

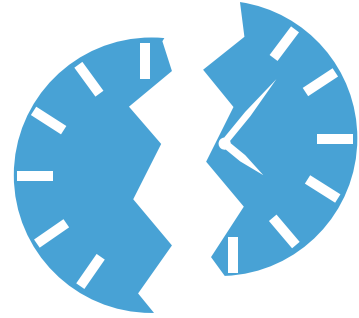


Steps to a Winning
Content Strategy

*By failing
to prepare,
you are
preparing
to fail.*

—Benjamin Franklin

Since so many people know and understand Franklin's quote, why is it that centuries after the phrase was first recorded so many organizations still do little more than pay lip service to planning?



Sometimes it just boils down to lack of time.

To help ease the burden on busy marketers and overworked executives who don't have time to start from scratch, we've put together this short guide to developing a winning content marketing strategy.



STEP 1: Ask Yourself Three Key Questions

Q: Why are we doing this?

To have any chance of success, first you need define what you are trying to accomplish in the first place.

- Do I want to improve client retention rates?
- Do I want to spread brand awareness?
- Do I want to improve SEO and increase inbound web-traffic?
- Do I want to increase the effectiveness of email marketing?
- Do I want to create warmer conversations for my business development team?
- Do I want to do all of the above?

Q: Are we in it for the long haul?

By its nature, content marketing is something that will grow in effectiveness over time. Creating a few blog posts and putting a whitepaper up on your website is nice, but will have limited long-term impact. Doing the same thing consistently over a long period of time is another story entirely.

Q: Do we have the budget to feed the machine?

A good content marketing strategy requires a never-ending stream of new material. To keep that stream moving, you need planners, writers, editors, and graphic designers, as well as a team with the tactical expertise to distribute the content to all appropriate digital channels. If you aren't willing to budget the dollars necessary to do it right, why do it?





“Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe.”

—Abraham Lincoln



STEP 2: Start Sharpening the Axe

Once you have complete buy-in on goals, long-term commitment, and budget allocation—all of which should be documented and included in your plan—it's time to get a bit more specific.

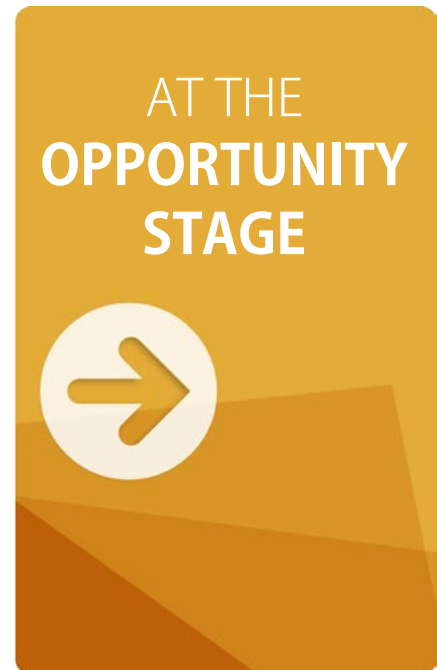
Answer the following questions:

- 1. What is unique or different about what we are selling?**
- 2. Who is our audience?** (Consider both demographics and psychographics)
- 3. What are key trends their industries are facing today?**
- 4. What are the critical issues that impact their ability to be successful?**
- 5. How does our product or service fulfill those needs/eliminate frustrations?**
- 6. What are typically the biggest perceived barriers to a sale?**

Do your homework. If you don't know the answers to these questions, find out.



Look at your answers to questions 1–6, then ask yourself, “What related content themes can we focus on that will educate, inform, entertain, and otherwise pique the interest of our identified prospects and customers?”



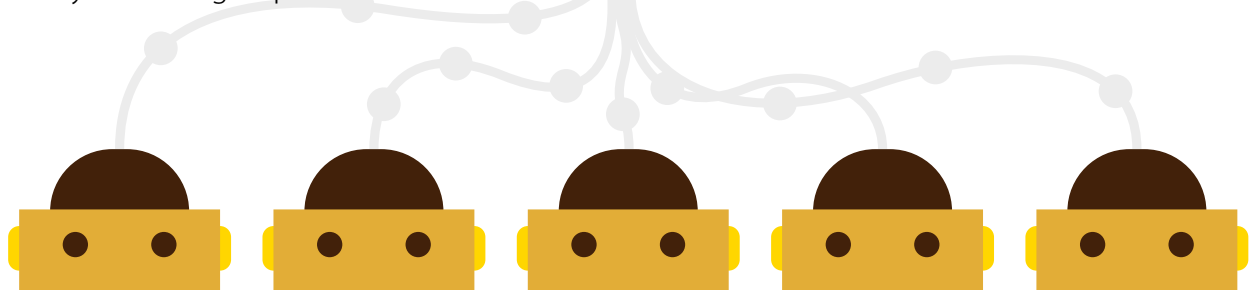
STEP 3: Keep Sharpening...



Just as an axe grows dull with time, so does content. Take a fresh look at the aforementioned questions at least once per quarter so you don't miss out on evolving trends.

Here are some suggestions for coming up with fresh themes:

- **Hold a brainstorming session.** Include participants from other departments. Talk to your sales team. Are there any questions or concerns that come up repeatedly in conversations with prospects? Write down anything and everything. All you need is a starting point.
- **Pay close attention to the content being produced** in industry magazines and blogs and take notes on any theme relevant to your product.
- **Check out what the competition is doing**, and weigh if similar strategies would work for you. What areas are they missing that you could deliver?
- **Use social media tools to listen in on industry chatter.** Follow influencers on Twitter. Join industry LinkedIn groups.



