

## Chapter 1

# Defining the Content Marketing Opportunity

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Understanding content marketing
  - ▶ Leveraging the power of search
  - ▶ Understanding the broad reach of content marketing
  - ▶ Shifting from a marketing to a publishing mindset
  - ▶ Developing content
  - ▶ Establishing expertise
  - ▶ Committing to the long-term
  - ▶ Benchmarking other businesses
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**C**ongratulations! You've made the decision to use content to promote your business, and you're ready to get started. This book introduces you to the content marketing opportunity. Thanks to the free and open nature of the social Web, businesses can build brand awareness, develop relationships, and boost their profits in amazing ways. The trick is understanding the why's and how's of content marketing so you can produce and publish content that actually helps you reach your goals rather than creating the opposite effect — or no effect at all!

Before you dive into the world of content marketing, you need to prepare yourself by taking the time to find out how content marketing evolved and what you need to do to create content that drives traffic, conversation, sharing, and ultimately, purchases. In other words, there is more to content marketing than simply publishing words. Set yourself up for success from the start by mastering the fundamentals.

## *Understanding What Content Marketing Is*

Content marketing encompasses all forms of content that add value to consumers, thereby directly or indirectly promoting a business, brand, products, or services. Content marketing occurs both online and offline, but the free and simple tools of the social Web have opened up the ability for companies of all sizes to compete alongside one another, not for market share but for voice and influence.

Marketing a business using content isn't a new concept; however, it has evolved in recent years to mean far more than creating a company brochure filled with overtly promotional messages and images. Today, content marketing focuses on creating content that is meaningful and useful to consumers with promotion taking a backseat to adding value, particularly adding value to the online conversation happening across the social Web.

### *Evolving from interruption marketing to engagement marketing*

In the 21st century, consumers actively try to avoid being interrupted by ads and marketing messages. While companies used to have to rely on catching the attention of consumers using tactics such as shock advertising and sexual innuendos, the same tactics aren't as effective today when consumers can simply click away from an online ad or skip commercials on their DVRs. Even the most attention-getting ads go unnoticed by consumers who fast-forward over them.

At the same time, consumers are now hyper-connected. They have access to enormous amounts of information, such as instantaneous access to real-time news, from their homes, offices, and mobile devices. In other words, simply interrupting consumers and delivering marketing messages won't get the job done anymore. Instead, companies have to quickly demonstrate the added value they can deliver, particularly if they're interrupting consumers in order to deliver that value.

To achieve success, companies need to engage consumers rather than interrupt them. Consider a pop-up ad appearing on a Web site today. It wasn't so long ago that pop-up ads were all the rage among marketers. Today, they're a sure-fire way to annoy customers and cause them to turn away from your brand. Rather than taking control of consumers' online experiences, businesses need to enhance those experiences, and they can do it with content that adds value and engages consumers.

## *Breaking through the online clutter*

Given how cluttered the Web is with content, messages, spam, and so on, you're undoubtedly wondering how you can get consumers to notice you without doing something drastic to catch their attention. That's where you can apply the steps of brand-building to your content marketing strategy.

Just as a brand isn't built overnight, neither is an effective and influential content marketing plan quickly built. Start thinking of content marketing as an essential part of building your brand and online reputation. A powerful brand can lead a business to fantastic places. For example, the Disney brand adds immense value to the Walt Disney Company. You can build your own brand through content marketing and position yourself for success through long-term, sustainable growth.

You can apply the following three fundamental steps of brand building to your content marketing initiatives:

- ✓ **Consistency:** All of your messages and activities must consistently communicate your brand image and promise, or consumers will become confused. They'll turn away from your brand and look for one that does consistently meet their expectations in every interaction.
- ✓ **Persistence:** Brands are built over time and through continual efforts in spreading messages and meeting customer expectations.
- ✓ **Restraint:** Brands must stay focused and resist extending into areas of business or activities that run counter to the brand promise.



Just as a brand represents a promise that consumers can rely on to meet their expectations again and again, so should your content marketing. By publishing valuable content that consistently communicates your brand promise, consumers will develop expectations for your brand and become loyal to it. Loyal consumers talk about the brands they love. This is a marketer's dream come true. In other words, you can build your brand and your business through content with little or no monetary investment. Instead, you simply need to commit your time and effort. It's an opportunity that businesses would be crazy to pass up!

## *Understanding 21st century buying behaviors and purchase processes*

Changes in the ways consumers make purchasing decisions is another reason content marketing has become a critical element of a business's marketing plan. No longer do consumers rely on television or print ads to get information about products and services; with the growth of the social Web, the pool of people and resources consumers can go to and get reviews and referrals has grown exponentially.

Research shows that prior to making a purchase, consumers conduct the majority of their research online. They read reviews from experts and everyday consumers. They search for comparison-shopping sites, and they publish questions on forums, blogs, social networking profiles, Twitter, and more. Consumers can learn about products and services and decide on which purchase is best for them in the privacy of their homes, either anonymously or otherwise. It's entirely up to each individual.

Within seconds, consumers can find honest opinions online through simple searches and by participating in conversations. Of course, not all reviews are created equal, but the fact is that this is where consumers do their research, and this is the stage on which they make the majority of their purchasing decisions, including where and what to buy. So, you not only need to represent your business in the online space, but also you need to monitor your business and industry across the Web conversations to ensure that they accurately reflect your brand, products, and services.

