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VALUABLE CONTENT **MARKETING**

**HOW TO MAKE QUALITY CONTENT
YOUR KEY TO SUCCESS**

2ND EDITION

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CHAPTER 12

MAKING YOUR WEBSITE VALUABLE

Even if you have stellar content such as e-books, webcasts, white papers, all roads ultimately lead back to your website. If your website is not resonating with prospects and clients, you are ultimately losing business.

Michele Linn¹

In this chapter:

- Build your content strategy on firm foundations.
- Is your website set up for content marketing success?
- The role of a valuable business website.
- The 80:20 rule of content.
- Logic, emotion and content for every step of the sale.
- Traditional website versus valuable website.
- Guidelines for a valuable website.
- Working with your website design and development team.
- Two important web design features.
- Marketing automation and the future of websites.
- Instructions for your web designer/developer.
- Ideas for key sections of your site.

Build your content strategy on firm foundations

You can share articles, videos, e-books and Tweet to your heart's delight but if the website these pull people back to doesn't convert interest into action – to return, to sign up to your newsletter, to contact you, to refer, to buy – then your investment will be wasted. Will your current website do your new content marketing strategy justice? Can you create, upload and house all this new content easily? Will people be able to find the valuable stuff on your site? Will your website convert their interest into action and motivate them to get in touch or stay in touch? Does it help you track their behaviour along the way?

Every strategic content marketing project we've worked on over the years has necessitated some work on the company website. Most likely some change will be needed to make your website deliver the benefits of your new content strategy.

This chapter shows you how to get your website right, making it valuable to your customers and turning it into a fully contributing member of your sales team.

Evaluation time: is your website up to the job?

Before we look in detail at what makes a valuable, content-marketing ready website, here's a quick evaluation tool to give you a picture of where your own site is now.

IS YOUR WEBSITE SET UP FOR CONTENT MARKETING SUCCESS?	YES	IN PART	NO
Is it immediately clear to the visitor what your company does? Is there a clear, customer-focused message upfront so people know they're in the right place?			
Is there a strong story that anchors all the content and gives meaning to the message? Does the website answer 'Why' as well as 'What' and 'How'?			

IS YOUR WEBSITE SET UP FOR CONTENT MARKETING SUCCESS?	YES	IN PART	NO
Do you have lots of valuable content as well as sales pages on the site? Great content marketing sites follow the 80:20 rule – 80% valuable content to 20% sales content.			
Is there an active, and well-designed blog as part of the site? The blog is the engine room of the website and often the place visitors land first. Does it feel like a welcoming home?			
Is there a resources section to house the deeper content? You're looking for a library of stock content – the heavyweight, long-lasting content along side the blogs.			
How up to date is the content? Fresh content added regularly? No tumbleweed. Your visitors will look for signs of life.			
How easy is it to find all the valuable content? Think of the visitor journeys through the site. Can they find what they need each step of the way? Is the site structure and information architecture clear?			
Is there a variety of content in different formats (eg video, infographics, podcasts as well as written content)? Does your content suit all learning styles?			
Plenty of evidence-based sales content? Case studies, stories of real customers, testimonials? Can the visitor find proof that the company delivers value to real people?			
Clear calls to action? Is it immediately obvious what the company wants you to do having found this site?			

IS YOUR WEBSITE SET UP FOR CONTENT MARKETING SUCCESS?	YES	IN PART	NO
Is there a sign up for email updates – so people can keep in touch with the content? This is a key call to action so make it very clear.			
Human touch – evidence of real people behind the firm? People do business with people. People profiles with photos and links to social accounts; author profiles again with photos?			
Engagement tools eg social share buttons, commenting facility, ability to rate content?			
Links to active social profiles? Easy-to-find evidence of an active and engaged community?			
Compelling service/product information with related content showing up on each page? Is the reader enticed to dig deeper, learn more?			
Responsive website design – so the site is easily viewable on all platforms?			
Professional, distinctive modern design that brings life and personality to the content?			
How customer focused is this website overall? (Messaging, copy, layout, design.) Is it all ‘we, we, we’ or ‘you, you, you’?			
Analytics and insight? Does your web platform give you the insight you need into visitor behaviour and content performance?			

Use the questions to help you understand where you need to focus to make your site an effective platform for your valuable content marketing efforts.

The role of a valuable business website

Over 80 per cent of buyers are looking to the web to evaluate you as a potential service provider. Whether sellers are consciously shaping their online presences or not, buyers are looking there for information.

