



ATTRACTION 101:

CONTENT MARKETING

3 Essential Ways to Use Content
Marketing for Generating
Top-of-Funnel Leads



Content is the Currency of Online Marketing

Strategic content marketing offers enormous business upside across the entire customer journey, including building your brand, driving demand, and expanding customer relationships.

But can it generate leads?

Yes. This eBook shows you how to use content marketing to fill the top of the funnel.

Modern Marketing Has Changed

Once upon a time...

The main strategy for finding new prospects for the sales funnel used to be entirely a push strategy: Push brand messages in front of as many people as possible, as often as possible, and via as many channels as possible – print, TV, radio, direct mail, display ads, phone calls.

And it worked. Brands enjoyed huge economies of scale by capturing more customers than they aggravated ... and the latter had few options to cause much of a ruckus about it.

Those days are gone.

Today's buyers are online, engaged, empowered, and in full control of their journey. They're far less responsive to "push" marketing, and they're far less likely to give you a second glance unless you appeal to what they need and want ... when they need and want it.

So how do today's marketers fill the funnel?

They use content marketing.

Since every funnel gets filled from the top, this eBook focuses on the three key ways content marketing is used to attract and generate leads at the top of the funnel. Whether you're a start-up, new to marketing, or simply want a refresher, this eBook will give you the basics of content marketing and set you on the path to lead generation success.

Prospects will have likely completed 70% of the buyers' journey by the time they engage with sales.

(SiriusDecisions)

So ... What is Content Marketing?

Content marketing is a strategy for attracting and retaining customers by creating and distributing valuable, relevant content that engages, assists, or informs clearly defined target audiences. The ultimate goal is to drive a profitable customer action.

Why should you care?

Because it works.

At the top of the marketing funnel, content marketing is used to attract and capture leads by offering compelling content in exchange for a tiny bit of information – commonly the person's email address. Once you "get the name," you can begin the process of building a relationship that results in a sale and, if you play your cards right, a long-term customer.

Successful content marketing fulfills one of three needs a potential lead has: To be informed, to be educated, or to be entertained; each at precisely the right time.

Get this right, and your reward is their business and loyalty.

Average pieces of content buyers consume before making a purchase: 10

(Google ZMOT Research)

What Content Marketing ISN'T

SELF-CONGRATULATORY ADS

and messages that tout the brand for the brand's sake

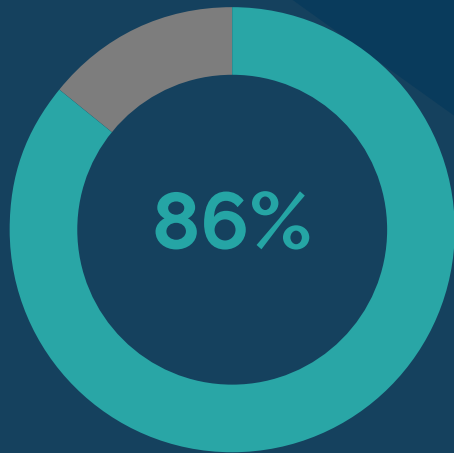
ABOUT THE HARD SELL

SOLICITOUSLY PUSHED ONTO PEOPLE

AN OVERT "PITCH"

of your products and services

Content Marketing by the Numbers



86% of B2B marketers say that they use **Content Marketing** -Defined as "a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience—and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action".
(Content Marketing Institute)

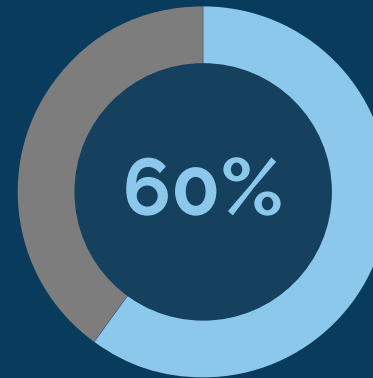
Content marketing **costs 62% less** than traditional marketing and generates **3 times as many leads.potential.** (Demand Metric)



Marketers who have a **documented content marketing strategy** and follow it very closely are

