

How Valuable Long-Form Content Drives Lead Generation

It's time for a paradigm shift in your content marketing. Learn to use expert content like eBooks and case studies as a lead magnet.

How to Leverage Shareable Content to Drive Lead Generation

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Your New Lead Magnet: Shareable Long-Form Content

Reimagine your marketing by sharing consumable, valuable long-form content (like eBooks) that provides thought leadership in your field.

Big changes have hit the marketing world in terms of how companies need to be promoting themselves online. Not *this* year, but several years ago. Huge, sweeping, monumental changes. Far too many companies remain oblivious to these changes, however. They're still spinning their wheels using old-school strategies that don't even apply to today's world.

If you're one of them, this book will help you envision game-changing methods of reaching new customers online through quality, highly shareable long-form content.

It's Time to Switch Gears in Content Creation



[Image source](#)

Many companies are still giving sales pitches in an attempt to lure in customers, when they should be sharing valuable informative content. They're populating their websites with product pages, not with expert advice that defines them as a learning resource for their customers.

It's time to face facts: The old sales pitch no longer works.

Yes, you need product pages on your website, but they're not the cornerstone of your marketing campaign. When was the last time you wanted to share a product description with friends and family? That type of content just isn't all that shareable.

The best way to generate leads and turn them into customers is to create content that people will actually want to share on their social networks.

You've probably heard the old proverb, "For want of a nail," which illustrates how overlooking one simple but vital detail can change an entire kingdom's fate. The same holds true for a company. Look at it this way:

For want of content, a lead is lost

For want of a lead, a salesman is lost

For want of a salesman, a company is lost

For want of a company, employment is lost

All for the want of content.

Content is one of those details that will make or break your marketing success. If you're still following an old-school strategy, take the next exit now. Whether you invest your own time or you invest the money to hire a professional, investing in solid content creation will help you soar past all your competitors who still haven't figured it out.

Turbocharge [or Supercharge?] Your Content Strategy



[Image source](#)

Content creation will establish your company's voice and expertise in its area of focus. It will also play a strong role in branding.

Traditional marketing strategy involves focusing on products and the company itself. The paradigm shift in content marketing calls for a continuous cycle of fresh content that teaches readers something valuable. While your content should focus on a topic *related* to your product, it shouldn't focus on your product itself.

"Small businesses with blogs get 126% more lead growth than small businesses without," asserts the Content Marketing Institute. In fact, content marketing is six times more likely to convert a visitor into a lead or a lead into a customer, says the organization.

Imagine the possibilities. Your blog can serve as a resource for current and potential customers, luring them back to your site time and again when you update it with fresh content. Sharing content in a variety of forms will make your blog a dynamic and engaging resource that poises your company as a thought leader in your field.

The Recipe for Success

Featuring a mix of these offerings on your website will jumpstart your lead generation.

- eBooks that readers can download and return to later, which keeps your company fresh in their mind.
- Case studies that share how you helped others achieve success.
- Interviews that lend wisdom from experts on topics your audience wants to know more about - whether you record them as podcasts or write them up.
- Tutorials that show readers how to do something they might find challenging.

eBooks, case studies, and other long-form content are top performers in the realm of content marketing, says the Content Marketing Institute in its report *“B2B Content Marketing: 2018 Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends—North America.”*

That’s why smart companies are increasingly bringing them into their larger content marketing strategy.

Reaching Customers at Zero Moment of Truth

Valuable, frequently updated content plays a key role in where you place in the search results.

And search marketing is the only marketing initiative that can put your products and services in front of your customers at the very moment when they become interested.

Moreover, consumable content has a much stronger effect on customers than ads - 70% of customers would rather get to know your company through articles than product ads, according to the Content Marketing Institute.

You need to position yourself to reach customers at the zero moment of truth (ZMOT) - the moment when they begin researching your product. If they find valuable articles on your site related to the product they're already interested in buying, or eBooks they can download and read later, they'll be much more likely to linger on your website and ultimately make a purchase.

