

Rules of engagement for effective content marketing

 By [Dee Stephens](#)

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1. The reflection of perfection

Creating content should not be based on how well the sentence is structured, or how a search engine will find it. Content is written by people, for people, not search engines. Perfection is only a temporary "phase" online anyway, as the rules of engagement keep evolving, just like the audience.

This is not to say you should publish sub-standard content, rather get the piece published, you can edit, condense, expand and contextualize a couple of hours later. Read what you've published, then decide what needs to be fixed.

2. Reduce, reuse and recycle

Let's look at a free publication of say an E Book. Every single page and possibly paragraph could become an infographic, chart, social post, video, how to, and so forth. We often have no idea how much content we actually have at our fingertips. In this infographic I have used an article and broken it down into an easy to understand four part infographic set that was published via social media. So from a couple hundred words, I created four separate pieces that each ranked individually for a week. Now that makes more sense, especially if you create your own content.

3. Slice and dice it

We content marketers are always looking for ways to extend our content to prospects, partners, publishers, bloggers, etc. Re-purpose old content through quizzes, surveys and polls. There are tools like SnapApp that can assist you in this, however it's not a free tool.



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Leverage SEO, through tools or a professional that will boost your efforts. Enable sharing of the content through partners, and social media. If it can't be shared it won't be seen. Bite sized portions suitable for the on the go mobile user.

4. Pictures share faster than words

They always have... Most publishers have access to image galleries, free and paid versions. Free versions are duplicated incessantly all over the web, it's even worse when you're in a competitive industry, this should not stop you though. Images have always had greater impact than anything else online, just look at the birth of the meme, and then the platforms dedicated to pictures like Pinterest and Instagram to name just two.

Infographics are generating 45% more search volume and traffic than most content online - Why? I'll tell you, information x image = Informative image that is easy to understand, identify, and SHARE! It contains data in pictures, and I'll let you in on a secret here, the brain naturally retains more information from an image than it does a 1000 word article.

5. Mobile missiles

We all heard about the Google mobile update that in essence, enforces that your site is mobile friendly. Did you know that Africa has more mobile devices than toothbrushes! We can safely assume they access via mobile right? In January this year, 3 out of 10 "Facebookers" access the platform through their mobile device, and that is exclusively, in fact, just last month I saw that Facebook had reached 1-billion consecutive users at one time. That's insane

But my point is this; your content marketing efforts should include social "versions" that can support. Collaborate, cement and amplify your content marketing campaign. The most consumed content on Facebook is VIDEO, so consider short 1 min inserts that natively support the other content, or supplement with an image that can be quickly imprinted and shared.

6. The authenticity factor

I have heard this term thrown around more often than I care to admit, "the internet is nothing but copy and paste" and in the past it may have been 100% correct, but the search giants have an algorithm that can tell if you have plagiarised, copied, scraped and stolen content. This will flag your site as LOW QUALITY and then its game over for your search ranking.

If you are authentic, then your content will naturally reflect that.

7. The "How to"

Ever search for a "How to" article? I'm sure you have. I am an avid DIYer and gardener, and I often search for "DIY or How To" articles, these are generally the easiest to find as well and since last year are doing wonders for the SEO (that means ranking) of the sites who published them. This directly ties in the Google Knowledge Graph, the Hummingbird algorithm.

This algorithm is set to amplify the usefulness of the internet as this is primarily what people search for, useful relevant information. You don't need the knowledge graph to make this work though, just publish some good quality how to content. Assuming search volumes are in sync, if you were a baker, I would opt for "How to make butter cream icing like a pro", and link that article to another one with "Icing ideas for buttercream icing"....

You can see where I am going with this right?

8. Content marketing the SEO way

The best way to explain how SEO works with content marketing is by thinking of a spider and how she builds a web. She starts in one corner and moves to the next corner, and then the next... creating a support structure to build on. Then she spins the web connecting each and every strand to each other.

In the early morning the web has dew drops all over it, these would be the data points, but when a fly lands in the web, the spider is able to identify by that web she built, where the fly is caught. She quickly moves towards they prey to immobilise it. That's how SEO works. It's a spider web of security for your site and all the people to come to it, and can find it.

How much of your content marketing efforts should be focused on SEO?

Tracking where your traffic comes from is a great start, so you would go to Google Analytics and then to audience acquisition and then to the overview. You are able to track seven traffic sources from Google Analytics.

Don't rely solely on search because that would be impeding any marketing efforts. SEO is not just Google, neither is content marketing. RiteTag and RivallQ are perfect for social media monitoring and amplification, and Facebook has insights you could delve into, just be cautious of the seven day data cycle. G+ is however a great tool for authenticity and authorship.

There are eight different formats you could create that have SEO value to your content marketing campaign, like video's, article's, infographics, free e-books & PDF's, how to guides, expert interviews, embed Tweets and memes.

9. Socially speaking

Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest and Instagram have ALL updated their algorithms to combat spam on the web, but more specifically here it's to stop brand spam.

The gravy train for businesses and brands in Facebook is over. Brands and agencies have long exploited the social algorithms, from both ends, by spamming the audience with far too many organically seeded over promotional posts, charging clients stupid amounts of cash for "posts" to the audience based on the average of 0.04% CTR.

That's all in the past now, the search giants woke up, know what is happening and will be swift with penalisation. The penalty? Only 10% of ALL over promotional posts will ever be seen by your audience, unless you pay for the audience to see it.

Search wars defines and outlines all the changes that have occurred within Facebook and Twitter, as well as the penalties and other titbits of useful info.

10. SEO long tail

It's unrealistic to expect any real search volumes when you just start content marketing, by incorporating social you could grow that traffic much quicker. When you start to see increasing volumes through search efforts you apply, the residual effect could be long lasting, provided it's a sustained approach as SEO and content marketing require velocity to generate the results we seek.

As I work with news publishers, we have some great examples of good content marketing. We all know the Oscar Pistorius saga, every time he makes it back in the media spotlight, all the old content on the site gets a new insurgence of traffic.

This is the long tail effect of content marketing. If you're really savvy you will anticipate the wave of interest and be prepared

with social media amplification content, if you provided this "social content" as a new spin, on an old tale, the search volumes in my experience have sky rocketed by +- 200% for about 48hrs.

With a water tight lateral content strategy, you could retain and or re-target half of that new audience.

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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