35%

more likely to succeed.
(Content Marketing Institute)



More than 60% of B2B buyers say they chose a vendor because it delivered a better mix of content appropriate for each stage of the purchasing process.
(DemandGen)

Content marketing generates

3X

more leads than traditional marketing per dollar spent.
(Demand Metric)



60% of consumers are inspired to seek out a product after reading content about it. (DemandGen)



78% of CMOs think **custom content is the future of marketing.** (Demand Metric)



84% of B2B content marketers say "brand awareness" is their organization's most important goal.(Content Marketing Institute)



88% of B2B marketers use **content marketing as a strategy to drive customer action and engagement.** (6Sense)

6 Steps to Get Started with Content Marketing

1 Determine your business goals.

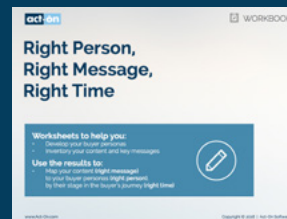
Before diving into content creation, it's important to know how many new leads you need every month or every quarter, as well as how much it costs to generate a lead. Work with sales and do a little math to ensure you have a clear picture of the playing field.

2 Understand who you want to attract.

You're looking for people like your existing good customers. Have a clear picture of them, and know what they need and want from you. This step is foundational to all other efforts; without it, you're aiming in the dark (and blind ambition benefits no one).

NEED HELP DEFINING YOUR PERSONAS?

Download this handy workbook, 4 Steps to Creating a Content Marketing Plan - **Right Person, Right Message, Right Time** - for a step-by-step plan.



Know the Prime Directive

Here are 10 popular content marketing objectives. Be sure you know yours.

1. Brand awareness
2. Lead generation
3. Generating traffic
4. Brand engagement
5. Sales
6. Thought leadership
7. Lead nurturing
8. Customer retention/loyalty
9. Upselling/cross-selling
10. Customer service

6 Steps to Get Started with Content Marketing (continued)

3 Create a content matrix.

This is an index of all the content you currently have. It includes information such as title, topic, format, target audience, abstract, date, and location. A content matrix helps you assess your current content and identify gaps in the mix.

4 Assess and identify your best lead-gen content.

Attracting new customers is all about creating awareness and interest, so the content that works best answers buyer questions, intrigues them to learn more, and helps them get to know your brand. Save the highly detailed information for later in the funnel.

5 Set up a campaign calendar.

Detail each campaign and the content needed to support it, step by step.

TIP: Tie top-of-funnel content to deeper assets

A very motivated buyer can move deeper into the funnel quickly. Make it easy for them by linking your “attraction and interest” assets to more in-depth content. Use a call to action such as “Learn more.”

Content Assets, A-Z



Content assets are limited only by your imagination. Here are some ideas to spur your creativity:

- Articles
- Blogs
- eBooks
- Brochures
- Case Studies
- Infographics
- Interview Q&As
- Manuals
- Microsites
- Mobile Apps
- Newsletters
- Podcasts
- Reports
- Solution Briefs
- Tips & Advice
- Videos
- Virtual Conferences
- Webinars
- White Papers
- eZines

6 Steps to Get Started with Content Marketing (continued)

6 Develop a process for measuring and reporting.

It's essential to have a mechanism for measuring your content marketing success and driving improvements. Key performance indicators tied to the business value of your program should include the obvious players (e.g., return on investment, contribution to leads, and contribution to sales) as well as less-obvious ones (e.g., the savings from reused content and social engagement). The content that provides the most leads is not always the content that provides the best leads; make sure you follow the money back to the first touch so you know which is which.

