



INTERACTIVE CONTENT MARKETING

The what, why and how of interactive content marketing

Real-world practical advice on the considerations, best practices, processes and roles that will help you launch effective, agile interactive content marketing experiences.

Toolkit

INTERACTIVE CONTENT MARKETING

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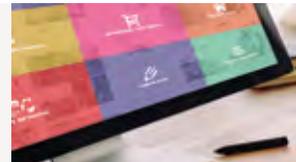


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CHAPTER 1

Interactive Content Basics

New to the 'interactive content' concept? We've got you covered. In this chapter, we're going to take a quick (and we mean REALLY quick) look at what interactive content is, the most common types, and why it's so effective. (If you already know the basic ins and outs of interactive content, feel free to skip ahead to chapter 2—you won't miss anything!)



What is Interactive Content?

In a nutshell: Browser-based digital content experiences designed for visitor participation. Interactive content usually includes a feedback loop in which the outcome of the experience is directly impacted by the interaction of the visitor.

These experiences go beyond passive reading or watching—the user might be calculating, configuring, answering a quiz, participating in a contest or clicking around on stats and facts within an infographic, for example.

What Are the Common Types of Interactive Content?



Calculators—Exactly as they sound, calculators help a lead crunch the numbers—whether on costs, ROI or any other metric they might find interesting.



Lookbooks—Like digital catalogues, lookbooks put your products and services on visual display for easy perusal.



Interactive Infographics—Just like the static type, this content brings interesting stats to life in a visually compelling way and has various elements of interactivity.



Solution Builders—Solution builders guide a visitor through assembling their own package or solution to their problem based on their unique and specific buying preferences or scenarios.



Configurators—Like solution builders, but even more specific, configurators enable buyers to match their needs to your existing products, customize a plan and even configure their own quote!



Quizzes—If you've ever visited BuzzFeed, you've seen a quiz before. These are hugely popular and shareable—great for the earlier stages of the funnel in both B2B and B2C.



Assessments—Like quizzes, assessments test a visitor's knowledge, but are typically more in-depth and include benchmarking or recommendations based on the visitor's responses.



Contests—Awesome for early-stage awareness, contests are highly shareable and great at getting people familiar with your brand in an entertaining way.



Interactive White Papers and eBooks—These are more in-depth pieces that offer a wealth of information to your leads, educating them on a topic and empowering them to take action. Visitors can navigate to the content most interesting to them, and other interactive elements, such as quizzes or sidebars can be included to keep the visitor engaged in a meaningful way.



Why Interactive Content?

What makes interactive content not simply a nice consideration, but a pressing marketing imperative? Far more certainty about every aspect of content—from leads and sales, to measurement and insights.

Better engagement

Static content provides limited opportunity for audience engagement. Visitors can read, watch, convert and share. But not much more. An interactive experience is inherently participatory—solutions configured, calculations made, quizzes taken, chapters navigated. Visitors naturally interact with the content, becoming immersed in the experience instead of passively reading.

Demonstrable consumption

When content is interacted with, consumption can be tracked and analyzed. While static content is pass/fail (a visitor lands, and then what? They can only leave, share or convert), interactive content provides deep insights into actual content consumption.

Higher conversion rates

An exceptional, relevant content experience drives more leads and sales than static content.

Real differentiation

Interactive content is a proven way to differentiate your brand and offer something more interesting and compelling to your audience. It's a more conversational way of interacting as opposed to just pushing resources and hoping people respond.

Richer measurement

Virtually everything within an online content experience can be tracked, measured and reported on. Beyond page views, bounce rates and conversion, interactive content provides an opportunity to see the outcomes and patterns of content interactions.

Meaningful sales alignment

Individual content interactions can be surfaced to the sales team in a meaningful context, allowing them to meet their buyers at the point of interest. Unlike static content, which offers very little information about how a lead actually engaged with your content, interactive content can tell you what a lead is most interested in, how much of your content they consumed, what inputs they provided, and much more. From their CRM, salespeople can gain instant, contextual understanding of every piece of interactive content their lead has experienced.

What's Next?

In the following chapters, we'll be arming you with the tools you need to get started with interactive content—from assessing your needs and evaluating your options to building a team and following a straightforward process.





CHAPTER 2

Assessing Your Need

One of the best ways to figure this out is to assess your content maturity level and get a sense of where on the spectrum of interactive content your organization is currently. Ask the following questions about your existing content efforts:

How would you characterize the nature of your content?

If you're only producing blog posts, white papers and static content, you're missing out on the data-gleaning opportunities of interactive. And while not all of your content needs to be interactive, at least some interactivity deserves to be in the mix.

