



Strategic
Communications

Success Through Strategy

6 Steps and 6 Days to an Effective Content Marketing Strategy

There is no shortage of content marketing experts these days, and there's no shortage of ideas on the best ways for companies to leverage their content to achieve desired results. The problem is that these ideas are often without context—not grounded in real-world examples that can help would-be content marketers get their arms around what content strategy is all about.

Here, through a fictional example of a company that's interested in gaining clients and driving business through content marketing, we apply content marketing best practices to demonstrate how content can be strategically to generate real results.

The Company

Jazz Jones has decided to leverage her unique background to launch a leadership coaching and development company in the healthcare market. She started her career as a nurse and later trained to be a nurse practitioner, ultimately going on to earn a Ph.D., specializing in internal medicine. Later, she entered healthcare administration—serving as chief administrative officer (CAO) in a midsize healthcare system.

She knows that healthcare is an industry that is being affected by many changes, that skilled leaders are critical, and that, particularly given the anticipated retirement of Baby Boomers, there is a growing gap in the leadership pipeline. She wants to work with healthcare organizations to identify and develop potential leaders to fill this gap through her company, Leading for Your Health. She's heard a lot about content marketing and, particularly because she has a limited budget, is hoping to expand her reach and generate new business across a much wider geography.

Jones has been following content marketing gurus such as Joe Pulizzi with the [Content Marketing Institute \(CMI\)](#), Brian Halligan and Dharmesh Shah with [HubSpot](#), Ann Handley with [MarketingProfs](#), Jay Baer with [Convince & Convert](#), and many, many more. She's familiar with CMI's research that suggests the biggest downfall for both business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-consumer (B2C) marketers is the lack of a formal content marketing strategy, but she is struggling to determine what that really means.

What Is Strategy?

Strategy is, simply, [a plan to get from here to there](#). With an identified end in mind, strategy is created to provide a road map of the "how" and "what" that will ultimately lead to success. This is true whether you are creating a strategy for a family vacation, a business launch, or content marketing. It's not new. It's not magic. But it can be quite complex because of a wide range of moving parts that can impact strategy—such as new technology, new competitors, unexpected competitive moves, and changes in consumer interests and behaviors.

It's important to differentiate between strategy and execution, though. In fact, this distinction is what often leads to confusion among businesspeople attempting to create and execute any kind of marketing strategy. Very often the focus is on the "what" of content strategy and the execution, instead of the "how":

- "We need to be on social media."
- "We need to start a blog."
- "Let's create a YouTube channel!"
- "We need to get involved in Instagram and Pinterest."

Any of those tactics might turn out to be exactly what you need to do-or they might not. How will you know? Strategy. Strategy is based on a number of considerations that help reveal an appropriate approach to take and how you will measure its effectiveness. In creating a content marketing strategy, we must think about, and find answers to, some key questions:

- What do we hope to achieve (goals and objectives)?
- Whom are we attempting to influence (audience)?
- What's important to our audience (AIOs: activities, interests, and opinions)?
- Who are our competitors and how do we compare to them (positioning)?
- How will we measure results (metrics)?

This is, basically, the same kind of list that Jones has come across as she's looked through the best practice insights she's found online, as well as in magazines and in books she's read (in both hard copy and electronic format). She can't argue with the common sense of it all, but she still finds herself lost when it comes to knowing exactly how this applies to her business.

The next six excerpts take a look at how a traditional content marketing strategy process might unfold with our Leading for Your Health client, Jazz Jones. (As you'll see, the process here is really no different than the strategic planning process might be for any type of marketing endeavor.)

How will your content marketing strategy help you get from here to there?

Read the Entire Series

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