RESOURCES

- ✓ [4 Steps to Creating a Content Marketing Plan- Right Person, Right Message, Right Time](#)
- ✓ [Creating a Content Marketing Strategy: 6 Best Practices That Work](#)
- ✓ [4 Steps to Develop a Content Plan](#)
- ✓ [Content Marketing Superstar](#)
- ✓ [Creating Killer Marketing Content](#)
- ✓ [Creating Buyer Personas](#)

Important Metrics for Measuring Content Marketing



1. Site traffic

2. Revenues

3. Keyword traffic and conversions

4. Search engine rankings

5. Organic search conversions

6. Social media mentions

7. Search query volume

8. Contribution to activity in other channels (attribution)

9. Customer satisfaction (e.g., Net Promoter Score)

10. Number of inbound links

11. Customer value (e.g., lifetime value)

12. Customer sentiment

ATTRACTION TACTICS 101:

3 Key Ways Content Marketing Fills the Funnel

There are a lot of different approaches you can take with content marketing at all stages of the funnel.

However, when focusing on attraction – i.e., the top of the funnel – successful lead generation boils down to three essential tactics:

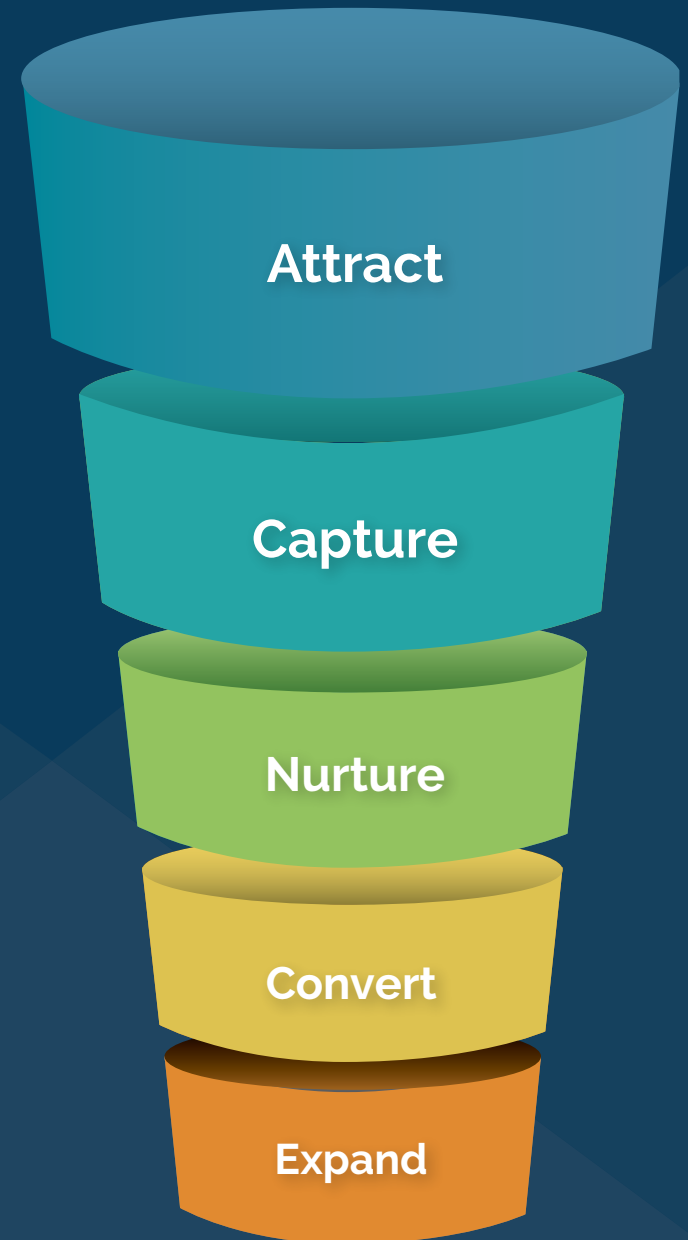
1 SEARCH MARKETING

2 SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

3 EMAIL MARKETING

How you use them depends on your company, your goals, and your resources.

Let's take a look at each ...



ATTRACTION TACTIC #1:

Search Marketing

What is it?

Search marketing is the process of gaining traffic and visibility from search engines using paid and unpaid efforts.

Why is it valuable?

Search marketing is an unobtrusive way to get found by prospective buyers who are – right now – looking for the products and services you offer.

Since 4 out of 5 consumers use a search engine to begin the hunt for something they're interested in, you have the opportunity to get in front of buyers exactly when they're seeking information about a product or service you offer.

