



**7 WAYS YOU
CAN IMPROVE
CONTENT
MARKETING
RIGHT NOW**



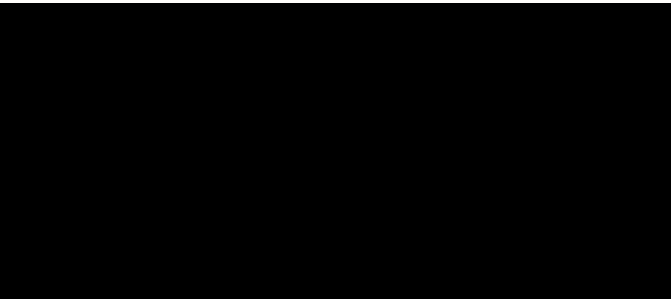
SHAHRIAR AMIN



If you measure by the amount of time & money spent behind it, content marketing is already a key focus area.

Today 3 out of every 5 marketers globally create at least 1 piece of content every day, according to eMarketer.


In a survey of 1500 organizations done by SEMRUSH, 76% of them have at least a dedicated 3 person team for content marketing.

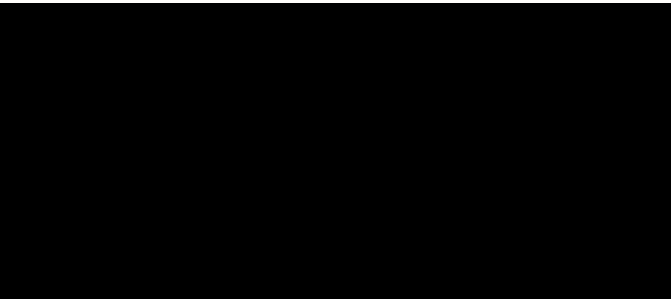


This proves content marketing is no longer part of a grand digital, future vision. It is very much part of our past marketing efforts upon whose foundation we stand and it is very much a current reality that is urging us towards an ever more dynamic marketing landscape.

There is a sense of urgency thrust upon us, the full weight of which is finally dawning on us.

Welcome to the crazy world of content marketing. I assume you are here to find ways to tame this voracious beast, to stamp your authority over content marketing



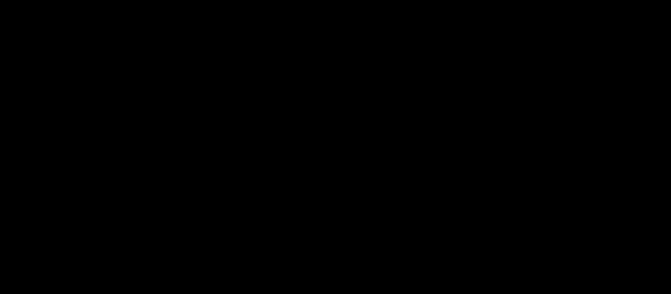


by learning to avoid all the mistakes that journeymen like you are making every single day. But before we approach that particular challenge, lets us try to understand what this whole new game is all about.

So what exactly is this content marketing?

Content marketing is a technique of creating and communicating materials so relevant to a specific audience that they get attracted towards the brand that made that content and in the process gradually gets converted to a paid customer.






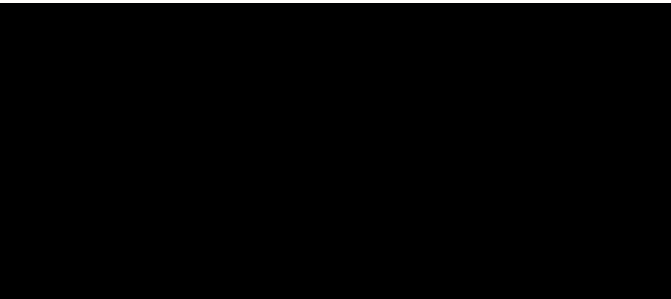
Here the long-term conversion objective is to turn him into an ardent advocate of the brand.

There are 4 key parts to this definition that warrants special attention.

