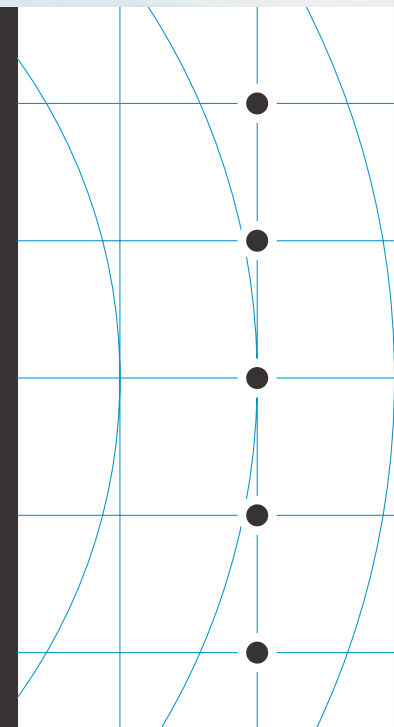




Creating B2B Content That Converts

Proven Content Strategies for B2B Marketers

Learn how to foster deep connections with B2B decision-makers, using content to build authority, garner trust and drive sales conversions.



Crafting content for the modern B2B sales journey

In today's fast-paced, digital-first environment — where B2B buyers wield unprecedented control over their purchasing journeys — mastering the art of content marketing is no longer an option. It's a necessity. These eye-opening stats tell the story:

95%

OF B2B BUYERS
CONSIDER CONTENT
WHEN EVALUATING
A COMPANY AND
ITS OFFERINGS¹

67%

MORE LEADS
PER MONTH ARE
GENERATED BY
B2B COMPANIES
THAT BLOG²

72%

OF B2B MARKETERS
ATTRIBUTE THE SUCCESS
OF THEIR CONTENT
MARKETING INITIATIVES
TO SHORTER SALES
CYCLES³

Simply put, if your B2B sales and marketing efforts don't include some form of content marketing, you're missing out on important conversations and potentially losing deals.

Explore the steps to effective B2B content marketing

In this guide, we'll outline six proven steps that drive success in B2B content marketing. Whether you're a seasoned marketer looking to refine your approach or a newcomer eager to make an impact on business growth, you'll find practical insights and actionable tips to elevate your content game and drive meaningful results.

¹ Demand Gen Report ² Hubspot State of Inbound Report ³ Content Marketing Institute ⁴ Worldwide Business Research

CONTENT THAT CONVERTS: OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

With B2B marketing experience that spans 30+ years, we've built our fair share of content marketing programs. Over the years, we've taken what we've learned and identified core principles that guide our content strategies.

Content marketing is not a campaign.

It's commitment. It's an ongoing effort that requires consistency, dedication and a long-term strategic approach rather than a short-lived, one-time promotional effort.

It's less about selling and more about educating.

Unlike traditional sales efforts, content marketing is focused on earning client trust — not by selling but by solving problems. The goal of content marketing is to empower your audience to become smarter B2B buyers.

Embrace today's digital-first buying environment.

The vast majority of B2B prospects (75%) begin the buying process online⁴ — conducting research, comparing products and engaging with content. It's essential to produce content for a digital-first world.

Tell stories through your unique perspective.

Chances are, your competitors are producing content targeting your same prospect list. How can you stand out from the crowd? Find your voice, establish your authority and then tell stories that are uniquely yours.

The foundation of a successful content strategy

A successful content marketing strategy begins here — by understanding the needs of your audience. Start with the basics by identifying your ideal customer profile (ICP) — those prospects that are most likely to convert to sales. When crafting your ICP, think of it as piecing together a puzzle, with each component contributing to the full picture. Here are key components to consider during your ICP development:

INDUSTRY | COMPANY SIZE | REVENUE | LOCATIONS | JOB TITLES

By understanding these key components, you're not just identifying potential customers. You're laying the groundwork for meaningful connections and fruitful partnerships down the road.

