

Content Marketing in the Life Sciences

A Position Paper by Forma Life Science Marketing

by David Chapin

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Introduction

Let's talk about buyers. Dan Pink, in his latest volume, *To Sell is Human*, points out that the phrase "buyer beware" came from the days of information inequality, when sellers knew much more than buyers. Those days are gone and the days of information equality are here.

Buyers in the life sciences can now do more and more of their research and pre-purchase activities without contacting a salesperson. So how will you influence these anonymous shoppers? By giving them information they can use. Actually, as this position paper makes clear, you'll be trading this information for an enhanced reputation and perhaps a bit of personal information about them.

And this exchange – trading information for an enhanced reputation – is the heart of content marketing. It represents the future of marketing in the life sciences.

If you are not actively engaged in or planning a content marketing initiative right now, you are falling behind. An analogy should make this clear. Think of content marketing as a stage in a crowded auditorium. On the stage are hundreds of microphones on stands. A good content marketing program will enable you to get on stage, claim one of the microphones and command attention from a section of the audience, assuming you have something to say that they want to listen to.

Content marketing is a first-come, first-served opportunity. Those organizations already engaged in content marketing programs have already claimed the microphones towards the front of the stage and the attention of large swaths of the audience. Search engines give preference to organizations that have a history of creating and posting content, so the stage is filling up; the number of available microphones is decreasing, along with your chances to engage the audience.

If your competitors are not actively involved in content marketing, you should count yourself as blessed; you have a huge opportunity to claim a prominent microphone by creating unique, compelling content. But this opportunity won't last forever.

Whether your competitors are engaged in content marketing or not, you need to be. Start now.

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Chapter 1

Life Science Marketing - Comparing Content Marketing and Peer Review Publishing.

*Summary: **Content marketing** is all the rage in some marketing circles. But many life science companies do not use content marketing – particularly on their web sites. This is surprising because the scientific community has been practicing a form of content marketing for years. In this chapter, we'll look at the similarities and the differences between content marketing and peer-review publishing. In the next chapter, we'll examine both the benefits of content marketing and the attitudes that must change for content marketing to be successful.*

What do you REALLY want your marketing to accomplish?

If you could wave a magic “marketing wand,” what would it accomplish?

There are dozens of possible answers, aren't there? Increase demand, build brand awareness, drive web site traffic, create customer loyalty, motivate sales, drive referrals, stimulate responses to offers, etc., etc.

Ultimately all of these share one similarity: they all involve your audience taking some kind of action or changing some sort of belief. To motivate action or change belief, you need the audience first to *find* you (out of the sea of noise), then to consider you relevant enough to *pay attention* to you, next to see you as *differentiated* from your competition, then *build trust* in you and finally to “*raise their hands,*” giving you permission to start a dialog with them. This chain of activities is both sequential (the steps get taken in order) and necessary (each step is required).

Executing a sound, focused, content marketing strategy allows you to support your audience in taking all five steps. But I bet that many of you are wondering, “Just what is *content marketing*?”

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What is Content Marketing?

As I mentioned, content marketing is a popular subject. If you Google it, you'll find no shortage of blogs, newsletters, white papers, podcasts and videos dealing with this hot topic. Content marketing goes by many other names: branded content, custom publishing, branded storytelling, etc.

In the book *Get Content, Get Customers*, authors Joe Pulizzi and Newt Barrett define content marketing as: “*the art of figuring out exactly what your customers need to know, and delivering it to them in a relevant and compelling way.*”

That is a pretty broad definition, and subsumes lots of business activities. Many activities in the sales cycle, for example, might fit within this definition. There is an ongoing conversation among marketers about where the commonly understood definition of content marketing will end up.

But the core idea is that content marketing is concerned with giving customers information, rather than a sales pitch. Content marketing is about giving away relevant information for free, using this information to enhance the firm's reputation and attract an audience. This brings us to scientists, who have been practicing a form of content marketing for at least a century.

Content marketing is about giving away relevant information for free, using this information to enhance the firm's reputation and attract an audience.

Content Marketing in Science

Here is an example of how content marketing works in the world of science. While the label “content marketing” may be new, I trust you’ll recognize the motivations and actions of the characters in this example.

A scientist has an idea and wants to test it by doing an experiment. She writes a grant (if she works in academia) or promotes the idea to upper management (if she works in the corporate world). Based partly on the merits of the idea, and partly on her reputation, she receives funding. Upon conclusion of the experiment, she writes a paper, which is submitted to a journal, the most prestigious one she thinks would be both relevant and willing to publish her paper. Her article is peer reviewed, and ultimately accepted for publication. Audiences find the information by turning to the journal or using a citation index.

Note that the scientist isn’t paid for her ideas; no money changes hands. Why then does she give her ideas away? Simply, she gives her ideas away to be *unique* (that is, to be the *first to publish*), and to be *noticed*, both of which serve to *enhance her reputation*. When it comes time to submit another idea for funding, she’ll be better off; she’ll have a longer CV of (hopefully groundbreaking) publications. In this way she is able to ‘monetize’ her ideas by using her reputation as an intermediate currency: she trades her ideas for an enhanced reputation, and takes her reputation and cashes part of it in for funding her next experiment or getting her next job.

Scientists give their ideas away to be *unique* (that is, to be the *first to publish*), and to be *noticed*, both of which serve to *enhance their reputations*.

This is a great example of content marketing, though science uses a different label: “peer-review publishing.” The scientist is giving away information that the audience finds useful and relevant. The audience responds by noticing the information, by paying attention to the source of the information, by seeing the source as differentiated, by trusting her and eventually by “raising their hands” to interact with her (e.g., “Could you please come present your paper at this conference?”).

In this way a scientist is able to ‘monetize’ her ideas by using her reputation as an intermediate currency: she trades her ideas for an enhanced reputation, and takes her reputation and cashes part of it in for funding her next experiment or getting her next job.

The benefits of peer-review publishing

It is not only the scientist who benefits from peer-review publishing. Whenever a journal publishes an article, there are many benefits to go around. The journal wins (by offering more relevant content and therefore gaining more readership and more prestige), the audience wins (by getting relevant information from trusted sources – both the scientist and the journal), the scientist wins (she is seen as unique, so her reputation is enhanced and she earns more trust, and she gets noticed) and the field itself - and all of humanity - wins (by the extension of the frontiers of knowledge).

Whenever a journal publishes an article, there are many benefits to go around.

The benefits of content marketing

Content marketing has similar benefits in the corporate arena. Companies that engage in content marketing reap many of the same benefits as our scientist above. They *get noticed* and are seen as *unique*, all of which *enhances their reputation*.

Lets explore this further through the following example: Company XYZ makes diagnostic instruments for hospital laboratories. They’ve been doing this for a couple of decades and so are experts in organizing a lab: deciding what the optimum floor plan should be, structuring the storage of supplies, auditing the current flow of samples and developing an efficient workflow, etc. They normally guard this information closely, providing it only to clients who buy one of their instruments as they help them set up their lab. “We use this knowledge in closing our sales and if we give this information away, then the customer has one less reason to buy from us.”

This mode of thinking harkens back to a time when information was expensive and rare; it was typically tough or impossible for a prospect to find information about best practices in lab organization. But information is virtually free now – both easy to find and cheap to obtain. Company XYZ’s prospects can find many, many sources on best practices today. Keeping this information private doesn’t help the prospect, so in the end, it doesn’t help Company XYZ.

Companies that engage in content marketing get noticed and are seen as *unique*, all of which enhances their reputation.

Realizing that the information is out there for prospects to find anyway, XYZ’s competitor publishes similar information in a newsletter that they make available on their web site. They also create a video, a podcast and a webinar. They then actively market this material, spreading it through a variety of media channels, such as the web, seminars, print publications, Google, etc. The audience members who are seeking help and information then find this content and are rewarded by getting (for free) engaging information that is both highly relevant and compelling. In exchange for this information, the audience provides their attention, and ultimately, their trust.

Who benefits in this situation? Everyone except XYZ.

The differences between content marketing and peer-review publishing

Content marketing is the hot new trend in marketing. But scientists have been pursuing a form of content marketing for decades. Known as peer-review publishing, scientists trade ideas freely given away for an enhanced reputation. There are some key differences between peer-review publishing in science and content marketing in business and these differences have some significant implications for the content marketer.

In the peer-review system, the published paper typically comes from the scientist. In contrast, in content marketing, the published idea can come from anywhere. This means that a content marketer has the freedom think more like a publisher than an author, more like a distributor than a creator.

There are some key differences between peer-review publishing and content marketing, with significant implications.