Branding yourself as a subject matter expert will help you lure in those potential customers at the zero moment of truth. Flaunt your expertise in your content, so you keep those readers on your website and ultimately convert them into customers.

The New Rules of the Game

Google is looking for unique content. That's how websites improve their ratings. But you need to do the legwork - you need to create something that stands out. Case studies and interviews with subject matter experts contribute a fresh perspective that readers want to hear. Instead of knocking off a cheap imitation of a competitor's article, they add something to the conversation. And that's how you want to be perceived after all, right?

Many companies don't even realize that in 2013, Google fundamentally changed its algorithms. Before 2013, having duplicate content was okay. Now, it's become toxic to a website. Google now filters duplicate content out of the search results. However, some companies are still following the old rules even though it's sabotaging their marketing efforts. The good news is, it's an easy problem to fix.

Case in Point: The Auto Industry

One of the three biggest car manufacturers in the world uses affiliate-style websites for all of its dealerships and populates all those websites with duplicate content. That means it's setting them all up to rank poorly in the search results.

Why? Because they'd created an \$18 million system that was designed to do things the other way. Before 2013, that was fine. But now, it's a surefire way to sabotage your own web traffic.

We approached a local dealership and persuaded them to let us loose on revamping their content strategy. After we detoxed the website and added valuable, relevant content, they saw a 54% increase in traffic to the site in four months.

Their success highlights the vital importance of quality original content. Interviewing experts to get fresh perspectives, or telling a success story that hasn't been featured in the media before, are just a couple of ideas for sharing something original. Take risks; explore new ideas. Be the first to speak out on an emerging topic. Go above and beyond the competition by offering something of real value to your audience.

A Best-In-Class Approach

Above all, you need to create original, quality content. But it's not just the words you say that count - it's the packaging. Creating a written document and slapping a title on top does *not* make for a successful eBook.

Instead, you need to make it visually appealing through carefully chosen images and a well-designed layout. Remember, it's the *sizzle* that sells steak. And all of those elements - the graphic design, the text layout - reflect on your company and brand, so create a total package that conveys meticulous attention to detail.

If you're writing a long-form post for LinkedIn - a very effective tactic - you need eight quality images as well as 1,500 to 2,000 words of text. That's the formula for making a post readable, compelling, and shareable. Long-form posts build trust with readers because they delve into a topic in-depth, says SnapApp.

A good title is just as important. The title needs to have a hook, based on either fear or fortune. The idea it's presenting will either make readers money or trigger fear by pointing out something they're doing wrong.

Seize opportunities for creating a series that will get readers coming back for the next installment. If you have a great idea for a longer piece, why not break it into a three-part series?

Most importantly, always sweat the small stuff. That's how you show you're committed to excellence. Take BMW's example: They've successfully branded their vehicles as the ultimate driving machine. Why? Because they give painstaking attention to detail, down to the sound a car makes when you unlock it or turn the ignition. They actually have someone with a doctorate in sound who tunes every noise the car makes. That's the level of detail BMW is committed to. By being that detail-oriented in every post and eBook you put out, you'll show customers you're serious about sweating the small stuff in the work you do for them.



[Image source](#)

Tactics That Drive Results

SEO and PPC Marketing

Each article or eBook should have its own webpage to make it more searchable. Do keyword research before you write it, targeting SEO search terms in the topic area you want to write about. Work in these keyword phrases naturally, varying the word order.

Using pay-per-click (PPC) marketing can give your content marketing a boost, as long as you have valuable, relevant content up. If you use it, PPC should accentuate your content creation strategy, never replace it.

Creating and Promoting Your eBook

Do you speak better than you write? Turn a podcast into an eBook. By repackaging the content, you have an entirely new product. Our eBook *How to Generate More Leads with Consumable Content* shares tips for creating a podcast and leveraging it in this way to get the ball rolling.

Create downloadable content. Downloadable eBooks, case studies, and interviews that are optimized with SEO perform well in the search results and help you maintain a connection with your audience.

Say you've done a podcast with a subject matter expert. After you embed the podcast into the website, why not create a transcript and use the content to create a downloadable eBook?

