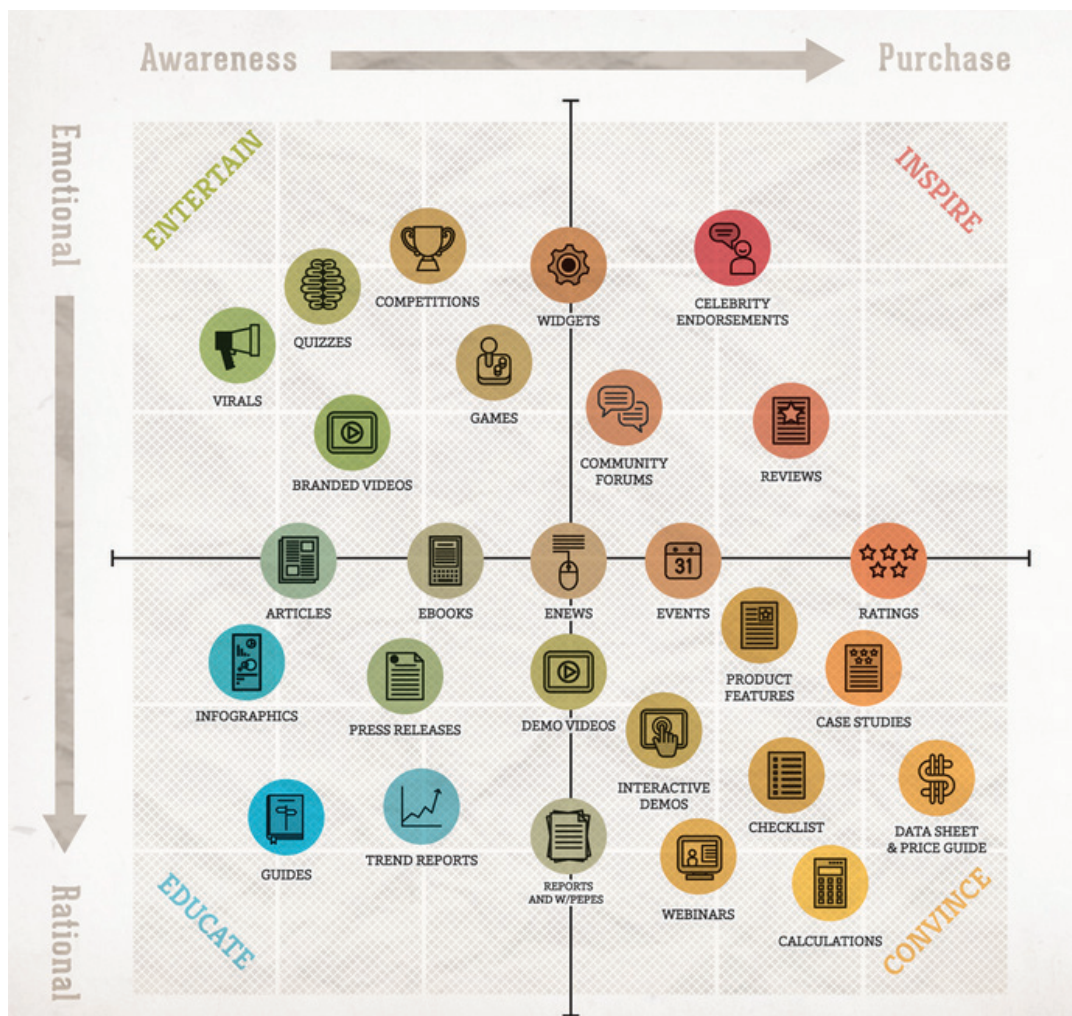


## Content Marketing ROI Guide

A guide to measuring, evaluating and reporting your content marketing performance

Authors: Stephen Bateman and Dave Chaffey



# Content Marketing ROI Guide

A Guide to measuring, evaluating and reporting your content marketing performance

## Contents

- 3 Introduction
- 5 ONE: Introduction to calculating the ROI of content marketing
- 9 TWO: Setting Content Goals & Metrics
- 21 THREE: Calculating the cost of content
- 25 FOUR: Calculating Content ROI
- 29 FIVE: Using analytics to evaluate content marketing

1 Introduction  
to ROI calculation

2 Setting goals  
and metrics

3 Calculating  
content cost

4 Calculating  
content ROI

5 Using analytics for  
analysis

# Introduction

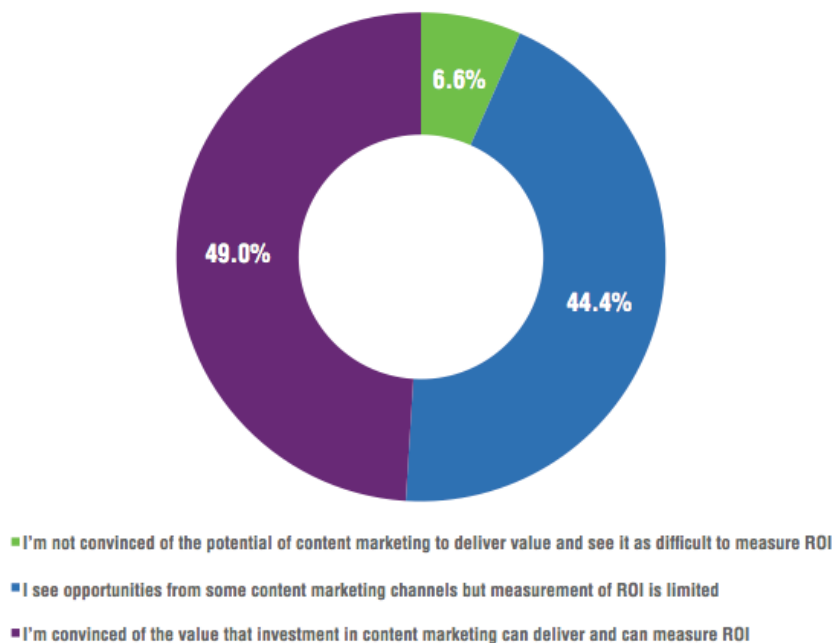
## The importance of content marketing ROI

Most marketers are now aware of the potential of content marketing to generate awareness and new business for a brand. Indeed it has been voted the best potential new form of marketing investment by Smart Insights readers for two years now<sup>1</sup>.

However, since this is a relatively new marketing approach, there seems to be a lack of confidence in how to calculate ROI. In our recent research with Hubspot<sup>2</sup> we asked marketers for their perceptions on how valuable content marketing is and the ease of measuring ROI. The chart shows that nearly half of marketers saw the measurement of ROI as limited.

We have also received requests from members for more guidance on evaluating content marketing ROI, so this guide is here to help.

The value of content marketing



The aim of this guide is not to present “XX metrics to measure your content marketing performance”, because that is too simplistic. Instead our aim is to focus on sharing techniques that help you PROVE the effectiveness of content marketing to your colleagues or clients, a key issue as more marketing budget is invested into content marketing.

## How is this guide structured?

The five sections in this guide are:

- ✓ **ONE: an introduction to ROI calculation.** An explanation of marketing ROI for readers without a background in the concept.

1 [Smart Insights: Marketing trends article](#)

2 Hubspot / Smart Insights: Content Marketing Success report

- ✓ **TWO: Setting content goals and metrics.** In this section we show how you can set goals for content marketing and measure them through KPIs. This section should be read together with the final section on using analytics which explains goal setup.
- ✓ **THREE: Calculating the cost of content.** Content marketing is certainly not free, so to calculate ROI for content we need to break out the component costs. This section has worked examples of how to do this.
- ✓ **FOUR: Calculating Content ROI.** Building on section three, this section gives example of ROI calculations.
- ✓ **FIVE: Using analytics to review content marketing.** Techniques to analyse and report content marketing effectiveness using Google Analytics.

If you use Google Analytics and already have the basics right such as setting up goals and goal value to evaluate content marketing, don't miss the advanced sections on "First content interaction analysis" on page 33 and Basic Channel Groupings that follows.

#### Recommended resources Content marketing guides

Our content marketing resources are collected in our [Content Marketing Toolkit](#). We have a summary guide and longer guides advising on content marketing which give more depth on strategy and management for content marketing:

- ✓ 1. *Strategy - 7 Steps content marketing strategy guide*
- ✓ 2. *Management – Managing content marketing guide*
- ✓ 3. *Scheduling - Editorial calendar spreadsheet template*
- ✓ 4. *Evaluation – Content marketing ROI evaluation guide*
- ✓ 5. *Summary – Content marketing Fast Start Checklist*

## About the author

**Stephen Bateman** is the Smart Insights expert commentator on Content Marketing. He is director and co-founder of [Wise Up Media](#) (part of GreenWise Business) and [Concentric Dots](#), both specialist content marketing agencies, as well as co-founder and MD of [iGlimpse](#), a leading educational mobile apps publisher. His strengths are in content planning, content creation and content ROI, with specialist knowledge of the sustainable business sector.

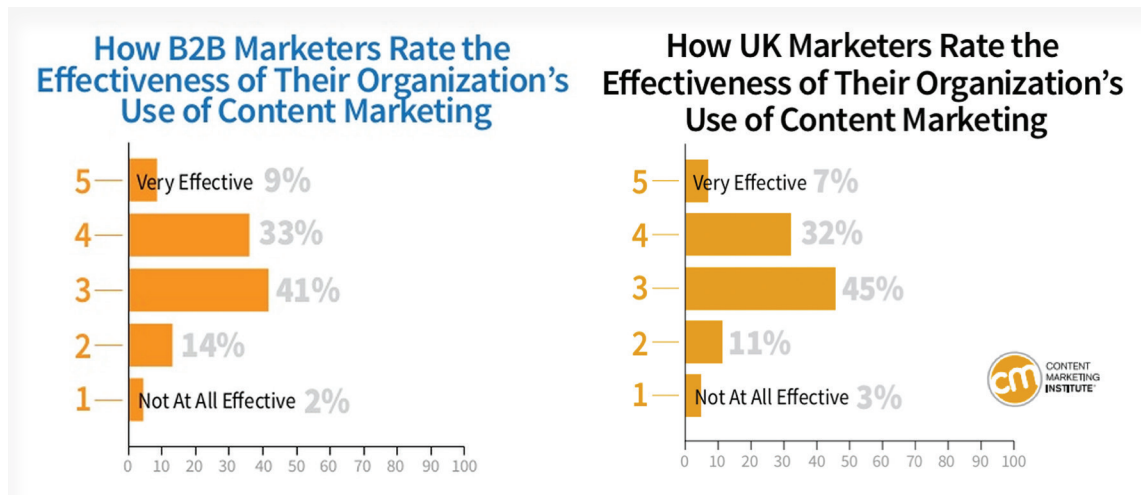


He offers expert training and content marketing consultancy, including social media training, to ambitious businesses. Before going independent Stephen worked as Business Director for a number of large corporates including Pearson (Dorling Kindersley), Hachette Book Group, and F&Media International, where he learned a thing or two about reporting business performance to the managing board. Stephen is co-author of Smart Insights' Content Marketing Strategy Guide and a scholar of the Chartered Institute of Marketing. You can connect with Stephen through any of these social networks: [Twitter](#) | [LinkedIn](#) | [Google+](#).

# ONE

## An Introduction to calculating the ROI of content marketing

According to the Content Marketing Institute (CMI), which publishes a yearly summary on the state of content marketing, as many as 90% of marketers are experimenting with content marketing in one form or other, yet fewer than 50 per cent of marketers feel confident in the effectiveness of their content marketing<sup>1</sup>.