Content marketing does not have a peer-review system. There are a lot of negative opinions about the peer-review system. Some call it a good-old-boy network and others claim that the system doesn’t really prevent fraud. Regardless, my point is this: the peer-review system, as flawed as some might consider it, does constitute a quality review step in the publishing process. Content marketing for business has no such peer-review – no such quality check.

There are two significant implications. First, with no quality check system, it is easier to publish bad content. In fact you don’t have to look very hard to find poor, irrelevant content on the web right now. Thus the second implication: if you want to be relevant and trusted, your content has to be top-notch.

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Science typically relies on the journal system for distributing ideas. Science uses the journal system as the primary channel of communication, with lectures at conferences and scientific posters as additional – though less frequently used – channels. In contrast, content marketing for business can use multiple channels that are not typically available to scientists, such as YouTube, Flickr, Facebook, etc. The implication is that content marketers must pick carefully from among the wide variety of channels those that are most relevant to their audience.

Content marketers don’t have to be limited to (or by) the written word alone.

Scientists typically give their ideas away in the form of papers. Content marketers have no such constraints. Videos, podcasts, webinars, etc. are just some of the forms that can be used to “package” the ideas distributed for free. The implication is that content marketers don’t have to be limited to (or by) the written word alone.

Scientists don't typically have to worry about marketing their ideas. Helping scientific audiences find the relevant information is a task typically handled by the journals or by citation indices. In contrast, marketers have to be much more active in helping the audience find the relevant information. The implication is that content marketers need to plan and implement the marketing strategies very carefully if they want to target their audience.

Summary

Publication has long been the driving force in science for getting *noticed* and being seen as a *unique, relevant resource*. Publication is becoming a driving force in marketing as well. There are some key differences between peer-review publishing and content marketing, however. There are many implications, the most important of which is that the content marketer has more choice and therefore more responsibility in authoring relevant information, in publishing this information and in helping their audience find this information.

The content marketer has more choice and therefore more responsibility in authoring relevant information, in publishing this information and in helping their audience find this information.

In the next chapter, we'll examine the benefits of content marketing, and examine the attitudes that must change if you want to be successful in planning and executing a focused content marketing initiative.

Chapter 2

Life Science Marketing – The Benefits of Content Marketing to Life Science Companies.

*Summary: **Content marketing** is all the rage in some marketing circles. But many life science companies use surprisingly little content marketing. We'll start this chapter by continuing the comparison between content marketing and peer-review publishing begun in the last chapter. A diagram will make the comparison clearer. We'll look at how fundamental changes in the way people access information has driven an increase in choice, which in turn is driving the importance of content marketing. We'll conclude with a list of changes in attitudes and behaviors that accompany a content marketing initiative. In our next chapter, we'll provide a series of "How to" suggestions for beginning a content marketing initiative.*

Content marketing and peer review publishing

Content marketing is a hot trend in marketing circles. Content marketing allows a company to trade with their audiences; the company provides relevant, compelling information for free, and in exchange the audience helps them develop an enhanced reputation by providing attention and trust.

In the last chapter, I drew attention to the similarity between content marketing and peer-review publishing. Figure 1 highlights the differences and similarities between the two.

If there are so many similarities between content marketing and peer review publishing, why is content marketing only now becoming a current topic in marketing circles, particularly for life science and medical device companies?

If there are so many similarities between content marketing and peer review publishing, why is content marketing only now becoming a current topic in marketing circles, particularly for life science and medical device companies? After all, peer review publishing has been going on since the mid-1700s, so why is marketing only now tuning in to the power of trading relevant ideas for an enhanced reputation?

Why content marketing and why now?

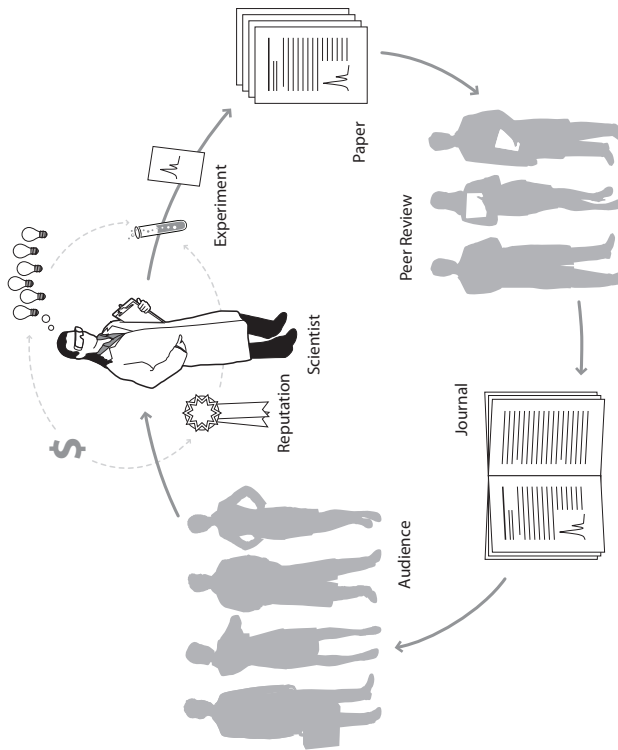
The core concept that makes content marketing both effective and timely lies in the giant shift away from what Seth Godin¹ calls "interruption marketing," which relies primarily on intrusive marketing tactics such as ads that seek to gain market share by interrupting the audience's stream of attention. TV and radio ads are prime examples, but there are many others.

Consumers erected a first line of defense against interruption marketing long ago; they learned to ignore the interruptions to the extent that they could. Technology assisted them by giving them tools such as the mute button to take back control. Marketers responded in two ways worth noting: by developing a more sophisticated understanding of consumer behavior and by creating more intrusive interruptions. The aim of both was to make the interruptions more effective at grabbing attention. They also used technology themselves; for example TV ads are typically louder than the programs they interrupt.

As a result, marketers and consumers have been locked in a battle for control over consumers' attention. But the entire battlefield has been undergoing a seismic shift, caused by the increase in both the number of communication channels and in the quantity and types of information available. Now, consumers can avoid interruption marketing tactics almost completely by choosing where and when they focus their attention. This increase in choice has shifted the balance of power towards consumers and away from marketers.

Marketers and consumers have been locked in a battle for control over consumers' attention.

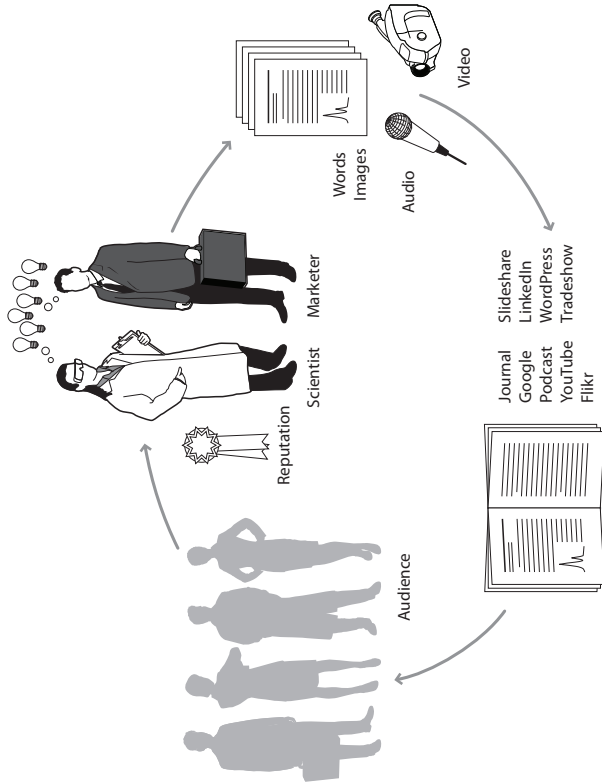
A Comparison between Peer-Review Publishing and Content Marketing in the Life Sciences



Peer-review publishing

A scientist's idea is funded based in part upon her reputation, and in part upon the merits of the idea. The scientist then trades content (e.g., the description and results of this experiment) for free in exchange for a bolstered reputation.

- The scientist conceives of the idea and authors the paper.
- The peer-review process helps ensure a baseline level of quality.
- Content typically takes the form of a paper (i.e., words).
- The publishing vehicle is typically a journal.
- The journal handles the promotion of the content (through "push"). The author typically doesn't help the audience find their idea.
- The audience does not have to search widely to find relevant content of interest; journals and citation references are standard places where searching begins.
- The content typically gets published only once.
- The audience values content that is innovative (first to publish), accurate, and complete.



Content marketing

A company trades content (e.g., a description of best practices, or a overview of trends in the industry) for free in exchange for a bolstered reputation.