Next up: conducting audience research

Once your ICP is established, it's time to conduct research to better understand your customers' needs, preferences, pain points and behaviors. Customer research can take shape in many forms.

- Use tools like Semrush and Moz to identify the topics and keywords that your buyers are searching for.
- Gather topline data using AI-powered resources, like ChatGPT. Or leverage the research capabilities in your existing tech stack, like ZoomInfo, Salesforce or HubSpot.
- Have one-on-one conversations with existing clients and current prospects to uncover their daily challenges and pain points.
- Gather quantitative data by creating an online survey. Invite clients and prospects to participate through email or by promoting it on your social channels.
- Talk to your sales and account teams and get their points of view. They are on the front lines and have a unique perspective that can fill in any related knowledge gaps.

TIP: HOW TO REVERSE-ENGINEER YOUR ICP

Over the years, we've helped countless B2B clients build their ideal customer profiles using a common sales tool: LinkedIn. Here's how it works: Create a list of your current (and most profitable) clients, then use their profile data on LinkedIn to reverse-engineer your ICP.

Many of the components of ICP (industry, company size, location) are easily accessible on LinkedIn. Plus, you'll be able to quickly gather a list of job titles you can use to create buyer personas and leverage for future content promotion efforts.

A look inside the mind of your ideal customer

With your ICP established and customer research complete, it's time to compile everything you've learned into a foundational element of your content strategy: the buyer persona. What exactly is a buyer persona? It's a fictional representation of your ideal customer that includes a title, demographic information, behavior patterns, challenges, motivations and goals.

The importance of personas

In the world of B2B content marketing, buyer personas are important for several reasons.

- They help you better understand your audience and allow you to create content that resonates with their needs and solves their challenges.
- Personas act as both a guide and guardrail, ensuring that the content you create is relevant and valuable.
- With personas in place, you'll be better equipped to segment audiences and target content based on needs, resulting in higher content engagement.
- Content tailored to personas helps build trust, credibility and loyalty — ultimately driving conversions and strengthening long-term customer relationships.

“Content marketing is like a first date. If you only talk about your-self, there won't be a second one.”

That analogy by David Beebe, a respected content marketer, cleverly explains the importance of using content to build relationships — not just push products or services. It's about listening, engaging and adding value to the conversation. When crafting your buyer personas (and the content that follows), find topics that connect with your audiences and help address their daily challenges. Build trust, solve problems and the sales will follow.



Cultivating relationships from awareness through decision

Most B2B sales journeys are lengthy — anywhere from several months to a year or more — and include multiple stakeholders that influence the purchasing decision. According to Gartner, an average of seven people are involved in the buying process in an organization with 100–500 employees. That means there are a lot of decision-makers you'll need to engage with, educate and convert.

Make connections at every stage

Before you start mapping out a content plan, it's important to understand the steps in the buying process and then align content based on the needs in each stage. The modern buyer's journey is organized into three phases:

1 AWARENESS

At this stage, your buyers realize they have a problem and are researching products and services. They are not necessarily looking for a solution just yet — but seeking information that helps them become smarter, well-informed buyers. In this phase, it's less about selling and more focused on education. Types of content in the awareness phase include:

- Trend reports
- White papers
- Explainer videos

2 CONSIDERATION

In this phase, the problem has been identified and buyers begin to evaluate potential solutions. Prospects are comparing vendors, researching features and functionality, and identifying pricing structures and costs. Types of content in this phase include:

- Infographics
- How-to guides
- Product demos

3 DECISION

During this phase, our audience has narrowed down their solutions and are ready to recommend options to a larger buying committee, which may require an RFP or proposal. Buyers are seeking reassurance and want to see proof that your solution works. Types of content in this phase include:

- Case studies
- Testimonial videos
- Product comparisons

Finding topics that connect and convert

With your ICP identified, your personas established and your buyer's journey outlined, you can begin the content ideation process. Start by brainstorming topics that align with the challenges of your buyer personas — finding those opportunities where your prospect's pain points overlap with your company's offerings.

