Goal: Systemize our content to routinely be more effective and help CS to improve their craft.

Scorecard layout:

You can copy and paste a blank scorecard here.

How Scoring Works

Scoring is based on two different areas:

1. Content Quality
2. KPI Quality

Content Quality is how well is the piece put together using best practices. This is the piece of the content we control the most out of anything and is the most important in order to affect KPI quality.

KPI Quality is how many data driven goals did the content piece drive in terms of traffic, and goal completions in Google Analytics. It also measures how effective the content is by watching time spent on page or by measuring low bounce rate. Longer times on page often means more engagement (though not always) and a lower bounce rate means the viewer is exploring our website more which leads to more engagement.

The Content Quality scores include these areas:

- **Formatting**
- **Relevant CTA**
- **Data Usage**
- **Emotive**
- **Value Led**
- **Internal Linking**

Content Quality

Formatting

Waterfall Method

The internet requires good usage of white space (blank spots between paragraphs) and short, punchy paragraphs.

Short paragraphs create stickiness.

Good stickiness leads to more people consuming the content.

You want to avoid long paragraphs. The thickness of these paragraphs make it far harder for a user to read because psychologically it feels like too much work *even if the blog post is shorter than a well-formatted one.*

Content is graded using the “Waterfall” method. The Waterfall method is where you use a short, medium, long then back to short paragraph. The same thing applies to sentence structure.

The rule should not be followed strictly. If everything is in the same length cadence just repeated, the user will break immersion as something will be off to them. Instead, it is more important to vary your sentence lengths, paragraphs to fully use the Waterfall method.

Using Bullet Points

The next formatting is breaking up the text using bullet points, **bolding** and *italics.*

This does a few things:

- Allows the eye to enjoy a novel change in the writing
- Attracts skimming eyes better
- Bold is an easy to call out the reader to get their attention back if the words are **dramatic** or revealing
- Italics emphasizes a point to say *“This is really meaningful, pay attention.”*
- Plays into the Waterfall method by adding textual variety

When using bullet points, use a numbered list if you’ve identified the number of things you’re about to talk about. If you don’t have a specific number of things you’ll be listing out, then use the circular bullet points instead. It is okay to use both styles in the same blog post if it makes sense.

Bullet points should ideally be short sentences, and never more than one sentence. If you find yourself creating bullet paragraphs than use headers instead to help break up the content.

Using Headers

Headers are another useful way to break up the text and add variety. *Many internet readers only read headers until one of the headers entices them enough to read the full thing*.Consider using headers like chapter breaks in a novel.

It is a signal the piece is switching to a new idea or new section of the post.

Headers range from H1-H5 and the only headers used in an actual blog post will be H2-H4 as the title is technically an H1 header and H5 usually looks like normal bolded text.

Headers help with structure in that they can create a logical flow of what you're talking about. It also helps the reader understand and immerse themselves into your flow, making it a far more enjoyable experience to read the content.

Headers should ideally be value-first and engaging second. You want to use good copywriting best practices to snare in skimmers, but you also want to be *very* clear on what you're about to discuss so the skimmer knows what the paragraphs below are going to contain. Consider each header as a "mini-title" where you need to at once provide value for someone that may never dive in further, but also drive enough engagement that skimmers want to dive in deeper into the content.

If you have multiple points you're trying to get across in a single section of a blog post, consider breaking those points up into actual headers to denote them to the reader.

This can be helpful from an SEO perspective. It is also helpful from a reader perspective as it will usually improve readability while enhancing your blog structure.

Relevant CTA

Solid call-to-actions are important in every content piece we create. However, each CTA should be ultra relevant to the content that the reader is reading.

If you veer into a CTA without relevance or context, it will perform poorly. Instead, customize your CTA message to the content you are writing. You don't need a specific offer to do this, you can customize a generic offer to feel relevant. It can be as simple as changing a valuation tool CTA to get your business valued to getting your Amazon FBA business valued instead.

The more specific and relevant you can make the CTA to the pain points of your audience, the higher conversion potential that exists.

There should be multiple CTAs throughout a blog post. In general, these are the 3 CTA areas that will be scored in a blog post:

1. Top Third CTA
2. Contextual CTA
3. Direct Ask CTA

Ideally, there should be at least 3 CTAs in all blog content. One CTA at the top, another in the middle and another at the bottom.

Longer pieces warrant more CTAs and shorter piece need less.