1. Relevance
2. Creation
3. Communication
4. Conversion


Relevance: Content marketing starts with a clear understanding of who the intended audience is and why would they crave the piece of content you are making. This is referred to as Relevance.

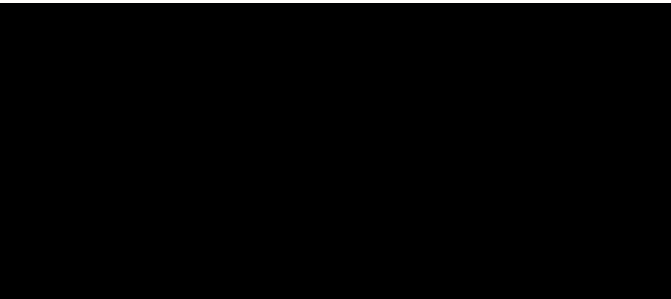




This is where content marketing differs from advertising, which often is an inside-out exercise, also known as outbound marketing. In outbound, you make a product or service and then find the best possible way to advertise its valuable benefits to find customers.


Creation: Good content marketing starts with audience need, creates a valuable content that addresses that need, and only later in the process, brings the brand angle into it. That's what makes content marketing a true outside-in process, also known as inbound marketing.

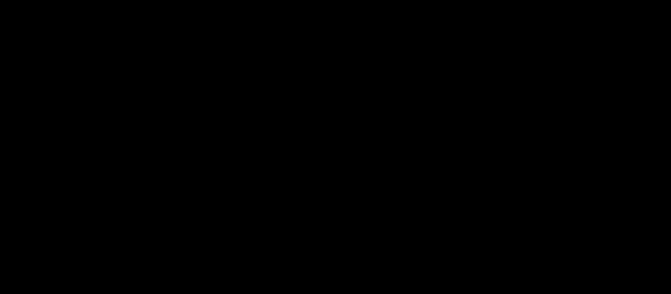




There is key difference in the approach of advertising and content marketing as well as the starting point. More details on this will be provided in later sections.

Content marketing needs creativity because you are creating something of value as well as something that stands out. But creativity alone does not make a content marketer. Content marketing is not art and a content marketer is not an artist. An artist's sole focus is the creation of beauty & truth that she feels compelled to speak, even if there is no audience for it.

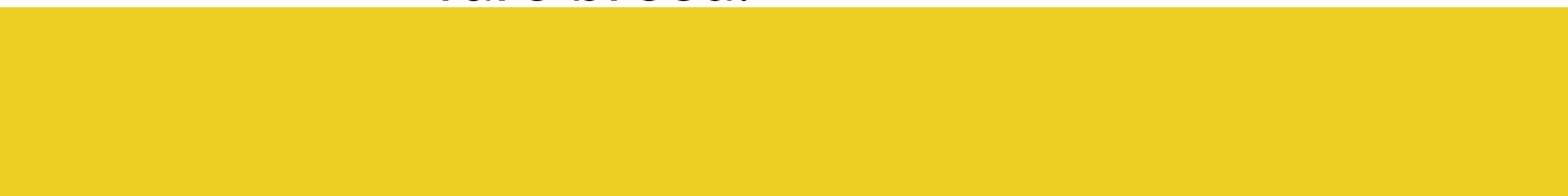


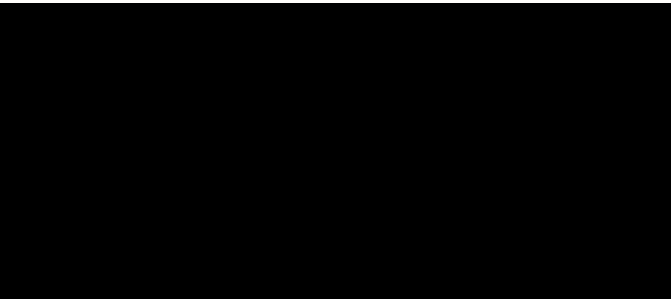


A content marketer lives and dies by her audience. If she creates something that has no relevance to her audience then she is not doing her job.