It gets better.

The audience-driven nature of search engines has the net effect of pre-qualifying prospects; if they click on your listing, it's likely because it matches what they're looking for at this very moment. So not only does search marketing drive traffic to your website, it drives highly targeted traffic, which further increases the chances for a sale.

2 Types of Search Marketing



PAY-PER-CLICK (PPC)

This is where you buy traffic through paid search listings. PPC focuses on acquiring prospects via paid ads that are placed on search results pages. PPC is just one of several types of online advertising.

SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION (SEO).

This is where you earn traffic through unpaid listings. SEO focuses on acquiring prospects via visibility in organic/natural search results.

SEARCH MARKETING:

How Do I Use It to Generate Leads?

In a nutshell: You put valuable, relevant content in front of people who express interest, via keywords, in something you offer – e.g., a product, service, or piece of information.

You probably know that SEO and PPC are different animals; they require unique approaches and can become complex and confounding in a hurry. Nonetheless, the foundational principles for generating leads with search marketing are the same – and pretty straight-forward – whether you're practicing SEO or PPC:

1 Write for your audience

Don't create content for search engines. Create it for your ideal customers – their needs and interests and pain points. This means knowing who they are and writing in natural language.

2 Speak the searcher's language

Learn the terms – keywords and phrases – that your target audience is searching on. When you understand what people are searching on, you can create content that connects to their wants and needs, and select keywords that resonate.

3 Optimize your website content

Thoughtfully incorporate keywords and semantically related phrases into your webpages. By doing so, you help the search engines find and deliver your content to the people who are looking for it.

BEST PRACTICE: MAKE YOUR SEARCH LISTING CLICK-WORTHY



You could rank #1 on page 1 of the search results, but if no one clicked your listing, it wouldn't do you much good. Compelling copy is essential for attracting attention and generating leads. So take the time to craft titles and descriptions that are worthy of a second look and a clickthrough.

LEARN MORE



Check out this killer eBook to learn How to Make Any Content SEO Friendly

SEARCH MARKETING:

Optimize Your Web Pages

TITLE TAG This displays as the text on a page's tab.

URL Have your keyword as far forward in the URL as feasible.

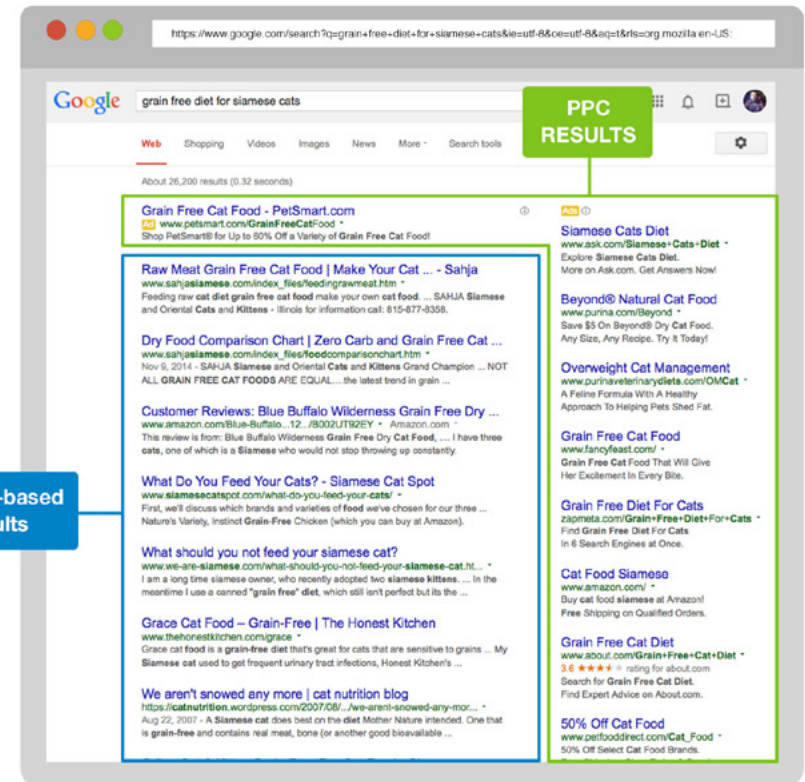
H1 AND H2 TAGS These are your headlines and subheads.