- The ideas do not have to originate with the marketer.
- The lack of a peer-review process means there is no standard of quality.
- Content can take many forms: written words, images, audio, video, etc.
- Many publishing vehicles can be used: Slideshare, podcast, Flickr, YouTube, blogs, etc.
- The marketer handles the promotion of the content and has to help the audience find the idea (by enabling "pull").
- The audience has to search in many ways and places to find relevant content of interest. Search engines are the typical starting point, but searches may involve many avenues.
- The content can get published and repurposed many times.
- The audience values content that is innovative (differentiated), relevant, and compelling.

Too much choice can overwhelm life science buyers

Contrary to popular opinion, more choice is not always better. In *The Paradox of Choice, Why More is Less*, Barry Schwartzⁱⁱ makes the case that too much choice can be just as detrimental to our well-being as too little. With too much choice consumers feel overwhelmed. They need help in finding and filtering information in order to decide what to pay attention to (choosing what information is relevant) and what information to act on (what sources to trust).

With too much choice consumers feel overwhelmed. They need help in finding and filtering information⁰⁰.

A few examples will make this clear: do you need information about contract manufacturing services for making API, flow cytometer performance, best practices in running adaptive clinical trials, or EDC standards? Google these subjects and you'll be flooded with information. Even within these narrow examples, the choices quickly become overwhelming. This glut of information forces you to ask: "Which sources are relevant? And once I identify relevant sources, what source should I trust?"

An effective content marketing strategy will make it easier for your audience to choose you as a relevant, trusted source. And there are other benefits as well. To examine these, let's compare the results of content marketing with the results of peer review publishing – which, after all, is a form of content marketing that scientists have been following for more than two centuries.

The results of peer review publishing and content marketing.

Peer review publishing for Scientists	Content marketing for Life Science companies
When successfully implementing a strategy of peer-review publishing...	When successfully implementing a strategy of focused, relevant content marketing...
The scientist gets <i>recognized (that is, found)</i> as an author/experimenter of note out of the sea of scientists	The company gets <i>found</i> out of a sea of competitors
The scientist is seen as <i>unique</i> by being <i>first to publish</i>	The company is seen as <i>unique</i> by being <i>differentiated</i> from the competition
The scientist is seen as <i>an expert</i> in their field	The company is seen as <i>relevant</i> to the industry sector
The scientist is seen as a <i>trusted source</i>	The company is seen as a <i>trusted source</i>
The scientist earns an <i>enhanced reputation</i>	The company earns an <i>enhanced reputation</i>
The scientist can "monetize" their enhanced reputation by <i>applying for funding</i> to test another idea through experimentation. Funding is granted based partly on the merits of the idea, and partly on the scientist's reputation.	The company can "monetize" their enhanced reputation by <i>engaging</i> with the audience, and either selling access to additional ideas themselves, or using the enhanced reputation to promote and sell products/services.

Being Found, Differentiated, Relevant and Trusted

As the table above makes clear, there are five important reasons to engage your audience through content marketing: so you can be *found* (out of the sea of information), so you can be *differentiated* from your competition, so you can be chosen as a *relevant source*, and so you can become *trusted* – all with the goal of *engaging with your audience* (prospects). As they work through the various stages of the purchasing process, these prospects need information that they consider relevant, and they need it from sources they trust. If they don't get the information they need from you, they'll find it from another source. And if they don't trust you, then they'll find another source they do trust. So when it comes time to buy, whom will they buy from? The company that will be "first in line" for consideration is the seller that is the most trusted source of relevant information.

These are the important reasons to engage your audience through content marketing: so you can be found, differentiated, relevant, and trusted.

For example, if you were responsible for purchasing flow cytometers, who would you be more likely to trust when it came time to buy a new one, the company whose marketing consists of ads focused on the specific features of their flow cytometer, such as the small sample volumes required, or a competitor that you've come to rely on to provide (for free) a comprehensive series of white papers about such subjects as "Ten tips for handling reduced sample volumes in flow cytometry" and "Best practices in flow cytometry laboratories"?

A focused, well-executed, content marketing strategy can help your company be *found*, be *differentiated* and be *trusted source of relevant information*. For an illustration of how this works, we need look no further than thought leaders.

Thought leadership in the life science sector

What is thought leadership? The term "thought leadership" was first coined in 1994. Wikipedia notes that a "thought leader" has come to mean someone who enlivens old processes with new ideas. In colloquial terms, a *thought leader* is someone who is recognized as a leader in understanding their customers, their business or their field. And *thought leadership* has come to be defined as the evidence of their unique expertise. The interesting thing about the life science sector is that for a field awash in both supposed and acknowledged experts, thought leadership's presence is spotty in much of life science marketing.

Look closely, and you'll see that there are some segments of the bio-science market that provide plenty of evidence of their expertise. Surf the web sites of the top five CROs; you'll find lots of newsletters, white papers, abstracts of published papers, even videos. Most of this information is not a sales pitch, but useful information, presented in a compelling fashion.

In contrast, take a look at some other segments in the services sector and you'll find little evidence of any attempt to assist the audience. Core labs are just one example where evidence of thought leadership is spotty, but this segment is not the only one; small CROs typically have little or no thought leadership in evidence. In fact, there is no evidence of any original thought, much less thought leadership. I'm not saying that there is no thought and no expertise within these organizations, just that there is no *evidence* of this expertise visible in their marketing. And remember, to a prospect looking in from the outside, this perception is their reality.

Life science service providers promoting their services often use their expertise as a "reason to believe" their marketing claims. Yet many of these same service providers offer little evidence of their expertise on their web sites, beyond abbreviated bios of their core management team.

In many segments of the services sector within the life sciences, there is no evidence of any original thought, much

The benefits of content marketing

Developing and executing a content marketing strategy provides lots of advantages, which I have grouped into categories below. The relative importance of each category will vary with your individual situation.

If you execute a focused content marketing strategy:

1) You get smarter. By focusing on what your prospects need to know, you discover, distill and catalog the expertise that already exists in an unstructured way within your organization. You learn to explain what you know, clearly and compellingly. And by explaining what you know, you come to understand it in a whole new way, because as the proverb says: “When you teach, you learn.” So you shift your attention from being reactionary to being more proactive and strategic; you get better at recognizing, understanding and predicting trends in your sector. You are encouraged to be more explicit about what you believe and take positions that are clearly defined.

If you execute a focused content marketing strategy, you get smarter.

2) Your focus shifts. By concentrating on what prospects need to know, you become less company-centric and more audience-centric. You see your company and your offerings more through the eyes of the audience. This helps you turn down the volume of the sales spiel and engage in more effective dialog. You create a better balance between what you know, and how you communicate.

3) Your visibility increases. Google and the other search engines rank web sites on many factors, but none is more important than *relevancy*. Content marketing begins when you clearly identify your audience and provide them relevant, engaging content. When you do this, you get found more easily and more often. Your web site gets better SEO (search engine optimization) results, which generates more traffic and more links to your site. You get noticed by the media and by analysts.

4) Your differentiation in the eyes of your prospects increases. Publishing evidence of your expertise helps lift you above the mass of “same-old, same-old” competitors. The audience will be able to clearly perceive a significant difference between you and your competition. You will be recognized as more of an expert; your reputation will be enhanced and your brand awareness will increase.

5) Opinions of you and behaviors towards you change. As it does, the audience will divide – those that are not interested in what you have to offer will walk away (saving you time, money and aggravation) and those that are interested will invite you to begin a dialog. This latter group will trust you more and will be more reassured. All of this will improve your brand image.

If you execute a focused content marketing strategy, your differentiation in the eyes of your prospects will increase.

6) Others will start to spread the word. When you have compelling, relevant, informative content, others will share it. As they recommend your content to others, this content will be doing some of your marketing for you.

7) Your business landscape shifts. The size of your company won’t matter as much, because in many cases experts don’t have to be large to compete effectively. You can be more selective about who you choose to sell to, and engage with.

The caveats

The benefits of content marketing are not free. Here are seven attitudes that need to change if you are going to be successful in content marketing.

Focus on your audience. Shift your focus from what you’ve been saying in your sales presentations to the information your audience needs to know. Pay attention to them and their needs. Listen

Focus on your audience. Think like a journalist or documentary filmmaker.

carefully to what they say and infer from that what they need. Be relevant. Lose the “sales pitch” mentality and language; do less convincing and more informing. Engage them with a dialog, not a monolog.

Be generous. Give away your expertise and information. Remember that any information you are now so carefully hoarding is in all likelihood available to almost everyone from other sources, almost anytime, almost everywhere. Why save it, when you can trade it for an enhanced reputation and a more authentic dialog with your prospects?