## The aim of this guide – proving content marketing ROI

In this guide we aim to explain a range of techniques to help marketers evaluate and prove their content effectiveness, through assessing the commercial value of content marketing measured through its profitability and Return on Investment (ROI). So, let's get straight into understanding these terms since these definitions are not always well understood by marketers.

### What is it? Profit

Simply put, profit accrues when the revenue obtained from a commercial transaction is greater than its cost:

$$\text{Revenue less cost} = \text{Profit}$$

### What is it? Return on investment (ROI)

Return on Investment shows profit compared to cost

$$\text{ROI \%} = 100 * \text{Return from investment (Net Profit)} / \text{cost of investment}$$

<sup>1</sup> [Content Marketing Institute: Research listing](#)

Let's take a simplified example for a transactional Ecommerce site selling products with an Average Selling Price of \$100. Let's assume that half (50%) of this \$100 ASP is margin, i.e. what's left over after the cost of the retailer buying products from suppliers. It costs another 10% of the \$100 for the retailer to process, pick and ship the order plus deal with returns. So, subtracting the product and process costs from the sales revenue gives a profit on the sale of \$40.

Consider an investment of \$1,000 into a content-based campaign to sell more of these widgets. What we need to isolate is the *incremental* sales from the content investment. If you sell 30 additional products at a profit of \$40 each, that gives a total profit of \$1,200 on the campaign, but campaign costs need to be subtracted too, leaving \$200. The ROI here is 20% (\$200/\$1000).

So far, so straightforward, but this example is for a retailer with clear visibility of sales revenue. How can we calculate profit for a non-transactional website where the aim of the site is to generate leads rather than sell products; a common situation in marketing, particularly B2B marketing? In these cases we have to find an equivalent value for leads based on the conversion rate to sale.

Let's take an example of a luxury travel company that doesn't have online sales, instead brochures are used to generate interest, with sales then occurring by phone or in store. If the typical profit for a holiday is \$4,000 and we know that the conversion rate from lead to sale is 10%, the value of a lead on average is also \$40. In this case, a similar ROI calculation for the retailer can then be calculated.

We will go into more detail of how to calculate the costs and ROI for content marketing in sections 3 and 4 where we look at some worked examples.

Previously these types of marketing campaign ROI calculations have focused on comparing costs against sales revenue for paid media marketing, but today's marketers also need to demonstrate how owned and earned media spend is directly accountable as a measurable impact on sales.

This greater need for accountability has arisen since we are seeing a much larger investment in content marketing that supports and impacts all the stages of the customer buying cycle. In other words ownership of the "funnel" is shifting toward marketing. This is especially true for B2B marketing where lead generation and sales cycles are more complex.

Fournaise<sup>2</sup> reports that *"just 20 percent of CEOs consider their top marketers to be ROI marketers"*. This means that *"80% of CEOs do not really trust and are not very impressed by the work done by marketers, while in comparison, 90% of the same CEOs do trust and value the opinion and work of CFOs and CIOs."* 75% of CEOs think Marketers misunderstand (and misuse) the "real business" definition of the words "Results", "ROI" and "Performance" and therefore do not adequately speak the language of their top management: these CEOs fail to understand why Marketers cannot zoom in on a few critical key business performance indicators to precisely measure, quantify and report on the level of customer demand they are asked to deliver, instead of drowning everybody with data and analyses that are too remote from the P&L."

### Strategy Recommendation 1 Define the need to evaluate content marketing ROI

If you don't evaluate content marketing, then you can't make the business case for future investment effectively and it's likely you won't have enough resource to manage your content marketing output so your content marketing efforts will wither and die.

2 [Fournaise: Marketing Performance survey](#)

Agencies and consultants also want to prove the value of content marketing to their clients, so the techniques we cover will help here too.

## What do we want our content marketing to achieve?

The first step towards presenting content marketing ROI is to review what you're looking to achieve with content marketing as an organization.

### Strategy Recommendation 2 Start by reviewing the organization goals of content marketing

Before organisations can evaluate their content marketing effectiveness they should agree what they are looking to achieve through content marketing, in other words, defining actions they want their consumers of content to complete.

If you're discussing the goals for content marketing within a company or with clients, this Content Marketing Institute definition is a useful starting point for thinking about what you want Content Marketing to achieve since they link the 'what?' to the 'why?'.

#### What is it? Content Marketing

*"Content marketing is the marketing and business process for creating and distributing relevant and valuable content to attract, acquire, and engage a clearly defined and understood target audience – with the objective of driving profitable customer action."*

Content Marketing Institute

Here *"creating and distributing content"* requires spending on media creation and distribution to generate new leads (attracting and acquiring new customers) and drive profitable sales (customer actions). *"Engage"* refers to engaging existing customers who are often the best advocates for a brand who will share content. Developing prospect and customer relationships is at the heart of developing a return on marketing investment (ROMI) from content marketing.

A less formal definition of content marketing states: *"Content Marketing is owning, as opposed to renting media. It's a marketing process to attract and retain customers by consistently creating and curating content in order to change or enhance a consumer behavior."*

This definition implies content marketing is a trade off (one thing but not the other) and that "owning media as opposed to renting media" provides a more permanent return on investment. This implies a decision to pursue content marketing over other lead generation activities such as Paid Search, Advertising and PR which needs to be justified via some form of comparative benchmarking. The same would go for claims published by online lead generation platform Eloqua and Kapost who claim that "the average cost per lead drops 80% after 5 months of content marketing" and "content marketing is 31% cheaper than paid search advertising". Tall claims for which claimants need to provide clear metrics.

### Recommended resource Delivering Results from Digital Marketing

For advice on setting broader goals and KPIs for digital marketing see our [Delivering Results from Digital Marketing Guide](#) which focuses on goal setting.

In section 5 we show how to set goals using analytics - it's in: "Step 1. Define goals with a specific value for conversion to different outcomes" on page 29.

## Applying content marketing to B2B and B2C markets

Buying cycle complexity depends on product and service categories, but in general, B2B buying cycles tend to be more complex, requiring content to be created for each persona and stage of the buying cycle. Measuring the impact of that content could, in some cases, be difficult, or it could be easier if your marketing and sales teams are using a customer relationship management system (CRM) to record tactics and their impact on lead nurturing, thus allowing you to accurately record content downloaded by contacts and its impact at each stage of their buying journey.

This guide won't make a specific distinction between B2C and B2B marketing since content marketing aims to achieve similar goals in both cases, and we won't specifically examine the role of CRM systems, but we will focus on measuring content marketing performance in complex buying cycles.

### What is it? The difference between B2C and B2B content marketing?

Both B2C and B2B aim for the same outcome, but each uses a different content mix and puts a different emphasis on channels and tactics. B2B often involves more complex buying cycles, but this does not necessarily translate into more complex measurement.

See section 5 of our [best practices guide on Marketing Automation](#) for ideas on how to use these systems to score lead quality - another technique for content marketing.

## Benchmarking your content marketing capability

How well you measure your content marketing is just one aspect of your overall effectiveness in using content marketing. To help argue for more focus on measurement it can help to talk to colleagues about the bigger picture. We're fans of using capability auditing tools to assess your use of different digital marketing techniques like content marketing against where you'd like or need to be. A useful tool to help with content marketing evaluation, which we introduced in our guide to content marketing strategy, is Altimeter's Content Marketing Maturity Model.

### Strategy Recommendation 3 Review and communicate your content marketing measurement capability

Assess your content marketing capability, including evaluation, to communicate to colleagues the improvements you need to make.

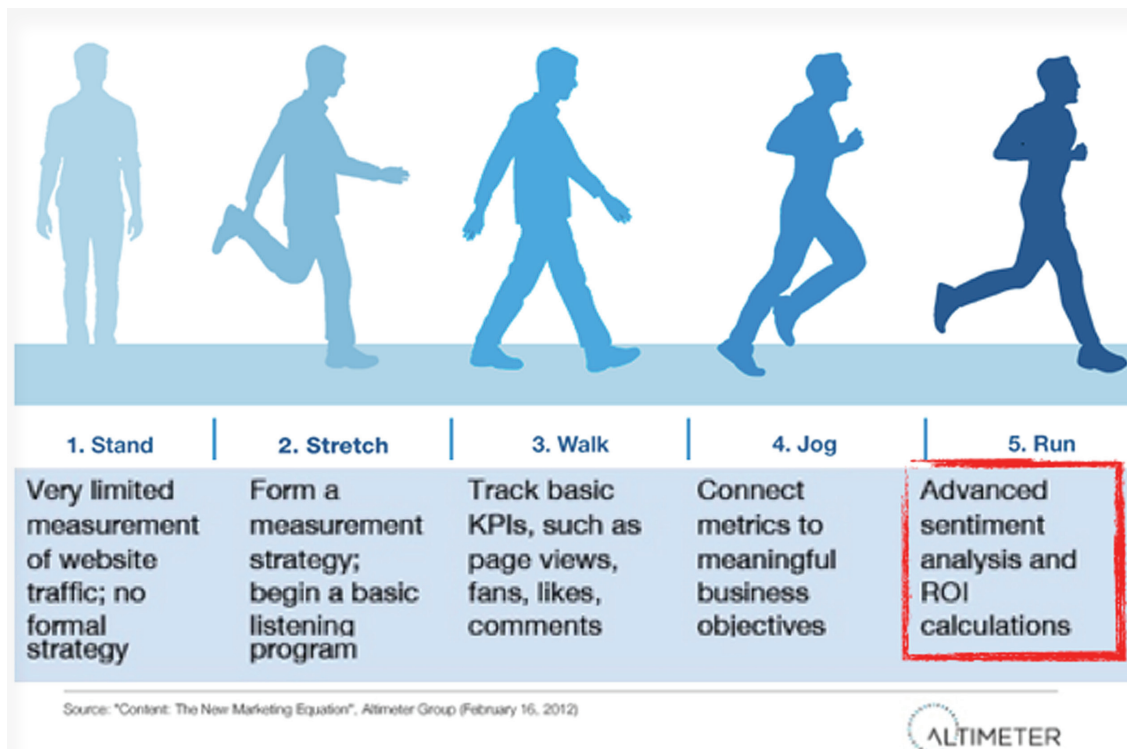
This guide is designed to assist content marketing professionals at stages 2 to 4 ("Stretch" moving to "Walk" & "Jog"). At the more mature stages of content marketing, managers need more accurate performance evaluation and ROI calculations to help them report the results of their content marketing to senior management, and thereby get the buy-in and support they need in order to maintain or increase their content marketing investment to grow their business in cost effective ways.

The stages in the Altimeter capability model are:

- ✓ **Stand:** You haven't yet realised the value of content marketing as a key component of your marketing strategy.
- ✓ **Stretch:** You understand the benefits of content marketing and have started to create content.

- ✅ **Walk:** Now with a solid foundation organisationally that supports content creation, your content strategy is more fully refined and tweaked. There is also a concerted effort to connect content development with all parts of the organisation's communication teams.
- ✅ **Jog:** Your company is seriously committed to content marketing and has a clear strategy.
- ✅ **Run:** Companies at this stage have production and creative as full, standalone business unit, and your company is creating content that is sold and licensed based on its standalone merit.

What stage of content marketing maturity are you?