How effective is your content at educating your buyer?

Are your leads coming in as well-educated and ready to purchase—or are they loaded with

questions that your content ought to be answering? If they're not completing the buyer's journey or asking questions they should have answers to, your content may not be engaging them on a deep enough level.

How effective is your content at differentiating your brand?

When you compare your content to that of your competitors, can you tell who created what? Does your content do a better job of engaging leads and answering questions? If not, you're probably blending in a little too much.

How effective is your content at getting shared socially?

Are you seeing the kind of traction in social proportionate to your audience and promotional effort that you should be—or is your content falling flat? If nobody's talking, interactivity is a good way to shake things up and start some conversations.

How effective is your content at converting your visitors?

How often does a visitor become a lead? How often does a lead become a qualified lead? Are your content pieces inspiring people to call, demo, or sign up? If conversion rates are low, interactive content can be an intelligent way to not only surface more info to sales, but get your leads taking action on their own.

How effective is your content at generating organic traffic?

Are you seeing much traffic from search? Are you earning links naturally and organically? If

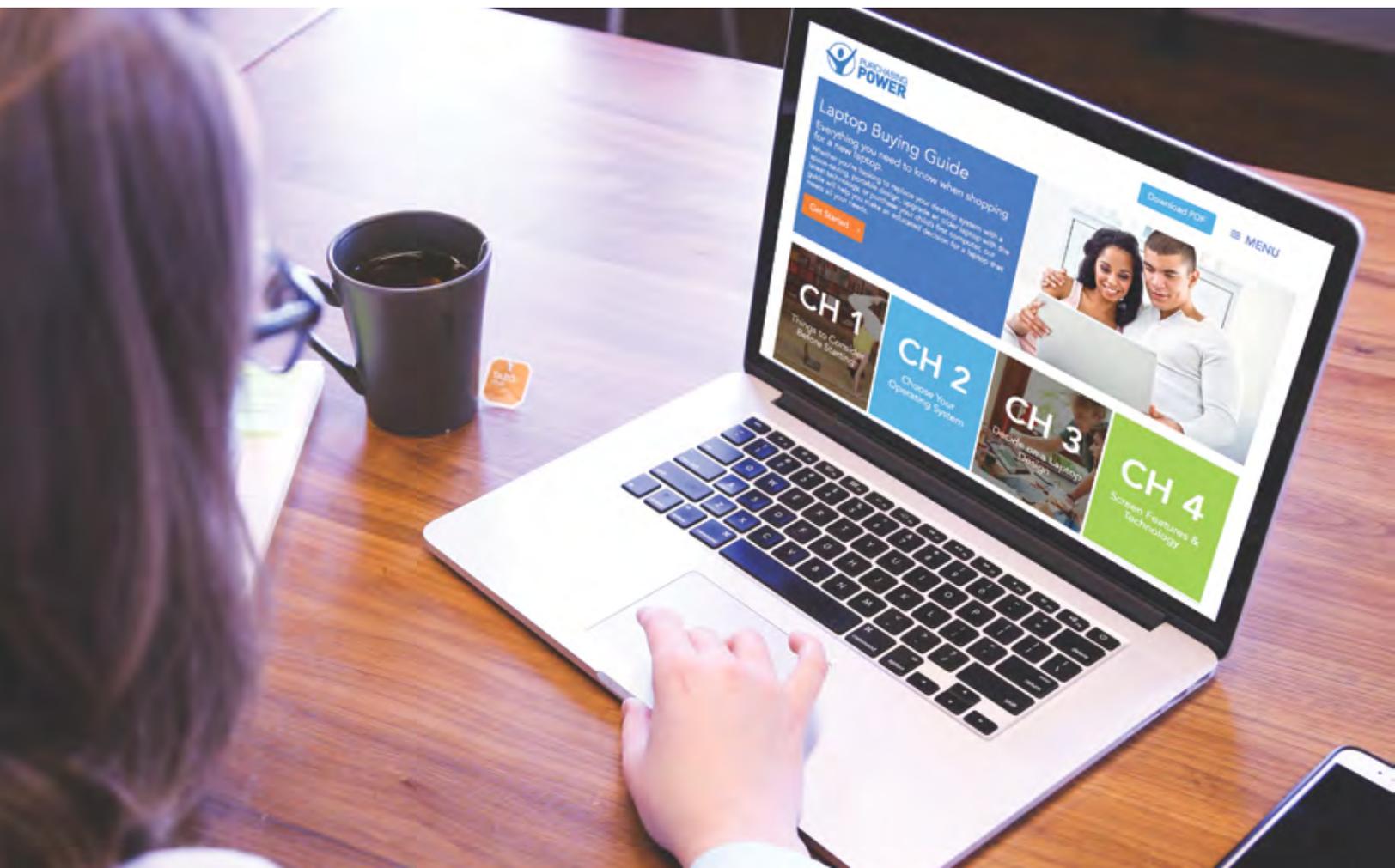
not, your content is probably poorly optimized—or just unremarkable. Interactive content can change that.