Communicate: A good content marketer also needs to be a communicator and that is where he needs to be business & marketing savvy. A good content marketer as a result is one part artist & one part businessperson.


Its a combination that is difficult to balance. People are either skewed towards their artistic side or they are savvy business people; rarely both. This is why a good content marketer is still a rare breed.

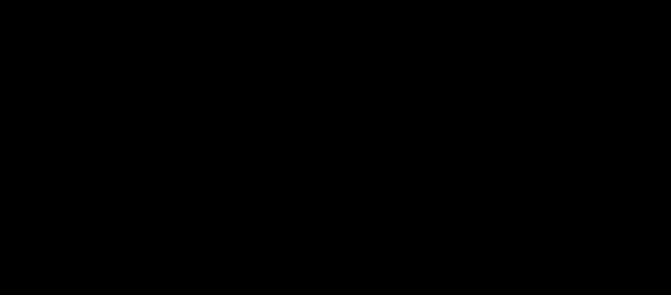




Conversion: Content marketing follows a particular technique of introducing and gradually converting a person into a paid customer.

Good content marketing is patient. It understands that only after the audience trusts the content marketer, should the content marketer push for some kind of business generation. That takes time & effort as an investment, just like a good salesman knows that if he doesn't invest in the client relationship first and starts talking about business from get-go, the chance of prospect showing him the exit door is high.




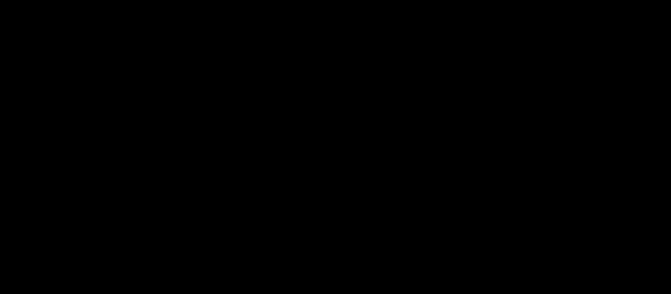


If you are impatient or rushed, advertisement is your quick fix.

Take your time and careful planning to introduce the brand into your content, because if a prospect suspects a commercial agenda at the sacrifice of her genuine need satisfaction, she might choose to turn it off, just like she has chosen to turn off advertising.

Such investment in time pays off because Content marketing is both different and upgraded from all things advertising.






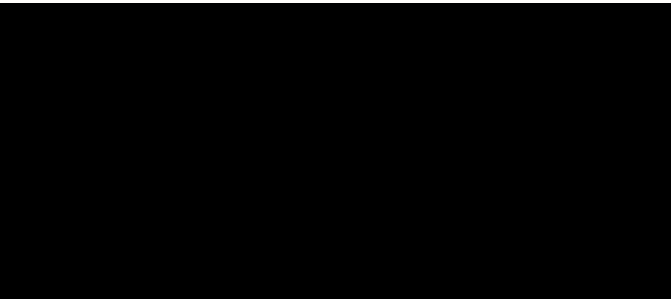
However as we mentioned in the beginning, we have all been guilty of doing it wrong. Based on all those mistakes and learnings, the following 7 steps are proposed which will improve all your content marketing mistakes and increase your success ratio.

1) Have a specific audience in mind:

A common mistake in content marketing is not having a clear audience in mind.

This might seem weird because a target market is kind of a given for any content exercise.






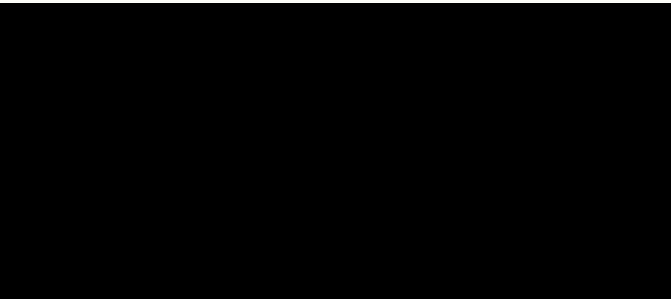
The issue is not about having an audience. The issue is about having a specific audience.