Source: "Content: The New Marketing Equation" - The Altimeter Group 2012<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> [Altimeter: The New Marketing equation](#)

# TWO

## Setting Content Goals & Metrics

If you read blog posts advising on content marketing evaluation, you will often see long lists of measures which can be impressive, but to help make sense of them in the context of business goals we suggest that choosing the best framework to structure them is essential. We will also see this in this section, that considering a hierarchy of measures from more strategic and commercial to more tactical is useful; CEOs and CFOs do not care very much about content campaigns or everyday metrics, but they do want to know that their marketers are striving to improve ROI.

### Strategy Recommendation 4 Select Content Marketing KPIs within a framework

A measurement framework helps you review that you have the right measures for different purposes and helps you communicate them to others. A hierarchy of top-level strategic goals and more specific tactical objectives can help make sense of the multitude of measures.

### Goals: What do we want our content consumers to do?

Many marketers produce content and dub it “content marketing” without having mapped it to business goals or to the customer buying cycle. This is evidenced in a lot of blog content, where brands decide to have a blog and then churn out posts that are at best “cool and trendy”, but which do nothing to impact on business goals. This is what content marketing guru, Doug Kessler, famously calls “the deluge of crap”<sup>4</sup> which, if unchecked, risks being content marketers’ downfall.

So, the first step toward creating ROI content is to turn your content creation process on its head: by that I mean think less about producing content and think more about *how you can use content to turn your readers or viewers* into leads, sales, and advocates all along the buying cycle.

### Strategy Recommendation 5 Select Content based on your goals

FIRST map your content to the customer buying cycle, THEN create content that moves people toward your goals.

In section 5 we show how to set goals using analytics - it’s in: “Step 1. Define goals with a specific value for conversion to different outcomes” on page 29.

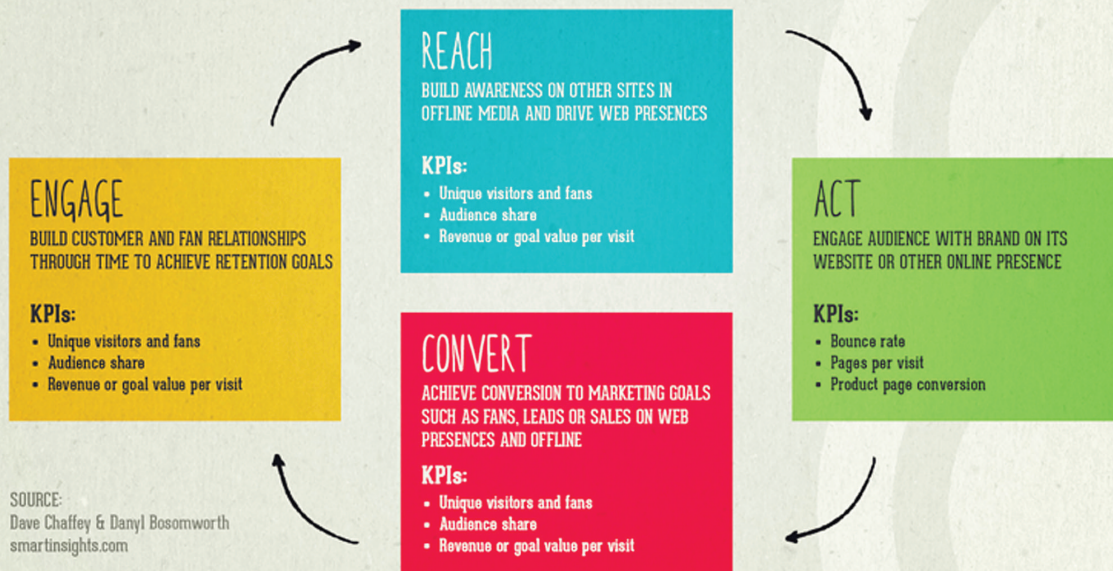
### Applying the Smart Insights RACE framework to content marketing

Defining goals without context can be tricky, so the Smart Insights RACE framework can help here. The Smart Insights RACE framework helps you define goals and subsequent measurement for your content across the customer buying cycle (similar to the AIDA buying stages from Awareness to Interest, Desire and Action). Here is how it works:

<sup>4</sup> [Slideshare: Crap. The Content Marketing Deluge](#)

# DEFINE THE SMART RACE KPIs

THAT REVIEW THE EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY OF YOUR DIGITAL MARKETING



#PLANTOSUCCEED

Presented by SMARTINSIGHTS.COM + FIRST10.CO.UK



- ✓ **Step 1 Reach.** Reach means building awareness of a brand, its products and services on other websites and in offline media in order to build traffic by driving visits to different web presences like your main website, micro-sites or social media outposts such as Facebook, LinkedIn or Google+ Business Pages.

*For Content marketing evaluation we need to understand how content individually and collectively supports reaching larger and different audiences.*

- ✓ **Step 2 Act.** Act is about persuading site visitors or prospects to take the next step on their journey when they initially reach your site or social network presence. It may mean finding out more about a company or its products, searching to find a product or reading a blog post. It's about engaging the audience through relevant, compelling content and clear navigation pathways so that they don't hit the back button.

*For Content marketing evaluation, we need to understand how content encourages interaction and leads as shown in the next table.*

- ✓ **Step 3 Convert.** Conversion is where the visitor commits to form a relationship which will generate commercial value for the business. It's where marketing goals such as leads or sales on web presences and offline can be achieved.

*For content marketing evaluation we need to link specific content against its impact on sales volume and creating value for the business.*

✓ **Step 4 Engage.** Build customer relationships through time to achieve retention goals

*For content marketing we need to determine which content is shared and how the amplification effect generates additional leads and sales.*

### Examples of KPIs by RACE

To help you select the right KPIs within RACE, we've taken the full range of measures covered, from hard sales measures to softer engagement metrics, and combined them into the table below. We recommend grouping measures like this as you find out the ones to select:

1. **Commercial measures:** These are the harder business or commercial measures that usually takes the longest to be demonstrable. These are the measures for the senior managers although they may well also be keen to know about Likes! Think audience share, sales, leads or at least clear indicators from people such as satisfaction ratings or percentage that fed back. Remember that these need to be *incremental* and ideally attributable to your content marketing.
2. **Tactical measures:** These include the views, clicks and interactions with your content – so involves the social shares such as Likes and Tweets. You might also use link shortening tools to help measure.
3. **Brand measures:** These are easier for bigger brands or where there's less competition, simply because the tools seem to work better in that space. Think brand or keyphrase mentions, sentiment, share of market mentions over competitors and certainly site traffic. These are the bigger needles to get moving and often require a bit more momentum.

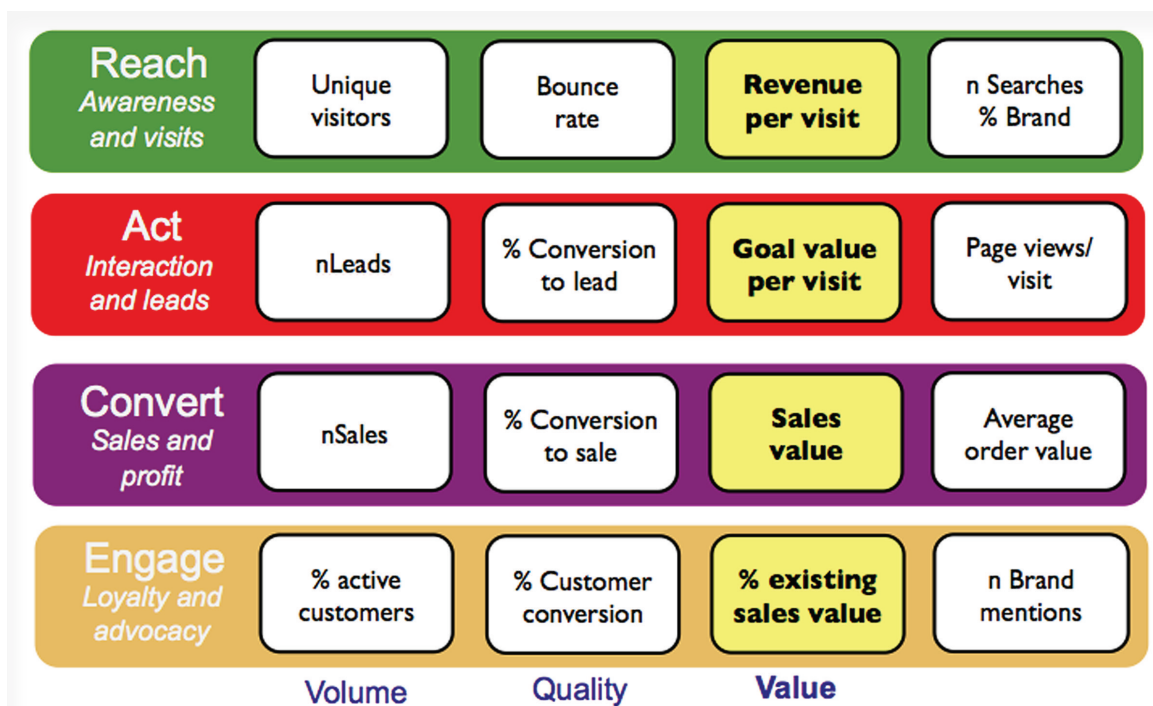
Measure	Reach	Act	Convert	Engage
<b>Brand measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>► Unique visitors</li> <li>► New visitors</li> <li>► Brand/direct visits</li> <li>► Audience share (vs competitors)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>► Lead volume</li> <li>► % product/service interactions</li> <li>► Pages per visit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>► Sales volume</li> <li>► Lead volumes</li> <li>► Follower or fan volumes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>► Email list quality</li> <li>► Repeat transactions</li> <li>► Repeat visits</li> <li>► Exit surveys - 4Q</li> </ul>
<b>Content performance measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>► Shake of audience</li> <li>► Key sites with your content visible in search</li> <li>► Follower or Fan volumes</li> <li>► Share or search / search presence (findability)</li> <li>► Inbound links</li> <li>► Referring domains</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>► Page engagement rate (Bounce, pages per visit, duration)</li> <li>► Shares by users (shareability)</li> <li>► PostRank score</li> <li>► Comments and site interactions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>► Lead sign-up and conversion rate by engagement tool</li> <li>► Subscription to email or RSS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>► Activity customers % (site and email active)</li> <li>► Conversion to Fan or Follower</li> <li>► % social interactions with content such as Fan page comments</li> <li>► Repeat conversion rate</li> <li>► Email open and CTR</li> </ul>
<b>Commercial measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>► Cost per click and cost per sale</li> <li>► Brand awareness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>► Goal value per visit</li> <li>► Online lead contribution (£, % of total)</li> <li>► Cost per lead</li> <li>► Customer satisfaction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>► Goal value per visit</li> <li>► Online lead contribution (£, % of total)</li> <li>► Cost per lead</li> <li>► Customer satisfaction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>► Retained sales growth and volume</li> <li>► Revenue per visit</li> <li>► Revenue per channel and category</li> <li>► Lifetime value of customer / loyalty</li> </ul>

Use this table to select the most relevant KPIs which are relevant for you in a content dashboard. For example, the next example shows a simplified dashboard taken from our

The next example shows our recommendation of a general digital dashboard taken from our guide to Delivering Results from Digital Marketing. You could create versions of this dashboard for specific content types as we will explain in the final section.

## Best Practice Tip 1 Isolate your dashboard for specific content assets

You should set up reports filtered using Advanced Segments for specific content types e.g. blog, content page, so you can see which sections of a site and types of content create value.