Then use the gated traffic approach to give readers access to your eBook. This means simply asking for their name and email to download the eBook. Since you now have their contact info, you can follow up with your new leads to keep the conversation going.

Because visuals have a high likelihood of being shared on social media, consider creating an infographic based on the content of a piece you write, suggests Robert W. Bly in *The Digital Marketing Handbook*. That will help you get your message out there and lure new leads to your eBook or case study.

Case in Point: A Game-Changing eBook

For example, one agency turned to us because they were struggling to get new customers. We created an eBook and launched a LinkedIn campaign to draw in leads. We first sent an invitation to connect, then a thank you for connecting that prompted people to download the ebook. Previously, the bounce rate for incoming traffic was almost 80%. When people clicked on the link to the eBook, it was *zero*. The average time per session rose to 3 minutes and 56 seconds, almost double what it had been, and the average page views doubled as well.

That's because we were targeting a very specific demographic, reaching exactly the kind of person who would purchase the agency's services. Fifty-percent of the traffic came from LinkedIn, and 50% was SEO-generated. Almost 40% downloaded the eBook, which generated a lead, while the others went somewhere else on the site. The average lifetime value of those leads to the client was in the neighborhood of *1.2 million*.

Co-marketing Campaigns

Creating co-marketing campaigns featuring subject matter experts is a great way to share new insights in your field while reaching new audiences. Both you and the expert featured can share the piece on your networks, expanding your reach. Give them a 3D image of the book cover, so they can embed it on their website and link back to you, driving traffic to your site.

This strategy works well with people who aren't direct competitors; whose services are complementary rather than competitive with yours. If your expert is a social media influencer with a large following, you've struck gold.

Leveraging Social Networks

Interacting with followers who comment on your content or mention it on Twitter lets you deepen relationships with them, Bly points out. In fact, reading custom content gives a whopping 78% of people the sense of having a relationship with a company, says Demand Metric.

They're far more likely to follow the company on social media and stay connected, it adds.

Leveraging social networks - particularly LinkedIn - should be a cornerstone of your strategy. Here are just a few reasons why:

- A full 50% of Americans with a college degree now use LinkedIn, says the Pew Research Center.
- Ninety-seven percent of B2B marketers, therefore, use LinkedIn to share content, according to the Content Marketing Institute.
- In a recent Business Insider Intelligence report, 48% of respondents said they tend to trust content on LinkedIn, compared to just 24% on Facebook.
- According to Marketing Insider Group, 80% of B2B social media leads originate from LinkedIn.

Share your content on an email Listserv as well, to keep in touch with customers and leads. Seventy-nine percent of the companies that are most successful in content marketing share content by email, says the Content Marketing Institute in its report *"B2B Content Marketing: 2018 Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends—North America."*

Case in Point: A Successful LinkedIn Campaign

Take what we did for a client in an aggressive software industry. They were first movers, but they were struggling to figure out how to get potential clients to sign up for a demo. We quickly identified the flaw; people were clicking on the demo page, but there was no concrete action they could take, not even a phone number to call. The page just said the company was available to do demos.

To remedy the problem, we first embedded a "Schedule a Demo" component on their website. We then embedded various types of downloadable content, including eBooks, case studies, and podcast

interviews with subject matter experts. After we'd added all of these elements to the page, we launched a LinkedIn marketing campaign that began with an invitation to connect, then sent them a thank you note with a prompt to download a case study about something they were likely to be interested in. So we used their LinkedIn footprint to drive traffic to their site, and soon they had a long line of people who'd signed up for demos.

Incidentally, the downloadable content in the form of PDFs gave us a metric for evaluating their success, since Google indexes those download rates—just another great reason to include this content on your site.

Commit to Your Success

Now that you have a strong concept of what makes content highly shareable and valuable to readers, map out the types of content you want to produce over the next several months. Who will you interview for a case study or expert feature? What topic will your eBook or tutorial cover? Whether you create them yourself or contract a professional writer, quality content will drive your lead generation strategy by hooking your audience and keeping them coming back for more.

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