Hinge Marketing research 2014, www.hingemarketing.com²

Potential customers and clients will be led to your website from all directions so you need to make it clear to them that they've come to the right place. Your website should feel like home to them. *Here's a place where people really understand me.*

Start with the questions your customers are asking – their concerns and problems. Your entire website needs to embody the same customer-focused attitude as your blog. Most business websites are written as if they are sales proposals or flat online brochures. Yes, the website is about you, and your business, but just like the rest of your content you need to approach it from *the customer's* point of view. Not 'Why we're great' but 'Here's how we can help you'. This is a complete turnaround in tone for many business websites.

In his book *A Website that Works*, Mark O'Brien, founder of world-renowned web development consultancy Newfangled, is very clear on the three goals for a business website:

- to attract prospects;
- to get them to the areas of the site they are most interested in; and
- to bring them into the next level of their relationship with the firm.

The role of a good website is to engage web visitors with your business; to pull them closer to you, win their trust, inspire them to spread the word about you, and to buy from you when the time is right. A valuable website is a powerful platform that independently draws in leads, builds relationships and helps convert that interest into sales. That should be your aim.

All the hard work we have done on our website and content has greatly increased our brand awareness. Now people are coming to us instead of us always going to them.

Dave James, MD of Ascentor, www.ascentor.co.uk, @ascentor

Make sure the content caters for visitors at each stage of buying journey – from early stage research through evaluation and selection to loyal customer. Buying is hard, and prospects are crying out for your assistance. So when it comes to your website don't just pitch.

Turn it into a veritable hub of information and resources that visitors can delve into and learn from – more library than proposal or brochure. You'll get much better results that way.

How self-oriented is your website?

Take a look at your current website and try this simple test. How much of the wording is devoted to promoting the company? How much focuses on your potential customers and their needs and challenges? To make your website valuable, talk more about your clients and customers than you do about yourself. You, you, you, not we, we, we. This is a simple way of testing self-orientation.

Give your website a customer-focused goal, like Mel Lester

Management consultant Mel Lester demonstrates this customer-focused attitude perfectly. His desire is to create content that serves his clients and he leads his website with a strong promise:

Mel Lester is pleased to offer this website as a valuable source of 'how-to-get-things-done' information and tools. I set out with an ambitious goal: to create the best internet resource for helping managers of architectural, engineering, and environmental consulting firms succeed, both corporately and personally.

Taken from the home page of www.bizedge.biz³

Mel's statement demonstrates all the valuable attributes to aspire to with a good website. His content is helpful and focused, his goal clear and compelling. He has committed to content excellence and is evidently sincere in his

desire to help. He focuses on the customer first and it gets results: by not selling so hard he elicits more sales.

If you are going to succeed with your website put your customer first, like Mel.

We've seen so many people design a website first, and then tack all the content on afterwards. The words are seen as just a filler to replace the *lorem ipsum* text, blogs are an afterthought hidden at the back of the website. By creating valuable content first then designing the website around it, you'll create a far stronger and more useful platform.

The 80:20 rule of content

How should your website content be structured? How many static sales pages versus how many pages of valuable content? It's an important distinction to make.

If you want to win on the web, weight your website heavily in favour of valuable content. This means devoting far more space to useful, educational content overall than you do to sales pages. And it means devoting more of your marketing budget to creating this type of content too.

A great rule of thumb to help you strike the right balance is 80:20. That is, 80 per cent of your website should be devoted to the helpful valuable kind of content you consistently create with your clients/customers firmly in mind, and the remaining 20 per cent should be your more static sales content.

Now this is a BIG change for many business websites, and we'd suggest you aim to change the ratio in favour of valuable content over time.

At Valuable Content, our blog is the beating heart of our website. At the time of writing, if you include our blog articles, we have 270 pages of valuable content versus 15 sales pages. More than 80:20 in favour of the valuable stuff!

Provide content for every step along the path to a sale

In a world where research is increasingly carried out online, much of the sales process is now complete before a customer gets in touch with your firm (60 per cent in B2B according to *The Digital Evolution in B2B Marketing*, Google and CEB). You'll know that your website has a major role to play, particularly if your product or service is one that takes careful consideration before purchase (rather than a snap, impulse buy).

Imagine you're trying to find a new accountant for your business. More than likely you'll put out many feelers, but whatever route you take you're likely to end up at a website with a lot of questions.

Would this company solve my problem? Do they want to work for people like me? Are they expert in what they do? Would they make a good partner? Who runs this thing? What do other customers say? What results do they get? Will they value my business? Would they be good to work with? Do their world view and mine match up? Exactly how does it all work? What's the first step? How can I test if they'd be right?

