LinkedIn

THE Sophisticated MARKETER'S Guide to CONTENT MARKETING

Short Version

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Vol. 1

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3 A Note to Sophisticated Marketers

4 Lay a Solid Foundation

5 Managing and Producing Content

6 Mapping Content Throughout the Buyer's Journey

7 The Big Rock: Your Stepping-stone to Content Marketing Success

8 Chisel Your Big Rock into Pebbles

9 Using LinkedIn across the Buyer's Journey

11 Let's Get Visual!

12 Expand the Reach of Your Content

14 Tap into Influencers for Content Amplification

15 Prove the Value of Your Content Marketing

16 Conclusion: A Checklist for Successful Content Marketing

17 Appendix: Tools and Resources

A Note to the Sophisticated Marketer

You likely don't need convincing that content marketing is vital to the success of an integrated, full-funnel marketing strategy. In fact, content marketing is helping fuel the success of businesses of all sizes, in many industries. And that success is being spearheaded by sophisticated marketers like you.

And as a sophisticated marketer, you're probably aware that the world doesn't need more content—it needs more relevant content. Relevancy is the linchpin to finding and keeping your audience engaged.

You also know that you need to understand how every aspect of marketing—from demand generation, email and social to PPC, PR and everything in between—fits together to help your organisation reach its goals. By orchestrating the use of both modern technologies and tried-and-true marketing techniques, the sophisticated marketer can achieve new heights.

This guide was written with you in mind: the sophisticated, multi-dimensional marketer. In it, you'll find everything you need to know about content marketing in general and on LinkedIn, written both strategically, and instructionally. It's your one-stop shop to understanding what works when it comes to marketing with content—and will help you be on the bleeding edge of all things content marketing.

Ready to dive in? Read on!
***Jason Miller**, Senior Manager, Global Content Marketing, LinkedIn Marketing Solutions.*

Follow the "Five W's" of Interrogative Investigation

Who?
Consider each member of the B2B buying committee.

Why?
Discover a reason why a prospect would buy from your company by understanding what the buyer wants to achieve or overcome.

When?
What information do buyers need at each stage of the buying journey and what will trigger them to move from one stage to the next?

What?
What content—and in what format—can you provide to answer buyers' questions?

Where?
Where do your prospects turn for information during the research and decision-making process?[1]

Lay a Solid Foundation

Successful content marketing needs to drive sales and marketers are under pressure to prove the value of their content. With a solid understanding of the customer journey, you can build a fluid strategy that can be constantly improved based on testing and experimentation.

Start with the End Results

Begin the planning process by documenting what you hope to achieve with your content marketing. Try to capture all of your goals and map them to the best way of measuring the effectiveness of your content.

Understand the Needs of your Audience

The key to identifying what content to create is to understand your target audience. Create a profile or persona of your ideal customers – their company types, decision-making process, purchase motivators, and where they turn for reliable information. Find out the topics that will resonate and ideally spur action.

Own the Conversation

Content should establish your company as an authority on a topic that matters to your audience. Once you have a thorough understanding of your ideal persona,

research hot topics that matter to them and discover their burning questions. What's a top-of-mind topic that you can share lots of expertise on and offer an interesting perspective? **Try www.moz.com, www.toprankmarketing.com** or tools like Ubersuggest or Buzzsumo to begin your research.

Always Be Helpful

Try to understand your subject matter from the perspective of your future customer.

Develop content to help prospective customers make their purchase decisions rather than producing content focused on a hard sell. Answer every question they may pose at different stages of the buying cycle. Instead of focusing on making a sale at every turn, you should focus on helping... the sales will follow.

1: Forrester, B2B Buyer Journey Mapping Basics, May 25, 2015

Managing and Producing Content

Fresh content needs to be produced regularly to drive leads. In addition, you must use varied types of content to keep audiences engaged. Once you've figured out the topics, you need a plan and tools to keep it all organised.

Stay on Track With an Editorial Calendar

An editorial calendar helps tame the chaos, keeping everyone on track when it comes to what content needs to be produced, by who, and when. You can use free collaboration tools like Google Docs, or go for a purpose- built tool like Kapost or Skyword if you need to manage lots of moving parts.

