The Beginners Guide to Content Marketing in 2021

Meta Description: Content marketing has been spiralling in the digital landscape, but it is definitely more than compiling a few blogs and articles. Read on to find out...

With millions of blog posts, videos, and several other types of content streaming online every day, it can get quite challenging to stand out from the noise. When it comes to educating your target customers and actually compelling them to shell out some hard-earned money for your product or service, a few sporadic posts won't suffice. For that, you need a killer content strategy that is fun to engage with, super informative, and provides real value for your users.

Image source: Pixabay
https://pixabay.com/illustrations/content-marketing-website-web-seo-3679757/

In order for any of this to happen, the first and foremost requirement is a stellar content marketing strategy that will help you disseminate your content to the right people at the right time. Yes, timing and audience engagement play a critical role in content success. Since we understand the time and effort that goes into curating the right content, it's only fair if it reaches your followers.

Don't worry, we'll help you get there, and we're confident that by the end of this article, you will know everything about content marketing- its types, latest trends, content calendars, social media content strategy, and everything that goes into building an excellent content marketing strategy from scratch. And yes, we will also walk you through some of the best content marketing platforms that we know.

But since we're going to hammer home the concept of content marketing today, it's only fair for the readers to first understand what it means. So here it goes...

What is Content Marketing?

As traditional marketing becomes less and less effective, content marketing has come to the fore in recent years. Content marketing is a form of strategic marketing that uses valuable and insightful content to educate, inform or inspire the audience to visit a platform, make a purchase or direct them to the next part of the sales funnel.

Why is Content Marketing Important?
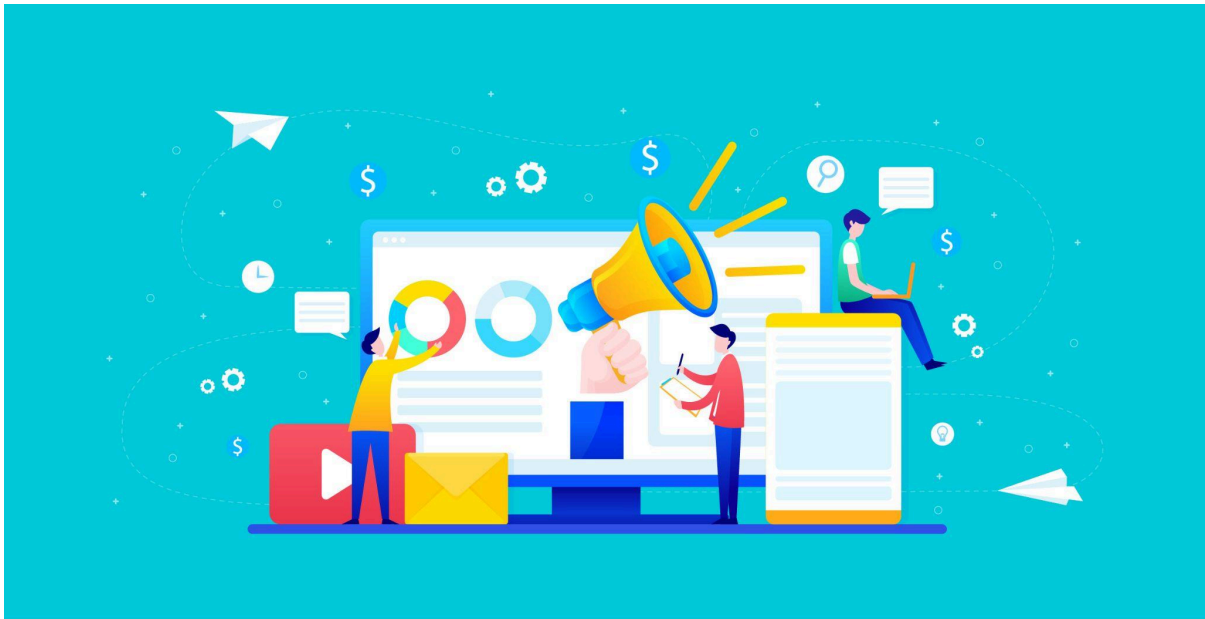
Video Content

Is content marketing one of the most effective ways to promote a business?