Consider a variety of topics that fall into each stage of the buyer's journey: awareness, consideration and decision. Include a mix of delivery methods, too — both long-format content like white papers and short-form content like infographics. And don't overlook quick-win content opportunities, like customer case studies that easily can be converted into a download or pitch decks that can become the foundation of an ebook or guide.

Content calendar: Plan ahead, but stay agile

The final step in the content ideation and planning process is the development of a comprehensive content calendar that maps out the entirety of your content topics and types. We recommend outlining a full calendar year but leaving room for opportunistic content, such as a blog post on a timely trend or a customer win that can be turned into a video testimonial.

CONTENT KPIS: WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

An important step in your content marketing strategy involves defining your KPIs upfront before you launch your first piece of content. Metrics can include:

Web traffic

Registrations

Video views

Lead conversions

Downloads

Deals closed

Email sign-ups

Increased revenue

With a solid measurement plan in place, you'll be better equipped to track performance, identify high-performing content and further optimize your content strategy.



Let the creative process begin

Once you've identified your content topics and deliverables, it's time to start creating. We recommend that you begin with foundational content, like blog posts or ebooks, that can be written by subject-matter experts on your team who understand your offering and can write content that reflects your unique perspective.

For more in-depth content, you'll need to identify content creators who have experience managing, building and activating more complex content, like videos or infographics. They can include internal stakeholders or partners like AvreaFoster — a full-service agency with targeted experience developing fully realized and sustained content marketing initiatives. Whatever path you take, here are roles to consider when establishing a content marketing team.

Building your content dream team

Find content creators who can activate the full spectrum of content marketing opportunities:

- Writers who can craft insightful blog posts, ebooks, white papers and video scripts.
- Designers who are skilled at crafting infographics, guides and video content.
- SEO and SEM experts who can conduct keyword research and optimize content visibility.
- Web and video developers who can bring animated content to life.
- Digital strategists who understand how to place and promote content on the right distribution channels.
- Project managers with experience managing content marketing teams, projects and timelines.



PRELAUNCH CHECKLIST: IT'S TIME FOR A TECH TUNE-UP

In today's digital-first environment, the vast majority of your content will be housed in an online destination — most likely your website. Before you launch any content marketing efforts, be sure that your website is optimized and ready to handle an increase in traffic. Here's a list of web tasks to consider:

- Create web templates for content promotion and downloads pages.
- Add new content sections (blog, downloads, video) to your main navigation.
- Ensure all forms are connected to backend marketing automation, CRM and analytics tools.
- Design a blog experience that can accommodate content like infographics, videos and documents.
- Establish a crosslinking strategy that drives visitors to high-converting pages.
- Add heat mapping to key pages to monitor trends and traffic.

Proven strategies to amplify the visibility of your content

Once you've created your content, you'll need a plan to actively promote it so that it reaches your intended audiences. A good place to begin is with your owned channels: your website, organic social posts, email newsletters and sales outreach. To expand your reach beyond your current clients and social followers, you'll need to add paid promotion to your content distribution strategy. This will allow your content to be seen by new audiences — those buyers who are searching for your content and most likely to become qualified sales prospects.

