



**SUREFIRE RULES
FOR BETTER B2B
MARKETING CONTENT**

- Is your content ticking all the right boxes?

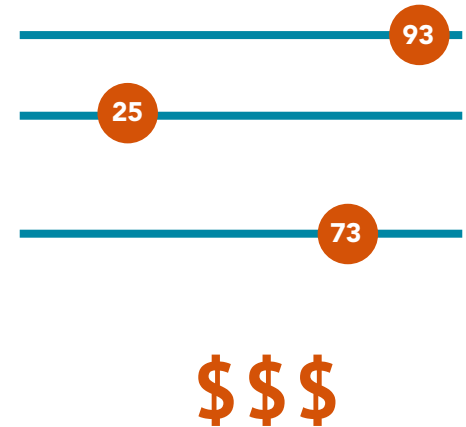
CONTENT MARKETING

It's one of the biggest trends ever to dominate the B2B marketing world. Most savvy companies agree that delivering quality content to their target audience is a necessary – and powerfully effective – tool in an informed marketing strategy.

Check out these stats:

- 93% of B2B marketers use content marketing
- Marketers spend over 25% of their marketing budget on content marketing. [B2B Marketing Insider]
- 73% are producing more content than they did a year ago – and 58% predict that they will produce even MORE this year. [Content Marketing Institute]
- \$118.4 BILLION was spent on content marketing, video marketing and social media in 2013. [eMarketer]

Clearly, content is a high priority – and most B2B marketers are planning to create a lot more of it. But, wait a minute...



DOES MORE CONTENT EQUAL GOOD CONTENT?

NO! A whopping 60-70% of B2B content goes unused by its intended audience. [SiriusDecisions]

Why? Most likely because

- people weren't interested in receiving it in the first place
- it addressed an overplayed topic without bringing anything new to the conversation
- the content boasted about the company's products rather than striving to meet its audience's needs
- text was written/spoken in technical jargon that customers couldn't fully understand
- or, maybe it was simply (yawn) boring

Q: If most content is ignored, yet marketers are planning to produce even more content this year, will we end up with a mountain load of content that nobody wants?

A: Yes.

Q: With so much unwanted content out there, won't it be harder and harder to create content that stands out? That gets people excited? That makes them want to engage?

A: Yes. Yes. And yes.



SO ... HOW CAN YOU CREATE IRRESISTIBLE CONTENT?

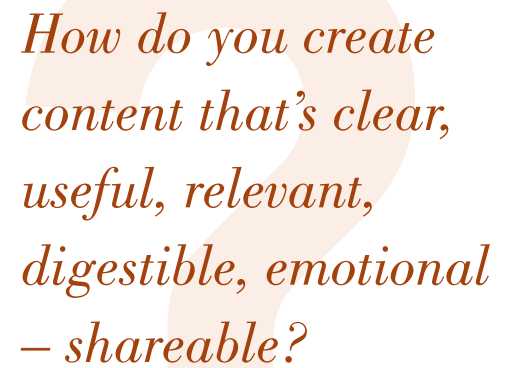
Only very, very good content cuts through the clutter. The rest gets lost in the blur and babble created by billions of other messages. But what does it take to be very, very good? To grab and hold people's interest? To motivate them to take action?

Here's a valuable 12-step checklist to help you ensure that everything you send out will be irresistible to your target audience:

1. Make it useful

Create content that can have a positive impact in people's lives. Give them information that will dazzle board members at the next meeting. Show them how to shave an hour a day off their busy schedule. Provide them with tools that make their jobs easier.

The key is to **make sure your content is designed to benefit them – not you.** The more useful (and less self-serving) it is, the more likely your audience will be to come back again and again — and to share your content with others.



How do you create content that's clear, useful, relevant, digestible, emotional – shareable?