Well, Yes, it is.

The CMI says almost half of all marketers plan to use content to reach their customers.

But Why?

Here are the top 5 reasons why content is ruling the marketing world

- ❖ Educates your leads about the products and services
- ❖ Cultivates trust between the brand and customers, which strengthens customer loyalty
- ❖ Shows the audience how their product or service solves a unique purpose or addresses their challenges
- ❖ Builds a strong brand community which consequently benefits your business
- ❖ Converts followers into potential buyers

So, if you wish to achieve your desired marketing objectives via content, here's what you need to do

- ❖ Be a problem solver and not a product seller
- ❖ Narrow down your target audience
- ❖ Care for your audience
- ❖ Show them how your product can positively impact their lives

Follow @Scalenut for more insights on content marketing.

The ultimate goal of content marketing is to benefit your business by helping you accomplish your marketing objectives. These can be as diverse as building brand awareness, generating leads, boosting sales, increasing reach or interactions, improving customer retention, or strengthening customer loyalty. While most marketers find paid ads or commercials

relatively easier and convenient, the strength of content lies in acquiring a clearly defined target group with relevant, valuable, and consistent content that other forms of marketing fail to establish. A content marketer should focus on being a problem solver instead of pushing an agenda. And this can only be accomplished by creating content that genuinely caters to the target customers' evolving needs and requirements.

Read on to find out more about the [top content marketing trends in the post-COVID world.](#)

Types of Content Marketing

The profound importance of content marketing can be derived from the right content type and strategy that we will discuss next in this post. For any content strategy to be successful, it is imperative to narrow down your target audience and the content type that perfectly aligns with their expectations. Here are some of the best practices that you must follow before choosing the ideal content type for your business:

❖ Choose the ideal content type for your niche
❖ Double down on platforms and content formats that your audience loves
❖ Play with your strengths, choose a platform that works best for you and your target followers
❖ Conduct a competition study to identify the content gaps; you might want to choose formats that your competitors aren't already using
❖ Branch out gradually; identify the latest trends and evolving customer preferences
❖ Repurpose content into multiple formats

[Top-performing content types for 2021](#)

1. Social Media

With over [3.6 billion people actively using social media worldwide,](#) it is easy to understand why brands invest heavily in social media marketing. However, working with several platforms (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Snapchat, Pinterest) simultaneously isn't as easy as one might think. In order to build a solid social media presence, you need a well-thought-out content strategy that works differently for every platform.

Here's a [5 step guide to formulating one effective and actionable social media content strategy for your business.](#)

2. Blogs

Blogs written in several different formats such as descriptive articles, how-to guides, or case studies effectively communicate the purpose behind starting a particular product line or service. The valuable information that the brand shares with its followers help establish new or nurture existing relationships.

When it comes to building a strong brand presence, consistency and valuable information are key factors, and blogging is one of the most convenient ways to establish connections. Besides incorporating product information, blogs allow more space for inbound links,

indexed pages, and a high volume of relevant keywords that will eventually improve the SEO compatibility of your web page.

3. Video Content

According to a survey, [69% of consumers](#) say they'd prefer watching a short video over a text-based article to learn about a brand's product or service. The pandemic has also altered consumers' perception of videos. In another research conducted to study the impact of the global pandemic on video consumption, [74% of the marketers](#) said that the pandemic has made them more likely to use videos. Video marketing helps brands convert faster, generate better revenue, and most importantly, they're quick to capture the consumers' interest in the age of declining attention span.