Again, you can achieve that goal with great content! However, as discussed earlier in this chapter, that content can't consist entirely of promotional messages. The content must be interesting and engaging, or it will be ignored, simply because that's the type of interruptive content that consumers are *not* looking for online.

## ***Being customer-centric***

When companies first started creating Web sites, the sites were highly navigational, meaning they offered static information through one-way information delivery. As the Internet evolved, business Web sites became transactional, and consumers could actually make purchases online. Nevertheless, online communication remained primarily one-way until the evolution of the social Web, which changed the world of communication and business. Suddenly, businesses could participate in public two-way conversations. However, many businesses still haven't modified their Web sites and online destinations to focus more on consumers' needs than on the company's goals. In other words, business sites are still talking *at* people about topics that matter to the business and in a transactional manner rather than talking *with* people about topics that matter to those people and in a social manner.

Today, online communication trumps many traditional forms of communication, particularly as smartphones enable people to easily communicate via the tools of the social Web faster than they can via e-mail, telephone, or in person. This fact doesn't mean a company should move all of its communications to the online space, but it does mean that the online space needs to be a priority in every company's marketing communications plan. The most successful

business Web sites in the 21st century have evolved, too. Those sites are now customer-centric (or audience-centric), and the content published is created with consumers' wants, needs, and expectations as the top priorities.

Consumers are fickle and impatient. You need to give them information that makes them smarter consumers and that helps them in multiple aspects of their lives. Create a Web site and other branded online destinations (see Chapter 2 for more on this topic) that are customer-centric. In every branded interaction, give customers a reason to want to visit your Web site and engage with you and your content by adding value to the online conversation. A destination-centric content strategy that focuses more on your business than on your target audience won't get the job done anymore.

## *Comparing traditional online marketing, social media marketing, and content marketing*

Most people, including many marketers, are confused about the differences among traditional online marketing, social media marketing, and content marketing. These three forms of digital marketing overlap frequently, so making a distinction among them is challenging. However, you need to understand the underlying differences if you want to be successful in marketing your business with content.

The three primary forms of digital marketing are as follows:

- ✔ **Traditional online marketing:** All forms of marketing related to the Internet are considered to be online marketing. Traditional forms predate the social Web and include all forms of online ads (such as banner, pop-up, flash, interstitial, video, and so on). Traditional forms of online marketing rely on “push” marketing strategies and are typically direct marketing efforts, meaning companies push messages at consumers with a specific action or response in mind from consumers.
- ✔ **Social media marketing:** Social media marketing can include direct and indirect marketing efforts and includes all forms of marketing executed using the tools of the social Web. For example, writing a business blog providing tips or participating in a Facebook conversation related to your industry are both forms of indirect marketing through social media. Alternatively, publishing a discount code in your Twitter feed is a direct marketing tactic through social media. The tools of the social Web include all online publishing tools that enable people to publish any form of user-generated content such as articles, comments, videos, images, audio, and so on.

✓ **Content marketing:** Content marketing is less social and more informational in nature than social media marketing (although great content can and should lead to conversations and sharing). All content that adds value and could market a business (directly or indirectly) is considered a form of content marketing. Content marketing can come in long-form (such as blogs, articles, ebooks, and so on), short form (such as Twitter updates, Facebook updates, images, and so on), or conversation and sharing (for example, sharing great content via Twitter or offering helpful information in an online forum).

As you might expect, an online article is a perfect example of content marketing. However, as consumers and audience members share and discuss the content, it becomes a social media marketing opportunity. In other words, content marketing involves understanding what consumers want and need, and then creating and publishing content that is relevant and useful. By publishing content that helps consumers, your brand and business become a part of their lives that they come to rely on and trust over time. As that content is discussed and shared across the social Web, what started as an indirect content marketing effort can become a powerful form of social media marketing. The opportunities are practically limitless!

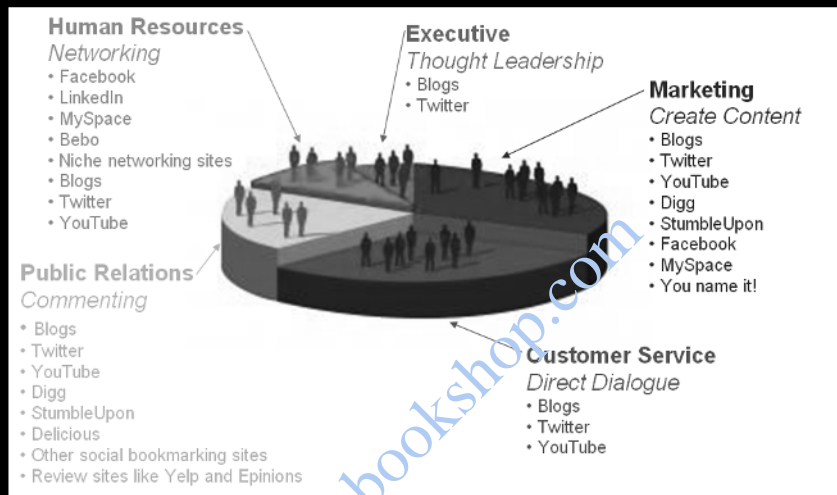
## *Understanding how different departments in an organization can use content marketing*

Despite its name, employees from varied departments within an organization can participate in content marketing initiatives. Remember, content marketing doesn't have to include direct marketing messages at all, and that's where members of your organization outside the marketing department can get involved. Chapter 17 has more about building a content marketing team, but right now, the focus is on how content marketing can spread across an organization and become an organic part of employees' everyday responsibilities.