Have a Healthy Mix of Content

Think of your blog calendar like a dinner menu. It needs to include all the food groups. Blogging Food Groups help to keep your content fresh and prospects interested over the long haul. Here's our updated take on the five essentials:

- A healthy serving of meaty posts (research and analysis)
- A side of vegetables (thought leadership articles)
- A serving of whole grains (how-to and influencer posts)
- A condiment or two to spice things up (bold statements)
- A sweet dessert (light-hearted, viral-worthy content)

Take Intelligent Content Risks

Opportunities can be missed if marketers play it too safe with content. Approach your audience in a way they are not expecting. Memorable content often involves:

- A Bigger Story - Goes beyond your company or products to engage your audience
- Braver Content - Ignores the status quo and uses a unique tone of voice
- A Bolder Voice - Uses a unique tone of voice that draws your audience in (think honest and empathetic)

SEO Still Matters

While Google's recent updates have signalled a shift away from keywords and towards serving quality content, SEO still plays an important role in content discovery. By quality content, Google means relevant content. Today's SEO experts must bring a strategic and content-centred approach to their efforts. And Content Marketers need to think through the research and planning stages carefully to ensure their content is relevant.

Tools to Give Your Content Wings

Percolate

A powerful, intuitive software platform to manage all your marketing in one place.

Spredfast

A software platform that enables large enterprises to manage their social media marketing, social advertising, content management, collaboration, advocacy and social media monitoring.

sprinklr

A social software platform that allows large companies to manage their online social media presences, build social media campaigns, and analyse social media performance.

Ways to Drive Early-Stage Prospects Into the Later Stage

- **Drive site traffic using search, social media, and advertising**
- **Offer engaging content, such as blog posts, white papers, eBooks, videos, and webcasts**
- **Gate valuable content in exchange for contact details**
- **Continue engaging prospects with compelling, relevant content offers and information**

Mapping Content Throughout the Buyer's Journey

The goal of content is to reach, and then nurture prospects to ultimately drive them to become a customer. Buyers now control the research process. It is critical to market across the buyer's journey, both in the early and later stages. Creating Top of Funnel and Bottom of Funnel content will help you do this in a way that is relevant to buyers.

Focus on Reach in the Early Stage

Top of Funnel content (or TOFU content) should be used in the early stage of your relationship with a prospect. You should try to gain mindshare with those who are unfamiliar with your company and not yet ready to purchase. Although many prospects will not convert to customers at the top of the funnel, your efforts here will make it easier to engage them once they reach the later stages.

You "reach" your target audience with topics that get attention or generate buzz. Concepts include thought leadership pieces, influencer endorsements, public relations activities, display campaigns or offline events.

Nurture in the Later Stage

In the later stage of the buyer's journey, you "nurture" prospects that have expressed an interest in your company and are ready to consume Bottom of the Funnel content – also referred to as BOFU content. With BOFU content, the goal is to educate audiences once they are aware of your brand and influence them to engage with a sales representative.

Later-stage nurture includes nurturing after a sales conversation but before a purchase. Use data to understand your prospects' online behaviour and continue to guide them to purchase by employing strong keyword-marketing strategies, highly personalised email marketing, display ads, topical newsletters, case studies, product guides and targeted limited-time promotional offers or incentives.

The Big Rock: Your Stepping-Stone to Content Marketing Success

It's easy to get overwhelmed at the thought of developing content to keep prospects engaged and interested all along the path to purchase. That's where a Big Rock comes into play.

What is the Big Rock?

A single cornerstone piece of content that can power your demand-gen engine for months on end – we call this a Big Rock. This is your stake in the ground on a theme and it sets you apart from the competition. This is a substantial content asset (think 15, 20, 30 or more pages). Move from thinking like a publisher to actually publishing like one by putting out a "book" on your topic. Fill your Big Rock with all the wisdom you have on a topic in a way that makes it clear you know what you're talking about.

How do I write a Big Rock?