Top Third CTA

Heatmap data and general industry standard is that very few people will scroll beneath the fold i.e scroll down on laptop or phone to consume the full article. Every device has different dimensions which means people have different folds that we are trying to beat.

Eliminating this in a streamline way, the content specialist should focus on finding a good spot in the top first third of their article to include a CTA. This will be the CTA that will likely get clicked on the most.

Since it is the start of the article, it will likely convert better as a Contextual CTA rather than a Direct Ask.

Contextual CTA

Contextual CTA is where the CTA is "hidden" inside of the actual sentence. Instead of a direct ask like "Fill out our valuation tool right now" you may have something like "Entrepreneurs find that when they fill out their valuation that their businesses are worth more than expected."

Contextual CTAs often get more CTR without breaking immersion in the piece they're reading. It is a subtle way to get them to the next step if they're ready, without annoying readers who aren't ready for that step.

Best to use this in top-third and mid-section of the content piece.

Direct Ask CTA

Direct Ask CTAs are exactly that, you are directly telling them what you want them to do next. This is best used at the end of content because they've shown enough engagement and interest to finish reading the article, that they are likely ready for the next step in the process.

A Direct Ask on a SaaS valuation article for example could simply be "Ready to sell your SaaS? Start the process here."

Data Usage

Using specific data we have access to can supercharge an otherwise bland piece of content. The more specific your data is, the better.

Avoid generalizations like "Most FBA deals have an earn out." Instead be ultra specific "Our data shows 83% of FBA deals have an earn out."

The latter example is far more powerful. People will trust the article more, will view it with more authority, and in general more willing to follow any CTA the blog is promoting because of this data.

The Industry Report is a treasure trove of reusable data that can be used to spice up all other content pieces. Other data-driven articles can also do this.

Every data content piece we write should have a TLDR (too long didn't read) for the content specialist to look at to know at a glance what the main data findings were so they can cherry pick that data and use it in their next blog post if relevant.

The more data you can use, the better your content piece will be. Almost every piece of content can benefit from using some kind of data point even if it is just a single sentence.

Emotive

Emotive asks if the content piece is hitting any emotional notes and telling a story.

Stories will pull people in more than anything else. People are gripped by a good story. It also allows them to act as if they are that person in the story, as the character in the story should relate to them specifically.

Ex: An article about selling an FBA business may include a story about an FBA seller, that FBA seller is the emotional relevance to the person reading the article who is an FBA entrepreneur considering selling their business too. They see themselves in the story.

Outside of stories, also use emotional language to color the logical argument.

Instead of saying, “The Asset Flywheel can produce $2 million dollars in your pocket if you follow this multi-year plan.”

Say this, “The Asset Flywheel can produce $2 million dollars if you follow the plan, and for most people that means *freedom.”*

They both say the same thing, one just without emotion. The other with emotion *creates* the story in the reader’s mind, of what it can mean to them, why it matters to them on an emotional level.

Everyone buys based on emotion, no exception. They back it up with logic.

If your article has no emotive components, then it will not be as valuable of a piece that has a chance to perform well.

Value-Led Brevity

Your article should have brevity.

You say what needs to be said without long build ups also known as “throat clearing”. In the first few paragraphs your reader should know:

- What the article is about
- What is the value they’re going to get by reading it
- Why they should care to read the content

“By the end of this article you’re going to know exactly how to X, Y and Z.”

“Take notes because at the end of this, you’ll have the exact plan on how to achieve your X goals.”

“You’ll know exactly why X is so important to your success.”

Keep your articles brief in this way and value-packed. Look to eliminate unnecessary sections, paragraphs and sentences. Every word should be **valuable.**

You have a small window to capture their attention, and a smaller window to *keep their attention.*

Don’t waste it on valueless build up that they don’t care about. Get to the point and more importantly, stay on point. Do not deviate from the main point of what you’re writing and what you hope the reader will accomplish by the end of the content piece.

Internal Linking

Internal linking is where you do a contextual linking (see contextual CTA, they’re almost the same thing) to drive traffic deeper into EF’s content.

Internal linking does not lead to an “offer” such as a lead magnet or some other traditional CTA, instead it leads to other blog posts, videos or podcasts. The more we can get the reader exploring our content, the better chances we have to nurture them into an actual customer or avid fan of what we are doing.