4. Podcasts

Whether you are travelling or working on tight deadlines, the podcast is one of the most convenient forms of communication. Unlike blogs/articles or videos that demand complete time and attention, you can hit play and listen to a podcast anytime. The podcast format has become incredibly popular in the post-pandemic world, encouraging many businesses and media outlets to diversify their network. Spotify, today is the leading podcast app in the world, followed by the Apple podcast app. [You can also check out this amazing podcast collection for more.](#)

Well, the list of top-performing content in the post-pandemic world certainly doesn't end here. The digital industry's massive transformation has given rise to a sequence of new content formats and patterns, which can be explored [here](#).

So, now that we've acquired a good understanding of content marketing and its several types and applications let's talk about how it can be made effective in the longer run. Content marketing can only be effective if it's reaching your target audience at the right time, and this is not going to be a coincidence. For this, you need to leverage every opportunity you find to connect with your followers. Listed below are some of the best content marketing examples from 2020.

Best Content Marketing Examples from 2020

Content Marketing was touching the realms of the unthinkable when businesses were almost falling apart during the pandemic. Surprisingly, even with a meagre budget, businesses found interesting ways to stay connected and relevant to their customers.

Wondering how? By creating super-creative, eye-catchy and binge-worthy content.

The below-enlisted content marketing examples from the darkest hours are testament to the increasing popularity of content in recent times. Content has conquered the digital marketing sphere in its true aspect and we can list a 100 content marketing examples to prove how. But let's start with a few for now.

1. **McDonald's made personalisation its core marketing strategy**

Customers value brands that genuinely make an effort to connect with them. In one of its pandemic-led marketing initiatives, McDonald's encouraged its customers to use the MyMcDonald's app and get more personalised content and suggestions based on their location and past app engagement.

In yet another effort to stay connected worldwide, the brand embraced a major marketing opportunity in Saudi Arabia during Ramadan, the time of the year when advertising of food is prohibited in the country. McDonald's created a [virtual live sand clock](#) to help count down the hours to daily Iftar evening meals and shared it across all its digital displays and social media channels. This was definitely one of the smartest workarounds for brand promotion.

2. **Dominos virtual homepage film festival**

[Dominos virtual homepage film festival](#) is one of the most creative content marketing initiatives taken during the pandemic so far. The company encouraged participants to submit any homemade movie that also showcased their love for Dominos. The best video makers were rewarded free pizza for a year with Domino's eGift Card worth a little over $2000. The campaign turned out to be a great success in the American households who made great use of this opportunity to actively promote their own videos, which were shared widely across different social media platforms.

3. **Netflix in support of Black Lives Matter protests**

The Black Lives Matter protest, the biggest racial justice movement since the 1960's moved several brands to dedicate themselves to the cause. This was the time when people really expected brands to act in support of the ongoing protests in every possible way they could. Being the leading content creator, Netflix dedicated its entire homepage to a wide collection of 56 shows, films and documentaries highlighting Black Lives Matter.

4. **New York Times Cooking**

Thanks to the pandemic, most of us discovered our latent talents. Cooking came out to be a major hobby and talent for most of us. Therefore, as the pandemic conditions worsened in the United States, forcing people to stay at home, the number of people using [New York Times Cooking](#) accelerated. Now, considering the increasing demand, the company could have leveraged the opportunity by keeping up its paywall. However, it instead decided to drop the subscription price, which helped them build a consistent and loyal reader base. The subscribers to NYT cooking consequently went up.

5. **Social Media Content Marketing trends**

❖ [NBC News](#) became a multi-million dollar media organisation after adjusting its YouTube strategy. Over the past few years, and especially in 2020, after the pandemic began, YouTube was upgraded from being second fiddle to becoming the top priority for NBC News.

❖ YouTube's [Chapters](#) update also changed the marketer's outlook on streaming short video content. The tool allows creators to segregate their videos by using timestamps and titles for different sections. These timestamps have been proven to make long-form video content more user-friendly and easier to navigate.

❖ Instagram also introduced the [reel feature](#) to encourage users to create short video clips by adding music and text elements and Cshare them as moments on Instagram timeline and stories feed.

We may have overlooked some of the most trending examples at the time, but the brands will always be remembered for making genuine efforts to establish connections in their most difficult times.

How to build a content marketing strategy from scratch?