1 Introduction to ROI calculation

2 Setting goals and metrics

3 Calculating content cost

4 Calculating content ROI

5 Using analytics for analysis

2

So use Advanced Segments in analytics to identify the proportion of each metric that can be attributed to content marketing and channels related to inbound marketing by reviewing specific channels or content on the site.

Content fuels social media sharing and content fuels SEO which together comprise inbound marketing.

It's that old adage that says the "whole is greater than the sum of its parts". That's why you need to think about how social can help achieve your goals and how you can measure the effectiveness of both your content (likely to be on your own turf) AND your social activity (most likely in social channels). For an explanation of the how social media and content marketing work hand in hand read this post<sup>5</sup>.

This approach also make sense as increasingly, we see combined responsibilities for SEO, content marketing and social media marketing within a company.

## Strategy Recommendation 6 Measure content marketing, social media and SEO effectiveness together

Measure content marketing, social media and SEO effectiveness together. It's difficult to isolate the different components and they all support each other, so group their contribution.

With this established, you can review the contribution from these two perspectives, media and content:

<sup>5</sup> [Smart Insights: How content marketing and social media can work together](#)

## 1. Digital media channels that attracts visits to content created as part of content marketing

These channels will typically include:

- ✓ SEO
- ✓ Social media
- ✓ AdWords or Display advertising (if used to promote content assets)
- ✓ Direct (Note that some Social media traffic will be from apps such as Facebook and Twitter that don't show the source). If you promote content through offline traffic, then this will be evident too.

## 2. Content groups or types on your site that attract visits through digital media.

Content groups that you can use to evaluate of your content marketing through analytics include:

- ✓ A blog
- ✓ A specific section of site devoted to resources (for example the hub pages on Smart Insights)
- ✓ Content related to products and services used to encourage visits through SEO or conversion

Whether you use the first or second approach, you can then use analytics to show the Volume, Quality and Value measures related to content marketing!

### Best Practice Tip 2 Tag campaigns and content to help track content effectiveness in a more granular ways

To help you track the performance of specific content types better you can structure or tag them to make them more measurable, so you can tag specific content or campaigns with a specific content convention.

For example, you can show links obtained from a PDF to a site in this way to show the volume of referrers:

*[http://www.domain.com/landing\\_page.php?utm\\_campaign=<campaign-name>&utm\\_medium=pdf&utm\\_source=<site or partner name>&utm\\_content=<PDF name>](http://www.domain.com/landing_page.php?utm_campaign=<campaign-name>&utm_medium=pdf&utm_source=<site or partner name>&utm_content=<PDF name>)*

For more detail on how to tag your content see our 7 Steps Google Analytics guide or this post<sup>6</sup>.

## Alternative measurement frameworks content marketing

We have shown how we recommend using the RACE framework to define the effectiveness of content marketing, but thought readers would find it useful to review other content marketing metrics.

In the remainder of this section we will review alternative frameworks that you could use. Of course, we recommend the RACE framework, but you may find the other alternatives fit the way of working or way of thinking in your organization or your clients better.

<sup>6</sup> [Smart Insights: Tagging marketing campaigns](#)

## Jay Baer's four data "buckets"

Jay Baer's "four primary buckets" framework offers a holistic and pragmatic content marketing measurement model. He recommends using four types of content marketing metrics: consumption, sharing, leads, and sales. It doesn't have a hierarchy related to the buy cycle, although he suggests that most marketers overvalue the first two (blog page views and retweets, for example) and undervalue the last two (email subscriptions from people who first read the blog and, ultimately, sales from among that group). If you focus your metrics on behavior, rather than on data aggregation, you'll be measuring points of greater business value.



Examples of measures within each of the four "buckets" include:

1. **Consumption metrics.** This fundamental data point is easy to derive through Google Analytics, YouTube insights or similar. The metric tells you how many people consumed your content, measured as page views, downloads or views.
2. **Sharing metrics.** This metric tells you how successful your content is at getting consumers to share it with others through social sharing like tweets, Retweets, 'Likes', LinkedIn shares, Google+ shares, etc. Free social sharing monitors like [www.sharedcount.com](http://www.sharedcount.com) will provide with an accurate real-time measure of how often your content is shared with others across all social networks.
3. **Lead generation metrics.** Whether you require registration before allowing people to read/watch/download your content, or whether you're measuring leads generated after content is consumed, this is the metric that determines whether or not your content marketing effort is making financial sense.

If you host a lead form on your site, you can measure this by determining how many people went to the lead form immediately after consuming your content. You can also set a browser cookie and track when someone fills out that lead form after viewing your content, even if there is a 30- or 60-day interval between those events. If your leads are handled via phone, you can install a simple script that shows a different (trackable) phone number when people have first watched a video, downloaded a presentation, etc. This metric tells you many content consumers on your website turn into leads.

4. **Sales metrics.** This metric will tell you how often your content consumers turn into customers. If you're using a customer and prospect database, such as Salesforce,

you'll want to note in the prospect record that the potential customer consumed content pieces X, Y and Z. Then, when your sales team turns that prospect into a sale, determine the projected revenue and profit (lifetime value if you can) of that customer, and assign it to the content pieces that drove the sale.

#### Avinash Kaushik's Social media metrics

Although these measures from Google's Digital Marketing evangelist Avinash Kaushik<sup>7</sup> are specific to social media we have included them here since they show the effectiveness of content marketing in generating incremental awareness on social media and they also can be used to review blog effectiveness. The four key measures are:

- ✓ 1. **Conversation Rate.** Measure by:

*Conversation Rate = # of Audience Comments (or Replies) Per Post*

- ✓ 2. **Amplification Rate.** Measure in this way

*On Twitter: Amplification = # of Retweets Per Tweet*

*On Facebook, Google Plus: Amplification = # of Shares Per Post*

*On a blog, YouTube: Amplification = # of Share Clicks Per Post (or Video)*

- ✓ 3. **Applause Rate.** Measure as follows:

*One Twitter: Applause Rate = # of Favorite Clicks Per Post*

*On Facebook: Applause Rate = # of Likes Per Post*

*On Google Plus: Applause Rate = # of +1s Per Post*

*On a Blog, YouTube: Applause Rate = # of +1s and Likes Per Post (or video)*

#### 4. **Economic Value.**

*Economic Value = Sum of Short and Long Term Revenue and Cost Savings - measured through goals.*

---

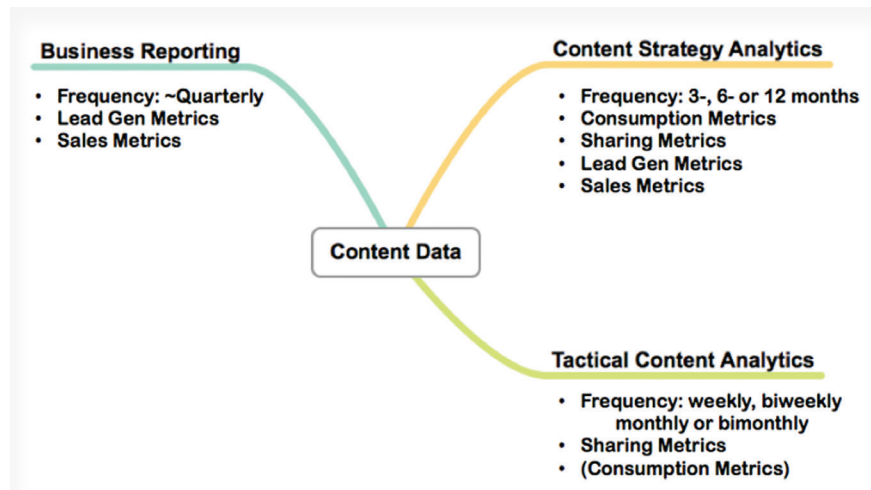
<sup>7</sup> [Avinash Kaushik: Best social media metrics](#)

This is measured through the ROI calculations explained in sections 3 and 4 of this guide and goal value from analytics in section 5.

It's a great framework, but suffers in that manual calculations of comments per post or shares may be needed, but tools such as Hootsuite can help in collecting this insight.

### Three categories of data for reviewing content marketing effectiveness

When working at Velocity Partners, Ryan Skinner, now senior analyst of Content Marketing at Forrester advocated three broad categories of data that help us define what we need to measure, each with a corresponding period or duration:



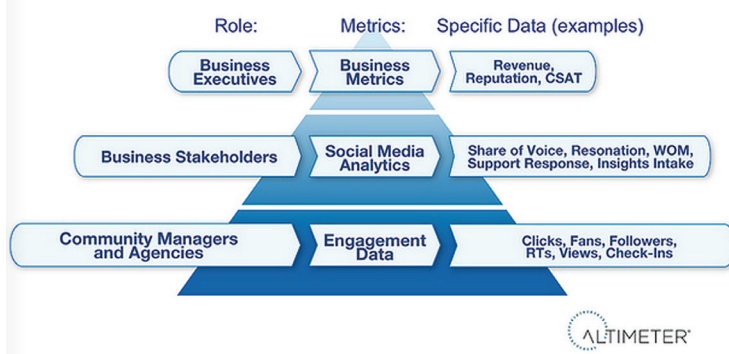
The beauty of this framework is that it reminds us that we need to package data to suit the needs of different target audiences (as we do in content marketing). In this case we need to have in mind the a) the C-suite (Business), b) the Division (Strategy) and c) the operational Team (Tactical), and for each group we customise reporting.

### Altimeter Social media ROI pyramid

Altimeter iterate this process of packaging metrics for different audiences in a report<sup>8</sup> related to social media marketing, which recognises that *“the seasoned professional provides executives with business metrics first. They know fans and followers aren’t a business goal, but what you do with them is.”*

<sup>8</sup> [Altimeter: Framework: The Social Media ROI Pyramid](#)

## The ROI Pyramid



1 Introduction to ROI calculation

2 Setting goals and metrics

3 Calculating content cost

4 Calculating content ROI

5 Using analytics for analysis

Here's how this model helps us:

- ✅ **Business Metrics (top of pyramid)** are for executives, and everyone else who supports them, which is everyone. The pyramid is smaller at top as there are fewer metrics to give to busy executives. There are really only three: increased top line, reputation, and reduced costs.
- ✅ **Social Media Analytics (middle pyramid)** is for the Corporate Social Strategist and the internal stakeholders and internal clients. This a synthesised higher level view of the Engagement Data (in the tier below), there are no industry standards, so pick one and benchmark over time. Choose from the metrics in Jay Baer's model to create your formulas.
- ✅ **Engagement Data (bottom of pyramid)** is for the teams deploying social media: community managers, social media managers, developers etc..Collecting this data is done using social tools tracking tools (Appendix), not forgetting of course your traditional web analytics. **Don't give this to the top level executives, they're not interested.**

## Content performance across the buying cycle

Measuring content performance across all the stages of the customer buying cycle will help you identify what is working and what is not and ultimately what content marketing tactics warrant support. Start by mapping the buying cycle from the customer's stand point (if you need help with this, [see our buyer persona toolkit](#)). Give each stage a name then measure and evaluate key metrics across the buying cycle. Focus on these critical metrics:

- ✅ **a) Volume** metrics, the number of people you have in each stage, how fast they are growing over time, and how many are being added each period. iGlimpse, an educational app developer, observed that more than half of the people who bought its nautical apps consumed a demo video early in their journey to purchase. That led iGlimpse to multiply the social touchpoints where consumers could link to the demo video (email blasts, facebook pages, linked in forums, blog posts, affiliate websites etc ...)
- ✅ **b) Visitor** quality or conversion metrics: how buyers move from one stage to the next. Example: Hubspot, the inbound marketing solution provider, provides valuable white papers and eBooks for download (I'm sure you know them) and analyses its conversion rates from marketing lead to sales-accepted lead so it can refine the criteria for "sales-ready", which ensures the sales team then emails or calls the leads with the highest likelihood of conversion.
- ✅ **c) Visitor value:** This is the value of sales generated that can be attributed to content

marketing. For Hubspot, they defined how content played its part in helping the company grow its customer base to 8,440 and revenues to \$52.5 M in 2012.

