

Becoming Buzzworthy

A GUIDE TO MAKING YOUR
STORE e-SAVVY

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CONTENT MARKETING: WOW YOUR CUSTOMERS WITH EXPERT RESOURCES

With the popularity of mobile gadgetry, it's easier than ever to get information on just about anything at any time. Need to learn how to unclog a drain? A few clicks online and you have a step-by-step tutorial. Need to know when the next movie starts? A few taps on your phone and you not only know the time, but also how to get to the theater. We live in a time when information, and access to it, makes our lives easier and more productive. When you offer content that makes your customers' lives easier, they'll remember you the next time they want to learn (and buy) something.

Content marketing, according to the Content Marketing Institute (CMI), is “a marketing technique of creating and distributing relevant and valuable content to attract, acquire, and engage a clearly defined and understood target audience—with the objective of driving profitable customer action.” CMI also describes it as “delivering information that makes your buyer more intelligent.” However you define it, content marketing is one of the fastest growing segments in business promotion.

Content comes in a nearly endless variety of flavors. It could take the form of a blog post, a PDF tutorial, a technique demo video, or even your class schedule—whatever provides information to your audience. And since not everyone is a fan of Rocky Road, it makes sense to offer as many flavors as you can.

In previous issues we’ve talked about several ways to distribute content, such as Pinterest, Facebook, and YouTube. Content marketing focuses more on the actual information you broadcast. When you publish information online, your audience comes to see you as a resource. The key is to offer valuable and relevant information.

VALUABLE AND RELEVANT

Many business owners struggle with what topics to address and what content their customers will find valuable. Those very customers can help break that writer’s block! Keep these questions in mind as you develop your content:

- What questions do your customers ask frequently?
- What information can you provide that will help them better understand what you offer?
- What will your customers find interesting or motivating?
- What will inspire them to get crafty?
- What solutions can you provide to your audience’s challenges?
- What fun techniques can they try, but only if they have your product?
- What will make them say, “I never would have thought of that!”

Once you figure out your customers’ questions, you can answer them with content and gently guide them to your door.

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CONTENT TYPES

- **Blog Posts:** According to Technorati, business owners report that blog posts help build greater industry visibility and lead to new customers and sales (bit.ly/ICblxD). Take advantage of this communication channel—post interesting content that will keep ‘em coming back for more.
- **Podcasts:** Downloadable audio recordings are great for quick info on the go. Record a recap after a day at a trade show, offering your insider insights into industry happenings, such as new designers and product launches.
- **Video:** Take advantage of video to engage visual learners. Share pointers on easy ways to use products that will shorten your customers’ learning curves.
- **Newsletter Articles:** When your customers learn to expect a helpful tip or article in your newsletters, they are more likely to look forward to receiving them (and opening them).
- **Photo Slideshow or Gallery:** Online tools like Slideshare, Flickr, and Pinterest make it easy to display visually inspirational content.
- **FAQs:** Create a list of frequently asked questions to address topics such as how you handle returns, class cancellations, and special orders.
- **Static Information:** Though it may seem like a no-brainer, include your store location and hours of operation on every broadcast channel you use.

- **Printable (PDF) instructional tutorial:** include step-by-step photos for how to complete a project.
- **Ebook:** Combine several tutorials of a common theme together and create an ebook.
- **Social Media/Status Updates:** Use a social networking site like Twitter or Facebook to share quick updates on sales, promotions, and class registration deadlines.

REPURPOSING CONTENT

Today’s crafty trend of “repurposing” old into new doesn’t only apply to that cool trunk you scored at the thrift store. Once you’ve created some useful content, take it a step further and repurpose it. If you’ve created a step-by-step tutorial on how to knit a pair of mittens, combine it with tutorials on how to make a hat and a scarf, and you have a great downloadable ebook. If you record a video demoing a new technique, also offer an audio-only (mp3) version for people to download and listen to while they work out. Or compile ten videos on a DVD to offer as a five dollar upsell at checkout. You’ve already done the work to create the content—why not reap the rewards multiple times?

Creating and providing useful content will highlight your expertise and willingness to help. It will set you apart from your competitors. Don’t settle for commonplace sales speak when you can inspire your customers with resources that WOW.