Content marketing is all about publishing useful information that helps your target audience, which means your executives can write blog posts, ebooks, or presentations that offer their thoughtful leadership. Customer service team members can create answers to frequently asked questions or solutions to common problems, and the marketing team can create videos, conduct interviews, and publish tutorials. Figure 1-1 shows a breakdown of activities that different departments within a company can pursue via content marketing, as well as the social media marketing opportunities that evolve from great content.

## Multiple departments can get a piece of the social media & content pie.



**Figure 1-1:**  
Multiple departments can get a piece of the content marketing pie.

Of course, if you're a solo entrepreneur or have very few employees, you'll wear multiple hats and create varied content to leverage the multiple opportunities to connect with consumers. The trick is to publish varied content so your audience is continually engaged and its expectations are met again and again.

## *Discovering how you can benefit from content marketing*

The primary benefits of content marketing are building brand awareness and developing relationships with your target consumer audience *and* online influencers. (See Chapter 2 for more about finding and connecting with your target audience and online influencers.) The idea, at this point, is to understand how content marketing can enable you to build your brand and business by putting you in front of audiences that matter.

By publishing content, you can put yourself on the map. As you build your business's online presence through consistent and persistent publishing of interesting and useful content, more and more people will find you or hear

about you. If your content is relevant and interesting, they'll want more of it. They'll remember who you are, and they'll share your content with others. They'll want to talk about your content with you and with their own online (and offline) connections. In other words, your content opens the virtual door between your business and a global audience.

Your content helps people understand your brand message and promise, and it allows people to develop their own perceptions for your brand and business. They develop expectations for your brand based on the information you consistently share. They reach out and communicate with you via social Web conversations, and in time, they become loyal brand advocates who talk about your brand, creating a form of word-of-mouth marketing that business owners could only dream about years ago.

Think of it this way — two decades ago, business owners like you would have done anything (well, maybe not *anything*) to get together with an audience of engaged consumers to talk about products and services. Today, a larger engaged audience than you can imagine is available to you, thanks to the power and reach of the social Web. You just have to discover what they want to hear from you, and then deliver it again and again.

## ***Defining the three forms of content marketing***

Content marketing comes in three basic forms — long-form, short-form, and conversations. It's important to understand that content marketing is still a new form of marketing, and no one knows the recipe for success. Only a few rules and some loose guidelines are available for businesses and marketers to follow. In fact, you're really limited only by your creativity and dedication. Truth be told, any content that you make publicly available online and offline could be considered a type of content marketing, because all content is a reflection of your brand and business. Furthermore, all content opens up a potential talking point for consumers to consider, dissect, analyze, and debate. The social Web offers a perfect (and very public) place for them to do so.

Also, the forms of content marketing are constantly changing as new tools to create, publish and share that content are launched and others are shut down. Enhancements and new functionality are added to content publishing tools every day, which means the tools you're using to create, publish, and share content today might not be the tools you're using tomorrow.

The three forms of content marketing that you can create, publish, and share as part of your content marketing plan follow:

- ✔ **Long-form content marketing:** Includes all published content that's longer than a few sentences and that offers deep value, such as blog posts, articles, ebooks, press releases, white papers, presentations, videos, podcasts, webinars, and so on.
- ✔ **Short-form content marketing:** Includes all published content with no more than a few sentences and that communicates useful information, such as Twitter updates, Facebook updates, LinkedIn updates, images, and so on.
- ✔ **Conversations and sharing content marketing:** Can happen through conversations about published content and through the sharing of published content, such as blog comments, forum comments, Twitter updates, link sharing via social bookmarking, comments on videos and images, and so on.

Each of the preceding forms of content marketing is described in detail later in this book. The important thing to remember is that you're likely to see overlap between the three forms as well as overlap with social media and traditional online marketing efforts. That's a good thing!

The best marketing plan is a fully integrated strategy where one piece connects to the next. For example, the phrase, "If you build it, they will come," doesn't apply to content marketing. Simply publishing content isn't enough. You also need to promote that content. You can do so through conversations and sharing as well as through social media and digital marketing efforts. In fact, you can even integrate your offline marketing efforts with your online content marketing efforts (see Chapter 15 for more on this topic).

## *Understanding the Google Effect: How to Leverage the Power of Search*

There has never been a better time in history for a small business to compete on a level playing field regardless of its budget. If you can spare even just an hour a day on content marketing-related activities, you'll see results in terms of increased word-of-mouth marketing, repeat business, and new business. But many people don't understand how to connect content marketing efforts with bottom-line business growth. If you're wondering how content marketing can help you build your business, you simply need to think of a single word — Google.

Ask yourself the following question — how do you find information about a type of product, service, or business? Do you pick up the local Yellow Pages or newspaper in search of an ad? Probably not, and it's fairly safe to assume that most people are just like you. When they need information about a product, service,

or business, they turn on their computers or smartphones, open up their Web browser, and visit their preferred search engine. For the vast majority of Internet users, that preferred search engine is Google. Next, they type keywords related to the product, service, or business they need to find, and click the various links provided in the search results. In simplest terms, your business needs to be represented in keyword searches related to your products and services, and it's easier than ever to get there through content marketing.

## *Creating entry points*

Consider the following scenario, which demonstrates how content marketing can help you ensure that you're represented on search engines and across the social Web. First, imagine that your business has a Web site. You invest in great design and copywriting and launch a 10-page Web site that looks fantastic and tells the complete story of your business and products. That site creates ten entry points on which Google or other search engines can find you.