In digital, there really is no excuse for not being specific because you can really be as specific as you are willing to go. In digital the more specific your audience is, your ROI becomes stronger.

Secondly, just knowing the demographic details is not enough. We need to know the psychographic, intent, and action-based details of the audience.

And with all this information forming the backdrop, we need to know what is the key audience






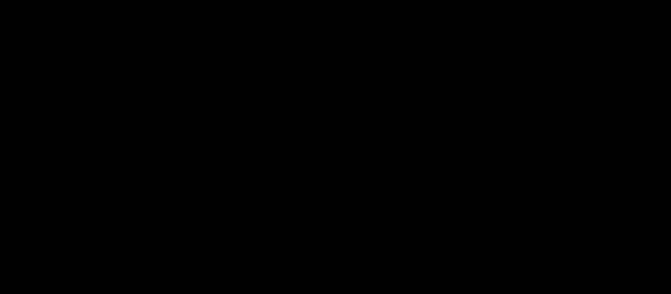
insight we are using to build the campaign. We need to know if he is someone who is actively looking for your brand to solve any problem or someone just in an exploratory mood.

We need to know if he is swayed by price or by an influencer recommendation or by a friend using it.

We need to know if reliability is more important to him or glossy look.

Good content marketing solves an audience problem. If you don't know which specific people you have in mind when you make






content, that content will neither resonate with anyone specific nor will solve any problem.

2) Ensure the right mix of contents:

In our rush to produce content after content, at times marketers forget to have the right mix of contents to cater to all parts of the funnel.

Content marketing is not about throwing one content after another to see which one sticks with the crowd. It is a structured process of taking one audience through a step-by-step process where he starts as a mere





audience but ends up being an advocate.

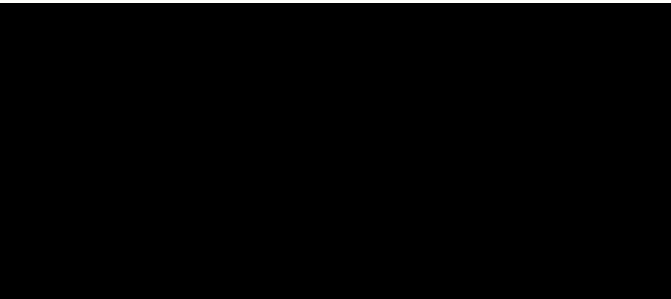
To cater to this journey and to this funnel, an ideal mix of 3 types of contents -Attraction, Trust & Action - is necessary.

To meet Awareness objective, we need an Attraction type of content


To meet Engagement objective, we need a Trust type of content

To meet Conversion objective, we need an Action type of content





Sometimes when one type of content works, marketers have a habit of doing that type of content again and again and forgetting the rest. Some marketers are comfortable doing a certain type of content and they end up doing only that same type of content. We are not always aware of our hidden bias. To avoid that, create a content strategy framework that links all critical aspects of content marketing together.

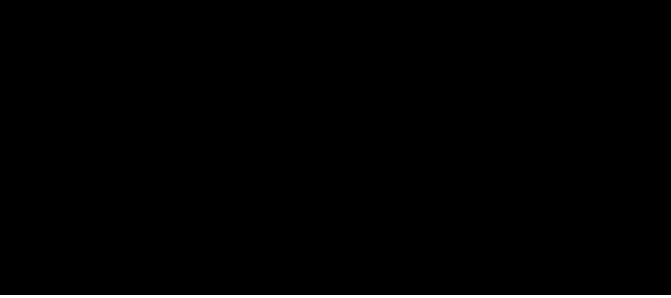


3) Have a long term strategy:

Another common problem in content marketing is not having a long-term strategy.


There is a commonly held view that content marketing needs to be tactical and agile, at the expense of long-term and strategic thinking.