Your website needs to answer all these questions through the content you provide. Give them the answers they need to choose to take the next step forward in their journey to becoming a loyal customer. Bryony Thomas captures this journey in detail, expanding on the elements of emotional and logical needs, time taken and the third parties people talk to, in the *Watertight Marketing* framework,⁴ in the book of the same name. Think through the information that the people, potential customers, will be seeking as they're looking to buy. Use your content to give them a valuable experience and a call to action at every step to move them along that path.

Imagine yourself as a potential customer. What thought processes do you go through when you're thinking about making a big purchase?

- **From research to awareness.** When someone's researching, you want to appear everywhere they look – you want to pop up in search, in their

social feeds, in the press they're reading, through recommendation. Your job at these outposts is to draw them back to your website, so whether it's your tweets, headlines in Google search or the title of a podcast, present them with something short, snappy and instantly appealing that motivates them to click through to your site.

- **From awareness to interest.** You have their attention, now you want their interest to grow. Provide answers to their challenges: make them think, make them laugh, inspire them or teach them something new. Draw them closer with blog articles, videos, infographics etc. Don't lose their interest – motivate them to stay in touch by signing up to your email list.
- **Surviving evaluation.** They're ready to buy. Make sure they buy from you. Give them all the information they need to make that decision, like you would in any good brochure: up-to-date case studies (video plus written), testimonials, reviews and clear information on your company and service/product and pricing. Your deeper written content is helpful here – fantastically useful guides, FAQs etc will give you more time when the potential customer is making a decision. So give them the detail they need to make the decision process easier – and make sure it's easy to find.
- **Try before you buy.** They've decided you're probably the people or the product for the job, but how can they be sure? Give them a flavour of what it's like to work with you through the content you share. Often in the professional world this occurs through an offline meeting or call, but your website can help here too. Think webinars or online reviews, offered via your site. Make the final decision to buy from you as easy as you can.
- **From sale to happy customer.** Congratulations, you have a new customer. The job of your website does not stop there. Hold their hand as they settle in to using your service or product. A series of warm, useful welcome emails with links to blogs and content on your site will help.
- **From customer to loyal advocate.** Keep the conversation going with your content to build an experience they love enough to share. Not just how to get the best out of your product or service but a drip feed of useful inspiring content that builds their understanding and shows you continue to care. Showcasing their success is a great way to do this. Make your customers the heroes and cement your bond with them.

Logic and emotion

People usually buy on emotion, then use logic to justify the decision they have just made. In the first part of the *Watertight Marketing Framework*, Bryony Thomas shows the interplay between logic and emotion in what she calls 'The Logic Sandwich'. To catch someone's attention and hook into a need you must appeal to their emotions. Then the logical brain kicks in as they scrutinize your offer. As the final decision draws near it needs to feel right and you're back to emotion.

With a mix of marketing content on your website, from visuals to blogs, research and factual information to a heartfelt manifesto, you can make sure you hit the right emotional and logical triggers to keep someone on the path to your bottom line.

Appealing to the heart of your buyers may be harder to quantify than appealing to logic, but there are steps you can take to make sure your website hits the mark.

We often refer to this beautiful quote from Maya Angelou:

I've learnt that people will forget what you've said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.

Maya Angelou⁵

That's as true for businesses as it is for people. A business that makes people feel good will fly far. Smiling and listening comes naturally when we meet people face-to-face, but sometimes these important feel-good factors get lost when they're translated into a website. And as your website is your business by proxy, it's smart to do all you can to make it as feel-good as possible.

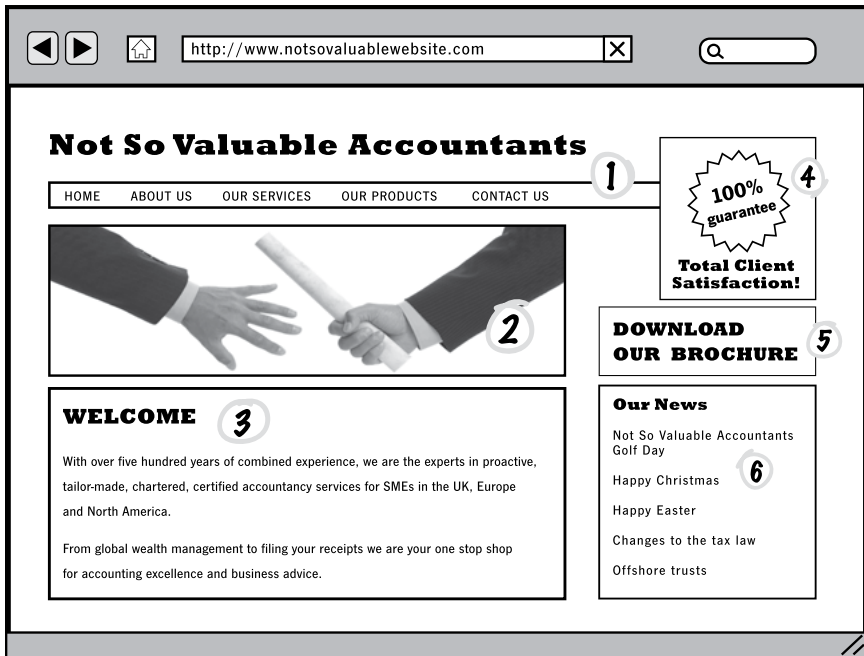
Feel-good means friendly – the right tone of voice, pictures of real people, good design. It also means it makes it work effortlessly. Don't underestimate the huge surge of gratitude you'll get from visitors when they find exactly what they're looking for straight away, and whose progress through the site is joyfully straightforward. We love sites that make life easy for us.

