5 mistakes companies make when starting a content program

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services, and head off customer questions or concerns.

Despite the ubiquity and value of content programs, many companies struggle to deliver high-quality, consistent output. At too many firms, the instinct is to measure self-produced content against the material produced by competitors, leaving many business leaders trapped in only looking at what others are doing, failing to appreciate the investment, time, and resources that content requires.

Content programs can vary quite a bit depending on the product, company size, industry, and degree of competitive analysis. But many companies make common mistakes when they start to produce content. Here are some of the most common pitfalls — and how to avoid them.

Assuming a content program is "self-starting"

A common misunderstanding is that content can be easily created using people already working at your company. Although your technical, support, and sales teams know your product and probably have some great ideas for content, they don't necessarily have the training, resources, or time to consistently write blog posts, make videos, and perform all of the other tasks that go into building a quality content marketing funnel.

As with any other product, content marketing requires experts who can consistently produce valuable work. Expecting your existing team to simply add content marketing to their existing workload is going to pull them away from their other important tasks and result in lackluster content . Just as you wouldn't ask a writer to help debug a faulty product purchase flow, it doesn't make sense to rely heavily on inexperienced writers to create quality content marketing.

Failing to create a set of measurable goals

When performing a competitive assessment and analysis, you might notice your competitor has an active blog of thought leadership pieces. This leads you to ask, "Why don't we have something like this? I'm sure our customers and prospects would find this useful." However, you don't know whether that program is actually beneficial in the way you imagine. Your competitors might have chosen to double- and triple-down on content, but there's no way for you to see whether or not that content has generated leads or garnered attention.

This is why you need to create a set of goals for your content program. Because content can be applied in so many directions — lead capture, thought leadership, public relations — creating a set of goals flows naturally into conversations about the type of content you want, the readers you are addressing, and the ways you can assess whether creating the content is worthwhile. More importantly, setting goals early on will help you get a sense of what kind of content works to meet those goals. You might find your customers are drawn especially to videos or webinars, or that you generate a significant amount of leads from blog posts. This will help you maximize the return of any resources you invest.

Underinvestment in writers

As we discussed above, sourcing content internally can be difficult, so the next logical step is to find external content writers and editors. However, sourcing quality writers can be tricky, particularly if you are only looking to pay for a few pieces of content a month. Additionally, many assume that writers are able to instantly get up to speed on your product, competitive landscape, and goals. If you are able to find a writer who is an expert in your field, the chances are they will be fairly expensive, but a generalist writer will require some investment and training to be able to write capably about your company and products.

Even if you are only planning to use writers on a contract basis, it's a good general practice to arm them with as much information as possible. Collecting a list of competitors for them to look at, giving them a product demo, having a discussion about goals, and being clear in your expectations will save you having to cycle through writers or invest in content that misses the mark.

Not getting buy-in from other stakeholders

When done well, a content program can benefit everyone at your company, gathering leads for sales, showcasing new features for the product team, and addressing common issues to save the support team time and effort. However, this requires strategy and coordination — content creators are only able to create valuable content if they get feedback to inform them on what works. Reporting on what content is generating leads is great, as is creating a content calendar that reflects future plans like product releases.

As a part of the border marketing strategy, content is sometimes ignored by the rest of the company. However, if you are developing a content program, you should make an effort to educate and involve stakeholders outside of marketing, as they can provide valuable contributions to help create better content and will also benefit from being in the loop on your content strategy goals.

Chasing volume over quality

One of the most common mistakes marketers make when creating spa content program is to over-produce at the expense of quality or consistency. Still stuck in the past, when search engines like Google were less sophisticated in their content filtering process, many companies think that the key to a successful content program is to chase search engine optimization (SEO) juice, saturate their content with keywords, and follow trendy topics regardless of whether they are relevant to the company.

While following trends and applying SEO principles to content is absolutely worthwhile, search engines have made it clear that [they rank quality content higher](#), meaning the goal should be to provide value. Content resources are better invested as part of a long-term, iterative process that takes your goals into account. Just like a product needs to be calibrated to find product-market fit, working to meet the desires of your readers requires an intentful investment in quality rather than a huge volume of ineffective content.

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