How would you characterize your content measurement?

Measurement is a big challenge for marketers—so much so that we dedicate an entire chapter to it later on, with some tools to assess how well you're doing. If your content measurement is poor, interactive can help you tap into some really useful data.

How effective are you at reusing and repurposing your content?

If you're running ragged on a churn and burn strategy, running out of ideas and never revisiting your old content, you've got enormous opportunities to start turning the content you already have into interactive experiences. One piece of static content can often be transformed into several different interactive experiences.





Assess Your Content Maturity

| | | | |
|--|--------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| How would you characterize the nature of your content? | all passive | some interactive | extensive interactive |
| How effective is your content at educating your buyer? | not at all | somewhat | very |
| How effective is your content at differentiating your brand? | not at all | somewhat | very |
| How effective is your content at getting shared socially? | not at all | somewhat | very |
| How effective is your content at converting your visitors? | not at all | somewhat | very |
| How effective is your content at generating organic traffic? | not at all | somewhat | very |
| How would you characterize your content measurement? | weak | room for improvement | strong |
| Are you able to surface content consumption & outcomes to sales in a meaningful, contextual way? | not at all | somewhat | yes |
| How effective are you at re-using and re-purposing your content? | not at all | somewhat | very |

The more red and yellow answers you have, the less mature your content program is, and the higher the opportunity for the introduction of interactive content to make a huge difference in your campaign.

What's Next?

You now know your need—so, what exactly should you create? In the next chapter, we'll help you figure out which interactive content experiences will work best for you.



TIMELY CONTENT

MULTI MEDIA

GLOBAL PRINTS

WELCOME EMAILS

ABANDONED CART EMAILS

EYE CATCHING DESIGN

HUMAN COPY

BE SOCIAL

T EMAILS

CHAPTER 3

Getting Started With Interactive Content

Every journey begins with a single step—so you're going to want to make sure that step is in the right direction. If you're just figuring out where to begin with interactive content, this chapter is going to give you some tools and ideas that will help you take action!

If you don't have any interactive content or you're wondering where to begin, the answer is

almost never "from scratch." If you're producing static content, you've already got assets you can convert into interactive pieces!

This chart shows how some common types of static content can be repurposed. Static formats are listed along the left, and interactive formats they can be repurposed into are listed along the top.

Identifying Opportunities to Repurpose Your Content

| | interactive white paper or ebook | interactive infographic | lookbook | quiz | solution builder | assessment | configurator | calculator |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|----------|------|------------------|------------|--------------|------------|
| Your white paper becomes... | | | | | | | | |
| Your product brochure becomes... | | | | | | | | |
| Your pricing sheets become... | | | | | | | | |
| Your infographic becomes... | | | | | | | | |
| Your research becomes... | | | | | | | | |
| Your product specs become... | | | | | | | | |
| Your solution briefs become... | | | | | | | | |

How Repurposing Into Interactive Content Works



If you have a static white paper:

- Take **stats** and **figures** shared in the white paper and turn them into a quiz that tests the reader's knowledge.
- If you share **best practices** or **recommendations** in the white paper, turn those into an assessment where a lead can measure themselves to see how many they're actually executing and implementing.
- And of course, you can take the **content from the static white paper**, chunk it out into chapters and turn it into an interactive piece, with sliders, clickable images and other unique navigable elements.



If you have a product brochure:

- Turn your product brochure into a lookbook a lead can click through, highlight, favorite and share.
- Use the product specs and information for a configurator that allows your lead to build their own ideal solution, or see the best products for them based on their needs.



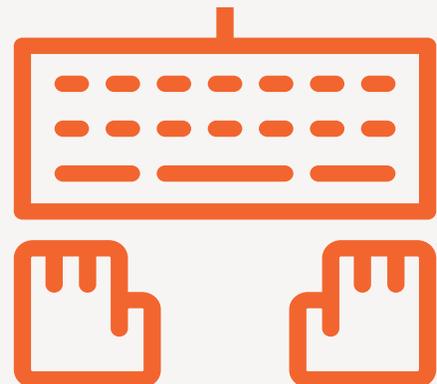
If you have a pricing sheet:

If you have product or service pricing sheets, why not turn those numbers into a calculator that gives your user the ability to price out their ideal purchase, before they even need to talk to sales!