So when you're thinking of designing your website content, think head plus heart.

Traditional website versus valuable website

So you're convinced that you need a valuable website. What does that look like in practice? What elements make a traditional brochure-style website different from a valuable content marketing site? Here are a couple of different layouts to show you what we mean.

Not so valuable website

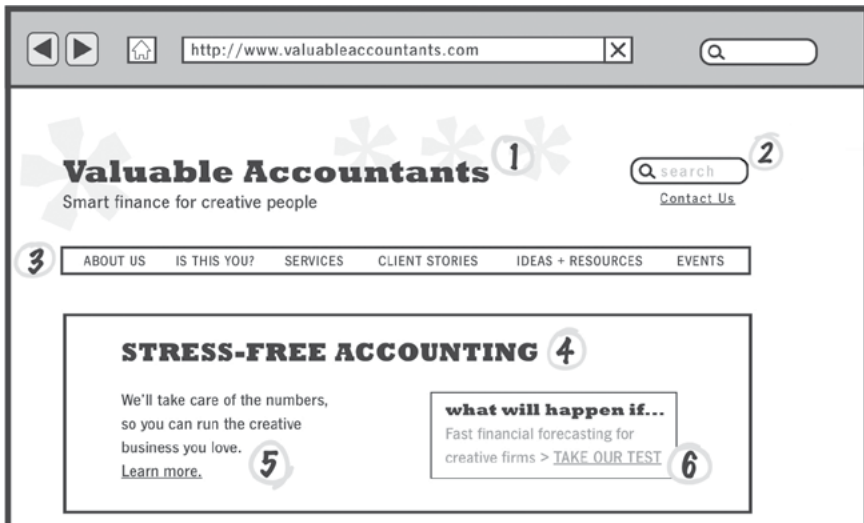


Characteristics of a traditional, brochure-style website

- 1 The menu doesn't even mention the customer. It's all about the company. Nothing valuable on the site to help clients solve their finance challenges.
- 2 No clear message. No clear story for the customer, just an anonymous stock image. Customer can't easily see what is in it for them.

- 3 Self-oriented wording. The copy is all about how great they are. Plenty of nonsense gobbledygook too. Also trying to be everything to everyone (and catching no one in the process).
- 4 Meaningless self-promotion that doesn't build trust.
- 5 Selling, not helping. Sales brochure is the only download. Presumes that visitors want to buy, now.
- 6 Company news. Internal-looking news of no real interest to the customer, and out of date.

Characteristics of a valuable, lead-generating website



- 1 Tagline focused on the customer. The whole website is designed and written around the needs of the customer. Valuable content is prioritized.
- 2 Search.
- 3 Simple customer-focused toolbar.
- 4 Clear message. Sets the scene with an inspiring snapshot of what this company is all about and what it will do for them.
- 5 Customer-focused wording. Engages with their issues and tells them they are in the right place.
- 6 Content that engages with customer challenge and pulls them in.

- 7** Valuable Accountants are a team of experienced accountants and bookkeepers. We specialise in working with creative businesses in the South West, helping them become more profitable and more fun to run. [Find out more.](#)

Your Financial Business Challenge **8**

<p>Help us understand our finances and make smart decisions.</p> <p>READ MORE</p>	<p>Do we need a financial director?</p> <p>READ MORE</p>	<p>We're great at creative, not so great with numbers.</p> <p>READ MORE</p>	<p>Have we got our pricing right?</p> <p>READ MORE</p>
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Valuable Accountants Library **9**