CALLS TO ACTION These are important for conversion, as well as if you're linking to an internal or external page.

BODY COPY Don't "keyword stuff." Think about and use the terms someone might expect to find on your page.

META DESCRIPTION This displays on the search results page as the description underneath the title. It's a trailer for your page's content. (Not shown)

ALT TEXT This is the text that labels images with your keywords to help Google better understand the content on your page.



TIP: PROMOTE GATED CONTENT IN YOUR PPC ADS

To generate leads and connect your ad spend to revenue, promote high-value content behind a registration form so you can "get the name" and the lead. Since not all content is worthy of a registration form, make sure any content you put behind a gate is worth it to your potential buyer. **Follow the 80/20 Rule:** 80% gated / 20% ungated

SEARCH MARKETING:

Search Marketing in Action

THE CAT'S MEOW

Using Google as our search engine, let's say Consumer types in "grain free diet for Siamese cats". Here's what happens:

- 1 Google serves up a page with the two main types of results:
 - Organic (unpaid listings based on SEO tactics), and
 - Sponsored (paid ads based on PPC tactics)
- 2 Consumer clicks on the most compelling listing or ad.
- 3 Consumer is taken to a landing page on the Advertiser's website that should contain the exact information Consumer searched for.
- 4 If Consumer clicks on a paid result, Advertiser is charged for the click.

The screenshot shows a Google search results page for the query "grain free diet for siamese cats". The URL in the address bar is "https://www.google.com/search?q=grain+free+diet+for+siamese+cats&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&aq=1&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:". The search bar contains the query "grain free diet for siamese cats". A green box labeled "PPC RESULTS" highlights the top two results: "Grain Free Cat Food - PetSmart.com" and "Siamese Cats Diet" from Ask.com. A blue box labeled "SEO-based Results" highlights the remaining organic search results, including "Raw Meat Grain Free Cat Food | Make Your Cat ... - Sahja", "Dry Food Comparison Chart | Zero Carb and Grain Free Cat ...", "Customer Reviews: Blue Buffalo Wilderness Grain Free Dry ...", "What Do You Feed Your Cats? - Siamese Cat Spot", "What should you not feed your siamese cat?", "Grace Cat Food - Grain-Free | The Honest Kitchen", and "We aren't snowed any more | cat nutrition blog".

SEARCH MARKETING:

Learn More and Get Started

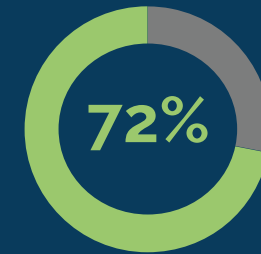
RESOURCES

- ✓ Infographic: 5 SEO Strategies Every Marketer Needs to Master
- ✓ SEO 101: The Basics and Beyond
- ✓ Your Most Common SEO Questions, Answered
- ✓ How to Make Any Content SEO Friendly

Explore Act-On's SEO tools to help you attract visitors who are looking for exactly what you offer!
[LEARN MORE](#)

Long form content of over
1,000 words

consistently receives moreshares and links than shorter form content.
(Moz)



72% of marketers worldwide **said relevant content creation was the most effective SEO tactic.**
(Ascend2)



70% of search traffic comes from long-tail search terms.
(SEOMoz)

The average length of a Top 10 URL (on Google search results) is

36 characters

(Searchmetrics)

ATTRACTION TACTIC #2:

Social Media Marketing

What is it?

“Social media marketing” is an umbrella term for using social networking sites – Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, Pinterest, Tumblr, Instagram, etc. – as marketing tools to gain the interest and engagement of potential buyers.

Why is it valuable?

