

# Five tips in winning the 2016 content marketing challenge

 By [Dee Stephens](#)

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2015 has been a long year, with a myriad of new algorithms affecting search and social media, content quality taking centre stage, long form content fast on its heels, not to mention the advance of [video marketing and the micro moment](#).



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PR and SEO are now one output or at least should be, as is SEO and content marketing. The [blurred line](#) is spreading across all the digital marketing outputs. We now know that SEO and SEM are not the same thing, that syndicated content is duplicate content, that social media has serious ranking power and that authenticity and relevance are key in content. Click baiting and link farming are the cardinal sin, and, we know that content is STILL king, and that the marketing of that content is the queen.

Yet the deeper insight here is often missed. In this past year I have had the pleasure of working with some of the largest news publishers in the country, the largest marketplace in SA, and some of the best digital agencies in town. And this is the insight I have for you.

## The content marketing deluge

The biggest threat to content marketing as a practice is content marketing itself, as content marketing does not equate to content marketing success. The issue I have found most prevalent in the industry is that there is a skills shortage, of epic proportions in the severe lack of content managers, content strategists & content marketing professionals.

Businesses need to build on their internal content teams, ensuring they are equipped with up to date SEO knowledge, principles of copywriting, ORM and PR basics and of course social amplification techniques.

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Copywriting agencies are now content farms, digital advertising agencies are now social media experts, video production companies are now rich media creators, contract publishers are now rebranding themselves as content marketers... and all this is based on content created from a mix of inexperienced content creators that are already stretched to the limit with no idea on how content marketing works.

This translates to an influx of crappy content, and that means that its just a matter of time before content marketing blindness takes over. Consumers will wisen up to this "new" tactic of mass publication pretending to be valuable content. The reality is that content marketing is a powerful tool to get the consumer to drop their defenses for just a little while so we can gain their trust and become their custom. But with crap content disguised as great content, the user who is bitten will not be clicking on the good content in a hurry. So content marketing in my view will become harder with diminishing returns as long as we continue to mass produce content under the guise of believing that hordes of content published means you are a successful content marketer.

Branded content, in my opinion, and yes it is jaded, is the swearword of the digital marketing space, the term "branded content" was created by the world of paid media - it has no place in content marketing in 2016, but allow me to elaborate: Unfortunately, the problem is that the people in control of marketing media budgets in this industry do not understand content marketing as a concept nor as a business strategy.

So, who and or what will be successful in content marketing? It's going to be the businesses and brands that create something of value, something unique, something so close to the audience, it will be precious to them. Those who build a "content brand", not brands publishing branded content. What brands often forget is that the consumer has enough wit about them to know that: "Brands are a symbol of a promise, and a strong brand is built on promises upheld."

Brands and publishers alike need to stop applying the same old marketing structures and principles to content marketing. Content marketing does not require content assets to be effective, however producing high quality content consistently will be a challenge and the key is: less really is more, less quantity but more quality".

## Smart content marketing tips

Here are some examples of "smart" content:

1. *Answer a question*: Can be called the "how-to" format. This is perfect for instructions like how to bake a cake, or teaching your audience something.
2. *Provide opinion*: Kind of like a review style and a great opportunity to show your perspective on a specific topic.
3. *Add context*: Pick an angle to follow with your particular topic, this is the ideal format for interviews and event coverage. Always focus on connecting with your audience first, if you can illicit some sort of emotional response you're on the right track, and PS: It's at this level that people connect and make purchasing decisions.
4. Smart content uses more than just words, it uses images, graphics, animations and video so use these to bring your content to life.

## ABOUT DEE STEPHENS

I am a dedicated individual, an analyst at heart, SEO professional, ORM professional, accomplished Content Marketer, SMO expert, and digital media award winner. Starting out as a content producer I have evolved this business to be the cornerstone of success in all things SEO and Content Marketing for my clients. My ability to identify and recognise the requirement, and craft the perfect online solution for my clients is un-paralleled.

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