<p>Poster</p> <p>A financial manifesto for creatives to live by</p>	<p>Guide</p> <p>10 ways to win at pricing creative services</p>	<p>Blog</p> <p>Are you pitching your way out of business? 10</p>
<p>Story</p> <p>Cheesy Design – from one man band to award-winning 30 person agency in 3 years</p>	<p>Tool</p> <p>Are your finances set up for success? Valuable Visibility puts you in control</p>	<p>Event</p> <p>Profitability for creative business WORKSHOP</p>

11

<p>ABOUT</p> <p>Why Valuable Accountants</p> <p>Our people</p> <p>How we started</p> <p>Manifesto</p> <p>Fun with numbers</p>	<p>INFO FOR</p> <p>Business owner</p> <p>Creative Director</p> <p>Financial Director</p>	<p>YOUR FOCUS</p> <p>Business accounts</p> <p>Financial director service</p> <p>What will happen if...</p> <p>Finance for growth</p> <p>Planning to exit</p>	<p>RESOURCES</p> <p>Guide to finance for creative businesses</p> <p>Blog</p> <p>Podcast 14</p> <p>Financial forecasting tools</p>	<p>CONNECT</p> <p>Join the Valuable Accounting Club 12</p> <p>13</p> <p><input type="text" value="EMAIL"/> <input type="button" value="Sign Up"/></p> <p> Twitter</p> <p> LinkedIn</p> <p> Google+</p>
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- 7** Niche business, focused market.
- 8** Customer-focused route into service pages. Gets them to information that's relevant to their challenge, fast.
- 9** Heaps of valuable content in different formats. Highlights customer stories. Important credibility-builders.
- 10** Blog. Lots of fresh, useful content. A hit with customers and search engines alike.
- 11** Use footer as quick route to find what you need.
- 12** Monthly newsletter to maintain contact and build relationships.
- 13** Easy ways to get in touch.
- 14** Offers a clear call to action. The sign-up box is motivating and clear.

Working with your website design and development team

Your website is a work of commerce, not a work of art.

Mark O'Brien in *A Website That Works*, www.newfangled.com, @newfangledmark⁶

If you are thinking about designing or redesigning your company website, it is tempting to focus first on how it should look to impress your customers. This strategy prioritizes form over function, aesthetics over information. But this design-led approach fails to consider how and why people buy your services and what customers want from a professional business website.

Design is very important, but if you concentrate on colour schemes before planning the content you run the risk of creating a great-looking site that customers either have no use for or cannot use.

With a few exceptions, people visit the web for its utility, not its beauty. Having a visually appealing site is good, of course, but content is golden.

Web usability guru Jakob Nielsen, www.useit.com⁷

Think content first. Before you pick up the phone to a web designer, think very carefully about what you and your customers want from your site; what does it need to say to convince them to buy your services and how should this content be laid out?

A good way to get this clear is to create a 'wireframe': a non-graphical layout of each page of your site. This will enable you to organize the content and test the layout before you start building the site. Draw out a structure with pen and paper, or use a simple wireframing tool such as Balsamiq (www.balsamiq.com). If you wireframe first, before a single graphic is chosen or line of code written, you have a far greater chance of web success, for you and your customers, and you'll avoid expensive and time-consuming revisions at a later date. Use this to help you brief your web designer/developer. Use a tool like this to show your designer what you're looking to achieve. You'll find that many good web firms use tools like this too.

Valuable Tip

Spend as much time planning your new website as you do building it.

Two important web design features

Here are two design features to add into your plan and discuss with your web team:

1 Related content

Too many websites miss the opportunity to engage people. The problem is often not the content, but how findable it is. Related content and sidebars are your friends here. Prioritize these as part of your web design and you'll encourage people to stay longer on the site and engage more deeply.

If you're following the advice in this book you'll have both a library of valuable content, and sales pages that talk about your company and the products/services it provides. Connect the two by signposting the reader to related content in your sidebars.

Give the visitor links that match their interest. Use a related content feature to direct people deeper into the website and motivate them to stick around. 'Our services' is a key place where your valuable content can add richness, authority and depth. In addition to a clear description of how you help, signpost people towards a relevant customer story, or a handy guide. Make it easy for them to get to the information that they need, and prove your expertise in the process.

No page should be a dead end; every page should open a door to further useful and engaging content. Using related links is a great strategy for keeping people on your site (your bounce rate will drop) and earning their loyalty. Sites that offer useful suggestions encourage people to interact with them and to come back repeatedly. Maintain the conversation by ensuring that related links are relevant, well written and presented so that they get noticed.

2 Calls to action

Clear calls to action across the site are absolutely key. You've got their interest. What do you want people to do? Because people will be arriving at your website via your blogs or from any number of places, every page needs to have a clear call to action. Make it obvious what you want people to do next. Action is everything when it comes to your website.