Next, imagine that you connect a blog to your Web site and publish a new blog post every day for a year. Now, you have 365 *more* entry points to your Web site. Google and other search engines can find all these entry points and then deliver those pages to people searching for your type of business and products.

Now, imagine that the content you publish throughout the year on your business blog is interesting, useful, and meaningful content that meets your target audience's needs. Your audience will undoubtedly want to share that content with their own online connections. They'll tweet about it, post it on Facebook, blog about it, and more. When you write amazing content that people want to share, which I call *shareworthy content*, you're opening up the floodgates for even more entry points to your business blog and Web site. Suddenly your 375 entry points turn into hundreds or thousands more, all from the conversations and sharing of your shareworthy content.

I call this the *compounding effect of blogging*, and it's a powerful thing. You simply can't buy that kind of access to consumers! By publishing amazing content that is relevant and useful to your target audience, your entry points will grow over time. Every day you wait is a missed opportunity to create those valuable entry points that every business needs in order to reach full potential.

## *Researching keywords*

Before you begin creating a lot of content and publishing it online, take some time to discover what keywords and keyword phrases you need to focus on. Drill down and find the specific keyword phrases that will drive your targeted

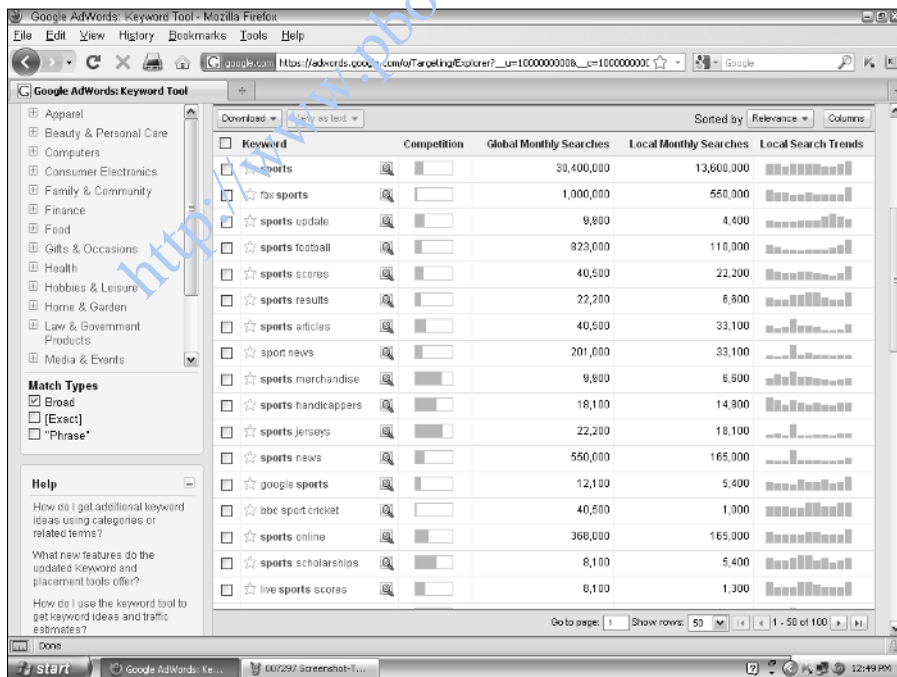
traffic to your content — and that will help you avoid competing with larger competitors with bigger budgets to spend on search engine optimization.

Throughout this book, you can find specific search engine optimization techniques as part of the tips provided for implementing the three forms of content marketing, but you can't use search engine optimization techniques unless you do your research upfront (specifically, keyword analysis).

Following are several free and paid tools that can help you determine which keyword phrases to target in your content:

- **Google AdWords Keyword Tool** ([https://adwords.google.com/o/Targeting/Explorer?\\_\\_u=1000000000&\\_\\_c=1000000000&ideaRequestType=KEYWORD\\_IDEAS#search.none](https://adwords.google.com/o/Targeting/Explorer?__u=1000000000&__c=1000000000&ideaRequestType=KEYWORD_IDEAS#search.none)): The free Google AdWords Keyword Tool enables you to find out the popularity of keywords in terms of traffic and the cost-per-click that advertisers are paying for those keywords. Additionally, when you enter a keyword into the search tool, a list of related keywords is returned to you as well, making it easy to broaden your research and find the best keywords for your content. See Figure 1-2, which shows the results for the keyword *sports*.

**Figure 1-2:**  
The Google AdWords Keyword Tool provides search popularity data and related keyword suggestions.



- ✓ **Google AdWords Traffic Estimator** ([https://adwords.google.com/o/Targeting/Explorer?\\_\\_u=1000000000&\\_\\_c=1000000000&ideaRequestType=KEYWORD\\_STATS#search.none](https://adwords.google.com/o/Targeting/Explorer?__u=1000000000&__c=1000000000&ideaRequestType=KEYWORD_STATS#search.none)): The free Google AdWords Traffic Estimator tool helps you discover how much advertisers are paying for certain keywords. Advertisers bid on keywords and serve ads on Web pages with relevant content. Popular keywords typically have higher price tags and higher traffic estimates. The key to using Google AdWords Traffic Estimator for keyword research is to find the middle ground. Look for keywords related to your blog's content that are neither the most trafficked and highest priced nor the least trafficked and lowest priced. This way, you'll strike a balance between too much competition (meaning many other sites are already creating content related to those keywords) and too little traffic (meaning no one is searching for those keywords).
- ✓ **Wordtracker** ([www.wordtracker.com](http://www.wordtracker.com)): To use Wordtracker, you have to pay a fee, but a free trial is available. If you're serious about keyword research, then Wordtracker is probably the best tool currently available with a fairly reasonable price tag.
- ✓ **Keyword Discovery** ([www.keyworddiscovery.com](http://www.keyworddiscovery.com)): Keyword Discovery is another excellent tool for keyword research, but it also has a fee associated with it. A free trial is available, so you can give it a test drive before you pay anything. The results you'll get from Keyword Discovery are extensive and best for someone who really wants to drill down deep into keyword research.