- Identify your theme and own it

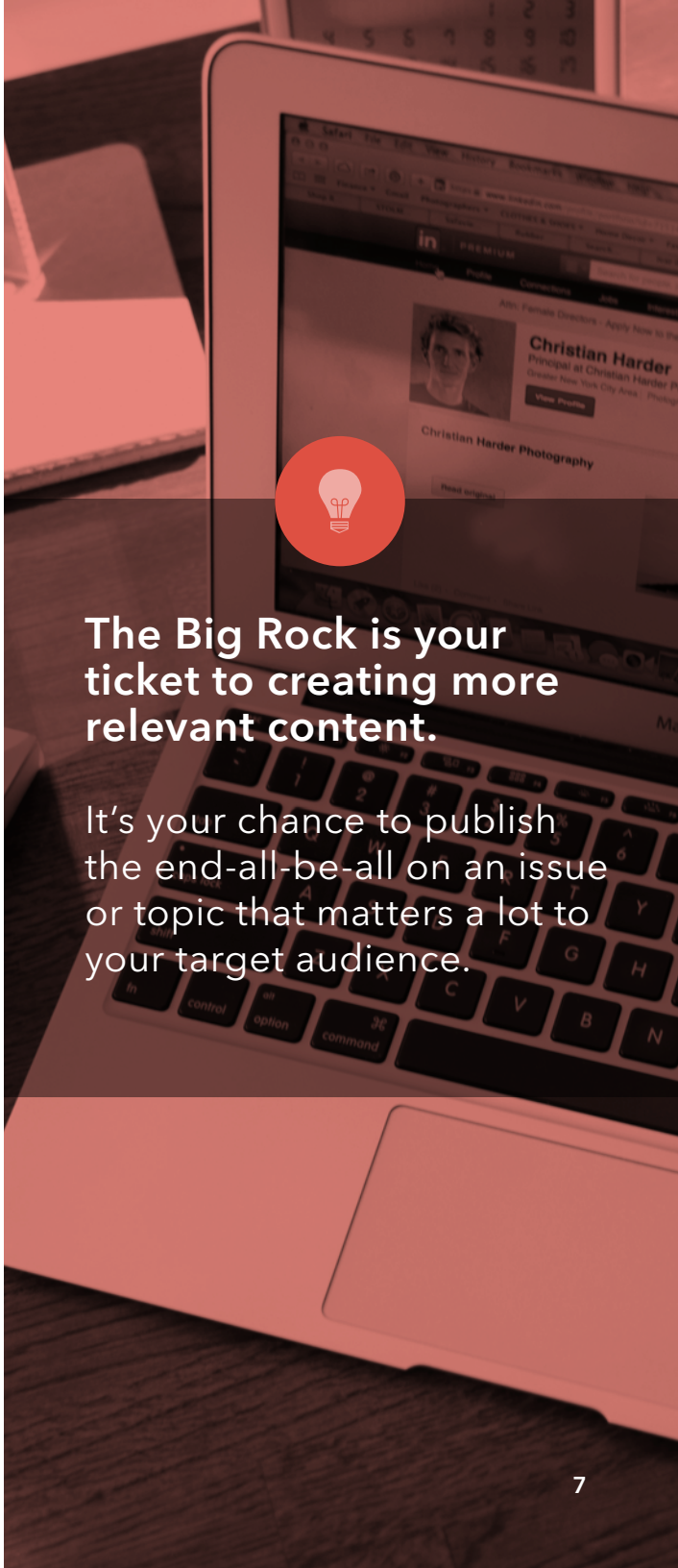
Using consumer insights, you can generate a number of potential topics and questions to set the theme of your Big Rock. Find the one topic that allows you to own the conversation, the one that will likely drive quality traffic to your site. Then write the book on that topic, relations activities, display campaigns or offline events.

- Reverse engineer the big rock by pulling from your blog

Do you publish a blog? Identify five or more blog posts that follow a theme, put them in a sequence, write an intro and conclusion, throw in a case study or two, add some influencer interviews and quotes, design the cover and – voila! You just produced a Big Rock!

- Flip the content funnel

Choose five of your case studies that have relevance and an overarching theme. Bundle them together into Success Stories and then promote it. Your Big Rock can be the engine that generates months of leads.



The Big Rock is your ticket to creating more relevant content.

It's your chance to publish the end-all-be-all on an issue or topic that matters a lot to your target audience.