The key actions you want people to take when they visit the site are:

- take something away – download a document they find useful;
- keep in touch – sign up to your updates or newsletter;
- get in touch.

Include these calls to action as relevant across the site. Give calls to action some emotional weight by showing you understand the client's problem. 'Wrestling with end of year accounts? Call Sarah' is better than 'Call us'.

Marketing automation and the future of websites

If you're considering a website redesign, it will pay you to look ahead at what's happening in the fields of marketing automation, CRM and new email marketing, and how these can be linked to your own site. The next generation super sites are much powerful than websites of the past, and the technology is becoming more accessible. Next generation websites are an integral part of a whole lead development ecosystem. They don't stand alone but are linked to the social web, to your growing email subscriber list, to your contact database, to smart analytics.

Joining up your website with a smart marketing automation system (eg Hubspot, Act On, Marketo and more) that connects with your email marketing tool (eg Mailchimp, Aweber) and CRM platform (eg Salesforce) will give you a high-performing content marketing base that will give you insight, knowledge and real control.

Marketing automation is a key part of this ecosystem, a way to help you power your website and manage the relationships your content builds. Initially the preserve of larger firms, with new platforms like New Rainmaker from

Copyblogger (newrainmaker.com) these powerful online and sales platforms are becoming more accessible for smaller businesses too.

Here are two powerful elements that smart automation platform like this will bring.

1. Automation platforms give better insight

In terms of insight, analytics takes you only so far. You can learn from analytics what content is driving most site traffic, where this is coming from and therefore what places are best to share your content. But there are other, important questions that are more difficult to answer.

Questions like:

- Specifically, who is consuming which content and when?
- Which types of content (both topics and delivery formats) are most likely to attract your ideal customers?
- Which valuable content is leading to the best opportunities and ultimately real revenue for your firm?

A good marketing automation system will help you answer these tricky questions by tracking visitor behaviour. As a visitor moves through the buying process and eventually becomes a customer, it allows you to track their progress back to the first point of entry and conversion – closing the loop on which content is most likely to lead to good opportunities and new business.

A good automation system lets you go more granular still, tracking how your *ideal* customers behave so you can design your content and your site around their needs. This is good for them (a better and more relevant web experience) and very good for you too (far more likely to choose you, and you'll know what content works). Win, win.

Smart marketer Jason Miliki, owner of US-based professional services marketing agency Rattleback (www.rattleback.com), explains more about the power of this approach:

For most small- to midsized firms, websites are still pretty much static experiences that are uniformly the same for most site visitors. While we've

introduced dynamic elements (Twitter feeds for instance) for the most part we're still delivering largely the same information to everyone who visits the site. But, increasingly, web users expect more. I call this the Amazon Effect. Because Amazon knows so much about me based on things I've looked at or purchased in the past, it can largely drive my web experience every time I visit. I know every site I visit is tracking me, and I'm starting to expect that they're going to use that information to deliver me some value.

Automation tools like Marketo are already making elements of this possible for midsized firms and possibly even smaller firms. We're already capable of delivering smart calls-to-action on the sites we build that ensure that no site visitor will see the same call-to-action twice.

The next step is really to apply this thinking to the 'relevant content' of a site. So, you read our article? You might also like the research study we did on the same topic... You already downloaded that? Well then let me offer you the webinar we did on the same topic... and, we can do that all directly on the site page while the visitor is there (rather than through email after the fact).

2. Automated connection, no matter the size of your following

In an ideal world we'd bet you'd like to nurture each and every one of your prospects personally, wouldn't you? But as your email subscriber list grows (and it will) to a meaningful size how will you communicate with all these followers? You'd like to share content with them that's helpful and related to the content they've already read. Smart marketing automation allows you to do this through automated programs and what's known as 'lead scoring'.

Automated programs give you the ability to send out timely content and messages to a visitor based on content they've previously interacted with. With lead scoring you can score visitors based on who they are and the actions they take. As they accumulate points, you can set up triggers in your system to notify you when they reach a certain threshold.

Over time you'll see which content people are most likely to want to interact with as they get closer to getting in touch with you. And you can identify those who might be ripe for direct personal contact at the right time.

Pretty fantastic, right? While we're sold on the idea of using this technology to deliver more good stuff at just the right time to your customer, we also know it's not possible to automate trust. If you get it wrong, it backfires horribly. More importantly, we know how it makes us feel if marketers use data to

target us too relentlessly (cross, that's what) so keep your customers' best interests at heart, and handle with care. You'll find more on trust and selling in Chapter 14.