Expand reach using paid channels

According to a recent report by the Content Marketing Institute, 88% of B2B marketers use paid distribution channels for content marketing purposes.⁶

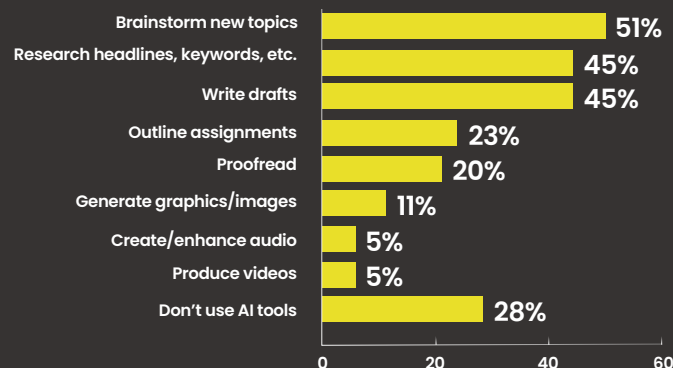
What distribution channels top that list? Most B2B marketers (62%) start with search, which involves placing ads on search engines, like Google, to drive organic traffic to online content. Half of B2B marketers promote content on their company's social media channels, using both organic and paid posts. For B2B marketers, LinkedIn is the most popular social channel, with 84% of marketers reporting that it delivers the best value. But other social media channels — such as YouTube, Instagram, Facebook and Twitter/X — also made the list. Other popular paid channels include sponsorships, native advertising, display advertising and partner emails.

To learn more about the top digital channels for B2B marketers, check out this blog post: [Navigating the Digital Landscape](#).

AN IMPACT OF AI ON CONTENT CREATION

It's hard to imagine a corner of the marketing landscape that has not been impacted by AI — and that includes B2B content creation. A recent report⁵ shows that B2B marketers are using AI for content creation, but only for fundamental tasks — like brainstorming topic ideas, keyword research and writing initial drafts — as the chart below illustrates. And most organizations are limiting their use of AI to free tools, like ChatGPT. Will that change as AI evolves and becomes more ingrained within additional corners of marketing and sales? Only time will tell. To learn more about how AvreaFoster uses AI, check out our [recent blog post](#).

B2B marketers use generative AI for various content tasks



⁵ B2B Content Marketing Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends: Outlook for 2024

Content that converts

IMAGINE360 CASE STUDY

What does a fully activated content strategy look like? Here's a case study for Imagine360. We partnered with this health insurance innovator to create a multi-touch content marketing campaign targeting employers and their brokers.

THE CHALLENGE

Imagine360 offers a health plan that is an alternative to a traditional PPO. While the solution promises significant benefits versus a PPO — lower costs, better service, happier members — many employers and their brokers were unfamiliar with how the health plan works.

THE SOLUTION

After building personas and researching pain points, we developed a comprehensive approach that included a variety of content that educated and nurtured decision-makers through every phase of the buyer's journey.



WHEN THE HEALTH PLAN PRICE HIKE HURTS... PUNCH BACK.



“Changed the trajectory of our healthcare program.”



Stephanie Koch
Hendry Marine | Imagine360 Client

THIS GUIDE WAS MADE FOR YOUR EYES ONLY.



A strategy that delivers

IMAGINE360 CASE STUDY

“I consider AvreaFoster a true strategic partner. They jumped into the weeds and learned our complex business and, as a result, they have contributed to our growth in big, impactful ways.”

KATHY HEBLING,

VP OF MARKETING, IMAGINE360

THE RESULTS

Imagine360 experienced a significant increase in marketing engagement across the board, from impressions to traffic and conversions. More importantly, marketing efforts contributed to an increase in qualified sales leads and deals closed.

197%

INCREASE
IN LEADS

585%

INCREASE
IN MQLS

249%

INCREASE
IN SQLS

Keep exploring

Want to see the full story? Visit the [Imagine360 case study](#). When you're ready to take what you've learned in this guide and put it into action, let's connect. Our team is ready to help you create B2B content that converts.

The pioneering perspective in B2B marketing.

For over 30 years, businesses have trusted AvreaFoster to deliver unmatched results through digital-first brand and marketing strategies. Our experience navigating an array of unique business challenges has honed our approach and resulted in a mindset of contagious curiosity, leading to insights that unlock a B2B brand's full potential.

BRANDING | DIGITAL MARKETING | CREATIVE | WEB DESIGN | INTERNAL COMMS



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