2. Be entertaining

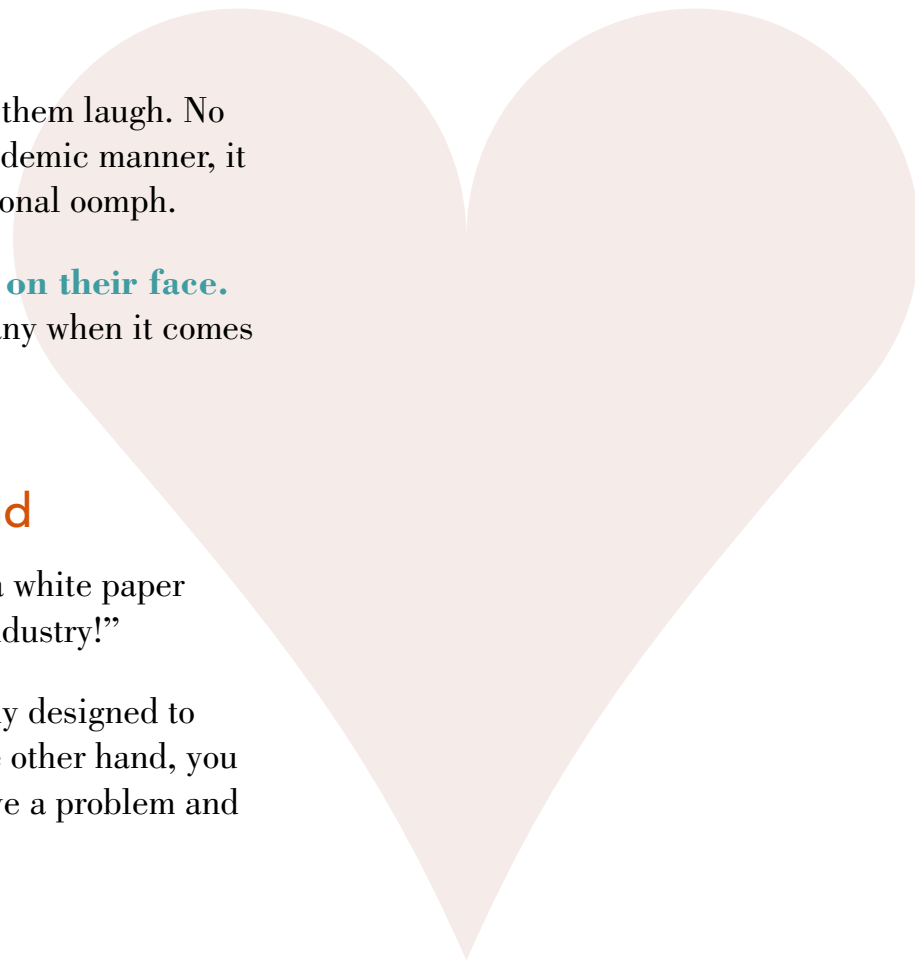
Offer people something that inspires them, wows them, or makes them laugh. No matter how valuable your content is, if it's presented in a dry, academic manner, it won't have the tickled-pink appeal of something that offers emotional oomph.

Make the extra effort to **touch people's hearts or put a smile on their face**. They'll remember you and will think positively about your company when it comes time to make a buying decision.

3. Keep the customer's best interests in mind

So much content is a transparent money grab. "Hey look, here's a white paper (ahem, that we wrote) that proves our product is the best in the industry!"

If it's screamingly apparent that your content has been specifically designed to meet your sales targets, people won't be that interested. If, on the other hand, you selflessly give them information and tools that can help them solve a problem and **make their lives better in some way** – they'll love you for it.



4. Speak their language

Most organizations develop their own internal language to describe their products and industry. Most customers don't speak that language!