Think about how you can break apart your Big Rock into smaller assets—everything from stand-alone blog posts and Q&As to attention-grabbing infographics and SlideShares.

By lifting these "pebbles" directly from the Big Rock, you can quickly churn out content with minimal effort.

Chisel Your Big Rock Into Pebbles

A Big Rock does more than help you lay claim to a topic—it's the springboard for more relevant content.

Not everyone will download your Big Rock... Fortunately, your Big Rock is perfect for chunking into smaller, derivative content assets. Elements from the Big Rock can be easily chiselled into smaller pieces your audience may prefer such as a short blog post, a colourful infographic or a how-to webinar.

Keep in mind that prospects are likely to consume quite a few of your pieces of content as they research their purchase options.

- Buyers download an average of seven informational assets during the purchase process. (Source: IDG Enterprise)
- The higher the price of the solution being considered, the more assets buyers consume on the path to purchase. (Source: 2015 TechTarget Media Consumption Report)
- 75% of B2B buyers rely more on content to research and make B2B purchasing decisions than they did a year ago. (Source: SiriusDecisions)

Tip:

All ungated 'pebbles' will point back to your Big Rock and if your Big Rock is gated, you can collect lead information in exchange for the download.

Using LinkedIn Across The Buyer's Journey

To succeed with content marketing, you must deliver your message to the right audience at every stage of the buyer's journey.

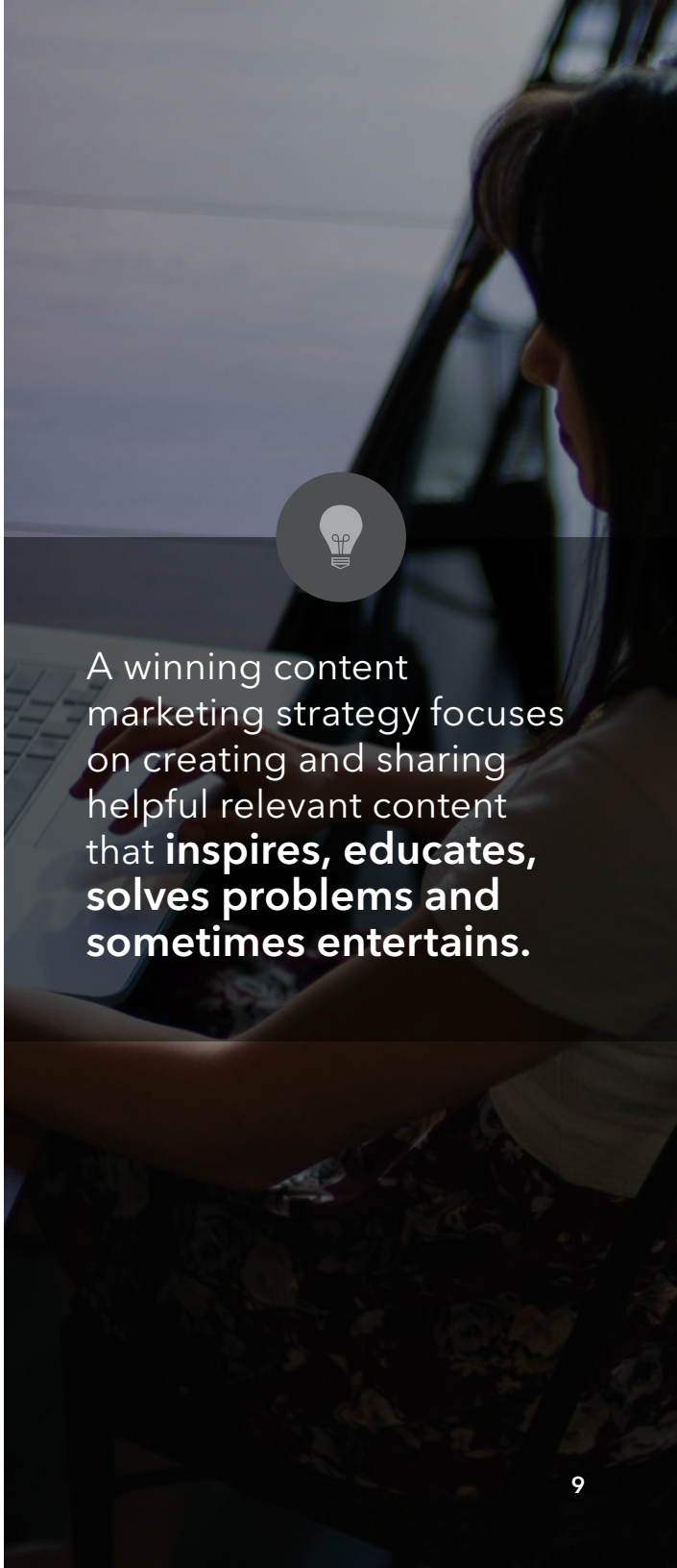
LinkedIn offers a unique platform for sharing content with the world's largest professional network on the Internet - more than 433 million members in over 200 countries.