- ✓ **d) Rapidity** will tell you how long an average sale takes to close, how fast people are moving through the stages, and how their time spent in the stages accelerates over time. Tracking velocity through the stages helps identify the effectiveness of content used: the content that accelerates the purchasing cycle and that which slows the buyer's purchasing down.

Throughout this process you'll be tracking visits, page views, video views, email open rates, tweets retweeted, wall posts shared as described in Avinash Kaushik's framework, but the key is to know where this data serves its purpose and for which audience it is destined so that you do not drown your bosses in irrelevant metrics when you meet to report performance at the quarterly reporting meetings!

## Time

Remember to ensure you put your content analysis against sales trends that correspondent with your typical sales cycle. This is especially true for complex sales cycles of 9-18 months (not unusual in B2B). For example, if your sales cycle is typically 10 months, deploying a content marketing pilot across one quarter will be difficult to track. Furthermore your first content marketing efforts will always be your worst. And your past and current efforts will be eclipsed by your later efforts. So measure the rate of improvement.

### Frequency of reporting Short term and long term return on content marketing investment

The above frameworks demonstrate that reporting on content marketing ROI needs to create a reporting system that encompasses both short term fast-cycle returns on tactical execution, midterm strategic returns and longer term trends that demonstrate content marketing's return on investment to all stakeholders.

	Tactical Level (fast-cycle)	Strategic Level (mid-cycle)	Corporate Level (longterm)
Report Frequency	Punctually, weekly, bi-weekly, monthly	Bi-weekly, bi-monthly, quarterly	Quarterly, annually
Content Data	Visits, views, clicks, shares, RTs, fans, followers, immediate conversion events	Awareness, overall traffic volume, conversions, sales cycle velocity, SEO impact of keywords on SERPs (organic), WOM, social media penetration, inbound links and syndications achieved by content, high profile placements, conversion events, new customer acquisitions, up-sells, cross-sales	Revenue, Reputation, PR impact & reach, Thought leadership, growth in branded keyword volumes from organic search, invitations to speak at conference, invitations to comment / guest blog, new connections with key influencers, new partnerships,

	Tactical Level (fast-cycle)	Strategic Level (mid-cycle)	Corporate Level (longterm)
<b>Example</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ increased lead generation from white paper download by 20% over previous week</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ added 1500 names to newsletter list</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ 15% growth in sales of basic software package</li> <li>▶ talking head on The Bottom Line (BBC Radio)</li> </ul>

The first level of success is measured by initial fast cycle reach, traffic, leads and conversions. Strategic level and long-term success is also measured by growth of relationships with influencers, publications and the ability for the brand to influence messages through those relationships. Growth and cyclical engagement with online networks and communities expands the company's ability to grow the reach of its distribution channels creating a network effect for it's online marketing.

If incremental and short term increases in new revenue are the only measure of content marketing success, that will make it difficult to justify the cost of long term creative content campaigns, social engagement and relationship building. A focus on simultaneous goals of direct customer acquisition in the short term as well as growing the community at large, can result in tremendous influence and momentum in the long term. The investment in an approach that doesn't simply measure immediate ROI but aims for category dominance is strategic. And increasingly, that's what it takes to achieve the key success factors that successful companies run their businesses on.

1 Introduction  
to ROI calculation

2 Setting goals  
and metrics

3 Calculating  
content cost

4 Calculating  
content ROI

5 Using analytics for  
analysis

# THREE

## Calculating the cost of content

Before we can properly evaluate the returns of content marketing we need to know how much content marketing costs. This chapter will walk you through a simple but effective costing model, similar to the one used in publishing. Let's start by reviewing different types of costs relevant to content marketing.

### Different cost types for content marketing

#### 1 Variable costs

The cost of content marketing varies according to the sophistication of content, the time spent on researching it, creating and distributing it, and the number of skilled people needed to work on it.

#### 2 Operational costs

Broadly speaking, the content marketing operation can be divided into 5 cost components:

Plan Create strategic structure		Ideate Generate flow of ideas		Produce		Distribute and Nurture generate traffic, leads, sales		Measure & Optimise
Customer Needs Business Goals	Personas Buyer cycles Keywords	Content Assets Internal External	Buyer journeys Themes	Editorial plan	Editorial Style Format	Promotion Moderation Nurturing	Evaluation	Optimisation
Purpose	Audience	Audit	Map & Gap	Manage	Create	Market	Justify	Improve

Some of the costs in content marketing are one-offs or irregular costs, whilst other costs are recurrent costs incurred on every content project. The point here is that some costs need to be grouped into overhead.

#### 3 People costs

Working on content marketing activities is very manual, although a degree of automation can be bought in (this also has a cost) which is easier for larger organisations that want to scale the process and gain economies.

For the purpose of this guide we'll consider the team of people needed to run the content marketing operation to deliver and distribute content. In some instances, the team might also be outsourced.

Senior Team	Middle Management	Workforce
Content Strategist Managing editor Creative Director	Editorial Manager Project Manager Community manager Graphic designer Social media manager	Editor (copy) Proof reader Social media exec

## 4 Production costs

Production costs depends on the type and frequency of content creation. To calculate product or creation costs, content can be viewed as being either

- a) lightweight, frequent and by definition less demanding to create, and
- b) heavyweight, with greater, longer lasting impact.

The table shows some typical examples. In Step 4 of our 7 Steps Content marketing strategy guide we explain that it's helpful to review content strategy by looking at these two key types of content.

In his book 'Launch' Michael Stelzner, founder of the Social Media Examiner website, attributes his marketing success to two forms of content that he created and gave away to attract customers: 'Primary fuel', content he created to keep his business moving forward and 'Nuclear fuel', the special content he used to attract the hundreds of thousands of visitors per month, many of whom later gladly purchased his services (to create a \$3 million turnover business).

### What is it? Primary fuel / Lightweight content

Primary fuel is regularly published, free or low-cost content that meets the needs of your audience. The goal of your primary fuel is to help solve your readers' problems so they will become fans and advocates.

### What is it? Nuclear fuel / Heavyweight content

Nuclear fuel is carefully designed content with a higher production cost that is designed to have a lasting impact on significant numbers of your ideal reader base and possibly experts.

The dilemma for content marketers is that lightweight content is likely to be cheaper to produce it typically has less impact and cut-through. Meanwhile heavyweight content is more costly to produce and will typically have a greater impact – it is more sharing and engaging if you get right. However, that's an unknown – depending on the type of content, its impact maybe less predictable – you can design a viral video, but it won't necessarily 'go viral'.

Lightweight content Largely primary fuel	Heavyweight content Largely secondary fuel
Blog post	Infographic
Simple article	White Paper
Checklist	Research study
Article / Interview	eBook
Press Release (media announcements)	Professional Video
Podcast	Mobile App
Handheld video	Event
Case Study	
Basic Slideshare	
Webcast	

Table. The two broad categories of content

Your content marketing goals and strategy will dictate whether you choose to put more effort

on lightweight or heavyweight content. That should be a big question for you! Let's now examine the cost of producing and distributing both lightweight and heavier content.

### Costing lightweight content

Let's assume your company decides to invest three solid, 600-900 word, blog posts per week, sourced either from experts, or from members of the senior team.

- ❑ A solid blog post takes an average five hours to research, write, and edit.
- ❑ Let's assume that the average annual earnings of a solid blogger (external or on the senior team) is £45,000 annum
- ❑ If that person works 45 weeks in the year and 48 hours per week their hourly cost is  $\text{£}45,000 / 2160 \text{ hours} = \text{£}20.83 \text{ per hour}$
- ❑ Hourly expense of solid blogger = £20.83 (NB this includes no charges or overhead)
- ❑ Therefore, the **cost of one blog post** is equal to  $\text{£}20.83 \times 5 = \text{£}104.15$
- ❑ The annual cost of blogging at this frequency is  $\text{£}104.15 \times 3 \text{ blogs week} = \text{£}312.45 \times 45 \text{ weeks} = \text{£}14,060.45 \text{ per annum}$  (not including overhead)

#### Best Practice Tip 3 Consider the role of content curation

It's not the case that unique, original content always gives the best returns. Curating content sharing infographics, data and visuals from others may be more cost effective and can still present a brand well if it adds value.

### Heavyweight content

Let's now assume your company also decides to invest 4 heavyweight projects per year.

- ❑ A white paper or eBook takes an average 50 hours to research, write, design, edit, publish, and market.
- ❑ Let's assume that the average annual earnings of a heavyweight contributor (external such as a well-known influencer or internal) is £65,000 annum
- ❑ We assume once again that person works 45 weeks in the year and 48 hours per week so their hourly cost is  $\text{£}65,000 / 2160 \text{ hours} = \text{£}30.09 \text{ per hour}$
- ❑ Hourly expense of heavyweight contributor = £30.09 (NB this includes no charges or overhead)
- ❑ Therefore, the cost of researching, writing and editing one heavyweight piece (sometimes also called epic or nuclear content) equals  $\text{£}30.09 \times 50 = \text{£}1505$
- ❑ The annual cost of heavyweight content at this frequency is  $\text{£}1505 \times 4 \text{ pieces per year} = \text{£}6,019 \text{ per annum}$  (not including overhead)

#### Best Practice Tip 4 Evaluate the value and savings from repurposing and spin-outs

Heavyweight content can have a hidden benefit in that it can repurposed and atomised to provide a number of lightweight content items. Therefore, focusing resources on fewer big projects that can "spin out" repurposed content is worth considering.

## 5 Content promotion and outreach costs

Promotion includes a wide range of activity from community building activities such as moderating discussions and commenting on influential blog posts to tweeting and building relations with influencers on Twitter and LinkedIn. There is also paid promotion of content through Google AdWords and advertising on the social networks.

In essence promotion is executing a plan that uses content as social bait to build customer relations, customer leads, sales and advocacy. As defined at the beginning of this guide.

For the sake of this costing exercise let's assume two members of your team spend 90 minutes on content promotion per workday, each.

- ❑ Let's assume that the average annual earnings of a social media / community manager (internal or agency) is £40,000 per annum
- ❑ Hourly cost of that person is £40,000/2160 hours = **£18.52** per hour (without charges or overhead)
- ❑ Therefore, the cost of promoting content is £18.52 x 1.5 x 2 (people) x 225 days = **£12,501** per annum (in this case there is no paid content promotion)
- ❑ To this cost we'll add an hour per week for measuring, evaluating and reporting on metrics £18.52 x 45 weeks = **£833**

You may also add in some cost for graphic design and for more junior contributions. The point is this method of cost calculation offers an effective and flexible costing framework for both content marketing and social media promotion. Smart Insights has developed some hard-working actionable costing and charging spreadsheets that can help you further with the practical aspects of putting together accurate costing models for your content marketing.