This however is a limiting view of content marketing. If you only use content marketing to periodically boost your acquisition and conversion efforts, and nothing else, then you are using content marketing to build a short-term business focusing on quick-fix solutions.



The long game is the brand-building game.

Content marketing can be a great tool to build both short-term business boosts as well as long-term brand building. If we don't have a long-term strategy, your content marketing will always look like a collection of posts instead of a consistent brand with a consistent voice.

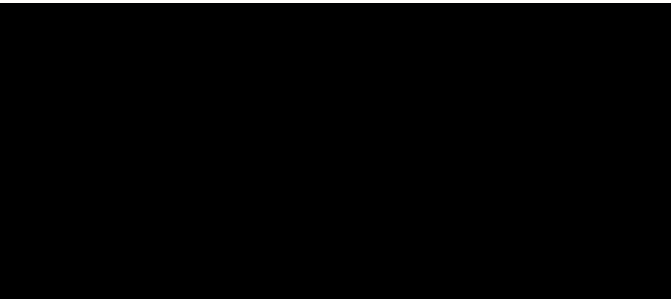


4) Creativity is the key:

In recent times, marketing has started to adopt a scientific and tactical mindset.

From insight mining to content testing to effectiveness measuring - everything is designed and dictated by a rigorous analysis of data.


The keyword for marketing is Return on Investment (ROI) where the focus is efficiency - how little we can put in as resource by being as targeted and tactical as possible and maximize our results before moving on to the next agile project.



That is why, the biggest need for content marketing now is not a new framework or an excel sheet. But the need for creativity. The need to stand out in a crowd.

To do that, you need to learn from all relevant resources what made their content marketing successful, but never blindly follow anyone. Because what made others successful will be copied countless times and will never quite be unique. Test your own ideas. Find your own way. Learn from your own failures.

And most importantly, don't be afraid to push the envelope in doing something that others find weird. That's what makes you creative.

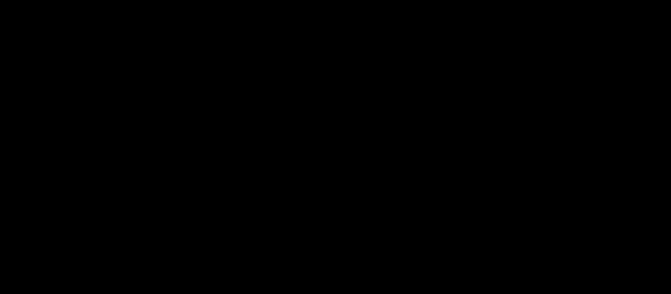


5) Integrate Content marketing with SEO & Influencer:

Another common mistake in digital marketing is we look at social media marketing, influencer marketing, SEO, and content marketing in isolation, instead of each being an integrated piece of a puzzle set.

That is a mistake. They all must work hand in hand.


When an influencer doesn't practice content marketing, all he or she does is post pretty pictures every day.

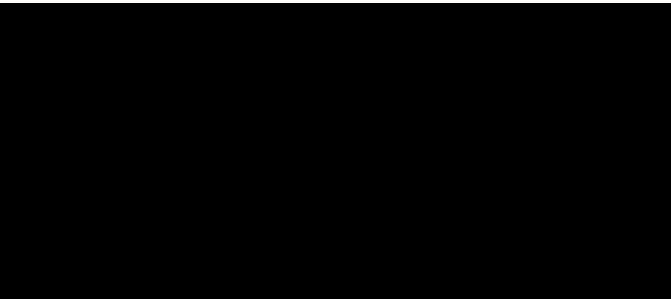


When content marketers don't collaborate with Influencers, they can never reach the wide audience that is necessary for the content to work its commercial objective.

When a social media marketer doesn't exploit content marketing principles, she is focusing more on the media and less on the content.

A successful campaign is part content strategy and part media strategy. They each complement each other.