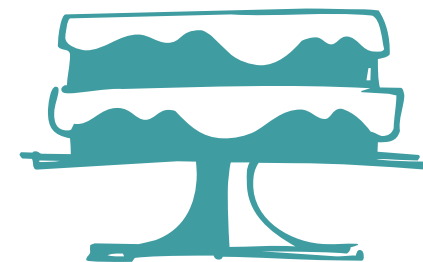
You won't impress them by throwing a whole lot of acronyms, technical jargon, and insider-speak at them. Find out how your customers describe their priorities, their needs, and the problems they want to solve. These are the words and phrases you need to use in order to hit the target. **Be clear, conversational, understandable.**

5. Make it deliciously consumable

How many times have you downloaded a white paper, only to find it too long, too academic or too densely written to hold your attention?

You've clicked on how many videos – just to find the audio quality so poor you had to strain to catch what was being said? You've struggled through how many amateurish slide presentations? Been turned off by how much bad design and poor formatting?

When content is easy to access, read, watch or listen to – people will eat it up. And they'll want to share the goodies. Quality graphic design and production values **make your content a pleasure to tuck into**. It impresses people, sticks in their minds, and leaves a good taste long after it's been consumed and digested.



6. Tell a compelling story

We humans are a storytelling species. Ever since we first sat around the tribal campfire sharing tales of our exploits and sharing myths, we've used storytelling to give meaning to the world around us.

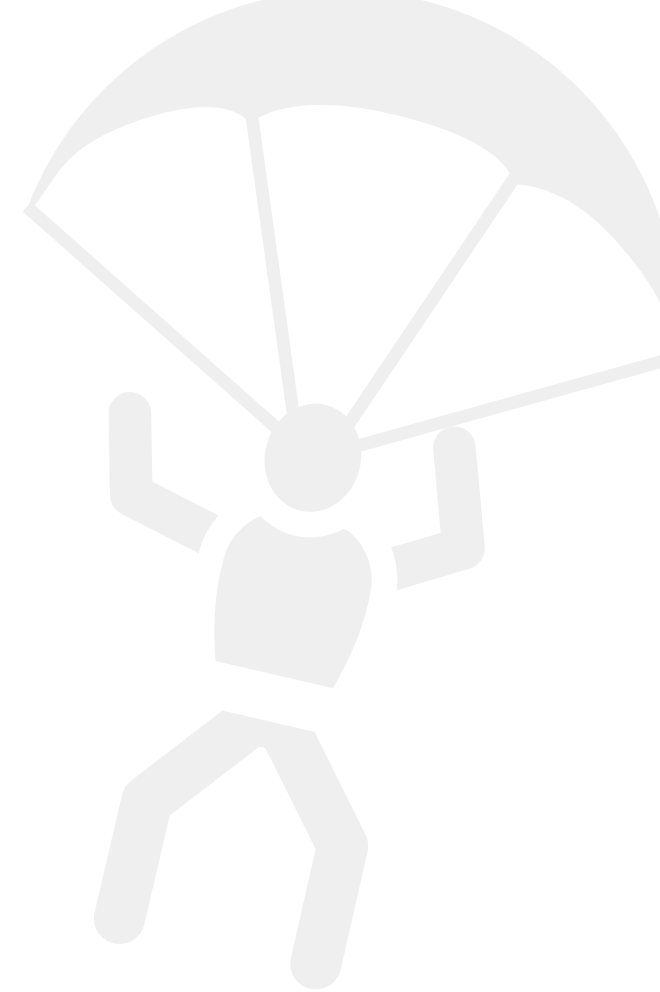
Our stories are what define us. And we love them – look at the amount of time and money we spend on movies, books, television.

Marketers take note: **the more storytelling elements you include in your content, the more people will love it.**

Your stories can take many different shapes: a compelling customer case study; a day-in-the-life account of your employees – maybe the ones your customers don't often see; or an anecdote that does a great job of reflecting your brand's personality.

As long as it involves (a) a hero that your audience can identify with, (b) one or more believable obstacles, and (c) shows your hero overcoming those obstacles, it will hook people and make them want to read through to the happy ending.