Don't let search engine optimization take center stage. Your content is always the top priority. Make sure what you say is the cornerstone of your content marketing efforts. Everything else should be secondary and used to complement what you say. If you have any chance of getting people to talk about you and share your content in the long-term, which helps you build your brand and business, you need to make sure your content is always meaningful, relevant, and useful.

Keyword research is constantly evolving, and it's a very detailed topic. You can read much more about search engine optimization in *Search Engine Optimization For Dummies* by Peter Kent (Wiley). And don't forget to check out the additional search engine optimization tips included in Chapters 7, 10, and 14 of this book.

## *Search engine reputation management*

There is more to search engines than keyword results. You can also use search engines to stay abreast of content and conversations related to your brand and business reputation. In this way, you can take the necessary steps to ensure those results are the ones you want people to see. In other words, when consumers type keywords related to your business into their preferred

search engines, you need to know that the results they'll get not only point them in the direction of your business, but also point them to places that paint your business in a positive light.

You can use several tools to monitor your search engine reputation. Following are some easy tools that you can use free:

- ✔ **Google Alerts:** You can set up Google Alerts ([www.google.com/alerts](http://www.google.com/alerts)) to send you e-mail messages when content that uses your chosen keywords (for example, your business name) is published online.
- ✔ **Google Advanced Search:** You can conduct daily or weekly Google Advanced Searches ([www.google.com/advanced\\_search](http://www.google.com/advanced_search)) using your chosen keywords (such as your business name) to find content that Google Alerts may have missed.
- ✔ **Twitter alerts:** Twitter alerts work similarly to Google Alerts. You receive e-mail messages telling you about Twitter posts that include your chosen keywords. TweetBeep ([www.tweetbeep.com](http://www.tweetbeep.com)) is a good choice for automating Twitter alerts.
- ✔ **Twitter Advanced Search:** You can conduct Twitter searches using very specific criteria to find tweets related to your chosen keywords using the Advanced Twitter Search form (<http://search.twitter.com/advanced>).
- ✔ **Twitter apps:** A number of Twitter applications can help you monitor tweets and conversations on Twitter that are related to your business. Monitter ([www.monitter.com](http://www.monitter.com)) is a great Twitter app for keeping tabs on conversations using your chosen keywords.

Again, content marketing can't occur in a silo. You need to be aware of what's being said about your business, brand, products, competitors, and so on. In this way, you will be able to respond and create content that's even more relevant to your targeted audience's wants and needs. Be sure to check out Chapter 16 to read about how to best respond to negative conversations and content about your business that you find online.

## *Revealing the Broad Reach of Online Content*

Your business operates in a truly global environment, and content marketing via the Internet has the ability to put your business in front of more people than ever. In 2009, comScore reported that the number of Internet users around the world had surpassed one billion, and that number didn't even include people who accessed the Internet via smartphones or public computers such as Internet cafés and libraries. Furthermore, the majority of those

users were in the Asia Pacific region, followed by users in Europe, North America, the Middle East and Africa, and Latin America ([www.comscore.com/Press\\_Events/Press\\_Releases/2009/1/Global\\_Internet\\_Audience\\_1\\_Billion](http://www.comscore.com/Press_Events/Press_Releases/2009/1/Global_Internet_Audience_1_Billion)). And the growth in Internet use shows no signs of slowing down. According to predictions by Forrester research, the number of Internet users across the globe will more than double to 2.4 billion by 2014.

In fact, many small businesses have grown into global companies with millions of dollars in annual revenue simply through minimal efforts to build an online presence and by publishing valuable content. The sidebar, “The success of Gary Vaynerchuk and Wine Library,” describes one of the most popular examples of a small business expanding beyond anyone’s wildest dreams, thanks to a blog and online video content.

It’s amazing to think that people around the world can see the words you publish online instantaneously. Therefore, the question for businesses isn’t “Why should you use content marketing?” but rather “Why *aren’t* you *already* using content marketing?”

It comes down to earning a share of the online voice as mentioned earlier in this chapter. If you’re actively participating in the online conversation (or at least being mentioned in that conversation), then you’re earning valuable publicity without spending any money. The value of this *earned media* is incalculable. The sidebar, “The success of Gary Vaynerchuk and Wine Library,” is the perfect example of how earned media born of amazing content can catapult a business to new heights of success. But you can’t get there unless you’re consistently and persistently publishing your own shareworthy, amazing content that your audience finds useful.

## The success of Gary Vaynerchuk and Wine Library

Gary Vaynerchuk’s father owned a small wine store in Springfield, New Jersey. As Gary grew up, he spent a lot of time at his father’s store and developed a love of wines. One day, he asked his father if he could start a blog for the store. His father acquiesced, and Gary began publishing content about his love of wine, his unique ways of tasting wines and comparing the flavors of those wines to unusual objects like rocks. Soon, he added an online video element where he used his own video camera to record himself talking about wine to the Wine

Library blog, and Wine Library TV (<http://tv.winelibrary.com>) was born.