By using LinkedIn to build relationships with the world's professionals you can reach your goals at every step of the buying cycle:

- Generate awareness
- Establish though leadership
- Drive targeted website traffic
- Generate leads and pipeline
- Create advocacy

Because people are on LinkedIn to consume information that is relevant to their business or career, audiences are primed to look for actionable insights.

Marketers can create content hubs on LinkedIn through Company Pages or Showcase Pages. Relevant content can easily be spread through Sponsored Content, appearing directly in the newsfeed and using unique member data to target the right audience.



Pin up this handy table so you always know how to kill it with content on LinkedIn!

LINKEDIN CONTENT MARKETING

TACTICAL PLAN

Here's Your Printable Plan for Killing it with Content Marketing on LinkedIn

OPPORTUNITIES	WHAT TO SHARE	OBJECTIVES	KEY METRICS	ACTION ITEMS
1HR. DAILY **Linkedin Company & Showcase Pages**	• Whitepapers • eBooks • Case Studies • Industry Articles • Helpful How-To Content	• Brand Awareness • Lead Generation • Thought Leadership • Event Registration	• Page Followers • Post Clicks • Engagement • Inquiries & Leads • Event Registrants	• Post 3-4x a Day • Engage With Followers Via Post Comments • Change Cover Image Every 6 months
30MIN. DAILY **LinkedIn SlideShare**	• Company Videos & Presentations • Infographics • Webcast Decks	• Lead Generation • Brand Awareness • Thought Leadership • SEO	• Views • Leads & Inquiries • Linkbacks & Embeds	• Upload New Content Weekly • Highlight Decks on Profile Page • Group Content into Playlists • Add Lead Forms
1HR. WEEKLY **Publishing on LinkedIn**	• Professional Expertise & Experiences • Industry Trends • Lessons Learned	• Thought Leadership	• Post Views (& Demographics of Your Readers) • Post Likes, Comments & Shares • Profile Views	• Publish Whenever You Feel Passionate • Recommended: Bi-Weekly or Once a Month
30MIN. DAILY **LinkedIn Sponsored Content & Direct Sponsored Content**	• Company News • Blog Content • Industry News & Research • Case Studies • Webcast • Eye-Catching Visuals & Statistics	• Lead Generation • Brand Awareness • Thought Leadership	• Engagement Rate • Impressions • Inquiries or Leads • Company or Showcase Page Followers	• Run 2-4 Sponsored Content/ Week • Run For 3 Weeks, Then Test & Iterate • Select Compelling Visuals • Share Links To Lead Forms & Add URL Tracking Code

Let's Get Visual

As humans, we are all visual thinkers - 75% of the neurons in our brains process visual information.

The old cliché of a picture being worth a thousand words continues to hold true in the digital world. Sharp images and evocative photos aren't limited to Instagram. Even in a business context, we find that articles containing images get 94% more views. Posts with videos attract three times more inbound links and posts with images are liked twice as often as text-only updates.

If you're not using visuals, you're missing the boat. Australian marketers are quickly adopting more tactics that involve visual content – from 66% of marketer using photos and illustrations in 2014 to 86% in 2015.

How to Get Started

The good news is that you won't need to create a bunch of visual content from scratch. Start by simply adding images to your LinkedIn posts (you'll stand to increase comments by 98% in the process). Next, reimagine your Big Rock content as smaller visual pieces. Compelling visuals can also be added to other content such as emails and landing pages.