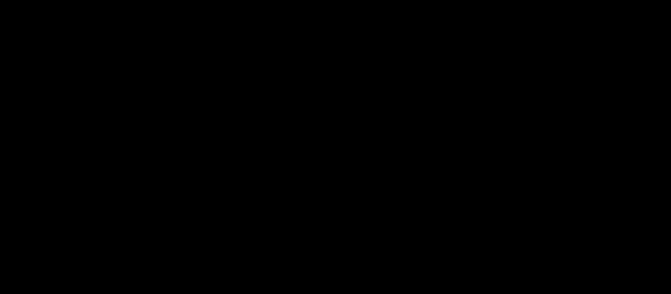


Social media thrives on its content. And content gets the true reach through social media.

SEO focuses on getting your website the true reach and that reach can be amplified through your social media marketing. By promoting your site and its content in front of a new set of audiences through your social media activities, be it on your own page or as a guest on someone else's page, you increase the traffic and awareness of your site.


Also, the heart and soul of SEO is keyword strategy and the keyword strategy will only ensure

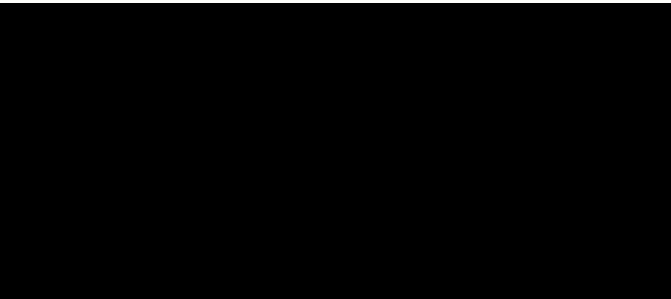




your website gets featured in a top-ranking when the keyword that you have chosen is also integrated into your content marketing plan for the website

For example, if you choose “The best wedding planner in the greater metro area” as a keyword for SEO activities then in your website that particular keyword needs to be featured heavily in multiple contents like an opinion poll, a feature story, customer reviews, etc. As we can see, all these are interlinked.




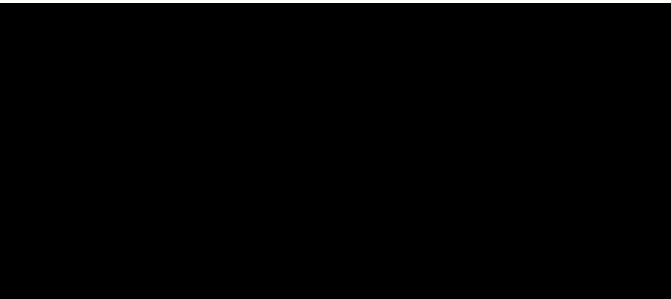


The best digital marketing campaigns thrive on the integration of all these digital tools and touchpoints. And the best marketing campaign integrates all these digital tools with all the offline tools, to create a true integrated omnichannel campaign.

6) Know what success looks like:


When it comes to using measurements or metrics effectively in content marketing, three problems stand out.

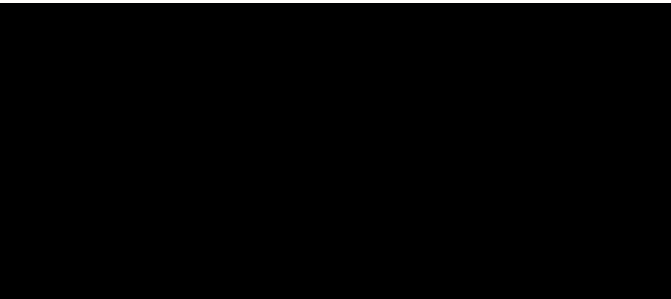




Firstly, most content marketing efforts start without having a clear idea of what success looks like. They proceed blindly, excited with a creative idea, rushed by a pending deadline, and afraid to make a KPI commitment they may or may not be able to keep.


Secondly, to measure success a lot of content marketing efforts adopt very superficial, easy to achieve metrics like views, comments, likes etc. The problem with these metrics is they don't have a direct link with the brand and business-boosting efforts.