Gary’s passion for his subject matter and his enigmatic personality were contagious, and his audience grew and grew. Today, Wine Library is a \$60 million-per year business with over half of those sales coming from the Internet. Gary is a sought after social media speaker, and he signed a multi-million dollar contract to author a series of books about social media marketing. And it all started from a blog.

## *Shifting from a Marketer to a Publisher Mindset*

One of the first things you must do in order to be successful with content marketing is to forget everything you know about marketing. That's a scary concept for many people. For years, businesses have been following marketing strategies based on interrupting consumers. For your content marketing efforts to work, you need to put the aggressive marketing mindset on the backburner and focus on writing and publishing shareworthy content, as mentioned earlier in this chapter.

Therefore, as you're creating content, do so with your audience in mind, not your business goals. Deliver the content your audience wants and needs and then promote that content separately through your social media interactions. Inevitably, as I mentioned earlier, your content and social media marketing activities will overlap, but your content should be able to stand on its own, separate from your social media marketing tactics. This section offers some helpful suggestions to better enable you to separate your content marketing and content publishing thoughts.

### *Applying the 80-20 rule*

In marketing theory, the 80-20 rule states that 80 percent of business comes from 20 percent of the customers. I like to use a similar concept when it comes to content marketing and social media marketing. Remember, you have to think like a publisher to be successful with content marketing. If you apply the 80-20 rule to your content marketing efforts, 80 percent or more of the content you develop should *not* be self-promotional and 20 percent or less should be self-promotional. That means the vast majority of the time you spend on content marketing activities won't be directly related to marketing at all.

But hold on! Just because 80 percent of your efforts aren't directly self-promotional doesn't mean they're not indirectly marketing your business. In fact, it's indirect marketing that makes content marketing so powerful. Every piece of content you publish or share can add value to the online experience and further strengthen your relationship with your online audience of brand advocates who will talk about your content and share it with their own audiences. Don't think content that doesn't directly promote your business isn't helping drive revenues. It's just happening indirectly and might not be apparent immediately.

## *Adding value, staying relevant, and being shareworthy*

If you're following the 80-20 rule, you know that 80 percent of your content should add value to the online experience, particularly for your target audience. This is how you build relationships and set expectations for your target audience and among online influencers who can help to spread your messages even farther across the global Web community. You need to take the time to research what type of information, messages, and content your target audience wants from a business like yours, and then deliver that content in a professional manner. Read Chapter 2 for more on researching your audience and online influencers.

In addition, you need to offer content that your audience will share with others. Traditional publishers use this strategy to create content that not only sells newspapers or magazines but also offers a pass-along value that may convert secondary readers into subscribers. The same concept holds true for content marketing today. The difference is that today anyone, including you, can be a content publisher and use that content to lead to bigger and better things, such as brand awareness, business growth, and sales.

Never has there been such an exciting opportunity for small and mid-size businesses to stake their claims and position themselves for success — because now it's not necessarily the depth of your wallet that leads to success through content marketing but rather the depth of your words. Content marketing enables businesses to continually meet customer expectations and to add something extra to the consumer experience that helps develop trust, security, and loyalty.

Content marketing offers the perfect way for businesses to leverage the three S's of Customer Loyalty:

- ✔ **Stability:** Customers become loyal to a product, brand, or business when it sends a consistent message they can trust and rely on.
- ✔ **Sustainability:** Customers become loyal to a product, brand, or business when they believe it will be with them for a long time or at least for a specific amount of time with a predetermined end.
- ✔ **Security:** Customers become loyal to a product, brand, or business when it gives them a feeling of comfort or peace of mind.

As you can see, consumers actively look for products, brands, and businesses that they feel they can trust and that won't abandon them. They become emotionally involved in the products, brands, and businesses that

help them feel a sense of comfort. A well-executed content marketing strategy can offer the stability, sustainability, and security that consumers seek, and it can help them develop an emotional connection and relationship with a product, brand, or business.

## ***Developing Content to Build Your Brand and Form Relationships***

Content marketing, paired with social media marketing, is the single largest opportunity for individuals, organizations, and companies of any size to build their brands and build their businesses.