What Types of Interactive Content are Right for You?

Ok—so now, you've seen that you have options to start with existing content, repurposed into a wide variety of interactive experiences. But while you could produce several different types of interactive content, which ones should you produce to help you reach your audience and your marketing goals?

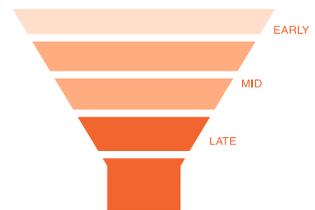
There are a couple of helpful ways to think through this—mapping content experiences to the buyer's journey, or mapping them to your campaigns and traffic sources. Let's take a look at each and see what's right for you.





Mapping Content to the Buyer's Journey

The questions, concerns, pain points and interests of your audience change as they go through the buyer's journey—so the content you share with your customers at each stage of the journey should be different, too!



Early: Awareness & Education

In the early stages of the buyer's journey, you and your buyer are strangers. They may not even know they have a need yet, and if they are strangers, they may not know who you are.

Content in this stage should be lightweight, easy to digest and easy to share. It's not the time to ask for a big time commitment from your visitor, but a moment where you can help your visitor determine that they have a problem that needs solving, and educate them so that they see you as a viable solution.

Mid: Education & Acceleration

As a buyer gets more serious about finding a solution to their problem, they're going to need more and deeper information. In the mid stage of the buyer's journey, your visitors want information that helps educate and inform them—and you want to use your content to accelerate the journey towards making a decision.

This stage is about arming the lead with information, overcoming their objections and

showing them that you're not just a viable solution—you're the best one.

Content here tends to be more in-depth and personalized to the customer.

Late: Acceleration & Decision Making

In the late stages of the buyer's journey, your content needs to help close the deal. That means building trust, stomping out any last objections and making it really, really easy to buy from you.

This is a stage where pricing and personalization matter a great deal, as leads work to confirm that the purchase they're making really is the best one for them.

Understanding these stages, you can use the matrix on the next page to help determine the content types best suited to each stage of the buyer's journey. Importantly, these are not hard and fast rules, and it's not the case that a piece of content cannot cross all stages. It's simply a picture of their "best fit."



Leverage Interactive Content Across the Buyer's Journey

| | early | mid | late |
|-------------------------------|-------|-----|------|
| ebook | ■ | ■ | |
| interactive white paper | | ■ | ■ |
| interactive infographic | ■ | ■ | |
| lookbook | ■ | | |
| quiz | ■ | ■ | |
| game | ■ | | |
| assessment | | ■ | ■ |
| configurator/solution builder | | ■ | ■ |
| calculator | | ■ | ■ |

As you can see, lightweight content like quizzes, games and infographics works well in the early stage, where awareness is being generated and the lead is just getting to know your brand or solution.

Interactive white papers, assessments, solution

builders and calculators all do a great job of educating a lead and accelerating their path to purchase—ideal for that mid stage.

And in the final stage, assessments, calculators and solution builders can all help seal the deal and justify the purchase to your lead.



Mapping Content to Your Campaigns & Traffic Sources

| | interactive white paper or ebook | interactive infographic | lookbook | quiz | contests/ games | assessment/ scorecard | solution builder/ configurator | calculator |
|--------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|----------|------|-----------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|------------|
| trade show | | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | | | |
| social | | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | | | |
| paid search | ■ | | ■ | | | ■ | | ■ |
| organic | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | | ■ | ■ | ■ |
| display | | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | | | |
| 3rd party email | ■ | | | | | ■ | | |
| house email | ■ | ■ | ■ | | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ |
| native advertising | ■ | ■ | | | | | | |

This matrix lists the primary traffic source along the left column and the types of suitable interactive content along the top.

Another way to think about which types of content are ideal for your business is to tailor your content to the campaigns, traffic sources and

context that content will be used in.

For example, those who visit your booth at a trade show likely won't stand there digging through a detailed white paper—but they'd probably love taking a quick quiz, entering a contest or flipping through a beautiful lookbook.

Some Fast Examples for You to Think About:



Social Media

On social media, lightweight, easy-to-consume content with a visual element tends to get more traction than complex calculators or heavyweight white papers. That makes infographics, look-books, quizzes and contests ideal content types for this traffic source.