The future for your website?

The right content to the right people, right time, right place – that should be the aspiration, and as we've explained here, much of the functionality is available now. The websites of the future will offer visitors an even more personalized experience, with valuable content as the default navigation.

New platforms will undoubtedly appear, and new web agencies will hopefully follow who understand the need for holistic solutions for our connected digital world. One thing is for certain though; having the right content – knowing what to say and how to say it – will remain at the heart of it all.

Instructions for your web team

Now you're clear on what you want the website to do, it's time to talk to someone who can build it for you. Most website suppliers are good aesthetically or technically, however not all fully understand the needs and functionality of a valuable content marketing site.

Use this checklist to help you guide your web team on your requirements.

Requirements to discuss with your designer:

- **A fully content-managed site.** This is a no brainer. Platforms such as Wordpress make it very easy to add and update pages of additional content. You'll be constantly updating the website so you want to be able to do it yourself.
- **A content-centred site** rather than a highly visual experience. Any movement, sounds, graphical devices, blocks of imagery should fulfil a specific purpose.
- **Simple, intuitive navigation and layout**, designed around target visitor needs. It must be very easy for people to find the information they want.

- **Fully responsive design** – viewable on all mobile devices.
- **An integrated blog** – fully functioning and well-designed.
- **An engaging home page** that highlights valuable content and pulls people in.
- **The ability to upload, store, highlight deeper content easily** – video, podcasts and other content.
- **Search engine fundamentals** – a logical URL structure and the ability to set metadata (see Chapter 7).
- **Analytics** – you want to know who's coming to your site, what pages are your most read, what's working and what's not.
- **Marketing automation** – what level of automation and integration of tools will you require?
- **Integration with an email marketing tool** so visitors can sign up for content updates.
- **Ability to show related content** and relevant calls to action on every page. No page should feel like a dead end – there's always more to discover.
- **Engagement tools** – eg social share buttons, ability to comment on articles, enquiry forms.
- **Strong visual design** – professional and interesting but uncluttered.
- **Professional page and content layout** – paying attention to typography and styling to help the content stand out and be easy to read.
- **Search capability.**
- **Clear contact details.**

Valuable Tip

Hire a web designer/developer who creates valuable content for his or her own business. This way you'll know that they understand what you're looking to achieve.

Ideas for key sections of your site

Home page

Your homepage isn't a gallery. It's a door. You need to convince people that there's a good reason to come through it.

Chris Butler, COO of Newfangled⁸

When you're trying to sell your home, estate agents recommend clearing out the clutter to show off your best features. We think the same applies to your website home page. It should make people feel at home – understood, looked after, in the right place.

Although people will arrive at your site via lots of pages, you still need a well-designed home page. It needs to demonstrate:

- Clarity of purpose. In a nutshell – what you do, what you've done, what your clients say, what you say, and why that matters.
- Clear navigation.
- Is this you? Clear pathways to get visitors to the answers they're looking for, fast.
- Valuable content loud and proud.
- Room to breathe.

About us

Potential customers will want to know what kind of company you are, so this section is important. But that's not all. They're really after information that tells them what problems you can solve and if you are the kind of team who can help them:

- See the page from your potential customer's point of view. Your team's golfing prowess might be awesome, but how does that help? Focus here on your approach to the business.
- Share your mission, your story – what you believe and why?
- Be clear about the customers you want – what kind of people can your business help?

- Don't write too much. Remember the rules of good web writing. Short and to the point, with strong headlines and subheadings.
- Make sure the whole page links well to the rest of your site. Relevant 'About us' copy will make natural links to your customers, services and stories.

Our people

Apart from figuring out if your approach to business inspires confidence, potential clients like to see who they will be working with:

- Good professional photographs of the team are a must.
- Show some personality, although still remember that potential clients are most interested in themselves and their concerns so don't go overboard with personal stuff.
- Quick Q&As are an engaging way of getting across enough information to show your human face without becoming a bore.
- Link to the valuable content they've produced.

Is this you?

Define your customers or clients and their concerns in an engaging way. This is where your customer persona profiles come to life. You'll need a place to demonstrate exactly who you serve and how well you understand their problems and can help to overcome them. An 'Is this you?' page is a useful way to do that. Direct different potential buyers to the services, products and content that is relevant to them.

Customer stories

Don't tell me the moon is shining; show me the glint of light on broken glass.

Anton Chekhov

In a low-trust world, we crave independent evidence from real people. There is huge power in hearing your story from the perspective of those who have been on the receiving end of your products or services. It's much more believable coming from others than it is from you.