7. Take a few risks

Don't be afraid to try something new. With so much content being thrown at your audience, the best way to stand out is to go against the herd, do something different, push a few hot buttons.

Make people sit up and take notice. Say something that nobody else is saying. Shine a spotlight on an issue that others prefer to sweep under the rug. Poke fun at some long-held and unquestioned belief. Use an unexpected medium to present your content.

Be imaginative, be original, be anything but boring. It's the best way to be top-of-mind when a customer is ready to make a buying decision.

That's gotta be worth a risk or two!

8. Let your passion shine through

The best way to generate enthusiasm for your content is to show your own passion for the subject.

Too many B2B marketers believe their content has to come across as no-nonsense, knowledgeable, uber-professional. Unfortunately, that can feel dry, detached, unappealing... blah.

Let your own enthusiasm transform a typically dull topic into something novel, fresh, appealing. People will be eager to get caught up in it. By adding personality and emotion to whatever you create, your content will continue to **resonate in the hearts and minds of your audience.**

9. Make it shareable

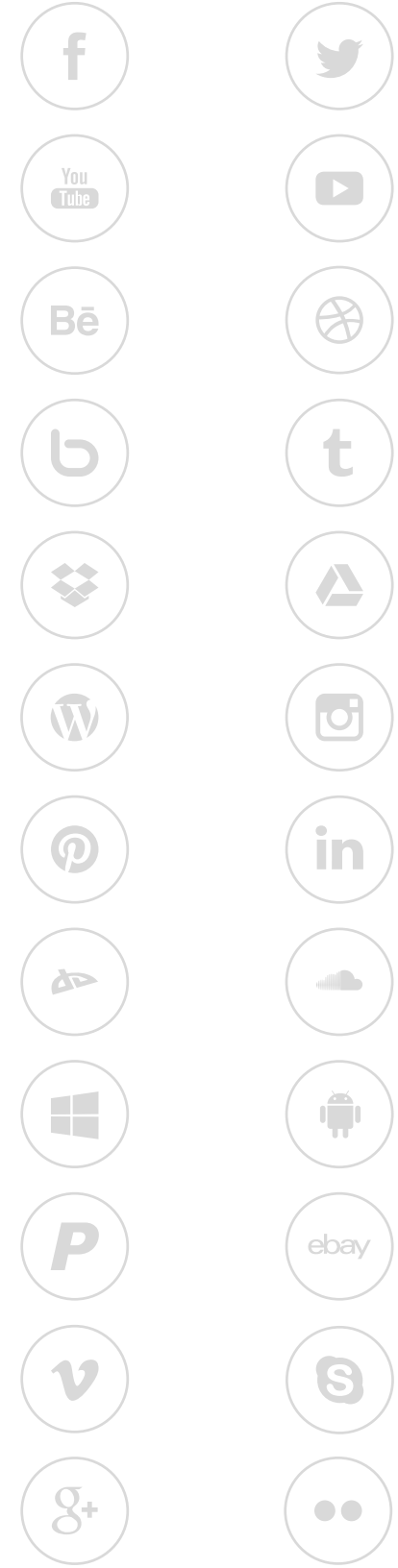
This might sound like a no-brainer but it's surprising how many B2B content marketers overlook this step. If you want people to share your content – and of course you do – make sure that every piece you create is designed to be easily shared with others.

From a technology standpoint, this means including share buttons for email and all the major social networks so people can post it or share it with one simple click.

But creating shareable content goes beyond the mechanics. The content itself has to say “share me, share me”. This means you have to consider why people share content online. And the biggest reason is this: sharing great content makes them look good.

People share a funny video to make people laugh. But on a deeper level, they also do it because it makes them look like they have a great sense of humor. When people share an interesting article or infographic, it makes them look well informed. And when they share a useful tool that can make life easier in some way, they do it because it makes them appear caring and helpful.