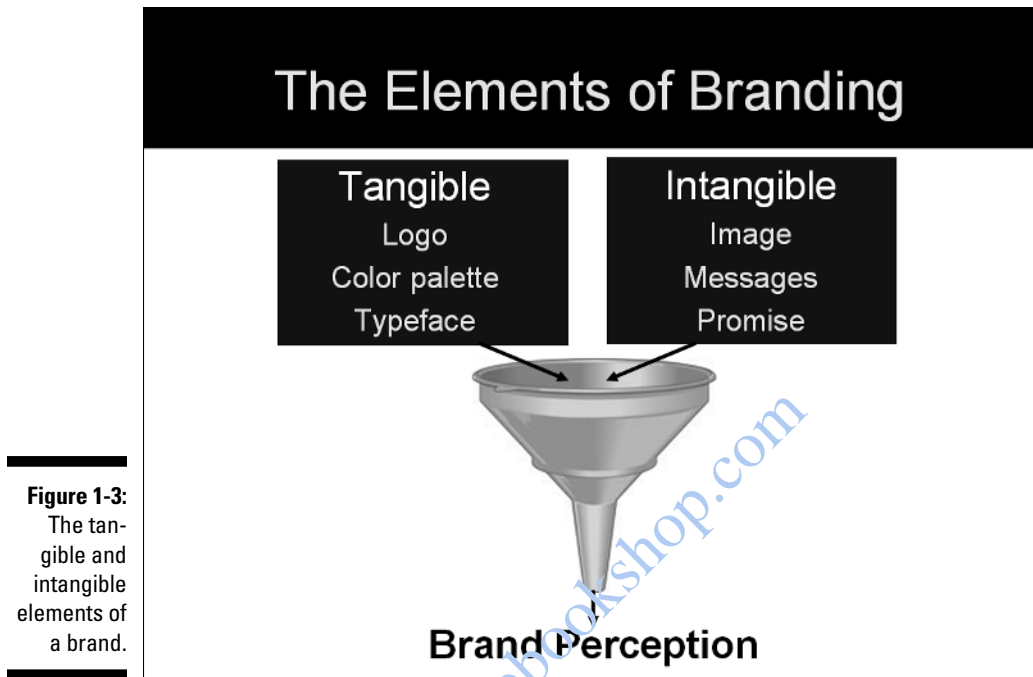
Content marketing offers a unique opportunity for you to engage with current and potential employees, position your brand as a brand of choice, develop an ongoing dialogue with consumers and influencers that ultimately creates brand advocates and brand guardians, and to learn an incredible amount about your target audience and competitors. What's not to love?

### ***Understanding what a brand is***

Branding is a difficult concept for many people to understand. That's because a brand isn't truly a tangible or quantifiable thing. Although a brand can be represented by tangible elements, such as a logo, color palette, and so on, intangible elements work with the tangible elements to create consumer perceptions, as illustrated in Figure 1-3. In other words, brands are built by consumers, not companies. Companies might nudge consumers in a desired direction, but consumers create brands through experiences and emotions.

The easiest way to think of a brand is as a promise to consumers. A brand sets expectations for consumers through that promise and meets those expectations in every interaction. Brands that don't meet those expectations fail.

As consumers experience brands and make them their own, the brands grow. The most powerful brands are relationship brands. These brands are typically shared by groups of people and provide opportunities for consumers to select how they want to interact with the brand they love through a wide variety of experiences. You can set the wheels in motion to turn your branding into a relationship brand by consistently and persistently publishing interesting, shareworthy content relevant to consumers' wants and needs, thereby adding value to their lives.



**Figure 1-3:**  
The tangible and intangible elements of a brand.

## *Positioning your brand*

Before you can create content that sets brand expectations in consumers' minds, you need to determine where your brand is positioned in the marketplace relative to your competitors. The most powerful brands own a word in consumers' minds. For example, in the auto industry, Toyota owns reliable in the minds of U.S. consumers, Hyundai owns affordable, and Cadillac owns luxury. Take some time to determine where your business should be positioned relative to your competitors, and work on creating content that accurately reflects that position.

If you own a gourmet food store, for example, publishing content that shows consumers how to make meals for under \$10 doesn't match your brand's position. Doing so will confuse consumers and could cause them to turn away from your brand in search of one that does meet their expectations based on the brand's promise. In other words, don't promise high-end, gourmet products and shopping experiences and then deliver low-end, cheap information and content experiences. That content doesn't add value to your target audience's lives, so they won't talk about it or share it with other people who might help your business grow.

You can determine your brand's position by taking the Brand Perception Snap Shot, which requires you to answer the following three questions:

1. What five words would you use to describe your brand today?
2. What five words would your customers use to describe your brand today?
3. What five words do you want customers to use to describe your brand in the future? What is your ultimate goal?

Be honest in answering these questions and then take some time to review your results. Find the gaps and opportunities and fill them. You can do this through your content marketing efforts and easily position your brand in consumers' minds. Your consistency and persistence will pay off over time as you continually develop audience expectations and perceptions of your brand.

## *Establishing credibility and becoming the go-to person for a topic*

Your business is nothing if it's not credible. Your amazing content can help you develop an online reputation that is built on authority and that clearly demonstrates your knowledge and expertise in your area of business or topic. When you publish content, do so with the goal of always making sure the content helps to establish you as the go-to person for information related to your business.

The more you publish valuable content and the more people talk about that content, the more your reputation will grow and spread across the online community. One day you'll start getting e-mails or phone calls from people who want to use you as an expert for an article or interview. That's a sign your efforts are starting to pay off! Pat yourself on the back and keep publishing shareworthy content that helps to position your brand and yourself in the eyes of consumers and online influencers.



Just as Gary Vaynerchuk (see the sidebar earlier in this chapter) wasn't always the go-to person for social media marketing, you'll need time to establish your reputation and become a popular source for topics related to your own line of business. Don't give up too soon!

It's also important to determine the style and voice you want to use in your content marketing efforts. That style and voice needs to be appropriate for your brand image and should match consumer expectations for your brand, but it also must be real and honest. If your personality and your passion for your business don't shine through, you're unlikely to retain an audience and build relationships based on that content.

Similarly, you need to be accessible to your audience. Communicate with them and respond to their questions, e-mails, comments on your blog, tweets, and so on. Content marketing and social media marketing go hand-in-hand. You can't publish content and then disappear. Instead, actively engage with your audience to deepen your relationships with them as well as their relationships with your brand.