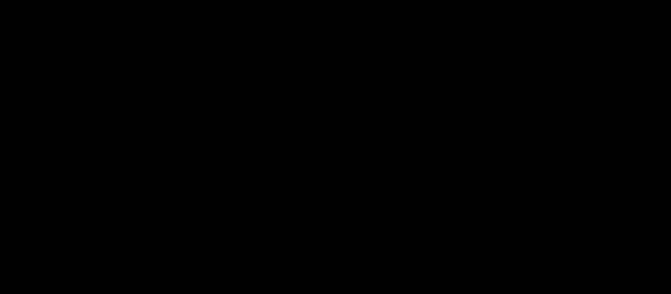




Thirdly, and surprisingly, using too many metrics is another common problem. To overcompensate the lack of data-driven decisions for a long time in the past, there is a tendency to measure everything, which is inefficient.

To solve these data analytics-related content marketing issues, specific interventions are needed. To solve the first one, make a commitment to not proceed without making a clear alignment on KPIs. We need to use past learning and competition learning to form clear sets of KPIs that answer the question of what does success look like. If that is






explicitly written and agreed on in a content brief that kickstarts the entire content marketing process, then all the confusion goes out the window.

To solve the second problem, build your KPI as a combination of campaign as well as business metrics. Don't just talk about "Likes", talk about "Referrals". Don't just measure "Views", measure "Leads".

And to solve the final issue of measuring inefficiency, commit to measuring only one or two things that have a direct relationship to your brand and business success. Keep the rest aside for the time being. Focus is key.

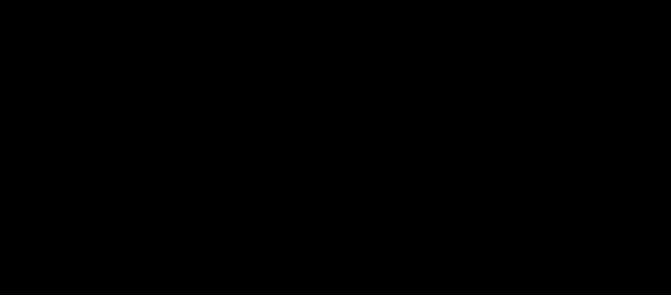


7) Don't run it like Advertising:

The last mistake I want to highlight is also the biggest one in content marketing, which is running content marketing in the exact same way we run advertising.

Now, this is where people say, “Wait up, content marketing and advertising; aren't they the same thing?”


The answer is no. They are similar but not the same. If anything content marketing is closer in nature to another tool of the traditional era which is called Public Relations or PR.

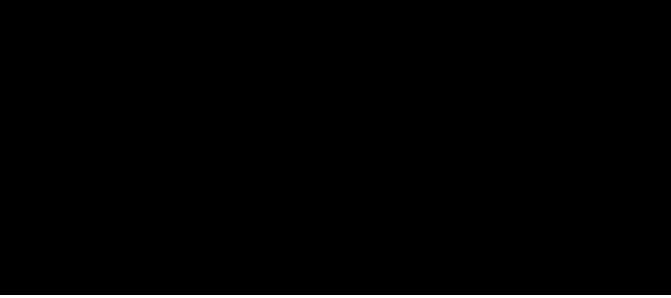


Content marketing is the evolved tool that is trying to resolve some of the shortcomings of advertising.

This brings us to the point, what these so-called shortcomings of advertising are.

The first one is, good advertisement sells the brand. But a consumer doesn't like to be sold. In fact, the moment we utter the dreaded “S” word, a consumer has her guard up. They run away from a pushy, overeager sales moment like they have come across a rattlesnake on steroids.






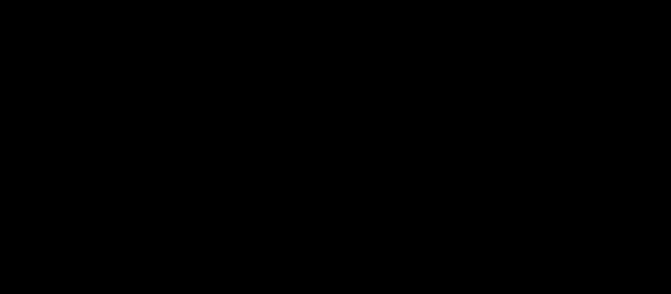
Secondly, there is just too much advertising and let's be honest, no one sits in front of TV or mobile to see more ads.