Best Practices for Imagery:

- Skip the stock photos
- Avoid photos that are random or don't add to the subject of your copy
- Never go image-less
- Be mobile-friendly in the cropping
- Use infographics and colourful charts to call out important statistics

LinkedIn Sponsored Content Are a Powerful Way to:

Raise awareness and shape perception. Send Sponsored Content to your target audience to rapidly increase awareness and shape the perception of your brand, products, and services.

Drive quality leads. Generate quality leads by sharing insights that professionals seek. Watch that content spread via the peer sharing that occurs naturally on LinkedIn.

Build relationships with the world's professionals. Publish your content with Sponsored Content to create value and establish trust that sparks ongoing conversations and deeper customer relationships.

Expand the Reach of Your Content

If you develop content but no one sees it, what's the point? Don't just post your content and hope prospective buyers will accidently stumble upon it—promote your content to make sure they find it.

Native advertising is quickly gaining steam, mostly because its unobtrusive design drives results. Native ads appear in the content stream that your prospects are already consuming. Research shows that 32% of consumers would share native advertising content versus 19% fordisplay ads.

LinkedIn Sponsored Content

Sponsored Content is native to the browsing experience, appearing directly in the LinkedIn member's feed without interrupting the stream of content. You can select specific criteria in order to reach the right people at the right time with the most relevant content. You can also use continuous tracking to monitor impression and engagement metrics, and instantly fine-tune your posts and your strategy.

LinkedIn: Test, Personalise and Control

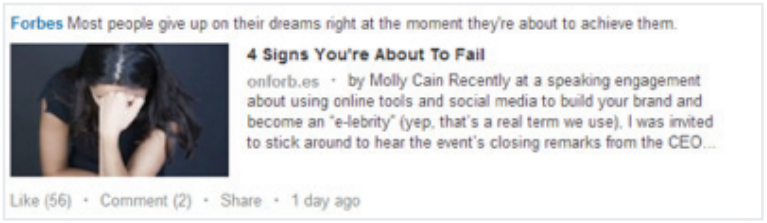
Using the Direct Sponsored Content feature in Sponsored Content you can personalise and test content in the newsfeed without first creating posts on your LinkedIn Company Page. This is ideal for different business units because they can try content specific for their audience without it displaying on the LinkedIn Company Page.

Another great use is to test and retest a variety of content in real time until you get it right. It allows you to A/B test imagery, headlines and call to action.

Tip:

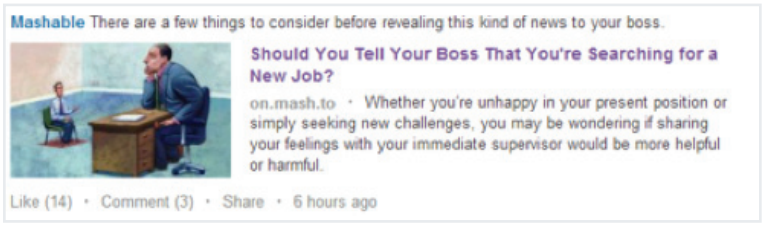
Sponsor two to four updates at any time to maximise your reach to your target audience, run each campaign at least three weeks and have clear CTAs stating what people will get when they click.

Here are three examples of how top brands are using visuals on LinkedIn.



1. **Forbes** ranks as one of the most influential global brands on LinkedIn, and it's clear why: most posts it publishes contain a relevant visual element. In many cases, these visuals are intended to convey an emotion, like an image of a frustrated employee. In this case, the content convinced more than 50 members to comment and like the post just within LinkedIn.

2. **Microsoft,** another influential global brand on LinkedIn, creates visual elements using content from its employees. The #ICreatedThis campaign highlights the work of Microsoft team members in various departments, and introduces them to the audience through visual content.



3. **Mashable** is yet another influential global brand on LinkedIn, partly because it uses illustrations and image composites to supplement its written words. Much like the Forbes posts, these visuals convey emotions and ones that might not be immediately understood by just reading the copy.