Focus on the long haul. Content marketing is a process, not an event. Just as a scientist builds a career over years, by working on a succession of experiments, so too must marketers build their firm’s reputation over the long haul. You have to be committed to a steady, long-term effort.

Think like a journalist or documentary filmmaker. Focus on telling stories and conveying information in compelling ways.

Behave like a publisher. Your ideas must be promoted. They can be reused and repurposed, and as you start out, no one else will do that for you.

Focus on creating an atmosphere of trust by being trustworthy and honest. Would you say this, in this way, to your very best client, your very best prospect, or your mother?

Put more emphasis on content than on “bling.” Develop relevant content that satisfies the real hunger in the marketplace. Present it clearly, authentically, and compellingly. This will always trump over-produced, over-hyped sales pitches.

Long term, you’ll need to develop the content yourself. In the short term it is possible to outsource every facet of your content marketing program: you can hire an editor to create an editorial calendar, you can hire an SME (subject matter expert) to provide the concepts and content, you can hire a writer or a producer to “package” the content, you can hire someone to distribute and promote the packaged content, you can hire someone to measure the results, and you can hire someone to maintain the dialog with your audience that this content marketing program will initiate. In the long term, however, you will miss an opportunity get smarter and to establish a meaningful relationship with your audience. I am not claiming that you need to complete every aspect of your content marketing initiative by yourself, but content marketing provides the greatest benefits when someone within your organization is the SME and someone within your organization handles the resulting dialog with your audience.

Long term, you’ll need to develop the content yourself.

How to start your own content marketing initiative

We’ll cover the steps necessary to create and execute a content marketing strategy in the next chapter . But for now, here are some questions that will get you started:

- 1) Who are my audiences?
- 2) What problems do they have? Which of these do my products/services address?
- 3) What do they need to know about the solutions I’m offering? What information will be most useful to them?
- 4) Thinking like a journalist, how can I make this information clear and compelling?
- 5) What avenues do I already have in place that I could use to promote and to spread this information?

Answer these questions and you are well on your way to creating an effective content marketing strategy.

Summary

Publication has long been the driving force in science for getting *noticed* and being seen as a *unique, relevant resource*. Publication is becoming a driving force in life science marketing as well. The benefits are the same; the creator of the information gets *noticed* and is seen as a *unique, relevant resource*. A well-executed, focused content marketing strategy is an excellent way to get your audience first to find you, then to see you as a relevant, differentiated source, next to build trust in you and finally to engage with you. Aren't these the goals of marketing?

Chapter 3

Planning Your Life Science Company's Content Marketing Initiative.

*Summary: **Content marketing** is an effective way to drive your life science brand's positioning and engage your audiences and prospects. In past chapters we covered the attitudes and behaviors that must accompany a content marketing initiative; we now focus on planning this initiative. Planning should be based upon an intimate understanding of the six factors for content marketing success. They are known by the acronym S-T-R-E-A-M: your Strategy, Topics, Resources, Environment, Audience and Measurement. We'll start this chapter with a real-world example of the results that content marketing can achieve.*

Real-world results: content marketing in the life sciences

Content marketing works. It can accomplish many goals, including starting a dialog with your prospects, acquiring leads and (ultimately) generating revenue.

Let me cite just one example. David Levin, VP of marketing for Clinipace Worldwide (a major CRO), reports that they invest 30% of their marketing resources in creating and promoting content – consisting of 1-2 educational webcasts and 2 whitepapers per quarter, among other things. As a result, Mr. Levin states, “80% of our sales leads and 50% of our bookings are generated from our (educational marketing) program.”

“80% of our sales leads and 50% of our bookings are generated from our (educational marketing) program.”

David Levin, VP of Marketing for Clinipace Worldwide

These are impressive results. If you are just starting a content marketing initiative, recognize that achieving similar results is possible, but will not happen overnight. Proper planning and consistent execution are key. Careful planning allows you to outline the path you'll follow, and then you'll be able to chart your progress along the path. When undertaking a marketing initiative that is new to your organization, it is as important to manage internal expectations as it is to manage the project itself, and a well-written, well-reasoned plan will support both.

Before you begin your content marketing initiative

There are two things you must understand about content marketing before you start planning.

Content marketing is a process, not a single event.

First, *content marketing is a process, not a single event*. Whatever the form you choose for your content (white paper, blog, newsletter, video, podcast, etc) creating the first one will only take you so far. The real benefits of content marketing will only be realized as an ongoing stream of high-quality content relevant to your life science prospects continues to be developed and promoted.

Second, to develop this ongoing stream of content, *your organization will need to take the content marketing effort seriously*. Resources (time and money) will need to be allocated. You will need ongoing support from the appropriate individuals and functions within the organization. In return, the organization will be developing effective assets with real worth, as the results from Clinipace make clear.

If an accountant were to evaluate all the assets of the business, a (growing) collection of exclusive content would have value – either genuine monetary value (in the example of a book of original content authored and published by the organization) or goodwill value. Greater than this accounting value, however, will be the importance of attracting new prospects and starting dialogs with them through the use of content marketing.

Planning for a steady S-T-R-E-A-M of content

There are six factors that your content marketing plan must address. For success you will need a steady **S-T-R-E-A-M** of content and so your plan must address these factors: Strategy, Topics, Resources, Environment, Audiences and Measurement.

Identify your content marketing *Strategy*

The goals of your content initiative must align with the overall marketing strategy of your life science organization. Failure to integrate these two will make it much more difficult to produce positive results.

There are two ultimate goals for all marketing activities: a) establish or reinforce your company's desired positioning in the minds of the audience and b) facilitate action of some sort by individual audience members. Your plan should specify how you expect your content marketing initiative to accomplish these – and this specificity will drive many of your subsequent decisions.

There are two ultimate goals for all marketing activities: a) establish or reinforce your company's desired positioning in the minds of the audience and b) facilitate action of some sort by individual audience members.

At a tactical level, what outcomes do you want to encourage? Be realistic – you won't get a contract for a flow cytometer or a phase 1 study solely on the basis of a couple of blog posts. But you can certainly help your audience along the path to purchase through your content initiative, getting them to "raise their hand" to start a dialog with you or building awareness and credibility.

Identify your content marketing *Topics*

There are many issues that must be addressed in the Topics section of your content marketing plan, including: choosing your topics, developing an editorial calendar, deciding upon the form in which your content will appear, and determining the frequency of publication. These issues are crucial in determining the effectiveness of your content marketing initiative. Due to the significance of these questions, we'll devote the entire next chapter to this subject. For now, begin by considering the following:

The issues surrounding your choice of topics are crucial in determining the effectiveness of your content marketing initiative.

- The issues you discuss with your customers frequently
- The topics your competitors cover in the content they publish
- Current subjects of interest in your sector.

Allocate your content marketing *Resources*

Content marketing initiatives require resources to address both *expertise* and *execution*. Begin by determining what resources you need and then follow up with an audit to determine what you already have.

Content marketing initiatives require resources to address both *expertise* and *execution*.

Expertise: First, what expertise will it take to generate relevant content? Who will be the SME (subject matter experts)? Will this expertise come from internal resources, or will you need to hire this from outside? In an ideal world many people within your biotech or life science organization will contribute to the content.

Then, what content (the evidence of your expertise) do you already have? Content marketing is unlike peer-reviewed publishing in that you can reuse, repurpose and recycle content. In fact, doing so will yield many benefits, so look for content you may have already authored, published, distributed or promoted.

Execution: There should be one person who is assigned the overall responsibility and authority to ensure that the content is actually produced and then published. This person may need assistance in day-to-day activities; will this assistance come from inside or outside your organization?

Understand your content marketing *Environment*

Your content will face lots of competition for the attention of your audiences. The environment is changing drastically due to *content inflation*. This era of exploding information brings with it certain corollaries:

Your content will face lots of competition for the attention of your audiences.

- As the amount of information increases, attention spans seem to be decreasing. Whether or not this relationship is causal or casual is immaterial. The important point is that there is ample evidence that both *information overload* and *scarcity of attention* are two growing trends.
- Information overload and decreasing attention spans are forcing publishers (those who distribute content in any form) to focus their messages clearly and concisely. As evidence of this, we need to look no farther than the rising number of one-page web sites.
- At the same time, there is a growing demand for content. In 1999 Google handled approximately one half million searches a day; this grew to greater than 300 million by the end of 2009. Not only has the amount of information increased but the number of channels for disseminating and promoting this information has increased as well. Each of these channels needs to be filled and so there is significant growth in the amount of mediocre content.
- Information is ubiquitous, but insight is rare. In the flood of data, there is a scarcity of clear-eyed understanding, both synthetic and analytic.
- Buyer attention will get even more elusive as low-value content becomes omnipresent.
- Changes in technology have enabled anyone to begin “publishing” content. This democratization of the publishing process means that small life science companies can target their audiences as effectively as the large ones.
- Audiences are fragmenting. There is no “mass market” any more.
- Google and other search engines are now necessary for audiences to handle the increasing content load. The search engine channel is crucial for reaching your audience, and any content marketing initiative must accommodate the unique aspects of the search engine ecosystem.
- Information overload means that trust becomes even more valuable in relationships. Buyers trust peers, and the effect of recommendations and social networks is increasing.