By creating content that makes people who share it look smart, thoughtful, funny, and kind, you **skyrocket your chances of making your content go viral**.

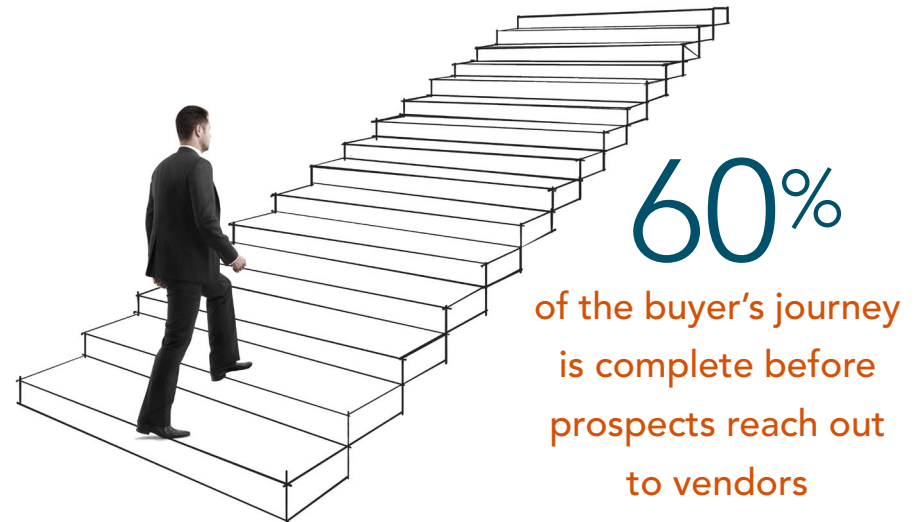


10. Target a specific point in the buyer's journey

We know that the idea of a “buyer's journey” is a bit simplistic. Contrary to conventional marketing philosophy, buyers don't travel down an ever-narrowing funnel. They bounce all over the place – jumping in and out of that funnel as their time, inclination, and need for a solution allows. But that doesn't mean your content should bounce all over the place!

Before you craft each piece of content, carefully consider the person you want to reach. If it's someone who is unfamiliar with your company and your primary focus is simply to get on their radar, keep your content light and entertaining. Infographics and entertaining short videos are great for this.

If the customer is close to making a buying decision, you'll want to give them content with more substance, such as an ebook or whitepaper that gives them the information they need to finalize their buying choice. Just make sure the content proceeds from THEIR point of view, not your organization's.



11. Connect the dots

Every piece of content you publish should fulfill a specific function in your overall marketing strategy. Instead of creating stand-alone pieces of content, make sure that everything you publish is connected to every other piece of content. This gives your audience many different options to explore.

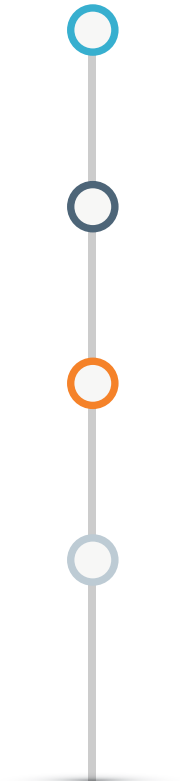
For example, if you're planning to create an e-book on an important topic, create a variety of supporting content that will not only lead people to that e-book but will give them somewhere to go and something to do once they've finished reading it:

- Identify your most eye-opening statistics and turn them into an infographic
- Repurpose some of the most compelling quotes as images with text
- Take powerful pieces of content that can stand on their own and post them on your blog, with a call to action to download the e-book to get the full story
- Distill the main message of your e-book into a series of graphically beautiful slides and turn them into a slide presentation

And make sure that the e-book itself includes a prominent and hard-to-resist call to action that encourages people to engage with your organization on a more personal level (e.g., to sign up as a subscriber or call for a free consultation).