Because many of your current and prospective customers spend a lot of time on social media sites. Social media marketing gives brands the opportunity to:

- Optimize visibility and connect with modern customers
- Create relationships with people who otherwise would not know about them
- Become “real” to consumers – a friendly face with a personality, opinions, and expertise

90% of all marketers indicated that their social media efforts have generated more exposure for their businesses. Increasing traffic was the second major benefit, with 77% reporting positive results.

(Social Media Examiner, 2015 Social Media Marketing Industry Report)

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING:

How Do I Use It to Generate Leads?

Social media is exactly like any other venue where people gather and socialize – if you don't add value to the conversation, you're shunned pretty quickly.

To generate leads from social networks, your brand must be viewed as a trusted advisor and expert in your industry. This is done by producing high-quality content that educates, informs, or entertains while directly responding to the problems, issues, pain points, wants, and needs of the people using the social networks you're targeting. Here's how content marketing can encourage your social followers to raise a hand and jump into the top of your sales funnel:

1 Provide a mix of content

Offer a wide selection of content types and formats to ensure there's something for everyone; e.g., quizzes, eBooks, infographics, images, blog posts, surveys, checklists, videos. Content variety increases your visibility and also the potential that your content will be shared.

2 Place calls to action in your content

People respond best to clear instruction that tells them what to do next. Provide it. Make your calls to action visible and specific to encourage prospects to take the next step.

3 Require registration for your high-value content

Place lead-generation forms in front of the content most sought after by your ideal buyers, such as eBooks, training, or templates. Gating serves as a lead qualifier: People who are willing to supply a bit of personal information in exchange for your content are likely interested in learning more.

BEST PRACTICE: LISTEN FIRST ENGAGE SECOND



People come to social networks to discover content and engage with others — not to shop.

Before you begin pushing your content, it's essential to understand the conversations (i.e., the themes, debates, issues, sentiments, etc.) that are currently taking place on social networks. This will help you fit your brand into the context of current discussions.

TIP

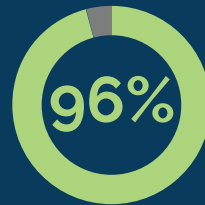


In social channels, it's important to mix gated and ungated content, but always share more ungated content. This establishes more trust with your followers.

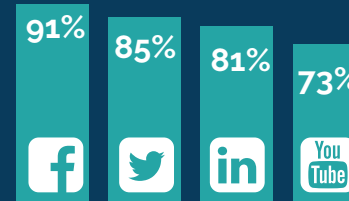
Learn More and Get Started

RESOURCES

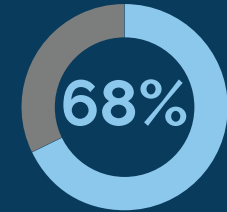
- ✓ Facebook's Rules of Engagement
- ✓ 10 Tips for Creating Engaging Social Content
- ✓ 5 Ways to Integrate Social Media Across Marketing Channels
- ✓ The Essential Social Media Resource Guide
- ✓ Social Media Crisis Management
- ✓ How to Set-Up, Launch, and Run a Paid Advertising Campaign on Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook
- ✓ 10 Things Marketers Should be Doing on Twitter



96% of marketers said that **social media was important to their businesses.**
(Social Media Marketing Industry Report, 2015)



B2B marketers use, on average, **6 different social networking platforms.**
(Content Marketing Institute)



68% of marketers are using **social media to develop loyal fans and marketplace intelligence.**
(Social Media Marketing Industry)

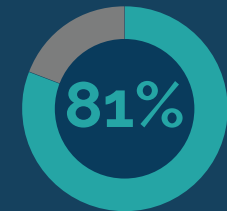


More than three-quarters (77%) of all companies **rate their social media marketing successful to some extent at achieving the most important objectives set for it.**
(Ascend2)

Sales reps with social media aptitude were

6x

more likely to exceed quota.
(Kitedesk)



81% of marketers agreed that **they have integrated their social media and traditional marketing activities.**
(Social Media Marketing Industry Report)

TIP

Regardless of your experience with social media marketing, there are some things you can do to optimize your potential for success. First, take a look at the time commitment, benefits, and platforms that your peers are using. If you're more experienced with social media, compare yourself against other marketers, see which platforms and content formats they're looking at next (video, podcasts, etc.), and determine whether you're achieving the same benefits as your even more experienced peers.



