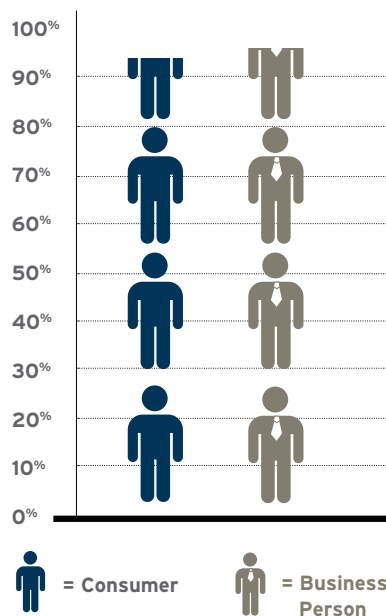
ing Council study, 62 percent of respondents said they feel better about a company after reading its complimentary material.

“If you're creating content that others have affinity for, over time interested people will be pulled to, or opt-in to, that content. Slowly but surely, you'll build an audience for your ideas

and forge relationships that grow stronger with each communication sent to customers,” says Singer. “Over time, that audience

will organically grow itself—the Web is a social place. What this will allow (if your content is good) is to build influence, trust, and authority.”

In a study of custom publication readers, Millward Brown found that 94% of business people and 91% of consumers thought custom publications were useful sources of information.



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### IT GENERATES LEADS.

Whether it's a print piece with a tear-out card to request product info or an e-book that requires readers' contact info to download, content marketing's potential to generate leads is virtually limitless. Newsletter and blog subscriptions, white papers, or an e-zine with a product info request form can all be invaluable ways to garner potential customers' contact info. Because the readers are offering their info to you, the chances of a sell are much greater than if you were cold calling or sending a postcard to a purchased mail list.

But there is a catch: The content



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You can't just throw words out there like a baitless hook and hope customers bite.”

has to appeal to your target audience. You can't just throw words out there like a baitless hook and hope customers bite. “People will only sign up for something they see of value,” Pulizzi notes. Because most companies lack an in-house publishing team, it's often necessary to use a custom publishing company to ensure high-quality content and design.

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### IT POSITIONS YOUR COMPANY AND BRAND AS AN EXPERT RESOURCE.

By providing your current and/or potential customers with valuable information, you position your company as an expert in your field and a trustworthy resource.

As you become the company customers turn to for information, you're more likely to become the source they seek for products or services.

“Especially in B-to-B industries, we first turn to proven experts. Content marketing lets you attain ‘expert status’ by putting your

knowledge, results, and team members on display in black and white for the world to see,” Singer says. “Essentially, by sharing your results publicly and letting the rest of the industry weigh in, you're removing the guesswork new clients frequently have to make.”

“ Brands need to have something interesting to say in order to cut through the clutter.”



#### Expert Tips

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## TIPS FOR CASHING IN ON CONTENT

Joe Pulizzi, coauthor of *Get Content Get Customers*, offers his top tips for launching a successful content marketing campaign.

- 1 Identify the marketing objective.
- 2 Clearly understand the customers' informational need that addresses the objective.
- 3 Choose tactics and test as you go.
- 4 As you develop the plan, look for opportunities to repurpose the content into different formats and solve different goals.
- 5 Don't launch your content marketing campaign until you know how you are measuring it.



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6**IT FURTHERS YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA EFFORTS.**

Although social media marketing can be quite powerful, you can't simply blog about the weather, and it's not enough to tweet solely about your company's sales or discounts. For successful social media marketing, it's essential to develop a content strategy.

"The content strategy must come first, followed then by social media channels," Pulizzi advises.

If you build on the foundation of content marketing, you're more likely to distribute info that engages readers (read: customers), making them want to participate in your conversations and share your content—whether it's a blog posting, YouTube video, or a tweet—with others.

"Social media has been around forever. The only

difference today is that we are using new technologies that help us develop relationships quicker through new channels," Pulizzi says. "For social media to work with these new channels such as Twitter and Facebook, brands need to have something interesting to say in order to cut through the clutter."

As your social media improves, so too should your Web traffic. "There is a symbiotic relationship between search engine optimization (SEO) and social media—your Web site is rewarded with greater traffic from the engines as both links and content volume grow," Singer says. "Search and social technologies are advancing together, so it's natural that they benefit each other."



**71%**  
of bloggers have greater visibility in their industry.\*

\*ACCORDING TO TECHNORATI'S 2009 STATE OF THE BLOGOSPHERE REPORT

**“Although content is powerful for customer acquisition, it is inherently stronger for customer retention.”**

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7**IT IMPROVES CUSTOMER RETENTION.**

"Although content is powerful for customer acquisition, it is inherently stronger for customer

retention," Pulizzi says. "There is no better way to keep a customer than to continue to deliver valuable, relevant, and compelling content that solves customer problems."

To keep clients coming back for more, consistently provide interesting, pertinent, and well-

designed content, shifting your mindset from marketing to publishing. "What brands need to do is find out what their story really is, how that story can help grow the business, and how they can distribute and share that story for maximum impact," Pulizzi says. 