Information is ubiquitous but insight is rare.

The search engine channel is crucial for reaching your audience, and any content marketing initiative must accommodate the unique aspects of the search engine ecosystem.

In addition to *content inflation*, your *competitors* also influence the environment for your content. If your positioning is truly unique, you should be able to avoid a “me-too” appearance when implementing a content marketing initiative. However, it is worthwhile to familiarize yourself with the content marketing your competitors are undertaking. A quick web search will give you most of the answers you seek. As you search, pay attention to whether or not these sites require visitors to trade personal information (contact information) for content they have generated. Such barriers tend to impede the distribution of content.

The net result of all these factors is that the clear, unwavering focus of your content marketing efforts must be your audience. The nature of the people you want to reach should drive your planning.

Audiences – the focus of your content marketing initiative

It is important to identify your audiences as specifically as possible. Not just companies (e.g., biotech companies with greater than \$3 million in revenue) or titles (e.g., Director of Drug Discovery), but roles, education, behaviors, attitudes, beliefs, motivations, etc. If you don't understand these specifics, how can you help your audience with their issues? Many publishers embody the specific characteristics of different audiences into one or more representative "personas" – think of these as composite biographies for your buyers or your corporate customers – for whom they then create content.

Many publishers embody the specific characteristics of different audiences into one or more representative "personas" – think of these as composite biographies for your buyers or your corporate customers – for whom they then create content.

If your audience is homogeneous, you might have to create only one buyer persona, but for most life science organizations, you'll develop several, e.g., decision influencers, decision makers, users, etc. Each will have separate information needs.

How do you know what these information needs are? The best way to find out is to ask. Content marketing should allow you to create a dialog (not a monolog) with your customers, so you need to get in the habit of listening. There are many ways to do this. Send out surveys. Join groups on LinkedIn and look for trends in their discussions. Ask your customers. Poll your salespeople.

Remember that search engines are the channels through which most audience members will first discover your content. In this sense, search engines should be treated as a separate audience group. Optimizing your content for searchability will provide several benefits, including raising your search engine rankings.

To measure the overall effects of your content marketing initiative, it is best to identify and track *conversions* – specific actions you want your audience members to take.

Tracking your content marketing initiative through *Measurement*

The consultative sales environment confronting life sciences firms can make it difficult to identify all the factors that influence any one specific sale. To measure the overall effects of your content marketing initiative, it is best to identify and track *conversions* – specific actions you want your audience members to take – that can then be linked to your content marketing initiative. One example of a conversion would be a "click-through" from your email newsletter to your web site. This type of conversion is simple to measure and tracking these conversions over time will enable you to develop a trend analysis.

There are many other ways to think about measuring the impact of your content marketing initiative. Here are a few:

- Track the behavior of those who receive your content versus those who do not. This could involve sales, or some other step of engagement along the sales process (e.g., requesting a meeting, or dropping by a trade show booth).
- Track the number of subscriptions to your online content (e.g., newsletter).
- Track the number of times people repost your content.
- Track your search engine rank. Properly done, content marketing will raise your rankings.
- Embed surveys into your content and track the results.
- Use web-based tools (such as Google.com/Analytics, Alexa.com, Compete.com, or Quantcast.com) to track the relevant metrics for your web site, such as the amount of time on your site, the number of page views, the length of time spent on on specific pages, etc.
- Conduct pre- and post-awareness studies. There are many ways to do this, but all involve gathering information from audience members. You can do this directly (e.g., handing out surveys at trade shows) or online (e.g., using tools like SurveyMonkey.com, Zoomerang.com or SurveyGizmo.com).
- Track responses through the use of unique 1-800 numbers, specific landing pages, individual URLs, customized email addresses, etc.

When considering what metrics to track, how to measure them and what to do with the results, remember that marketing has two primary goals: *establishing/reinforcing your positioning* and *facilitating action*. Don't be so focused on requiring hard data that you overemphasize the goal of *facilitating action* (because it is easy to measure) and downplay the value of *reinforcing your positioning* (which is harder). Even though it might be hard to measure changes in your firm's image, content marketing is well suited to helping you establish/reinforce your positioning.

Don't be so focused on requiring hard data that you overemphasize the goal of *facilitating action* (because it is easy to measure) and downplay the value of *reinforcing your positioning* (which is harder).

Great content marketing starts with a S-T-R-E-A-M of relevant content

By clearly identifying your Strategy, your Topics, your Resources, your Environment, your Audience and your Measurement, you will have a succinct plan for your content marketing initiative.

With your plan firmly established, we can now turn our attention to the next steps: creating and promoting your content. In the next chapter, we'll cover the development of the content itself, including such issues as choosing topics, the form for your content, the tone of voice to use and the frequency for publishing.

Chapter 4

Creating Compelling Content.

*Summary: **Content marketing** can establish your life science brand's positioning and engage your audiences, but attaining these benefits depends upon having compelling content. To create this content, you need the right **focus**, the right **form**, the proper **filters** and the optimum **frequency**. In this chapter, I discuss these factors and provide some tips for creating compelling content.*

How to create the content your life science brand's audience is hungry for.

The basic premise of *content marketing* is that giving away information that an audience finds useful and relevant will encourage them to respond with trust and give you the opportunity to engage them in dialog. All this enhances your reputation; you'll become known as a thought leader.

This is especially relevant in the life sciences, which responds well to content marketing initiatives. For many life science companies content marketing is currently an open opportunity because many life science sectors have little evidence of thought leadership. But this opportunity won't remain open forever. As more companies realize the necessity for content marketing, finding a position that is not yet occupied will become more difficult. If you don't stake out your position now, a competitor might well beat you to it.

There is an open opportunity because many life science sectors have little evidence of thought leadership.

You can't achieve the benefits of content marketing for your life science brand unless you create content with *real value*. This value depends upon the needs of your audience and the specifics of your individual situation. If you are reading this chapter expecting a list of topics to start blogging about (or a thought leadership position to adopt) you're out of luck – you'll have to create your own. I'll give you some help in getting started, though: to create valuable content you need to start with the right *focus*, the right *form*, the right *filters* and the right *frequency*.

To create compelling content in the life sciences, *focus* on what's important

Effective content marketing in the life sciences requires a clear and steady *focus* on your audience. Put aside your sales pitches and establish a dialog centered on issues and topics that are important to them.

How do you identify these topics? First, *listen* to what your audience has to say. They may not be saying it to you, particularly if your typical communications with prospects are centered on you, your company and your offerings. The antidote to this type of self-centered monolog is to develop "big ears." Social media can help here. Identify where your prospects are showing up on the web; these are their "watering holes," and you need to develop an active presence at these locations. For example, there may be groups on LinkedIn or other social networks that you can join or there may be discussion groups related to individual conferences or seminars. Once you have identified these locations, pay attention to what your potential customers are saying and the questions they are asking. But don't stop at listening; join the discussion and support the community rather than just being a parasite. The goal is to find and support discussion and questions about the problems, challenges, opportunities and issues your audience is facing. This will give you a sense of the topics that draw attention, and get you in the habit of being a source of information, knowledge and answers, in other words, a thought leader.

Effective content marketing in the life sciences requires a clear and steady *focus* on your audience.

There are other ways to identify topics that might be useful and interesting to your potential buyers:

Identify your expertise. Make a list of those topics that you know quite a bit about. What topics do you discuss with your prospects frequently? I'm not talking about issues such as "Why *our* product/service is better than the competition's!" but neutral topics on which you supply helpful, relevant advice or information. If the content is impartial and not sales oriented, this is an excellent place to start.

Ask your salespeople. They are on the front line and are in the closest contact with prospects. They should be familiar with your prospects' concerns.

Ask your prospects. Each time you touch base with a prospect provides an excellent opportunity to ask about his or her concerns. There are many ways to do this, including sending out surveys, e.g., "Which of the topics shown here would you most like to know more about?"

To identify which topics will be of interest, ask your salespeople. They are on the front line and are in the closest contact with prospects.

Keep your ear to the ground. Pay attention to topics under discussion in your life science sector right now. Follow bloggers and other editorial commentators. Read the print and online versions of the top publications.