ATTRACTION TACTIC #3:

Email Marketing

What is it?

Email marketing is exactly what its name suggests: The use of email to send marketing communications that promote your products, services, and expertise. It's primarily used to:

- Acquire new customers
- Nurture top- and mid-funnel leads along the buyer's journey
- Enhance relationships with current customers in order to upsell and/or increase loyalty.

Why is it valuable?

IT'S INEXPENSIVE. Email marketing is easy on the wallet, costing far less than nearly any other form of marketing.

IT'S MEASURABLE. Today's analytics capabilities make it quick and easy to measure and track email marketing campaigns from launch to conversion. This knowledge helps marketers make improvements (often on-the-fly) and optimize performance.

IT'S SUCCESSFUL. Email marketing gives businesses the ability to tightly target and personalize messages to specific audience segments based on any combination of known criteria, such as demographics and behavioral data. The ROI of segmentation and personalization is well documented and indisputable.

BETTER TOGETHER



CONTENT MARKETING AND EMAIL go together like Oreos and milk. Pizza and beer. Kale and tahini. The combination is successful across all stages of the sales process, but at the top of the funnel, it can work wonders for jumpstarting relationships and converting looky-loos to leads.

EMAIL MARKETING:

How Do I Use It to Generate Leads?

Using email marketing to generate leads may sound paradoxical – like putting the cart before the horse. After all, before you can send an email, you need a list of names to send it to. And if you have this list, doesn't that mean the leads are already generated?

Maybe. But a list does not a lead make.

Put another way, simply because someone says, "Hi, my name is Jane Smith and I live in Cincinnati," doesn't mean Jane has any intention of having a relationship with your brand. Yes, you have her name and know how to contact her ... maybe even have permission to do so. But she's not a lead. Not yet.

Email marketing lets you start a conversation with Jane and, over time, convert her to a lead – someone who is on the path to purchase – by delivering content that is relevant to her needs and interests.

So how can you use email marketing for lead generation?
Turn the page ...

BEST PRACTICE: CREATE A KILLER CALL TO ACTION



A strong call to action (CTA) is a must-have element for encouraging your prospects to take the next step. At the top of the funnel, the next step is moving from "name" to "lead".

Here are 8 things that can make your CTA awesome:

- 1 Language** – Be clear and direct; use active verbs
- 2 Content** – Make it engaging and encouraging
- 3 Size** – Make it big enough to grab attention
- 4 Color** – Draw attention to your CTA
- 5 Placement** – Put your CTA on prime real estate
- 6 Repetition** – Repeat the CTA more than once, if space allows
- 7 White Space** – Give your CTA room to breathe
- 8 Icons and Images** – Incorporate visual cues to help prospects click

EMAIL MARKETING:

Common Ways Email Marketing Fills the Top of the Funnel

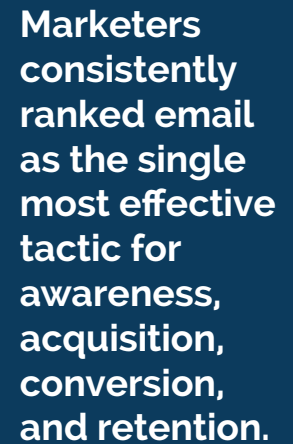
THIRD-PARTY AND CO-BRANDED PROGRAMS. You can work with a partner to include your messaging and materials in their email campaigns. You could advertise an upcoming webinar, for example.

NURTURE EMAIL PROGRAMS. This is a best practice that keeps your brand top-of-mind with your prospects by educating them with relevant information as they progress through the buyer's journey. A "raw lead" gathered as a business card at a trade show, for example, could be nurtured into a marketing-qualified lead.

TRIGGER EMAIL PROGRAMS. These act as immediate responses to some action taken by a prospect and can serve as both a thank-you and an introduction to your company. For example, when someone fills out a form to download content from your website, you could send a triggered message that offers them related materials, which is both a friendly gesture and a display of your company's expertise.