STEP 4: Map Your Content to the Buying Cycle

Even though on rare occasions you will have your prospects “at hello,” more often than not your first touch–point with a prospect will not result in an immediate sale. To be an effective content marketer, you must create pieces that speak to your prospects’ evolving needs. **The following chart highlights examples of the various types of content that should be used at each stage of the process:**

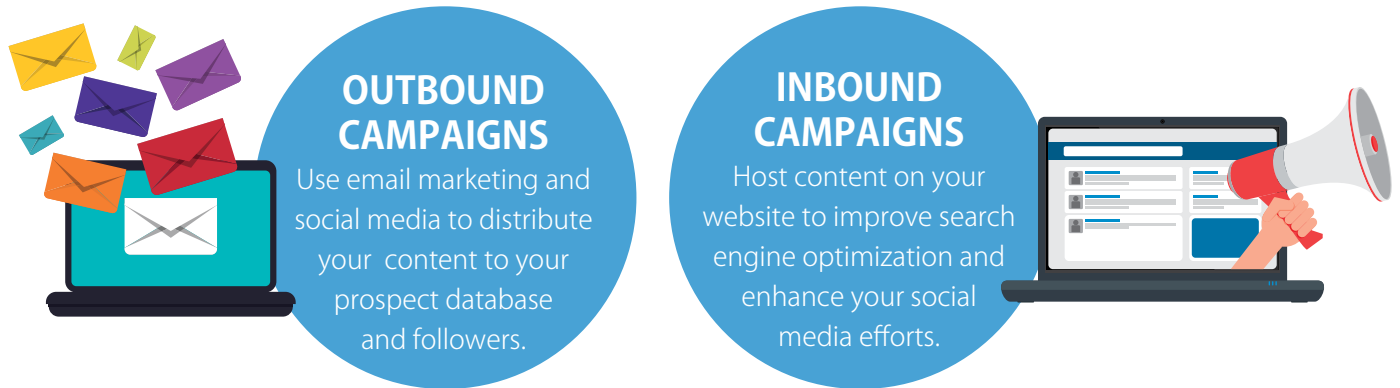
Sales Cycle	Lead	Account	Opportunity	Client
Buying Cycle	Unknown through Awareness	Awareness through Demonstrated Interest	Consideration through Purchase	Retention & Renewal
Appropriate Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press releases • Whitepapers • Infographics • eBooks • Thought leadership articles • Blog posts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press releases • Whitepapers • Infographics • eBooks • Thought leadership articles • Blog posts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case studies • Demos • Product literature • Product updates & announcements • FAQs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newsletters • Tips & tricks • Product updates & announcements • Webinars



STEP 5: Choose Your Delivery Methods

There are many ways to distribute the content you create, but you do not need to use all of them to be effective. You just need to find the right mix. As with everything else marketing and sales related, that boils down to knowing as much as there is to know about your customer—**including how technically savvy they are, where they spend their time online, and how they like to be communicated to.**

Because that is not information you can easily uncover overnight, we recommend implementing a dual outbound/inbound approach that leverages different types of media.



Content that you create for your outbound efforts should be used for inbound campaigns, and content you create to drive inbound traffic should be sent out via other channels as well.



STEP 6: Create Your Editorial Calendars

When it comes to creating an editorial calendar, we suggest you start broad and then narrow it down. Pick four quarterly themes. Break each theme down into three monthly topics, then break each month down from there. When possible, use the creation of smaller pieces to seed the content of larger pieces later in the month. There is no perfect, one-size-fits-all calendar format. Play around with what works for you, but getting it on paper is a great first start. **Sample Content Calendar:**

Theme		Date	Media	Title	Delivery Method	Assigned To	
Q1: Sales & Marketing Infrastructure	JANUARY CRM	Week 1	Blog	5 reasons CRM implementations fail	Website/Social		
		Week 2	Blog	8 things your CRM should tell you	Website/Social		
		Week 3	Blog	How to get your sales team to buy into your CRM strategy	Website/Social		
		Week 4	eGuide	What the best sales organizations know about CRM that other's don't	Email/Press Release/Website/Social		
		Week 4	PR	Announce release of eGuide	Online		
	FEBRUARY Marketing Automation	Week 1					
		Week 2					
		Week 3					
		Week 4					
	MARCH The Intersection of CRM & Marketing Automation	Week 1					
		Week 2					
		Week 3					
		Week 4					

Partner Effectively.

If you are looking to leverage the power of content marketing and don't have the bandwidth or desire to do it internally, it is important to work with a team that is in constant conversation with the marketplace. Those conversations will create a cache of intelligence that can be leveraged across all your sales and marketing efforts.

NuGrowth Digital is that team. We leverage the power of outstanding content, marketing automation and CRM integration to provide well-qualified leads that meet the high expectations and standards of our inside sales teams and those of our partners. We do this through a combination of careful strategy, strong content, and broad distribution backed by state-of-the-art systems that enable actionable reporting and complete transparency.

As one client so aptly put it, "There are good ideas, and there are good ideas that work. The ones that work require a dedicated cadence." The NuGrowth sales and marketing teams create and sustain that dedicated cadence so our clients can concentrate on what they do best. **Call 800.966.3051 to find out more.**