Listen to competitors. Keep in touch with what your competition is saying. You don't want to copy them, but remember that you want to approach this endeavor from the point of view of your prospects, and they will likely be listening to your life science competitors with filters that are less biased than yours.

Track the response to your current content marketing. For example, are you getting lots of comments on a particular blog topic? That is a sure sign that there is interest in that area.

Once you have a group of topics, organize them into an *editorial list*. This list will be constantly changing; topics of interest in your sector will change, inquiries and curiosity will add new topics to the list, and you'll remove individual items as you create thought leadership content about these topics.

To create compelling content for the life sciences, choose the most appropriate *form*

To drive effective content marketing in the life sciences, the *form* your content takes should match the needs of your life science audience and the specifics of the content itself. There are many possible forms for your content, each of which has advantages and disadvantages, including:

blogs	posters
newsletters	webinars
white papers	books
peer-reviewed articles	ebooks (e.g., a white paper made graphic)
images/charts/tables/graphs/diagrams	microsites
video	audio/podcasts
guides	speaking engagements (recorded lectures)
workbooks	research reports
slideshows	flash demos
animations	etc.

I'm sure this list is incomplete. Even so, there are lots of options, aren't there? Your choice of form should be dictated first by the needs of the audience and second by the need to communicate the information clearly and concisely.

In general, you'll get strong results by starting with the written word. There are several reasons for this. First, the scientific community is most familiar with the peer-reviewed article (words, words, words). Second, search engines can index the written word more easily than video and audio, though technology is changing this rapidly. (Remember, one of the reasons you are doing this is to be *found*, so optimizing for search engines is important.) Third, words are the most amenable to reuse and recycling. These reasons are all compelling, but they should not deter you from considering other forms for your content. For example, web video is a growing trend, particularly in the B2B life science marketplace.

In general, you'll get strong results by starting with the written word.

As you become sensitized to the need to develop a continuing stream of content, you'll begin to understand that there are many opportunities to tap into content that already exists, such as creating a video recording of a conference presentation, recording a webinar, or taping an address. These forms will not always be words on paper, and this should not deter you from grabbing these opportunities.

Whatever form you choose, make sure that the length is appropriate to your life science brand's audience. Concise is better than long-winded. Unfortunately, it often takes more effort to create a shorter message than it does to create a longer one. This has been remarked upon by many notables, including Carl Friedrich Gauss, (his *Gaussian distribution* is a familiar tool in the biological sciences) who said, "You know that I write slowly. This is chiefly because I am never satisfied until I have said as much as possible in a few words, and writing briefly takes far more time than writing at length."

Active filters can help you create compelling content for the life sciences

To create effective content marketing in the life sciences, it is important to *filter* your choice of topic. The goal of establishing a meaningful dialog with your prospects won't be supported by topics that are redundant, outdated or trivial. When it comes to filters, here are several you can use to increase the relevance of your content.

Is there a theme? Your audience will pay less attention to your content than you will. Therefore you may need to focus on a single topic or on a narrow range of topics to reinforce your message enough to grab your prospects' attention.

Is this topic novel? The topics you choose determine whether your life science brand is seen as a thought leader or a follower, so choose your topics carefully. Let's face it: the world does not need another white paper on the importance of recruiting patients into clinical trials. Don't rehash topics that have already been covered by your competitors, by editors or by other commentators. Rather than competing with every other supplier, choosing a topic with some "white space" around it will give you some room to maneuver.

The topics you choose determine whether your life science brand is seen as a thought leader or a follower, so choose your topics carefully.

Will this make you stand out? If you have to cover a well-known issue, can you take a big-picture view to give it some context – or conversely, focus in and provide a new perspective through examination of the details? Can you provide a new viewpoint by connecting previously unrelated trends in your life science sector? Can you invent and publicize a new metric? Can you develop and publish proprietary research, such as a web survey or a series of phone interviews?

Will they pass it on? Filter topics by imagining which one would be most likely to be passed on from one person to another. This is a good indication of real value. Here are three areas that might be useful:

- *What's New* – new regulations, new resources, new trends
- *Tips and Tricks* – some “how to” ideas that only an expert would know
- *Insight* – intelligence or connections (possibly from a completely different field) that your sector has not seen before.

Can you educate the educated? Don't aim your content too low. You want to be known as an expert and your thought leadership should supply proof of your expertise. Thought leaders elevate the dialog in their sector, so don't hesitate to aim your content at more experienced members of your audience.

Will you annoy some audience members? Thought leaders often take strong positions and actively defend those positions. You don't have to be obnoxious, but don't be shy about taking a stand. Taking this type of polarizing position can help you get noticed. Remember, the people who stand in the middle of the road are the ones that get run over.

Thought leaders often take strong positions and actively defend those positions. Remember, the people who stand in the middle of the road are the ones that get run over.

Can you involve someone else? Interviews are great sources of content. Interview your customers, your suppliers or other notables in your sector. Often they have more pull than you do, and will attract notice in ways that you cannot.

Can you make a prediction? Predictions are always interesting, particularly when they are bolstered by an explanation of the rationale behind the prediction. Thought leaders have deep insight into a particular topic, and many have enough that they can notice and extrapolate trends and thereby “predict” the future.

Can you offer more than just opinion? Can you tell your story with images? After all, a picture is worth a thousand words. For added impact, support your story with data. Can you prove your point?

The frequency of publishing is an important element in your success in the life sciences

To create effective content marketing in the life sciences, content *quality* is more important than the *frequency* or overall *quantity* of your content. However, there are some rules of thumb for frequency and length: newsletters should be published no less than four times per year and blog posts should be published no less than once per week. Anything less will give the impression that there is a lack of commitment to a position of thought leadership.

Newsletters are typically 800 words or more; blog posts are 300 words or more. These are only suggestions; both frequency and length should be chosen based upon the specifics of your goals, your content and your audiences.

While publishing more frequently is almost always better, it is best if you pick a frequency and stick to it. When an audience sees that material is being published on an inconsistent schedule, it breaks down trust. It is better to be slow and steady than prolific one week and invisible the next six.

While publishing more frequently is almost always better, it is best if you pick a frequency and stick to it.

Tips for effective content marketing in the life sciences

The right focus, the right form, the right filters and the right frequency are just the starting point. Though I can't provide a compelling list of topics or a surefire viewpoint, I can offer some *tips* for creating compelling content.

Tone of voice. The personality of your content should be congruent with your overall positioning. This does not mean that the tone of voice for your blog should be identical to that in your brochures – in fact there are good reasons for them to be distinct. But both should support the overall positioning of your brand. If your brand's character is supportive rather than challenging, or active rather than calm, or surprising rather than predictable, your thought leadership should echo this. The tone inherent in your content marketing initiative should reinforce that of the rest of your life science brand.

Keep it simple. Keep it simple, keep it short, keep it compelling. Enough said.

Pick a good title. Good headlines help invite the reader into the piece. A dry description may be accurate, but may be less effective at encouraging someone to read further.

**Keep it simple, keep it short,
keep it compelling. Enough said.**

Share some doubts. Sharing some of the negatives about a particular situation can increase the perception that you understand the entire situation. It will increase the believability of the positive points you are making.

Include your targeted keywords. Make a list of the keywords that your prospects will use when searching for the information that you are providing. If you incorporate these keywords into your content on a routine basis, you can raise your search engine results very effectively.

Unlock your content. Every discrete action you require of your readers to obtain benefit from your content will lower your conversion rate. Some web sites require almost as much information to get a "free" whitepaper as to apply for a credit card, and most users simply won't go to all the trouble. Requiring this much information will definitely decrease trust. Be generous with your thought leadership.

Solicit assistance. You personally don't have to be the subject matter expert. Find the writers and the teachers in your organization, and harness their expertise. Look for content you already have and re-purpose this.

Just do it. Develop an editorial plan and schedule. Assign responsibilities and get moving.

Conclusion

With content marketing, as in most of life, you'll reap large benefits only if you are willing to make a commitment. One of the benefits is that content marketing can "level the playing field." You don't have to be the biggest company to develop insight that is valuable to your audience. And while being big may convey a few advantages when it comes to resources for getting material published, technological changes have simplified the process, so almost anyone can now publish original material. You can make it easy for new customers to find you and communicate with you.

**With content marketing, as in most of
life, you'll reap large benefits only if
you are willing to make a commitment.**

This will only happen if you make a content marketing a *strategic priority* for your life science brand. This means assigning resources and responsibilities, developing a plan, creating the content and then publishing. This entire initiative will be hamstrung if you don't publish your content with the right focus, in the right form, with the right filters and at the right frequency. In the end, you must publish, publish, publish.