Internal linking should be done when:

- Mid-section of the article or lower great place for internal linking
- Avoid internal linking at top section as it will drive people away from the article before reading
- Listicles that contain relevant phrases for another article (i.e a valuation article that has a section about shipping might link to an article all about shipping)

3 Ways to Internally Link:

1. Google search integer
2. Topic clusters
3. Sneeze pages

Google Search Integer

The easiest way is to go to Google and type in site:empireflippers.com “Insert your phrase here”

This will bring up all results on our website related to that term. In the above example for the valuation article, you’ll want to type in site:empireflippers.com “shipping” to find all EF content that relates to shipping for instance.

Topic Clusters

For content all working in the same overall marketing campaign, they should be linked together in a web. This provides significant SEO value and also acts as a great user experience because all the topics are hyper related to each other and act as companion pieces.

An example would be talking about aggregators buying content sites and why that's great news for sellers, that also then links to an article about why aggregators should buy content sites to grow their FBA businesses and that article links back to the first.

They're highly interconnected and thus deserves an internal link.

Sneeze Pages

Some content lends itself well to being "Sneeze Pages". Sneeze Pages are articles talking about many different topics where each topic is then linked to an article that is more focused on that single topic.

An example of a Sneeze Page usually comes in the form of a listicle. If we had an article "7 Easy Ways to Increase Your Valuation" it would break down all 7 topics with brief summaries and then within each subtopic it would link to an article that goes on to explain that specific topic in far more detail as a standalone article.

Sneeze pages are fantastic ways to get external links as they are highly useful to an audience since it doesn't go too in-depth on any one topic while serving as a kind of table of contents for the reader to explore more.

Structure

Structure is about the clarity and logical flow of your article.

Your content needs to flow to the point where the reader doesn't realize they're reading anymore because they are so engaged with the content. The best way to make this happen is to have a logical structure of the content and the easiest way to visualize that structure is with a well thought-out outline.

You can use heading formatting tips from above to help break up the article into logical chunks. Then ask yourself if the logical chunks flow into each other well.

For example an article talking about operating an FBA business will likely talk about marketing, shipping and product research.

A badly structured article might do this:

1. Optimizing your PPC
2. Negotiating lower prices with your manufacturer
3. Jungle Scout as a Product Research Tool
4. Getting external traffic to your listing
5. Package design and how it affects warehouse storage pricing
6. Researching product child variations

Notice that there is no rhyme or reason. There is no logic and we're constantly stuttering the reader's ability to immerse themselves into the content because there is no logic as to why we're talking about something in that certain specific place.

A better structure would be this:

1. Product Research
    a. Using Jungle Scout as a Product Research Tool
    b. Research Product Child Variations
2. Logistics
    a. Understanding package design's effect on storage pricing
    b. Negotiating lower prices with your manufacturer
3. Marketing
    a. Optimizing your PPC
    b. Getting external traffic to your listing

Notice how this flows much better as it makes logical sense.

Not only are the relevant parts grouped together, but the overall group (product research, logistics, marketing) are ordered in the same phases that the business owner would do all of this. After all they can't do marketing if they don't have successful logistics set up and likewise there is no point of doing anything related to logistics without a product already researched.

Using Transitions

Transitions are a crucial tool in having solid structure. Poor transitions create choppy or jarring reading because it does not telegraph the reader where you're going next. A transition is like glue that binds together two different areas of your article.

Each paragraph needs a transition sentence, but so does each subtopic to denote the end of the subtopic by introducing the logical follow up to that topic with the next.

You can see natural transitions in the brief outline above.

It is likely you'd use Jungle Scout to do product research before you'd even consider doing research on child variations of that product for instance.

Likewise you'd be more interested to optimizing your PPC on Amazon before starting to send external traffic to the listing.

These are natural transitions and they should be emphasized in your actual writing to demonstrate that transition. Transitions do not need be long, and often can be a single sentence or even a single stand alone word in some cases. In broader articles your transition could sometimes be just the next header you use to describe the next topic as that will telegraph to the reader what comes next. As long as the next header is an obvious natural transition then it works.

Think of transitions as a story progression.

Ask yourself if the content is progressing in a rational manner, if the answer is yes then you likely have solid structure rather than skipping around topics that ends up confusing a reader.

Contextual Examples

Contextual examples allow you to frame a topic that an audience might be unfamiliar with by comparing it to something they most likely *are* familiar with.