<i>Lightweight content</i>	=	£14,060.45
<i>Heavyweight content</i>	=	£6,019
<i>Content Promotion</i>	=	£12,501
<i>Measurement</i>	=	£833
<i>Subtotal</i>	=	£33,413.45
<i>Overhead @ 25%</i>	=	£8,353.56
<i>Total Cost</i>		<b>£41,766.81</b>

Viewed from this perspective, your content marketing investment is equivalent to £42,000/ annum, which is an average annual salary for a mid-level manager. With this cost in mind you need to decide what your content marketing investment needs to achieve to get a positive return.

This will generally be the number of incremental leads and so sales achieved in any given period and for which content marketing has played a role in driving those sales. Having in place a system that measures throughput and attributes to original referring tactics is the key.

# FOUR

## Calculating Content ROI

In section 3, we looked at how you can calculate content marketing costs using the example of assessing blogging.

In this chapter we'll look at a calculation framework for evaluating the return on investment (ROI) of different aspects of content marketing. We'll stay focused on blogging for business as a content marketing tactic, because it's widely achievable for most businesses, irrespective of size. Then we'll look at two content marketing success stories to see how the results were evaluated for Content Marketing ROI (CMROI).

Let's begin by putting the cost of blogging above into context against the goals, metrics and KPIs of business blogging:

Example blogging goal	Metrics	Tools
Initiate / foster / maintain customer engagement and provide a platform for interaction	Track reader comments (engagement) Communicate with customers	Comment tracking tools
Improve search visibility and SERPs ranking with deeper more frequent content	Improve SERPs for key words	Link analysis tools Social media monitoring
Generate new leads online Build thought leadership	Funnel traffic toward a conversion page Shorten buying cycle by building early brand credibility	

Jay Baer examines business blogging ROI across 3 distinct categories of business blogging outcome:

1. Blog for content	2. Blog for commerce	3. Blog for community
What: Increase traffic to website Improve SERPs	Emphasise lead generation, rather than traffic generation	Build brand allegiance and affinity
How: Write with emphasis on search optimisation with Keyword inclusion	Educate potential customers to take action. Funnel traffic from blog post to another destination, such as a lead form	Write to be a resource, not to sell or convert. When it's time to purchase, readers will think of you first
Measure: lift in visits, measure percentage of new visits, measure lift in visits from organic search	Measure lift in average length of visit and lift in pages viewed per visit Measure lift in referral visits from other sites	Measure lift in repeat visits Lift in RSS subscribers Lift in comments Referrals from social media outposts

We also saw how "Avinash Kaushik's Social media metrics" on page 16 can be applied to

1 Introduction to ROI calculation

2 Setting goals and metrics

3 Calculating content cost

4

4 Calculating content ROI

5 Using analytics for analysis

blogging.

We will now look at some examples showing how content marketing can be reported on.


## Content Marketing ROI Example #1: B2B - Sage

When Sage decided to engage UK micro-businesses with content in the form of blogs, the results in these different categories were noteworthy. Here is how they reported them:

### Deliverables

Reached over 85% of UK micro-businesses generating 130m impressions (Google)

- On softer metrics, the campaign generated 578,600 ‘engagements’ (clicks, video views, shares, likes).
- On harder metrics the campaign generated 13,000 PDF downloads and 600 leads (contact forms completed).
- In PPC, CTRs were up to 33% on keywords due to the tightly themed nature of the plan involving over 11,000 ad groups.
- In SEO 50% of keywords moved from outside the top 100 to first page on Google within three months



## Content Marketing ROI Example #2: Not for profit - Rehabs.com

To showcase its “*Your Face On Meth*” campaign for Rehabs.com, Fractl produced an Infographic summarising the measurement approach used entitled “*The unmatched power of big content*”. This summarised the key success factors and KPIs resulting from the creation and distribution of powerful content to drive public awareness and engagement of its client’s brand and organisation. All the stages of the project are visible here<sup>9</sup> (LINK), but for our purposes we’ll focus on the final stage, stage 6, of the campaign where we can examine the project KPIs (views, organic shares, links, tweets, RTs etc) and the commercial values Fractl used to calculate the return on marketing investment (ROMI) achieved by the content marketing project.

<sup>9</sup> [Frac.tl: Rehabs.com case study](https://frac.tl/Rehabs.com-case-study)

## 6

### SINGLE CAMPAIGN ROI

We used conservative industry rates that are charged for the promotion and distribution of content. It is important to note that companies offering links, likes, tweets, and views on a piecemeal basis are generally unable to provide legitimate results and often rely on spam techniques. This is an issue viral content avoids, thriving instead via organic sharing.

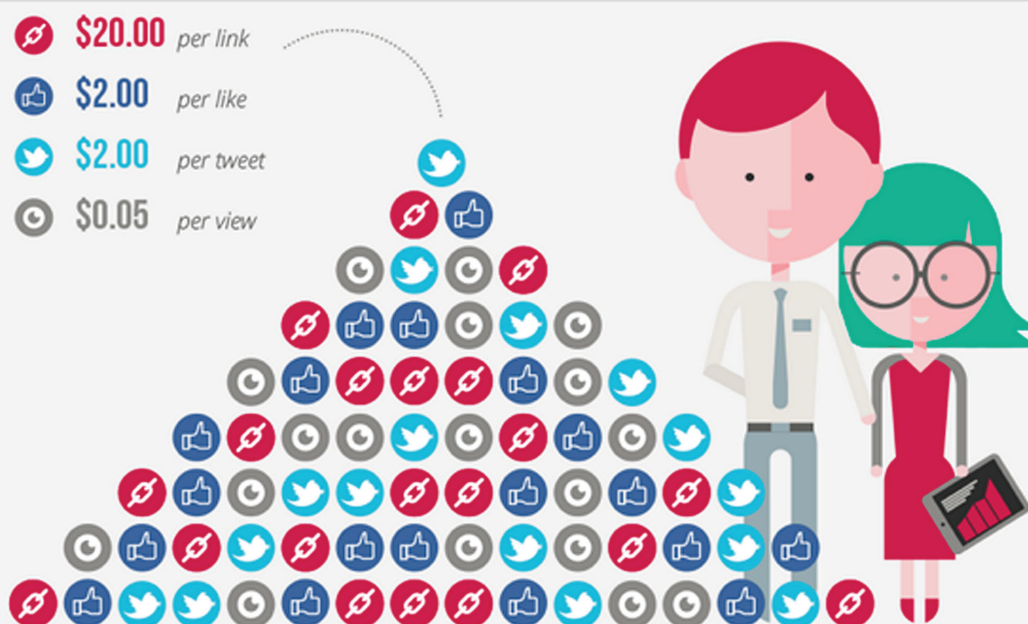


 **\$20.00** per link

 **\$2.00** per like

 **\$2.00** per tweet

 **\$0.05** per view



THIS CAMPAIGN VALUE BREAKDOWN WAS:

Estimating  
Total Value

1 Introduction  
to ROI calculation

2 Setting goals  
and metrics

3 Calculating  
content cost

4 Calculating  
content ROI

5 Using analytics for  
analysis

4

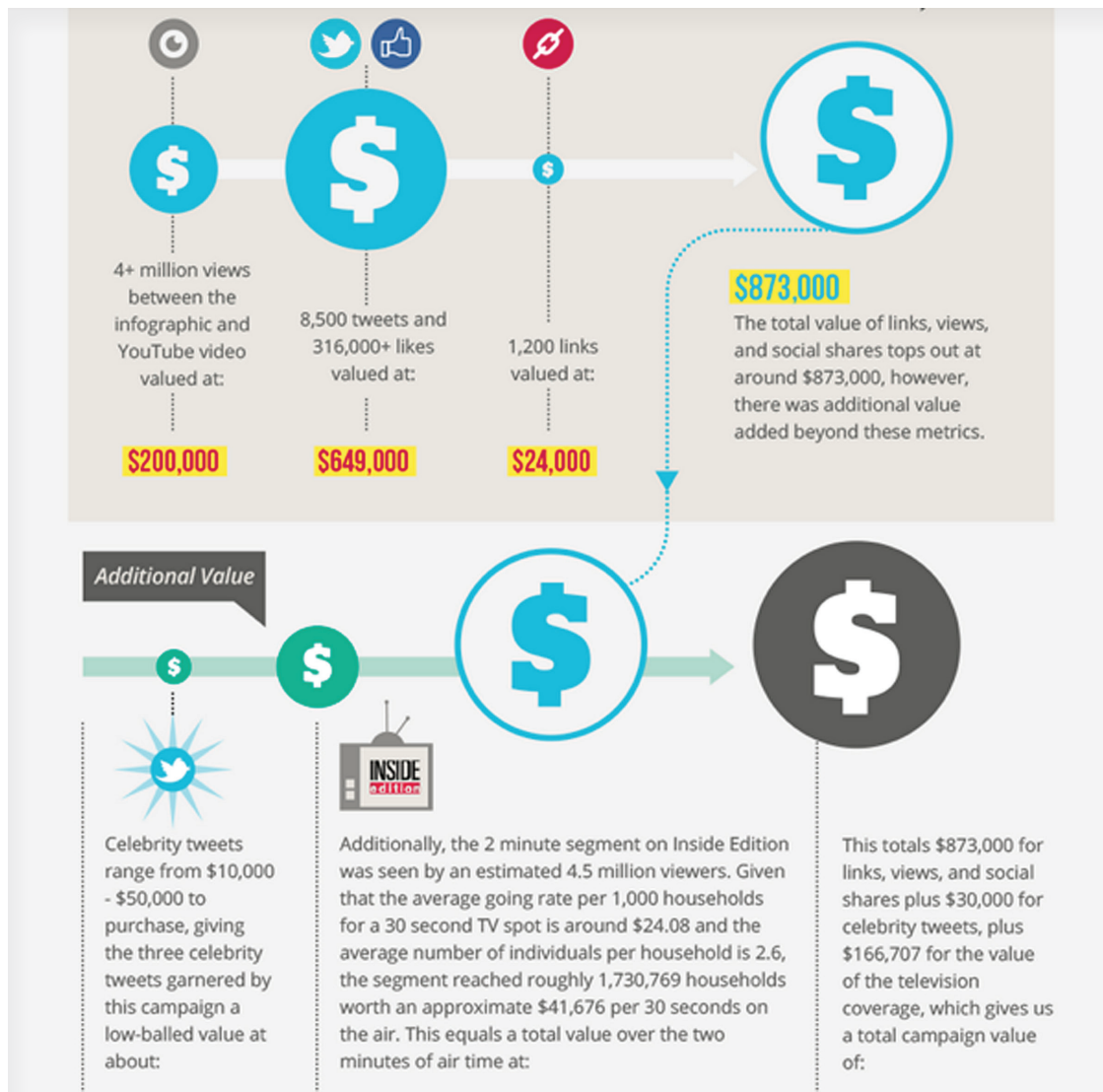
Fractl used its own estimates of commercial rates for sharing to apportion value to the content's ability to generate a link, a like, a tweet and a view: \$20 for a link, \$2 for like, \$2 for tweet, \$0.05 for a view. We would caution that this approach is subjective as Augie Ray of Forrester rightly shows in this post<sup>10</sup>. In his posts estimates from \$3 to \$300 are given depending on how the lifetime value of a fan might be mentioned.

#### Best Practice Tip 5 Place a monetary value on social sharing? Warning!

This approach does allow companies to benchmark different content marketing activities, but why not just report on the number of shares if the value is so subjective. We show in section 5 that a better method is to work back from conversion to calculate revenue per visit for content which is accurate although it doesn't include the long-term or amplification value.

10 [Forrester: What's the value of a Facebook Fan? Zero?](#)

You can see that activities that increase Reach are rewarded most – so sharing is higher than views. You may argue that these values are excessive, but the method does give a consistent way to value content.