You'll be amazed at how effectively **inter-connected content pulls people deeper into your brand.**

Which brings us to our final content indicator...



12. Set a clear and measurable goal

Many organizations seem to think that content for the sake of content is enough. Sure, it's important to get your content out there and keep your company in the top of people's minds.

But what is your content really DOING?

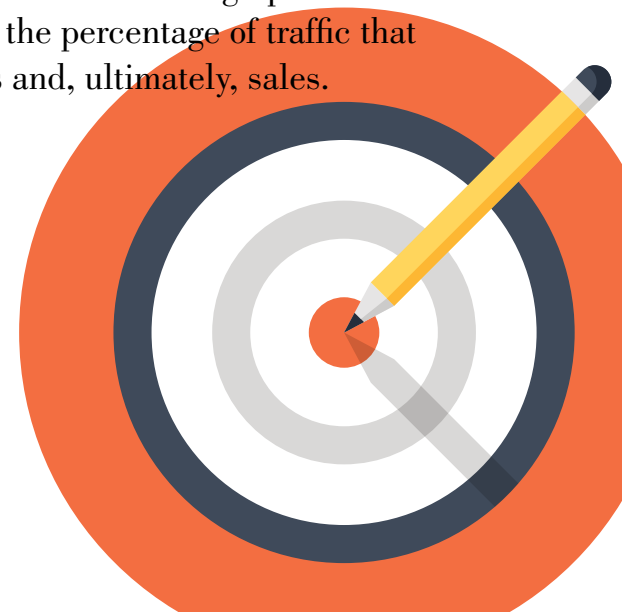
It's not enough to publish content that makes people smile or say, "Hmm, that's interesting." It's not even enough to put out content that people want to share with their colleagues and business associates. After all, do you have any way of knowing whether those smiles and shares translate into sales?

The bottom line is, your content marketing must support your business goals. All the feel-good content in the world isn't going to help your business if it doesn't motivate people to buy your products or services. That's why each piece of content you put out there must be created with a specific goal in mind – and that goal should be measurable. Only then can you track its performance and see how well it has done in achieving the intended purpose.

Let's say you want to create a strong infographic that presents state-of-the-industry information in a new and attention-grabbing way. Great! Sounds like a strong piece of shareable content. But before you send it out, make sure it includes a prominent call to action urging people to visit a landing page on your site that provides a deeper look at the information featured in the infographic.

Then, on the landing page, offer a free download of a powerfully written and graphically gorgeous e-book or slide presentation that expands on the themes covered in your infographic. Make this download available only to those who give you their email address – and make the offer doubly attractive by letting them know that as a member of your subscriber list, they'll continue to receive more valuable information that will make their job easier and make them come across like an industry genius in their boardroom meetings.

Bam! Now your infographic has become a powerful lead generation tool that will help you achieve the business goal of growing your prospect list and generating more sales. And the best thing is, you can easily measure its performance by tracking how much traffic the infographic sends to the page and by the percentage of traffic that converts into leads and, ultimately, sales.



CREATING STANDOUT CONTENT ISN'T EASY BUT IT'S WORTH IT!

If your organization is in the habit of cranking out a specified amount of content each week just to make sure you meet pre-determined production targets, you might be dismayed at the [12-point checklist](#) above. The fact is, creating compelling content that actually helps you achieve your business goals in a very real and tangible way takes a lot of careful thought, creativity, and planning.

But at the end of the day, it's better to create one spectacular piece of content that attracts a huge number of new leads and generates real sales – than it does to create 30 blog posts that just sit on your website without attracting eyeballs or eliciting any comments from readers.

Need help? Call the content experts.

If you're seeking fresh insight into creating content that helps generate engagement and (ultimately) boosts sales, give the Zoom team a call. Between us, we have several decades of experience creating marketing content that drives revenue – and we would love to help you take your content marketing higher.

Call +1 604.263.6310 or email connect@zoomcontent.com.