Publishing is the way to begin attracting customers, and a commitment to publishing should be baked into your plan from the beginning.

Another one of the many benefits of content marketing is that the material can be repurposed, reused and recycled. In the next chapter, we'll cover some ways to maximize your exposure from your compelling content.

Synopsis

To create compelling content, remember:

- Focus on topics that are important to your audience.
- Discover these topics by getting curious and by listening.
- Choose a form that your audience relates to. If in doubt about which form to choose, stick to words.
- Filter your material: choose a theme that will help you stand out.
- Publish on a consistent schedule.
- Don't lock your content by requiring your readers to register to gain access.

Chapter 5

The Content Marketing Life Cycle

Getting the most out of your compelling content for your life science brand.

by David Chapin



*Summary: **Content marketing** is an effective way to drive your life science brand's positioning and engage your audiences and prospects. In this chapter we'll introduce the idea of a **content life cycle**, known as P^7 . Managing the P^7 life cycle from Step 1, People all the way through Step 7, Promotion will allow you to harvest the greatest possible benefit from your content.*

Managing the life cycle of your content for maximum impact

Content marketing is the process by which you give away information that is valuable to your prospects, and in return get permission to establish a dialog with them. In this chapter we'll focus on managing the process so that you can harvest the largest impact from your life science content as it is developed, published and promoted.

P^7 – The content life cycle for life science companies.

Figure 1 shows the “life cycle” of your content; it describes how you can maximize the benefits you receive from the content you create. To harvest the maximum benefits, neither content creation by itself nor promotion alone (through social media, for example) is enough. Content must be actively created, managed *and* promoted. It is the active integration of these three tasks – the basis of this content life cycle – that will provide the most benefit. This chapter will discuss the ways you can leverage this process to extend the reach and the impact of your content.

Let's go through the steps in the content life cycle, one at a time.

**The Content Life Cycle for BioScience Companies:
Getting the Most Out of Your Compelling Content.**

The steps here will guide you in extending the reach and the impact of your content marketing.

7. Promote

Notify your audience that your content is available; track the impact using the metrics you established. Possible channels include: email blasts, direct mail, ads, trade shows, events, reprints and social media, such as: LinkedIn, Digg, Delicious, etc. Remember that content themes and ideas can be reused, recycled and repurposed, so start the cycle again.

6. Publish

Publish the material where your audiences will find it. Possible channels include *online*, such as your website, Slideshare, YouTube, Flickr and also *paper-based* media, such as: trade publications, Lulu, Xlibris, BookSurge, etc. As you publish, optimize for SEO results.

5. Prepare

Create/write/record compelling content that is clearly targeted at the audience's needs. If you are creating this content for another publisher (e.g., a trade publication), be sure to follow their editorial guidelines. If you will be self-publishing this content, choose a form that is appropriate to your audience from among the many possible forms: white papers, newsletters, blog, webinars, video, slide presentations, podcast, etc. Incorporate your keywords to maximize SEO.

1. People

Effective content marketing always starts with a clear focus on your audiences. For marketers promoting products and services in the life sciences, there are several audiences: your prospects, the editors and publishers of trade publications, and conference/seminar producers. Creating buyer personas will help you determine exactly what content your audiences will find compelling.

2. Probe

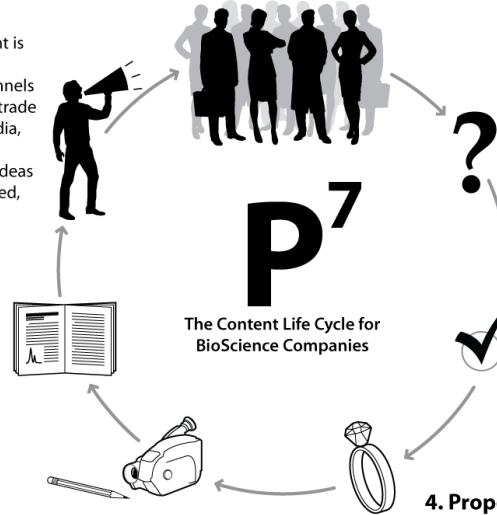
Develop a clear understanding of the issues and topics your audience finds compelling. Then determine the expertise within your organization that can be used to address these issues. Audit your existing content – what ideas can be reused, recycled or repurposed? Establish metrics and (continue to) measure the conversions your activities are generating.

3. Plan

Create an editorial list of compelling content – topics that your audience is interested in and that you understand well. Create lists of keywords that your audience might use to search for this content. Rank order the lists, taking into account factors such as upcoming events, what topics are “hot,” and the editorial calendars of major publications, etc.

4. Propose

Talk to editors/publishers/producers and offer to create and deliver content – that is, to speak or write – as an expert on a particular topic from your editorial list. If one editor or publisher declines your offer, try again with another. If all decline, create the content anyway and publish it yourself.



1. People – Your life science content marketing begins and ends with your audiences.

Content marketing for life science companies starts (and ends) with a clear focus on your audience groups. To get the most out of your content marketing initiative, you must broaden your definition of “audience” beyond just your prospects to include other groups – groups that also have contact with your prospects. Examples include the editors and publishers of trade publications as well as the producers of major events, such as trade shows and conferences. These individuals are generally regarded by your audience as trusted sources, so they can boost the success of your content marketing initiative if you are able to enlist them to help you spread the word. And spreading the word is the first step in driving conversions.

(Remember that a conversion is a specific action you want your audience to take, such as visiting your website, or signing up for your newsletter, etc. The ultimate conversion that everyone seeks is a signed contract, but the granularity of the Internet allows us to measure intermediate steps along the way to this sale, and these are known as conversions. Tracking conversions helps you determine how to improve the impact of your content marketing investment.)

Having urged you to think more broadly about your audience, and who else your content might be relevant for, let's now think more specifically about the various subdivisions that make up your target audience. Most people with marketing responsibility in the life

To harvest the maximum benefits, neither content creation by itself nor promotion alone (through social media, for example) is enough.

sciences have a general sense of these subdivisions. They may have identified different bioscience niches, such as decision influencers vs. decision makers or users vs. managers. There is now a growing trend to focus even more specifically on individual audience micro-niches by creating a series of *personas*. A persona is a fictitious personality that embodies many of the traits of a specific audience micro-niche. Each audience subdivision might be composed of multiple micro-niches, each represented by a persona.

Understand that creating personas allows you to author content with specific individuals in mind, rather than just a broad swath of your audience described only in demographic terms. One advantage of focusing specifically upon individuals, rather than on broad audience segments, is that you will focus on addressing specific problems rather than general ones.

You must broaden your definition of “audience” beyond just your prospects to include other group – groups that also have contact with your prospects.

Remember, the content marketing life cycle begins and ends with your audiences.

2. Probe – Before you create compelling life science marketing content – Get Curious.



We have covered the *Probe* step in detail in the past two chapters; it involves determining what topics are of interest to your audience. You can determine this in a variety of ways. In addition to probing the needs of your audience, you should probe *internally* to determine what resources you have available:

- What content do you already have? Can it be reused – for example, can you repost the slides from your latest webinar and reach additional prospects? While editors who accept your story ideas will typically insist upon the language being exclusive to their publication, this does not mean that you can't cover related or similar themes in different pieces.
- What resources are required to create new content? What expertise do you have internal to your organization that will enable you to create compelling content? What expertise will you need to hire?

As you probe these questions, plan the ways you will measure the impact of your content marketing initiative. Define the conversions you want individuals to take, such as signing up for a newsletter, attending a webinar, or visiting the home page of your web site. Determine how these will be measured and if any specific tactical implementations are required to support your measurements, such as programming a specific landing page with a unique url.

To maximize your life science content marketing benefits, define the conversions you want individuals to take and how these will be measured.

3. Plan – An editorial plan will organize your life science marketing content and the possible opportunities.



Create an editorial list to organize the content ideas that you have developed. Your list will have a variety of items on it in various stages of development. For example some content will be publication-ready, e.g., a transcript of a completed presentation; other items on your editorial list may be just the germ of an idea for content that *could* be created – a brief outline of a topic for a white paper. All of these topics that have value to the audience should be placed on your master editorial list. The list can then be sorted according to many different criteria, such as readiness for publication, alignment with current market interest (that is, what topics are “hot”), your firm's positioning (for example, “We want to be known as the formulation experts for parenterals, so we're going to run a series of webinars on the changing regulatory requirements in this area), etc.

This editorial list will not be static; you will be updating it often. As you develop a methodology for pushing concepts through the P⁷ process, you will find that you become sensitized to new ideas and

Create an editorial list to organize the content ideas that you have developed.

identify new concepts more readily. Continue to add these to your editorial list.