Before even if you didn't like it, you can't do anything except sit through the pain. Now, the power has shifted to the consumer where he says, "Sorry I don't want to see advertising".

Lastly, consumers just don't believe in advertising anymore.


I mean an ad is a beautiful mechanism where brands only talk about what makes them better than others.

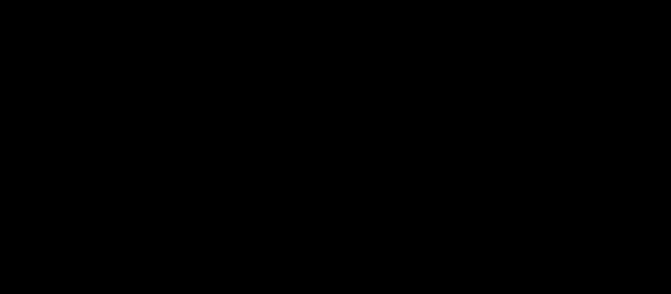




Consumer obviously understands that the brand is trying to convince her by overselling, so she has her guard up and looks at all the claims that a piece of branded advertising makes with a cynical point of view. And when the ad ends, she picks up the phone and calls someone who actually uses the brand and asks his opinion about the real truth about the brand performance vs the advertisement's claimed performance.

To sum up, too much direct selling, too much overselling, and frankly just too much advertising was the key shortfalls of advertising.





This is where content marketing can come over and do a better job.

What are the key differences between content marketing & advertising?

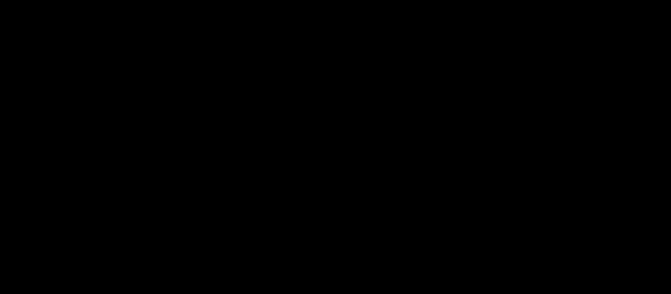
Content marketing is subtle. Advertising is direct

Content marketing focuses on the story. Advertising focuses on the product or service.

Content marketing's strength is authenticity. Advertising is about driving business goal

Good advertising starts with understanding consumer insight






Good content marketing starts with not treating humans like business goals in the making.

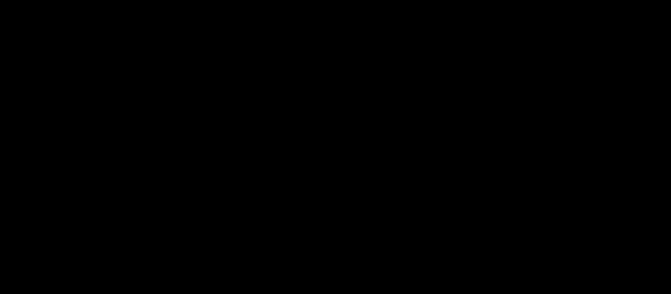
Really good content marketing is NOT only consumer-centric.

It is human-centric.

Let me give an example.

If you are trying to sell burgers to a potential customer, you will show an ad for your beautiful burger and highlight all that makes that the best burger in town.





But you need to understand, the question that is in the mind of the audience is not why your burger is the best but what is the burger solution that best fits his need at that specific moment.

So, unlike an advertising specialist of yesteryears, what a content marketer would do is make a video highlighting 5 of the best-reviewed burger in town, why they are so great and one of those 5 of course will be your burger, the brand you are trying to sell.