## *Understanding the ARMS Theory of Brand Building*

Four primary steps to brand building strategy can help you understand where you are on the path to building a successful brand and where you still have to go to reach the level of success you want and need. I call this the ARMS Theory of Brand Building, broken down as follows:

- ✓ **Awareness:** Consumers move from an unaware state to an aware state. They have heard of a brand but don't remember it without a prompt and can't remember any details about it.
- ✓ **Recognition:** Consumers move from an aware state to a state of recognition where they remember a brand when they are prompted and know what it is and what it's for.
- ✓ **Memory:** Consumers move from a state of recognition to a state of memory when they can recall a brand and what it's for without being prompted in any way.
- ✓ **Spreading the word:** Consumers move from a state of memory to spreading the word when they have tried a brand, believe the brand promise, and want to share their knowledge and experiences with other people.

The ultimate goal of brand building is reaching the “spreading the word” stage where consumers aren't only loyal to your brand but also advocate it and defend it against naysayers. Therefore, it's essential that on the social Web you focus your efforts on building a band of brand advocates who will share your content, promote your content and your brand, and stick up for your content and your brand when it is questioned. You need to cultivate relationships with your brand advocates just as they cultivate relationships with your brand. Again, there's more to content marketing than simply publishing content. If you don't pursue the activities that can help the content thrive and work as indirect marketing tools, you won't get the results you want and need.

## Committing to a Long-Term Strategy

As discussed earlier in this chapter, brands aren't built overnight and content marketing is a long-term strategy to build brands and businesses. You need to commit to pursuing content marketing initiatives for years to come in order to be successful. Remember the compounding effect of the blogging concept described earlier in this chapter (in the section, "Creating entry points"). That kind of domino effect can't occur without a lot of dominos already in position (that would be your varied pieces of content). Each new piece of shareworthy content that you publish plays an important part in expanding the domino effect. Keep adding dominos!

It's also important to set reasonable expectations for your content marketing success. That's because your success is directly dependent on the amount of time you commit to content marketing. The more time you put into publishing great content and engaging with your audience online and offline, the better your chances are of seeing real results sooner rather than later. However, much of your content marketing efforts will rely on your willingness to experiment and tweak your efforts. That's because content marketing is still too new to have a defined roadmap to success. Instead, carve out your own roadmap. Just don't expect to become an Internet sensation overnight!

Perhaps one of the most important things to keep in mind as you're pursuing your own content marketing plan is . . . don't get too caught up in the numbers. When it comes to content marketing, quality trumps quantity.



If you must measure your results, focus on hard and soft metrics, as described in Chapter 16.

Think of it this way. If you publish 1,000 pieces of poorly written content, they won't help you much. In fact, they could do more harm than good if they don't live up to consumers' expectations for your brand. However, if you publish 100 pieces of interesting, shareworthy content, the chances of that content spreading to your target audience and driving those people to visit your Web site, blog, or other branded online destination for more information are much greater.

Similarly, having 10,000 blog subscribers who don't share your posts or publish comments is far less helpful than having 1,000 blog subscribers who link to your posts, share them on Twitter and other social sites, join the conversation through comments, and so on. Quality relationships with your target audience can help you build your business far more effectively than can big numbers that are meaningless in terms of converting sales. It might be tempting to focus on numbers, but try to refrain!

## *Benchmarking Other Businesses That Are Doing It Right*

Before you begin your own content marketing plan, it's helpful to look at other businesses that are doing great things in the online space. Of course, you don't have to do the same things that the businesses mentioned in this section are doing with content marketing, but you can get some ideas and implement some similar tactics if they're right for your business, brand, and audience. The key is to avoid reinventing the wheel. Take some time to research what other companies are doing well or mistakes they've made, and learn from those companies. If similar tactics might work for you, try them. Also, make sure you know what your competitors are doing so you can act appropriately to retain your brand's position in consumers' minds.

Following are several businesses that are doing great things with content marketing:

- ✔ **Gary Vaynerchuk:** As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Gary Vaynerchuk of Wine Library is a great person to follow to see how video content can help a business grow. <http://tv.winelibrary.com>
- ✔ **Naked Pizza:** Naked Pizza uses Twitter for both social media marketing and content marketing. The New Orleans-based pizza retailer publishes direct marketing messages such as discount offerings as well as newsletter content, all in 140-characters or less. <http://twitter.com/nakedpizza>
- ✔ **Dell:** A large company that has evolved into a content marketer to benchmark is Dell. The company effectively surrounds consumers with branded content through varied Twitter profiles, blogs, forums, social networks, and more, many of which can be found by visiting the online Dell Community site as shown in Figure 1-4. <http://en.community.dell.com>
- ✔ **Whole Foods Market:** Whole Foods Market publishes content that adds value to users' lives through a large number of national and local Twitter profiles, blogs, Facebook, Flickr, and more, all of which give Whole Foods a personality that matches the brand and a way of engaging with consumers. Many of these branded destinations can be found from the Whole Foods Market Web site map at [www.wholefoodsmarket.com/sitemap.php](http://www.wholefoodsmarket.com/sitemap.php).

As you spend time online, always be on the lookout for great content marketing examples and companies doing amazing things through content marketing. There is always something new to discover, and you never know when you might stumble upon an idea that will work perfectly for your own business!

**Figure 1-4:**  
The Dell  
Community  
provides  
access to  
a variety  
of content  
through  
blogs,  
forums, and  
more.



<http://www.bookshop.com>

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