(Video content, kindly add good visuals)

10 Step guide to building an excellent content marketing strategy from scratch
1. Identify your SMART goals
2. Study your target audience
3. Determine KPIs
4. Determine the most suitable content type
5. Choose your content distribution channel
6. Create and distribute your content
7. Analyze and Measure results
8. How to amplify content
9. Adapt and Evolve
10. Choose the best content creating and marketing platform

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1. Identify your SMART goals

The first part of your content marketing strategy is to set SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely) goals that are specific to your business and align perfectly with your broader marketing and organisational objectives. Some of the SMART goal examples can be improving brand awareness, increasing revenue, boosting conversions, enhancing brand loyalty, increasing customer engagement, attracting strategic partners, or building rapport and trust among potential customers.

2. Study your target audience

After identifying your goals, the next step is to conduct an extensive study on your target audience, understand the evolving trends and buying behaviour, and segregate them based on the demographics for better targeting.

3. Determine your KPIs.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are quantifiable data points that are used to measure the actual performance against your SMART goals. For example, the KPIs related to Brand awareness will be site traffic, social media followers, sign-ups, subscriptions, or brand mentions. Listed below are some more KPIs that will help you measure your campaign's success in an easier and comprehensible manner.

Revenue: Daily sales, site traffic
Conversions: Conversion rate
Brand Loyalty: Product reviews, referrals, returning customers, promoters
Customer engagement: Likes, shares, tweets, follows, mentions, backlinks

4. Decide on the type of content

Now that you understand why your content needs to be effective, the next thing is to determine the content type that will attract and engage your target audience. For this, you need to first create a buyer persona and understand their needs and challenges. A content type that addresses your target audience's primary challenges in the most effective and actionable manner is the ideal content type for your business. While we've listed some of the **top-performing content types** for you above, you can also have a look at the complete guide here.

5. Choose your content distribution channels.

For your content to get maximum traction, you will need to choose several content types that interact differently with different platforms. In most cases, the same content does not perform great on every platform. Therefore you need to choose specific content channels where your content will be shared from.

For example, if your content resonates well with your target audience on Facebook, then you should start posting content on Facebook more frequently than other channels. Determining the type of content that your audience loves engaging with on the platform is another major decision. You don't want your content to fall between the cracks. Therefore constantly adapting to the evolving needs and preferences is the only key to an effective content strategy.

6. Create and distribute your content

For efficient distribution of content, it is mandatory for you to create a strategic content calendar that will help you accurately define your content marketing strategy and keep your content consistent and organised, make content promotion easier, and improve the publishing frequency. Scheduling your content ahead of time will help you target your audience with the right information at the right time.

Get better insights on how to create the most effective and actionable content calendar here.

Now, we understand that marketers are constantly torn between outsourcing content or building a creative team in-house. Well, outsourcing content has become more prominent than ever in the post-pandemic world especially when we have fantastic content and generating platforms like Scalenut that offer creative and cost-efficient solutions that help you target any audience group in the most effortless ways possible.

GenerateAI is another excellent Scalenut innovation that helps you generate instant and valuable short-form content, something that we've been waiting for a long time.

7. Analyze and measure results

Your content marketing strategy's success will be determined by the performance of actual results against the SMART goals. You can identify the content gaps to make suitable adjustments to the content for the best results. Some of the tools that can help you analyze your content marketing strategy are Google Analytics, Hubspot Marketing Analytics Software, SharedCount, Sprout Social, or Mention. Google Analytics is the most preferred tool that is used by a majority of organisations.

8. Content Amplification

Content amplification is another major part of the content distribution strategy. For best results, you need to identify the channels your target audience is most active on and their engagement with your content. This can only be ascertained once you've properly analyzed your content performance using the most efficient analytical tools. After delving deep into the engagement rate, ROI, and conversion score, you can stream your content accordingly on different platforms for maximum reach.