Tap Into Influencers for Content Amplification

Aligning with a recognised name or brand can boost your organisation's credibility. It can help build your presence on a much larger scale and more quickly than you could do on your own. Here are three steps for getting influencers to amplify the reach of your content.

Identify the Right Influencers

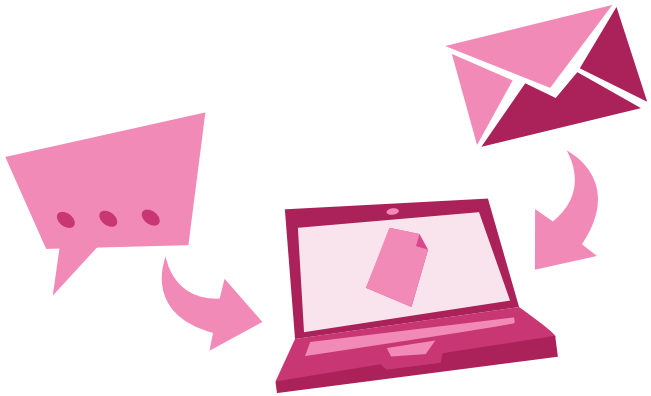
These are role-models and thought leaders in the industry. You can search Buzzsumo to find specific topics or top influencers in your space. Be sure to follow Influencers on LinkedIn, read their blogs, and follow them on any other social media platforms where they share their interesting views. You should also set up Google Alerts to see when they are mentioned in the news.

Cultivate a Connection

Start building a relationship by engaging with influencers. Tap into the power of reciprocity and share their content, comment on their blog posts and like their updates. Leverage relationships that your senior leadership may have with thought leaders across your target industry.

Invite Them to Participate

Your content asset can either be a quote from publicly available resources or an influencer may be willing to help you. Make it easy for influencers - tell them what post to share and how to share it. If they agree to provide content, send them no more than five questions to answer.



Prove the Value of Your Content Marketing

Once your content marketing engine is humming along, you need to measure the impact and identify future actions.

Define Success Metrics During the Planning Stage

Here's where it pays to have carefully defined content marketing goals. Tracking specific metrics such as post engagement and CTA click-throughs will make it simple to measure and prove the value of your content marketing. It may be easier to measure lower funnel results but you need the top of the funnel content to drive future buyers into the lower funnel.

When it comes to the Sponsored Content you distribute via LinkedIn, we provide a few ways to gain insight into its performance so you can act on the insights:

- Monitor brand engagement
- Measurable ROI
- Gain Insight with your LinkedIn Content Marketing Score

Define Actions Based on Results

While all that information is valuable, it's useless unless you act on it. You can experiment with new ways to increase your follower base among professionals by targeting a specific function with relevant news and information. Employees should be encouraged to share the content that you want to distribute and posts should include a call-to-action to increase CTR.

3 Metrics for Sponsored Content Success

Here are three key metrics to measure the impact of LinkedIn Sponsored Content:

1. Content engagement
2. Leads
3. Cost per lead

Conclusion: A Checklist for Successful Content Marketing

With content fueling every aspect of your marketing, it's clear why content marketing has become such a priority. Succeed with content marketing and you effectively enable an integrated, full-funnel marketing strategy. Your challenge now is to deliver relevant content at every turn. The advice and ideas in this eBook should help you do just that and we've gathered them in this handy checklist for easy consultation at any time.

- ☐ **Document** your goals and determine how you will measure the effectiveness of your content marketing
- ☐ **Identify** your ideal customer and develop buyer personas
- ☐ **Decide** what conversation you want to own and pinpoint the topics to cover
- ☐ **Develop** an editorial calendar and map content throughout the funnel
- ☐ **Think** global from the start as you determine what resources you'll need to create, publish and promote your content
- ☐ **Produce** a Big Rock to fuel your social and demand generation, then carve it up into turkey slices
- ☐ **Publish** LinkedIn Company and Showcase pages
- ☐ **Don't forget** visual content
- ☐ **Amplify** your reach with LinkedIn Sponsored Content, A/B testing, influencers and employees
- ☐ **Measure** your results and tweak your content for maximum impact

Appendix: Tools And Resources

Research Tools:

iProspect | Ubersuggest | Buzzsumo

Free collaboration tool:

