

Unspoken downsides of content marketing: What your agency isn't telling you

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In the trend-obsessed landscape of digital marketing, one strategy that often takes the spotlight is content marketing. Agencies promote its virtues, promising lead generation and heightened brand visibility. However, amid the gleaming promises, a darker side remains unspoken. In this article, we delve into the downsides of content marketing, revealing the hidden pitfalls agencies seldom discuss.



The murky waters of terminology

One of the first challenges that businesses face is the tangled web of terminology. Content marketing merges with other digital marketing facets like SEO and social media, leaving clients bewildered and often pushed into a content marketing pitfall. Agencies might sell one thing yet deliver another, transforming your online presence into a convoluted mess. You think you are buying an occasional blog post when, in fact, it quickly becomes a total digital brand makeover.

Resource drain: The high cost of content

As businesses embark on the content marketing journey, they're greeted by a resource-intensive monster. Crafting top-notch content that resonates demands time and effort, often from already busy executives. Agencies, however, tend to downplay the additional burden content marketing places on clients. They might envision churning out weekly articles based on basic keywords, sprinkling them across the website and social media platforms. Yet, this approach often clashes with the client's desire for oversight and customisation, heralding the unravelling of the strategy.

The heart of content marketing success lies in quantity (the sheer volume of material produced) and consistency. A continuous stream of content floods the website, generating online awareness and improving search rankings. But when clients want to influence content beyond mere cursory checks, the harmony crumbles. Agencies struggle to maintain the required cadence, and clients' managers are soon inundated with checking articles, diverting them from their core responsibilities. This chaos typically spells the demise of the approach within the initial months.

Beyond words: Taking over your website

Here's another unexpected twist: Successful content marketing often necessitates handing over significant control of your website to the agency. Suddenly, the website that was your brand's online headquarters transforms into a content circus, manipulated to appease the algorithms of search engines. Agencies might restructure site architecture, alter calls to action, and overhaul writing tone, all in the name of appealing to the digital overlords.

The apprehension is real – your corporate website could become Google's pawn. But the essence of this transformation lies in its necessity for effective content marketing. It's a dance with mass production that easily overpowers whatever digital presence you may have. As the cornerstone of this digital presence, your website is a prime target for the agency. If you, understandably, want a say in how the site is managed, it quickly becomes a drag on the agency's efforts, and if you give them free rein, chances are you won't recognise your website in a semester.

ROI illusion: Measuring the unmeasurable

Content marketing's allure is amplified by its promised returns in the form of leads streaming in. Yet, in reality, measuring its ROI can feel like chasing shadows. The uncertainty of quantifying the value it brings muddles the investment justification.

Agencies may paint a rosy picture, but the results often remain elusive. Poor quality leads... a deluge of enquiries that waste time to screen, and a straightforward lack of short-term results since, as the agency will certainly point out, content marketing takes time to work. But how long?

Tangible connections between content and revenue are elusive, casting doubt on the strategy's true impact and almost certainly raising everyone's already heightened stress levels.

Exceptional content: A rarity in content marketing

Often, the content produced within the framework of content marketing fails to meet the 'exceptional' benchmark. The content is bland, boring, 'stock' – mass produced.

We recently worked with a multi-national company that deliberately veered away from a content marketing approach. They decided to go for quality, not content, to build brand credibility to support their expansion into the Middle East. Rather than drowning everyone in a deluge of content, they opted for a precise approach. By teaming up with expert writers and internal subject matter specialists, they generated a few high-value case studies that truly added value and raised their reputation. This method deviated from the cookie-cutter approach that their agency recommended.

Crafting the true strategy

In conclusion, the unspoken downsides of content marketing are a sobering reminder that digital marketing, including content marketing, is a tactic – a means to an end, not an end itself. The path to a successful marketing campaign lies in building a robust strategy that guides every move. Sure, maybe a deluge of content is what your business should produce, but it can't be a strategy for every business, especially as sales become higher value and more complex.

As businesses navigate the dynamic waters of digital marketing, remember that a well crafted strategy will steer you clear of pitfalls and ensure that the tail does not wag the dog. It means your agency plays to your rules rather than vice versa. The journey might seem complex, but with the right strategy as your North Star, you'll discover marketing's true potential untethered from the confines of content marketing's limitations.

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