9. Adapt and Evolve

Change is the only constant, and this theory applies to all the domains of the digital marketing world. In order to constantly cater to the ever-evolving needs and trends of society, marketers need to constantly adapt and grow. Nobody pays attention to stale and boring content. Therefore, continual efforts to repurpose content in the most creative and engaging ways is a must for maximum engagement.

10. Content Marketing Platforms

Obviously, if everything goes as planned, you will think about upstreaming your social engagement at some point. Suppose you've already reached that stage and are thinking about upstreaming. In that case, you must hire some fantastic content marketing platforms that will help you maximize your user engagement by amplifying your content in the best possible ways. Some of the best content marketing platforms are SEMrush, Hub Spot, StoryChief, Mailchimp, Ahrefs, etc.

Get the complete guide on upstream social engagement with some of the best content marketing platforms.

Content Marketing Trends in the post-pandemic world

The worst crisis of this century- the coronavirus pandemic taught marketers how to reposition themselves for their audience and connect with the communities. It fostered some excellent marketing principles that have always been the foundation of a sound content marketing strategy. In a survey conducted by Deloitte, 79% of the respondents recalled brands responding positively to the pandemic-induced challenges by helping their customers, workforces, and communities. The study highlighted seven key principles that helped brands breakthrough through the most trying times in the history of humanity.

Content marketing has been spiralling in the digital landscape, but it is more than just compiling a few blogs and articles. It is about the intent behind every copy or content piece, the purpose it is resolving for its readers, space it leaves for innovation, the connections it forms, the participation that it encourages, or the talent that it brings to the table.

(Infographic to feature the key seven elements in the post-pandemic world)
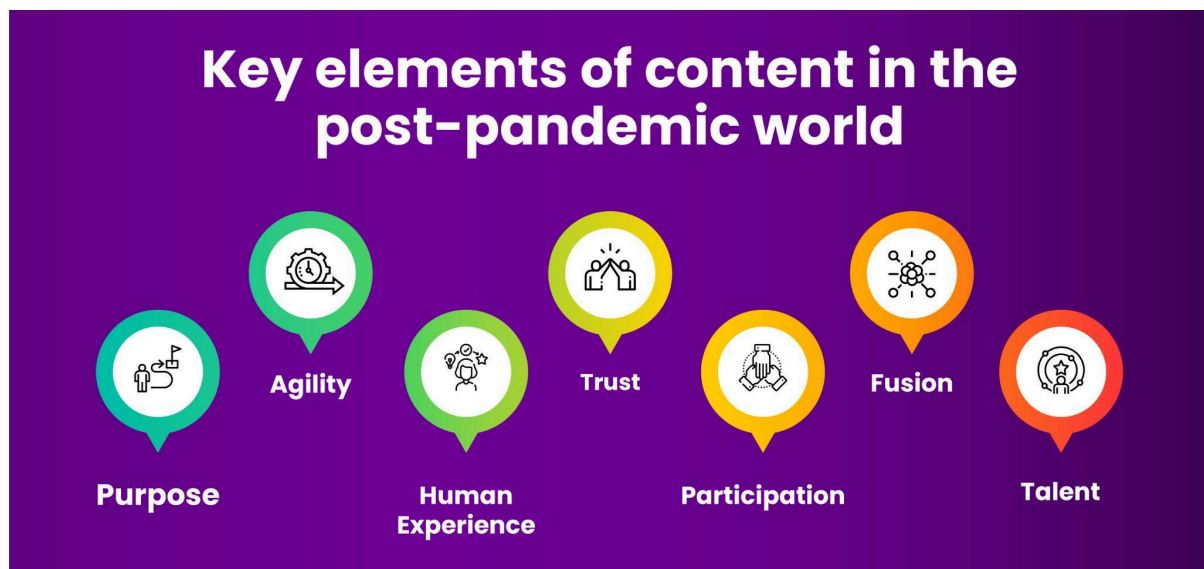
Key elements of content in the post-pandemic world
   1) **Purpose:** Purpose-driven content does not only reach the right audience but also spurs consumer action. Any brand or platform should emphasise its "Why" to win the trust of all its stakeholders in all good and bad times.

