CONTENT MARKETING STRATEGY: HOW TO MAKE CONTENT WORK HARDER (AND SMARTER)

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Developing effective thought leadership content can require a big investment of time and resources, and marketers naturally want to reach as many people as possible for the money spent. This can result in editorial strategies designed to appeal to the widest possible audience and dense content pieces overflowing with information. Data reveals that this "shotgun" approach to content, however, doesn't necessarily generate the best results. According to the Edelman-LinkedIn research study "How Thought Leadership Impacts B2B Demand Generation," C-Suite and Business Decision Makers place a very high value on thought leadership content. That said, the study also shows these audiences want content that is personalized and relevant to their specific needs.
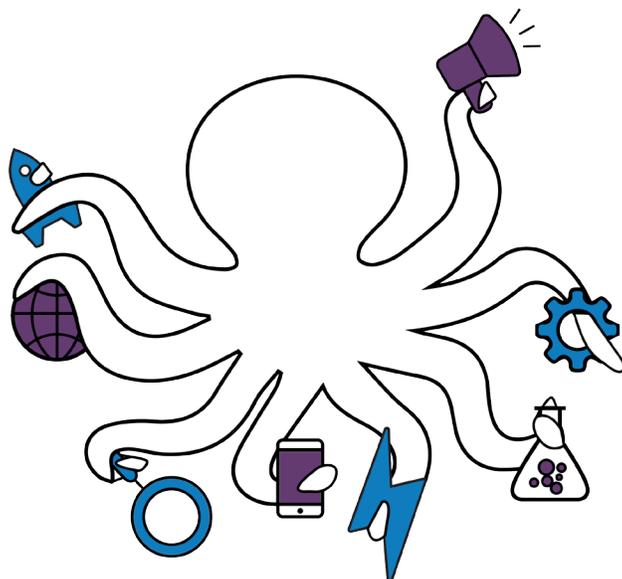
To maximize investment, develop content with the right intentions for each audience because it's not effective to just create a single piece to deliver on all potential needs. In other words, the goal is to make your investment pay off over *multiple pieces*. The most successful content marketing is built upon developing smaller, more diverse materials that can be *personalized for the audiences* you are trying to reach rather than to create a single, longer piece that tries to be all things to all people.

In the following sections, we'll discuss our recommendations for how to maximize investments in content.

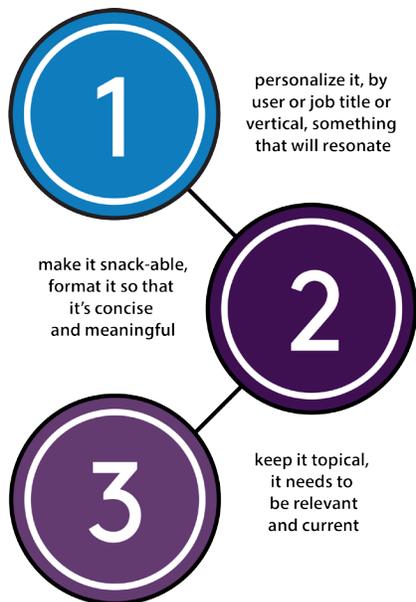## 1: Create Snackable Content to Reach Specific Audiences

Creating snackable content starts with understanding specific audience needs. We recommend developing an audience matrix as a simple way to build out different scenarios for how to leverage diverse content pieces in different formats. For example, from the Edelman-LinkedIn study, we know that business decision makers want facts and insights in short, simple and easy-to-consume formats. As such, it's critical to determine the most salient facts and figures for your content, and then break down the root causes and drivers that are effecting the most critical issues. This exercise will help you develop a matrix of smaller content pieces that can be created.

The following is an example of an audience matrix that looks at the user, the content format and the topic that is relevant to their respective need:
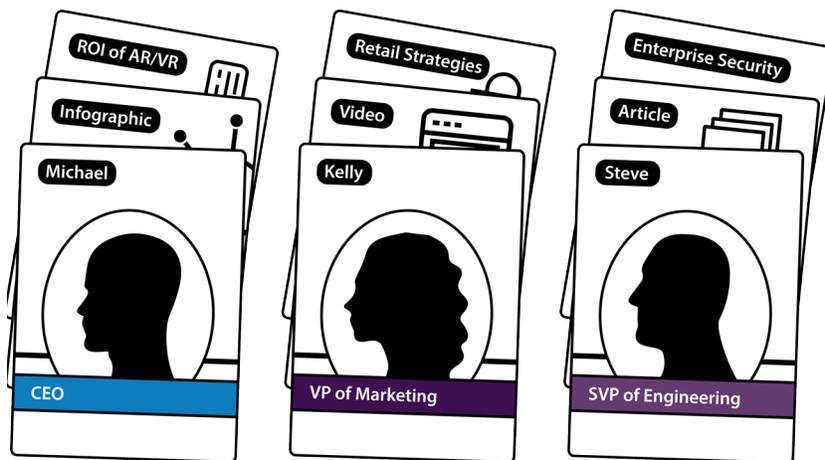
With the audience matrix, you can then use the following as key considerations and principles to best develop smaller pieces of content:


1 — personalize it, by user or job title or vertical, something that will resonate

make it snack-able, format it so that it's concise and meaningful — 2

3 — keep it topical, it needs to be relevant and current

2: Develop a "Next Best Content" Re-Targetting Plan

Effective content marketing creates multiple touch points for a customer over a period of time. Each short, individual content piece forms a breadcrumb that helps lead the specific audience through the full universe of information. Marketers should use the facts and insights in each sequential piece to keep these potential clients engaged with very clear CTAs that relate back to the audience needs. In this approach, marketers get more chances to hit the customer at the right time with the right message in the right format and help increase conversion. Let's take a look at how this "next best content" approach could work based on previous examples:

> *We've identified our possible audience and want to create a cadence for Kelly, our VP of Marketing. Previously we decided to kick off with a short video on omni-channel retail strategies. Then what happens? Let's say that video is great, but it's not enough for Kelly to convert. We can use re-targeting tactics to try and convert her with an infographic related to the same topic that details out additional information related to the content of the video. We can also deploy more thought leadership pieces around omni-channel retail that really solidifies our position on Kelly's mind and hopefully drives conversion.*

This "next best content" method also lets you put multiple re-targeting campaigns in market simultaneously, ensuring the most audience consumption for the investment. This introduces multiple chances to engage with multiple target audiences with the ability to keep building it out wider and wider. Rather than attempting to engage audiences in one shot conversion, this approach can plan to reach audiences with highly targeted content that is in sync with the customer journey.

Q&A   Case Study   Retail Strategies   Infographic
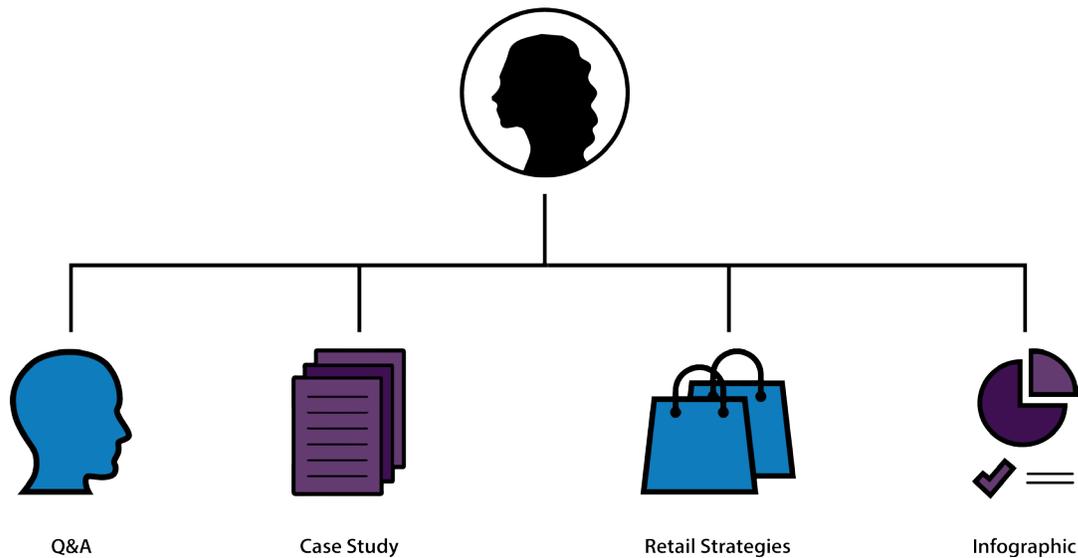
3: Launch Quickly, then Test and

While planning and creating strategy is important, don't let perfect be the enemy of progress. No plan works perfectly from the start, so this next step might arguably be the most important. Look at what is working and what is not and make changes. Talk to your analytics team and see what they can tell you about your audience and how they are engaging, or not engaging, with your content and try to work out what you can adjust.

The need to make adjustments is normal and it's also one of the reasons we wanted all that short, snackable content in the first place. When you pivot, you will have an arsenal of content ready to deploy in new and different ways in order to address what your audience is doing, but without strong analytics and metrics to inform that behavior you won't know how and where to make changes.

Remember, no plan ever survives first contact. You will need to adapt your strategy and make adjustments to ensure you are getting the conversions you need. Don't be afraid to make changes, just ensure that the changes you do make are driven by the information you gather as you test and learn and always drive towards being audience-centric.

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