Google Docs, or go for a purpose-built tool like Kapost or Skyword

Image Editing and sharing tools:

Canva | PicMonkey | Quick | Repix | PixlrEditor

Image databases:

CreativeCommons | Pixabay | PhotoPin | DotSpin

Fonts:

Google Fonts | DaFont

Video Maker

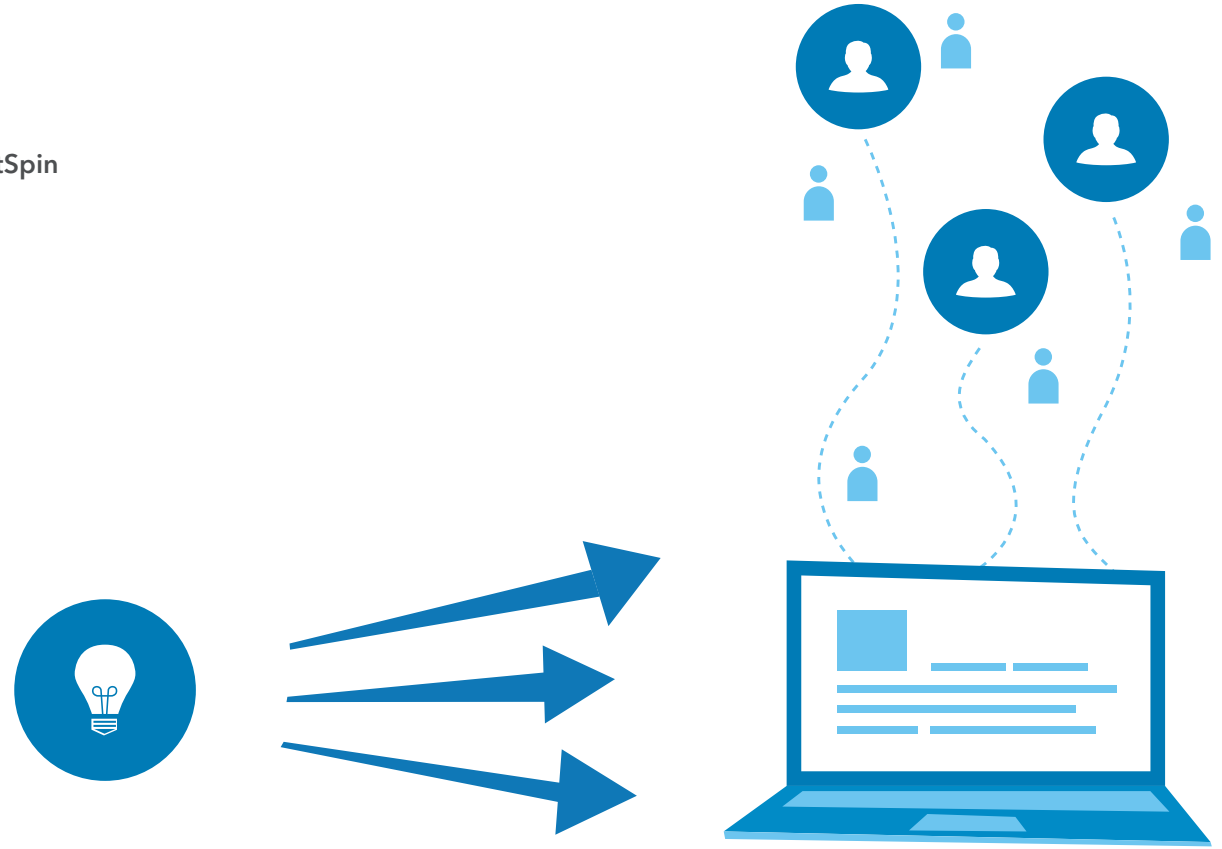
Wideo | Animoto | Wevideo | Stupeflix

Creating infographics:

Piktochart | Easel.ly | Piktochart | Visual.ly

Slideshare content:

Canva | Haiku Deck | Prezi



Today, LinkedIn members number more than 433+ million of the 600 million professionals on the planet, representing the largest group anywhere of influential, affluent, and educated people.

For more information, visit
emea.marketing.linkedin.com