   2) **Agility:** The pandemic taught the significance of agility to marketers worldwide. A good content strategy is one with better prospects so that it can be easily changed as per the rising trends and challenges. Anticipating the rapidly evolving market conditions to curate relative and informative content has become the new normal.

   3) **Human Experience:** The human experience is driven by values, emotions, and actions, and brands that can capture these elements in their content seal the deal—customers value and trust brands that pivot their marketing strategies for real human connections. And in order to develop these connections, the brands should be

able to align their content in the best interest of their target audience. This can be achieved by adopting a human-centric and all-inclusive content marketing approach. According to the Deloitte survey, 70% of the respondents said that they valued digital innovations that helped them deepen their connections during the pandemic.

4) **Trust:** Trust is the underlying foundation of human experience. When a brand connects on a humane or empathetic level, customers are more likely to trust its intentions and give it a fair chance, even at the cost of foregoing brands that they trusted for ages. But cultivating that level of trust isn't a month-long activity. It comes with consistent, valuable, and transparent communication. Also, marketers must ensure that their intentions align with their actions because your real followers can easily differentiate between authentic and fake content.

5) **Participation:** User-generated content has witnessed an upsurge in recent years, and the reason is obvious, it encourages participation on a massive scale. Customers value brands and platforms that have an impeccable engagement strategy when it comes to responding to all kinds of situations, good or bad. From passively consuming plain content, the role of customers has gradually evolved. They are now participating as brand ambassadors, influencers, collaborators, or the ultimate innovators.

6) **Fusion:** The pandemic has opened new doors for marketers, inspiring brands and organizations to make room for more collaborations and diversify their digital network. Fusion encourages brands to adopt a more holistic approach to capture the consumers' hearts and minds. The transition from traditional to digital becomes half as challenging with an expansive marketing approach and the right blend of content.

7) **Talent:** Remember, if you truly want to address the needs of your customers, you need to look at the problem through their eyes in order to create a super-effective road map. And this can only happen if you hire the right creative and production talent. From perfect content and design solutions to a robust content marketing platform, as a content marketer, you should look for nothing less than excellent resources and platforms.

Well, now that we've covered the concept of content marketing in great detail, it's time to explore some of the best content marketing platforms.

Upstream Your Social Engagement With These Content Marketing Platforms

1. SEMrush:

One of the leading content marketing platforms, SEMrush follows a strategic seven-step approach to market content in informative yet engaging ways. From finding a topic that

serves the user intent to creating a plan, executing the same on the platform to measuring its impact and making suitable improvisations, the platform does it all.

How do they do it?

1. Research
2. Plan
3. Write
4. Optimize
5. Analyze
6. Measure
7. Improve

2. **HubSpot**

Hubspot captures the user intent to create the most engaging content. To create high-quality content for the right audience, the platform has an integrated sales software that generates leads and connects with prospective customers or readers. The marketing hub provides tools that allow you to blog, check SEO compatibility, and create suitable content for social media and landing pages.

3. **Scalenut**

Now, Scalenut isn't exactly a content marketing platform, but it has rather become a foundation for these platforms. Famous for its powerful, credible, and highly engaging content and stunning design solutions, the platform has gained a firm foothold in the digital industry in a short span. Constantly evolving under intense competition with new technologies like QualityX and GenerateAI, it supports varied content formats and runs a proper AI-enabled quality check before disseminating the final content piece.

Here is a complete list of the best content marketing platforms for your reference.

Content marketing has been spiralling in the digital landscape, but it is definitely more than just compiling a few blogs and articles. Content marketing, in this day and age, is all about the intent behind every copy or content piece, the purpose it resolves, the connections it forms, the engagement it creates, and the impact it leaves behind. And the moment you start looking at the bigger picture, the content will be just as powerful and effective as you intend it to be.

For more information, you can follow our blog page or get in touch with the Scalenut team here. We're always ready to help you take your business to the next level. :)