By giving each sharing result an estimated commercial value, Fractl was able to calculate that the total value of links, tweets and social shares amounted to \$873K, and that additional value was garnered from celebrity tweets (\$30,000), whilst two minutes of air time for the video clip on TV generated \$166,000 worth of media exposure for the Rehabs.com brand.

Altogether the content and social media value generated amounted to \$1,069,707, which, when measured against \$35,000 marketing spend for the creation and distribution of the content delivered a rate of 2956 % return on marketing investment - if you believe the estimates of the values of shares! However, there was clearly a strong amplification effect here which ultimately this resulted in an 850% increase in qualified traffic from people searching for treatment and connecting with Rehabs.com treatment.

If you do believe in this approach, Fractl have made their content ROI calculator available online, so that others can measure their content ROI in this way <http://frac.tl/content-roi-calc>.

1 Introduction to ROI calculation

2 Setting goals and metrics

3 Calculating content cost

4 Calculating content ROI

5 Using analytics for analysis

# FIVE

## Analysis and reporting techniques using analytics

The methods we have reviewed so far require some large assumptions about the value of sharing. There is an alternative approach using analytics which looks specifically at the real benefits generated by content on the site in terms of conversion to marketing outcomes, i.e. leads and sales.

This approach has the advantage that it reviews the role of content in generating more shares leading to visits to a particular landing page or site section. It also looks at how that content supports conversion across multiple visits. However, it has the disadvantage that it doesn't review the intangible impact of content shared in other locations which may generate awareness resulting in direct visits to the home page which can't be attributed back to specific content.

The analysis approach we share in this section involves these steps:

- ✓ 1. Define goals with a specific value for conversion to different outcomes.
- ✓ 2. Define the scope of evaluation – filter results to specific content such as a section on site, or an individual piece of content.
- ✓ 3. Use measures available in Google Analytics to assess value.
- ✓ 4. Attributing social media marketing and content sharing using assists in analytics.

We will work through these steps showing examples of how to set up reports in Google Analytics. This consists of individual product pages like the one you used to download this guide. Here we're excluding all blog content which is more important in driving sales.

### Step 1. Define goals with a specific value for conversion to different outcomes

The first section in our [7 Step guide to Google Analytics](#) explains how to setup goals in detail. Since this is a short guide we can't explain the full details here, but here is an example from the Admin section on Google Analytics of setting up a goal for a thank you page with a value associated.

Administration > View Goals > Edit Goal  
Smart Insights / http://www.smartinsights.com / www.smartinsights.com

VIEW (PROFILE)  
www.smartinsights.com

View Settings  
User Management  
Goals  
Filters  
PERSONAL TOOLS & ASSETS  
Segments  
Annotations  
Channel Groupings  
Custom Alerts  
Scheduled Emails  
Shortcuts  
Share Assets

Goal setup Edit  
Custom

Goal description Edit  
Name: Spreadsheet download - subscribed  
Goal type: Destination

Goal details

Destination  
Begins with /spreadsheet-download-1 Case sensitive  
For example, use My Screen for an app and /thankyou.html instead of www.example.com/thankyou.html for a web page

Value OPTIONAL  
On 1 GBP  
Assign a monetary value to the conversion. Learn more about Goal Values. For a transaction, leave this blank and use Ecommerce tracking and reports to see Revenue. Learn more about Ecommerce Transactions.

Funnel OPTIONAL  
On Use an app screen name string or a web page URL for each step. For example, use My Screen for an app and /thankyou.html instead of www.example.com/thankyou.html for a web page.

Step	Name	Screen/Page	Required?
1	Conversion model spreadsheet	/conversion-model-spreadsheets	No

+ Add another Step

Verify this Goal See how often this Goal would have converted based on your data from the past 7 days.

Save Goal Cancel

### Best Practice Tip 6 Assign a value to key goals on non-Ecommerce sites

To assign a value to goals, you need to determine the value of different lead types based on rates of conversion from lead to sale and average selling price as explained in section 1. For example, after someone downloads a brochure the value could be \$5 while a phone callback could be \$10 since there is a higher propensity to convert in this case. These values need to be assigned in value box for the goals pages as shown above.

If you are running an Ecommerce site and have Ecommerce tracking enabled, you don't need to assign goal value since sales value will automatically be assigned to the visitor who purchased and then attributed to content and referrers that influenced that sale.

### Step 2. Defining the scope of evaluation – a specific section of content on site, or an individual piece of content

By default, Google Analytics shows visits, leads and sales for content regardless of whether it is a content marketing investment. To prove the value of content we need to isolate each content type. This works best if content is labelled or named consistently.

### Best Practice Tip 7 Group and group content marketing resources to help users and for trackability

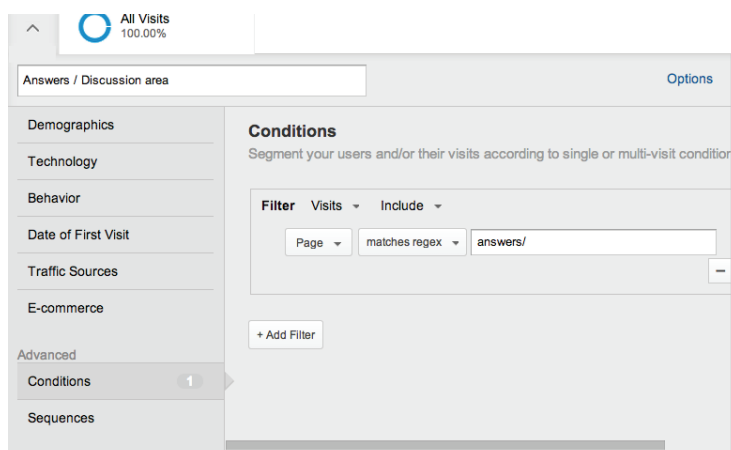
Through grouping content marketing resources you can both isolate their value to users by just reporting on these in analytics and measure it more effectively. For example, all resources, could be in folder /resources, all blog content under /blog or specific advice type labelled.

If you are labelling content URLs or titles systematically, you can then use Google Analytics 'Segments' (formerly 'Advanced Segments') to limit reporting of value to this content. This is again explained in more detail in our [7 Step guide to Google Analytics - see Step 4.](#)

### What is it? Google Analytics Segments

Different types of site visitors can be isolated to compare in their volume and quality to others. You can select from standard segments or define custom segments

Advanced segments are set up for content using different conditions based on Page (the URL) as shown in the example below which restricts reporting to all pages within the Smart Insights Answers forum.



If multiple segments are setup, for example for blog content and guide (product) pages in

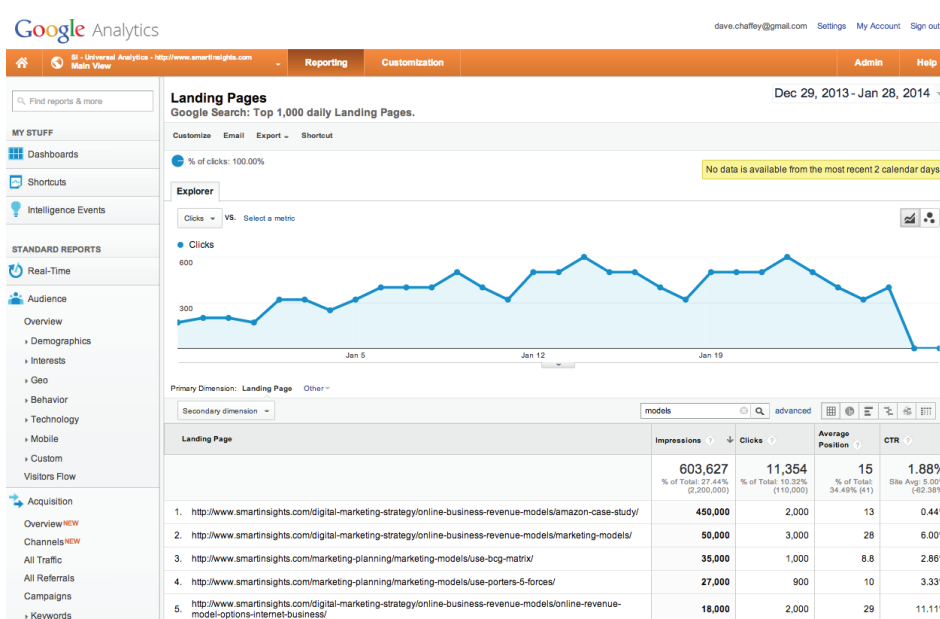
our case, we can then select multiple Advanced segments of different content types and compare their relative contribution side-by-side. You can review the contribution of specific content types in this way using different reports in Google Analytics, for example:

- ✓ **1. Content** - the landing pages or content drilldown reports under Behaviour in Google Analytics
- ✓ **2. Referrers** - different traffic reports shown below in the Acquisition reports in Google Analytics
- ✓ **3. Keywords** - show which content sections and pages attract visits, for example using the new Webmaster Tools report - see below - which still work now Not Provided has removed most Keywords data from analytics.

### Best Practice Tip 8 Use Advanced segments or Advanced Filters to review the contribution of different content through a common string

You can review behaviour across a page type such as all category pages, all pages within a category or all product pages by specifying a range of pages which contain the relevant string.

An example of applying this is filtering approach to see relevant content is available in more depth in our [SEO video tutorials](#) (*Tutorial 3. Using Google Analytics new Google Webmaster Tools*). This example shows how we just report on landing pages with the string “models” which we featured in a series of 10 or so posts on this topic.



The chart shows we have recorded over 10,000 clicks in this month period for URLs containing ‘models’. To see leads or sales revenue generated we could setup an Advanced segment for traffic entering the site as these URLs.

### Step 3. Use measures available in Google Analytics to assess value

Once we have the goals and goal values assigned and segments set up, then we can use the reports to prove to ourselves, colleagues and clients how well different types of content work.

*Here's the thing that many don't know about Google Analytics, once a goal completion page*

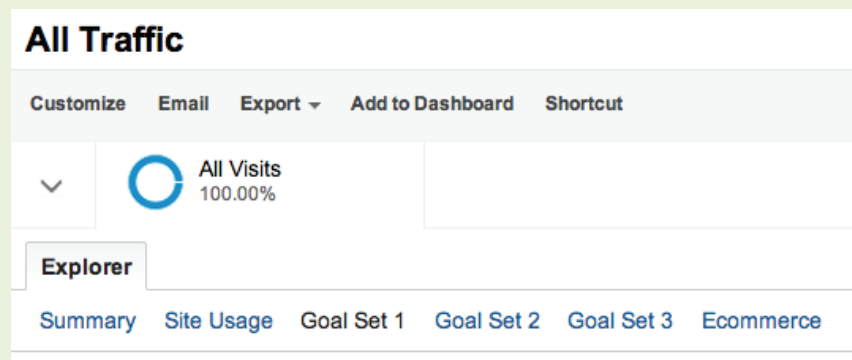
is visited OR an Ecommerce transaction is completed, Google automatically assigns the value of goal or sale back across:

1. All previous pages a lead or purchaser visited previously in the session.
2. All previous visits from different media (recorded through a cookie).

This is powerful for reviewing content and promotion effectiveness! Once this assignment from outcomes working back to previous touchpoints on or off the site has been completed by Google Analytics<sup>11</sup>, then you can review effectiveness with Google's 3 really useful measures for assessing value.