DYNAMIC CONTENT. This is where your email message is customized to match each recipient's interests based on what you know about them – demographics, behaviors, purchase history, etc. By delivering personalized communications to your prospects, you increase engagement and strengthen the relationship, both of which contribute to lead conversion.

SEGMENTATION. This is the secret sauce that turns email marketing into a lead-generation machine. Segmenting your lists lets you target your prospect by what matters – uniquely – to them. It's one of the most powerful tools in your email marketing tool belt.

A dark blue speech bubble with a tail pointing towards the bottom left. It contains white text and is flanked by two green quotation marks. The text inside reads: "Marketers consistently ranked email as the single most effective tactic for awareness, acquisition, conversion, and retention."

Marketers consistently ranked email as the single most effective tactic for awareness, acquisition, conversion, and retention.

- GIGAOM RESEARCH

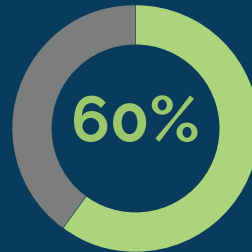
EMAIL MARKETING:

Learn More and Get Started

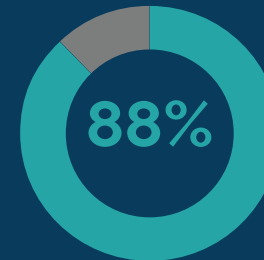
RESOURCES

- ✓ [Email Idea Lab: 6 Futuristic Techniques to Try Today](#)
- ✓ [Marketing Leadership Perspective on Email Marketing Trends](#)
- ✓ [Making Email Marketing Easier with Act-On](#)
- ✓ [How B2B and B2C Email Inbox Delivery Differ](#)
- ✓ [Email Service Providers vs. Marketing Automation](#)
- ✓ [Best Practices in Email Deliverability](#)

Want to send emails that your audience will love? See how easy it is with Act-on!
[LEARN MORE](#)



Email marketing is producing an ROI for 60% of marketers
(Marketing Sherpa)



88% of marketers say **email marketing is bringing them a positive ROI.**
(ExactTarget)

Consumers say:

72% of that email is their favored conduit of communication with companies they do business with

61% say they like to receive promotional emails weekly

28% want them even more frequently.

(ExactTarget)



In 2014, email marketing was cited as the **most effective digital marketing channel** for customer retention in the United States.
(eMarketer)

Content Marketing by Any Other Name...

... is still content marketing. It's been around for over 100 years. Most companies today use content marketing, whether they call it that or not.

- John Deere Tractor started The Furrow magazine in 1895. It offered farming-related articles and tips to their target audience: farmers. John Deere still publishes The Furrow today – in paper, online, and via social media.
- In 1904, JELL-O began publishing recipe books. Guess which key ingredient cooks needed for any of the recipes? JELL-O, of course. The books were wildly successful for the company; they generated leads, increased sales, and created new long-term customers.
- Legendary catalog publisher, Sears, began using radio to market to farmers. It was 1924. The tactic was so successful, Sears formed its own radio station: WLS Radio (World's Largest Store).

Nothing has changed except the medium.

People still want to be informed, educated, and entertained; they just get more of what they want online now, in addition to (or instead of) traditional channels.

Content marketing is still your best opportunity to make new friends and influence new people. That's why embracing and implementing content marketing practices at the top of the funnel sets you squarely on the path for success – through all stages of your sales process.

TO DIG DEEPER AND
LEARN HOW ACT-ON CAN
HELP YOU ACHIEVE YOUR
MARKETING GOALS,
CONTACT US TODAY.

Acclaim for Act-On



See all of Act-On's
awards & accolades...

About Act-On Software

Act-On Software is a marketing automation company delivering innovation that empowers marketers to do the best work of their careers. Act-On is the only integrated workspace to address the needs of the customer experience, from brand awareness and demand generation, to retention and loyalty. With Act-On, marketers can drive better business outcomes and see higher customer lifetime value. The Act-On platform provides marketers with power they can actually use, without the need for a dedicated IT resource.

Connect with us to learn more