This allows them to digest your content in such a way where they can reframe the topic and truly understand it.

For example, someone brand new to the concept of buying an online business may better understand the potential returns by comparing investing in online businesses with investing into real estate. As there are several similarities, this can help a real estate investors with zero experience in online business "ease" themselves in when it comes to learning about buying businesses.

Another example of a contextual example might be combining old ideas together into a new framework.

For example, most people view buying and selling online businesses as two separate topics to two separate audiences. However, these audiences overlap more than you may initially think as many sellers become buyers and buyers often become sellers over time.

This led to a birth of whole new topic concept called the Asset Flywheel that provides a strategy for entrepreneurs that combines both the concepts of buying and selling businesses.

A creative reframing like this can become powerful, especially when given a solid name. People will take that name and start referencing it all the time across the industry when they're talking about different strategies, and thus make your content become all the more authoritative.

Contextual examples can be extremely helpful but not every post will need them.

- Content is published
- Content is promoted on social media
- Content's promo email has been sent out

Once the content promo email is sent out, then a week must pass to see what happens on the KPI front to see if the audience was interested in the topic or not.

Long Time Frame

The long time frame looks at a 3-month snapshot of content produced. This is a good amount of time to look at analytics data and to give time for the content to rank in Google.

The same KPIs are measured with Short Time Frame and Long Time Frame.

If there were solid KPIs generated in the short-term but very few in the long-term, this could point to a promotion issue rather than a content issue. Thus it may warrant to repromote this piece of content in some shape or form to boost the KPIs it is generating. This could be via email promo, ads, or some other mechanism.

Traffic

This looks at pure traffic levels to the blog post. The goal is to beat the average benchmark for blog posts or at minimum obtain the average number.

Blog posts with very little traffic should be identified and asked why there was so little traffic. This could come down to several reasons:

1. Failure to promote properly
2. No SEO value identified (could especially affect long-term)
3. Topic did not engage audience (could see this even in short-term)

Identify which of these 3 things happened and keep notes of content that does not perform well. This will be important when deciding on new pieces of content to produce as you can avoid themes or the common elements of low traffic posts ideally.

While traffic is important, it’s not the most important KPI to track.

Time on Page

Time on Page is high, then that means the content was found engaging enough for readers to continue to read all the way through or most of the content. If Time on Page is super short, that means people were clicking away out of the content quickly which is a sign of them being disinterested.

This is a good metric to track but be aware of potential caveats that can crop up.

If people leave their browser open just sitting on the blog post while they’re doing other things, that could skew this metric significantly in terms of Time on Page.

Time on Page should hover within 10% of the benchmark range. Take note that longer pieces of content that are more engaging have higher chances of Time on Page, but that doesn’t mean we should devalue shorter pieces of content.

Always keep content length in mind when looking at this metric.

For blog posts with below or above average Time on Page, it is worth it to dive deeper into the content using heatmaps to identify what sections of the content people found the most or least interesting.

Take notes on this as it can help identify more content opportunities or traps to avoid.

Bounce Rate

A low Bounce Rate is a good sign that not only was the traffic interested in the original blog post, but they have become interested in our brand overall. They are deciding not to leave the website but rather explore other aspects of our website.

The Bounce Rate should be within 10% of the benchmark Bounce Rate.

For blog posts with high Bounce Rate there is a good chance they will also have a low Time on Page too. It is worth noting these posts as the topics might be interesting to the user (since they clicked initially) but something failed to meet their expectations.

Typically this failure will be found in the first sentence or paragraph that failed to draw them in.

Blog posts with low Bounce Rates should be identified and their structure explored. It is likely the blog structure more so than the content causing the lower Bounce Rate. Examples of this would be Sneeze Pages having lower bounce rates simply because there are more options and roads of interest for traffic to take from that page.

Goal Completions

This is the most important KPI to track.
Time On Page is a solid engagement metric to track. If
The various KPIs we will be looking at are the same as in Google Analytics:

1. Email subscriber
2. Marketplace registration
3. Valuation tool submit
4. Seller submission
5. Unlocks

A blog post could be low across the board on the benchmarks but be high on goal completion and considered a massive success. In fact, if it is noticed that a blog post is producing positive results in goal completions but low results in other areas, this is a sign to potentially update the blog post or repromote it as it is a proven winner.

A heavier focus on CRO on the article should be applied to see if we cannot increase the goal completions across the content.