Another list you will want to create and manage is a list of keywords.

Another list you will want to create and manage is a list of keywords – words that your audience will be using to search for information on the topics on your editorial list. You'll use this in step 5: Preparing your compelling content. Knowing the keywords that your audience uses and the keywords that your competitors are optimizing for will be important as you create your content.

For more information on keywords, you can read more in this article that Forma recently authored for Med Ad news, available at: <http://pharmalive.com/magazines/medad/view.cfm?articleID=9280>.

4. Propose – Getting others to help spread the word about your life science marketing content.



So now you've got an editorial list of topics that your audience will find valuable. The next step is to develop a list of industry-specific target publications. Review recent issues of publications and editorial calendars to determine topics of interests, writing styles, audience, contacts and submission deadlines.

Before you start creating content, take the opportunity to reach out to editors and other publishers. PR firms are specialists in getting notice from the press, and I'm not advocating that you can replace their services completely. However, you can augment their impact by using some of the techniques here. Ensure that you are not duplicating their efforts; don't approach the same editors.

The editors you approach can help you determine if any of the topics you have on your editorial list align with the interests of their readers. Now several things are true of editors. First, many (but not all) are hungry for externally generated content that their readers will find valuable. Second, they appreciate an independent, unbiased approach, so don't try to disguise a sales pitch for your product/service as an article. Third, they want exclusive, original content. Fourth, they're busy. After all, they've got another issue to publish and another one after that, so don't waste their time. And last, each editor is an individual, with individual preferences for the method of contact. Generally the best method is to use email with a follow up phone call a few days later.

Before you start creating content, reach out to editors and other publishers.

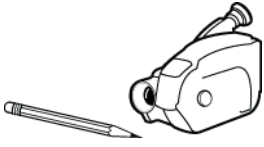
Considering all these factors, a direct approach is often useful when contacting editors. Pitch a few of the relevant content ideas to the publication contacts via email. The email should include information on the author, content outline or brief header and first paragraph (but no more than that), potential sources, potential word count and timeline for completion. For example, "I'd like to propose a 1200-1500 word article, dependent on space, reviewing the changing nature of best practices in patient enrollment for clinical trials, with a focus on the Asian market. I can have it for you within the month."

If the editor in question agrees with your proposal, then this can be a true partnership: the editor gets access to original, exclusive content that their audience values, and you get a chance to publish content as an expert in a respected trade publication. If the editor turns you down, don't be disheartened – ask what topics they *would* be interested in. Also, since content can be reused, repurposed and recycled, take any idea that has been turned down, and examine it: does it have real value for the audience? If it does, present the idea to another publication.

By approaching editors before your content is created, you give them a say in tailoring that content as it is created. This allows you to customize your content to the unique needs of the editor's audience, which means you'll maximize your chance of getting published. It will also lessen the chance that you'll expend resources creating content that editors are not interested in. If you are unable to find any interested editors, you can always create and then self-publish the content.

If the editor agrees with your proposal, then you get a chance to publish content as an expert in a respected trade publication.

5. Prepare – Creating your compelling life science marketing content.



Your content will be worth little if it is not compelling. In our previous chapter we covered the creation of compelling content, through the use of the right *focus*, the right *form*, the right *filters* and the right *frequency*.

If you are creating this content for use by another publisher, such as a trade journal, make sure you follow their editorial guidelines. If you will be self-publishing this content, make sure you choose a form for the content that is most appropriate for your audience.

Some of the possible forms include: white papers, newsletters, blogs, webinars, video, slide presentations, podcasts, etc.

Ensure that your content incorporates the keywords that your audience will be using to search for information about the topic in question.

Ensure that your content incorporates the keywords that your audience will be using to search for information about your topic.

6. Publishing – Where your branded life science content greets the world.



At this point in the process you are ready to publish your content. Remember that content can be reused, recycled and repurposed, so look for multiple avenues to publish your content. If you are self-publishing, the most likely place your content will appear will be on your organization's web site. In addition to your own website, you can use other sites, such as SlideShare, YouTube, Flickr, etc.

Right about now many novice content marketers think: "I've put all this work into planning and creating this content. I must get something in return." They lock their content behind a barrier and require that anyone who wants access to this content must provide personal information. This trend has been carried to such an extreme that some sites require users to provide almost as much information to download a supposedly 'free' whitepaper as to apply for a credit card.

Nothing could be more damaging to your relationship with your audience; do not erect too many gates in front of your content. Studies show that asking for information will cause large numbers of prospects to turn away. In part this is because users have to provide this information *before* they reap any reward from your "free" content.

If you are tempted to lock your content behind barriers, first perform the following test. Google the topic in question and see how much information you can find about it. If the content you have created is truly unique and can't be found anywhere on the entire worldwide web, then it may be appropriate to ask for information in return for access to this content. If, on the other hand, users can find information similar to yours without giving away personal information, then think carefully about requiring users to give you personal information. Users will typically choose the path of least resistance.

Do not erect too many gates in front of your content.

Thought leadership is supposed to build trust. Requiring that your audience give you lots of personal information before downloading supposedly "free" content does not build trust.

7. Promote – Publicizing your compelling life science marketing content



Your content won't do much good unless you maximize its exposure, so it is now time to notify your audience that your content is available. The ways to do this are almost infinite, of course, but here are a few common methods: email blasts, LinkedIn, direct mail, ads, trade shows, events, reprints and social sharing sites such as Digg and Delicious.

Social media can play a large role in helping you spread the word. But don't rely on any one channel exclusively. And don't forget the power of interpersonal relationships. At Forma, we ask

almost everyone we come in contact with if we may add them to the subscription list for our newsletter.

Social media can play a large role in helping you spread the word, but don't rely on any one channel exclusively.

Since the goal of content marketing is to create dialog, make it easy for people to provide feedback. Ask them what they think about your content. One method to do this is to publish a brief survey with every piece of content. You can also use Google Analytics and other tools to track your audience's response (such as the average time spent on any particular web page). Whatever methods you use, pay attention to the results. After all, you are trying to start two-way communication.

Close the loop: Reuse, Repurpose, Recycle and Measure.

Unlike peer-reviewed articles, content created for content marketing purposes may be reused, reapplied, repurposed and recycled. For example the recording of a presentation at a conference could be the basis for a webinar. A slide presentation could be transformed into an ebook.

Note that many trade publications will demand that content offered to them be exclusive. Be sure to discuss this issue with them to clarify any possible misinterpretation. In the end, however, while specific language may not be able to be reused, themes and ideas will be able to be repurposed or reapplied.

The metrics you established early in the process will help you determine which content is getting the most traction. Measurement is the best way to determine the true impact of your content marketing initiative and to focus your organization on continuous improvement in every phase of the P⁷ cycle.

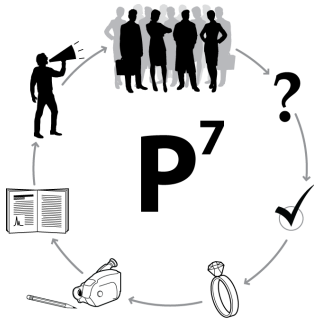
The metrics you established early in the process will help you determine which content is getting the most traction.

Life cycle management is the key to long-term content marketing success

Effective content marketing can help to position your firm in the space you strive to own, provide increased exposure, build brand awareness, establish and/or increase your reputation by generating thought leadership and help you achieve expert status in the industry.

If you manage the life cycle of your content correctly, you can extend the reach of your content far beyond your own sphere. By enlisting others to publish, promote and share your content, you can extend its reach and impact, and maximize your content marketing ROI.

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Conclusion/Summary

- If you plan properly, your content creation cycle can be managed to maximize the impact for you and your organization.
 - The life cycle for your content consists of 7 steps: People, Probe, Plan, Propose, Prepare, Publish, Promote.
 - Proper content marketing begins with a clear understanding of the needs of the audience. Your audience is composed of your prospects in addition to editors, trade show producers, plus others who are already trusted by your prospects, etc.
 - Harness others to spread your content. Ask editors if they would be interested in publishing your content; ask conference producers for podium time.
- When you create your content remember that it will be worth nothing if it is not compelling.
 - Publish your content and publish it widely. Look for multiple avenues/channels to maximize the reach of your content.
 - Promote your content. Harness the power of social media to help spread the word.
 - Repurpose, reuse and recycle the themes and ideas that underlie your content.

ⁱ http://sethodin.typepad.com/seths_blog/

ⁱⁱ *The Paradox of Choice, Why More is Less*, Barry Schwartz, Harper Perennial, 2004, New York.