#### Best Practice Tip 9 Use these 3 key measures to compare value for different content

- ✓ 1. **Page Value.** This shows the influence of pages in generating value either through e-commerce transactions or conversion goals with a value assigned. Page value is available within the Top content reports.
- ✓ 2. **Per Visit Goal Value.** This is best for non-e-commerce sites which should have a value assigned to conversion goals as have just explained. You can see per Visit Goal Value in the Top *Goal Set* menu of the Explorer tab within the Traffic sources reports like All Traffic, All Sources and Campaigns.



- ✓ **Per Visit Value.** This is best if you have a transactional e-commerce site. You can see Per Visit Value measures within Traffic sources on the *Ecommerce tab* if you have e-commerce tracking enabled.

Step 4. Attributing the impact of content distribution and different content types across different sessions or visits to a site.

Until this point in our description and using these reports we have made a huge assumption - that is that visitors to the site who convert, convert in their first visitor session. Of course, this may be true for some visits, but in many case it won't be, particularly where high value or high consideration products are involved.

#### Strategy Recommendation 7 Use multi-channel funnels to help prove the value of content assets and content distribution throughout customer journeys

Use 'multichannel funnels' to show how social media marketing or display advertising contributes 'assists' to sale earlier in the path to purchase.

<sup>11</sup> [Google Analytics: How Page Value is calculated](#)



This example<sup>12</sup> shows how a B2B company is able to show the value in Referrals from partner sites and social networks in generating leads:

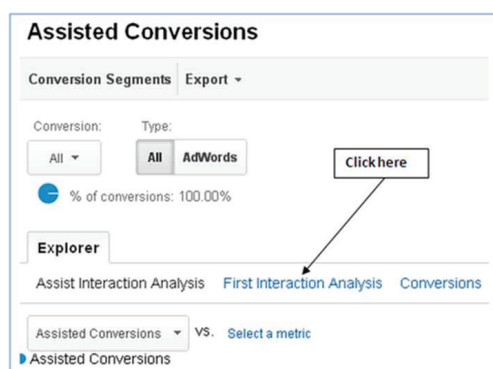
Basic Channel Grouping		Assisted Conversions ↓
1.	Organic Search	138
2.	Direct	96
3.	Referral	43
4.	Social Network	23
5.	(Other)	11

You can access this report from the Conversions menu in the left sidebar – it is labelled Multichannel funnels, Assisted conversions. In this case it shows the importance of organic search in creating assisted conversion. It also shows some assists from Social Networks where a first visit is from social media, but conversion occurs in a later session.

### First content interaction analysis

Extending this approach, Himanshu Sharma has written up an in-depth approach explaining how to do this which you may want to explore<sup>13</sup>. This involves these steps:

- ✓ 1: Head to 'Assisted Conversions' Report (under Conversions > Multi Channel Funnels)
- ✓ 2: Click on the link 'First Interaction Analysis'.



- ✓ 3: Click on the 'pivot table' button:
- ✓ 4: Create a pivot table with following specifications:  
 Primary Dimension: Source/Medium  
 Pivot By: Landing Page URL  
 Pivot Metrics: First Click Conversions, First Click Conversions Value

<sup>12</sup> [Smart Insights: An example of applying Multichannel funnels to content analysis](#)

<sup>13</sup> [Smart Insights: Building a content marketing dashboard in Google Analytics](#)

Primary Dimension: Basic Channel Grouping Source/Medium Source Medium Other Channel Groupings								
Secondary dimension								
Pivot by: Landing Page URL Pivot metrics: First Click Conversions First Click Conversion Value								
	Total		1. (not set)		2. www.seotakeaways.com/		3. www.seotakeaways.com/10000-search-engine-queries-for-your-link-building-campaign/	
Source/Medium	First Click Conversions ↓	First Click Conversion Value	First Click Conversions	First Click Conversion Value	First Click Conversions	First Click Conversion Value	First Click Conversions	First Click Conversion Value
1. (direct) / (none)	4,049	\$3,610.00	2,030	\$1,600.00	487	\$550.00	181	\$70.00
2. google / organic	3,593	\$4,200.00	1,742	\$1,930.00	179	\$210.00	39	\$10.00
3. linkedin.com / referral	1,160	\$800.00	327	\$230.00	74	\$90.00	45	\$20.00
4. t.co / referral	970	\$570.00	446	\$290.00	0	\$0.00	39	\$0.00
5. seomoz.org / referral	463	\$420.00	138	\$170.00	45	\$70.00	253	\$170.00
6. inbound.org / referral	451	\$390.00	142	\$70.00	1	\$0.00	36	\$30.00

1 Introduction to ROI calculation

2 Setting goals and metrics

3 Calculating content cost

4 Calculating content ROI

5 Using analytics for analysis

You can see that first click conversions are shown for different types of content - the third page is a content page. He has further steps that involve a filter to review an individual content type, group or page, but this could also be an advanced segment.

### Using basic channel grouping analysis

This approach can be extended further by using a customisation option, again within Multichannel Funnels. This Moz post<sup>14</sup> shows how you can go beyond the basic Assists report and report on content groups as well as channels.

Primary Dimension: Basic Channel Grouping Source / Medium Source Medium Other Channel Groupings					
Plot Rows Secondary dimension					
<input type="checkbox"/> Basic Channel Grouping <div>           Create a custom Channel Grouping...           Copy Basic Channel Grouping template...         </div>					
		Assisted Conversions	Assisted Conversion Value	Last Click or Direct Conversions	Assisted / Last Click or Direct Conversions
<input type="checkbox"/> 1. Organic Search		204	\$10,168.37	416	0.49
<input type="checkbox"/> 2. Direct		159	\$21,789.26	241	0.66
<input type="checkbox"/> 3. Paid Search		67	\$6,691.50	93	0.72

### Best Practice Tip 10 Use Basic Channel Groupings to review content impact

Through selecting a landing page URL for a particular type of content you can determine which content impacted conversion from a first visits where it was an entry or landing page.

The next example shows how you could create a content group called "Resource Centre"

14 [Moz: Basic Channel Groupings analysis](#)

9.   
e.g., Generic keywords

Or whatever identifying URL path you use

or

Containing! This lumps even deep pages in as well

and

Display Color:

Preview:

Savity Save

One you have defined one or more groups of content in this way, you can then see how they generate assists. See the full post for details - it's important to drag this custom grouping to the top so that Google's analysis picks up these entry pages first.

## Best Practice Tip 11 Setup defined content groups in Google Analytics

Since this Moz post was written Google has introduced another technique which should make these techniques easier to apply - see this introductory post on [Content Grouping Settings](#).

## Creating actionable dashboards

In his blog post *The “Action Dashboard”<sup>15</sup> (An Alternative To Crappy Dashboards)*, Avinash Kaushik tells us not to squirrel multiple metrics, but instead, to select the “critical few” metrics that inform C-level management, and allow decision making.

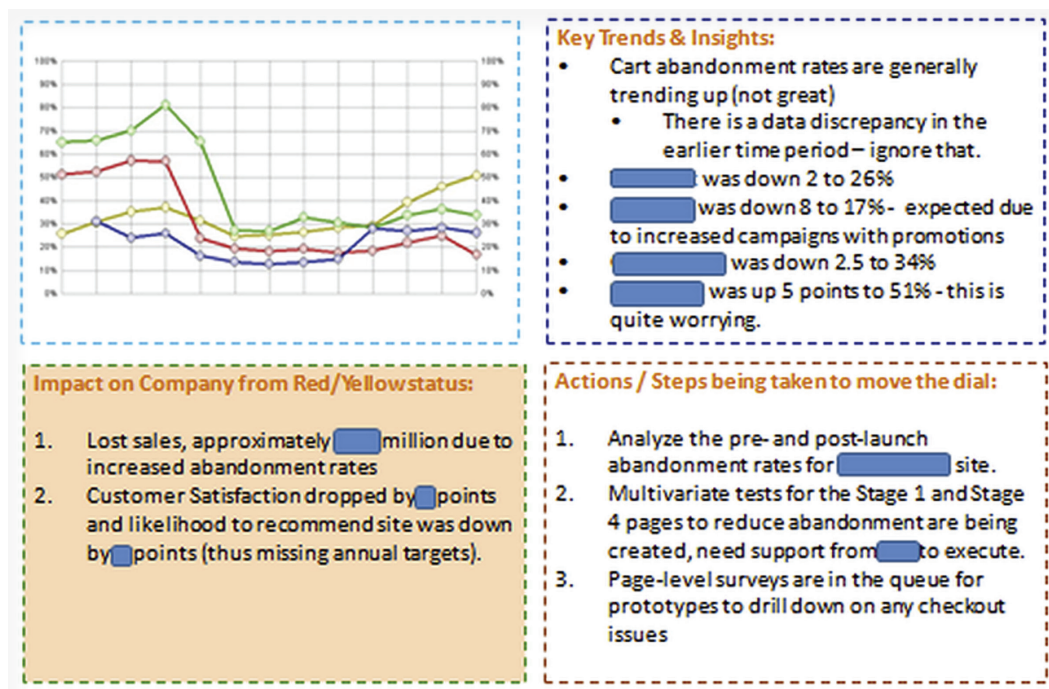
This advice resonates perfectly with our recommendations in section 2, to create three levels of content marketing reporting based around audience needs and reporting frequency:

	TACTICAL LEVEL (FAST-CYCLE)	STRATEGIC LEVEL (MID-CYCLE)	CORPORATE LEVEL (LONG-TERM)
Report frequency	punctually, weekly, bi-weekly, monthly	bi-weekly, bi-monthly, quarterly	quarterly, annually
Content data	Visits, views, clicks, shares, RTs, fans, followers, immediate conversion events	Awareness, overall traffic volume, sales cycle velocity, SEO impact of keywords on SERPs (organic), WOM, social media penetration, inbound links and syndications achieved by content, high profile placements, conversion events	Revenue, reputation, PR impact and reach, thought leadership, growth in branded keyword volumes from organic search, invitations to speak at conferences, invitations to comment / guest blog, new connections with key influencers, new partnerships, new customer conversions
Example	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>increased lead generation from white paper download by 20%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>added 135 names to newsletter list</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>15% growth in enquiries</li> <li>talking head on The Bottom Line (BBC Radio 4)</li> </ul>

To avoid the colourful “data puke”, Avinash Kaushik recommends an action dashboard

15 Avinash Kaushik: The Action Dashboard

comprising the following elements, laid out in a quadrant:



(Source: Avinash Kaushik)

An action dashboard like the one above comprises the following information:

1. The first box (top left) shows the visual trend (up/down) for a chosen metric. This satisfies executives early curiosity.
2. The information in *Key Trends & Insights* (top right) demonstrates that you know what you're doing, and where to focus attention, and wins you the confidence of executives.
3. The information in *Actions / Steps To Take* (bottom right) identifies the root cause for the trends in the metric and recommends solid action to take.
4. The *Impact on Company/Customer* (bottom left) helps those executives who may still be unclear about why the business needs to take action.

With this form of reporting Avinash promises “you'll gain a lot more trust from your executives and all the crappy dashboards (you create) can die and be replaced with this one.”

## Where to from here?

With a solid content marketing plan and content marketing evaluation model that aligns your content marketing activities to your core business goals, you can demonstrate via metrics how your content marketing activities contribute to demand generation and business growth.

Through knowing what works and what doesn't, you can then focus your content marketing efforts and optimise the approach.

If you have any questions or comments about any of the approaches discussed, [please ask us via our members' discussion area](#).

Stephen Bateman and Dave Chaffey