Case studies, or customer stories as we prefer to call them, are particularly important when potential customers are evaluating you as a potential partner to work with. They set your services in context and when targeted right will mirror the buyer's situation.

Customer stories serve a role that no other promotional tools truly fill by accomplishing the three purposes at once: credibility, education and validation.

Casey Hibbard, *Stories that Sell*, www.storiesthatsellguide.com⁹

Here's how to make your case studies work on your website:

- Put the client you worked for centre stage. Make them look good.
- Show how your product, service or organization solved a specific issue. Frame the business problem you solved clearly and upfront.
- Give value. Make this type of content really valuable by giving away learning points for others to follow.
- Involve the customer in the creation process. How do you know what benefits a customer got from working with you? You will only find out if you ask!

Valuable Tip

At the end of every assignment or sale ask your customer for their feedback. What did they really think? Why did they buy? What were the real benefits of your involvement? What did they appreciate and what could you do better next time?

You will find a case study template in the Resources section at the end of the book.

Our services/products

Your products or services section is the real nitty gritty of what you do, and these pages can be the most difficult to write. If your business sells technical services, for example, there is a risk they can become stilted and jargon-filled,

distancing your potential clients. If you have a number of services for a wide variety of clients, your website can become confusing.

You need a brief but clear description of your services for the people in the early stages of web research. Remember to phrase your services answering the question 'How do you help people like me?' and not just 'What do you do?'.

Write a short, clear overview, and signpost to more pages for those who crave more detail. Remember to add 'Related content' boxes too.

Useful structure for service copy:

- name of service;
- who this is relevant for;
- why they need it/what problem it solves;
- what your service involves;
- results/benefits;
- call to action – what to do next;
- relevant image/photo/video;
- customer stories and testimonials;
- related valuable content.

Free resources/library for your deeper content

Call it what you will – resources, free stuff, knowledge bank or library – this is a crucial section of your site. Your valuable content will be highlighted throughout the website, but it needs a home of its own too. Showcase the valuable stuff in one easy-to-find place. Gather together your articles, newsletters, videos, podcasts, downloads and SlideShare presentations and make them available as valuable free resources for your potential customers.

Just as a library needs cataloguing and signposting, your resources need to be presented so that people searching can find what they want quickly. Organizing your content into categories is important, and linking between connected pieces is the best way to keep people engaged on your site. Dividing by format too makes it easier for clients to access the information in the way they want.

Launching your new website to the world

The process of creating a new website will stretch you, frustrate you and really make you think. It forces you to look at your business with fresh eyes and make some really tough decisions – on your message, your customers and their needs, your services, the reason you're in business.

Once the hard work is done – your new website built, your content strategy in place, your social media feeds primed and a heap of new content ready to share – the temptation may be to just *go go go!* You've created a fantastic content marketing machine, and you're going to use it! You might be feeling a bit media mogul. All that power! Bwah hah hah!

Before you launch yourself onto the world, firing on all cylinders, and all guns blazing, remember that this content marketing game is about building relationships. Listen as well as broadcast. Share other people's content, not just your own. Be generous. You do have the power. Now use it wisely.

The work doesn't stop when you've launched your website. It's a platform to build on, not an end in itself. Be clear on your content strategy, create a publishing plan for the months ahead and keep adding and sharing great content if you want to get found and loved. It takes time to build up that head of steam when it comes to driving leads from the web but hold firm. If you follow these tips and continue to add value results will come.

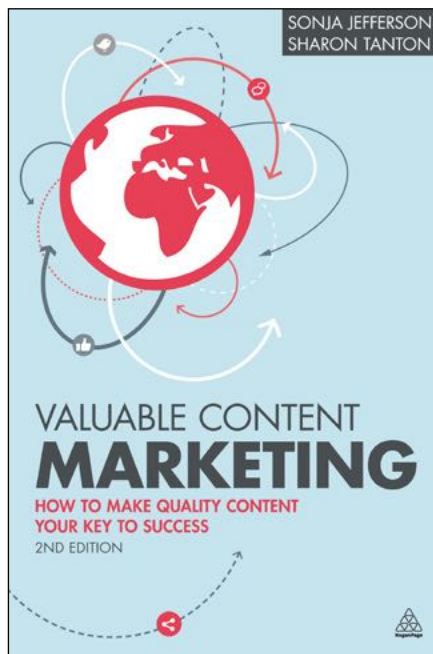
Take action

- Review your current website. Will it support your valuable content marketing goals? Is it the platform you need?
- For inspiration for examples of best practice check out the websites of companies who have won a Valuable Content Award:
www.valuablecontent.co.uk/valuablecontentaward

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