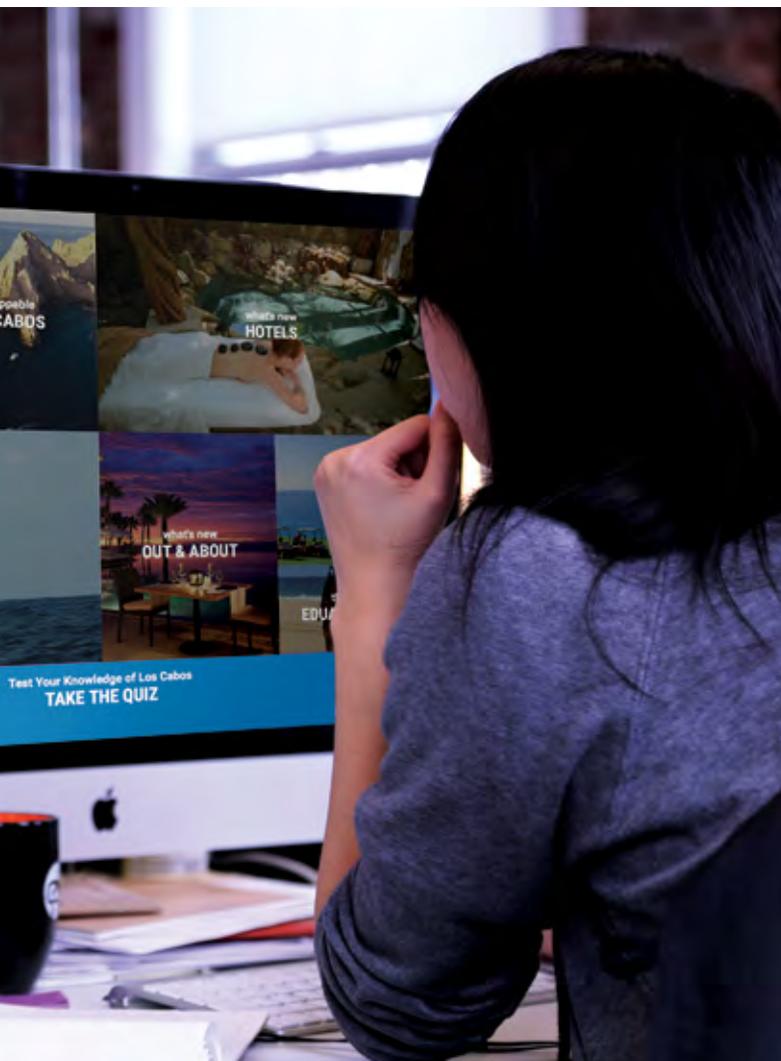
Paid Search

With paid search, you can target leads anywhere in the funnel—but if you're hitting people who are actively searching for solutions (past the point of awareness), white papers, assessments and calculators could be exactly what they need to see to accelerate decision making.



Email

If you're sending out an in-house email to your mailing list, numerous content types can apply—from infographics and contests for those segments earlier in the funnel, to calculators, assessments, solution builders and white papers for those who are closer to consideration.



Consider Context

Importantly, consider the context that your lead will be consuming the content in, their appetite for information vs. entertainment, and your existing relationship based on the traffic source you plan to use.

But again—these are simply guidelines and ideas, not rules. Do what's right for your campaigns and your buyers.

What's Next?

Once you've defined the ideal content types for your buyer's journey or traffic sources, you're not quite ready to produce. First, we've got to take a hard look at an important trade-off: effort against value.

The next chapter will give you some tools you can use to weigh both and make a wise decision for your audience and budget.



CHAPTER 4

Evaluating Effort vs. Value

One of the best ways to determine which interactive content you should invest in and which you should avoid boils down to understanding a simple exchange: The amount of effort (in time, resources and money) you put in against the value (awareness, leads and sales) you get back out of it.

This can feel like a bit of a slippery concept, but in this chapter, we'll give you some tools to help make it a more concrete, informed decision.

How can I know if something will be valuable?

Before you start thinking about effort, let's more clearly define what "value" actually looks like.

If you're wondering whether or not a piece of

content will be valuable, ask yourself the following questions as an assessment:

Will your audience find it helpful or useful? Be honest. Will what you're proposing actually help your buyers become aware, evaluate a decision or close the deal? If not, it should be something easy to create and launch that doesn't consume a lot of time, effort and budget. Avoid over-investing in something that is 'fun' versus 'useful'.

Will your audience find this entertaining or educational? Not every piece needs to be entertaining—but it should at least share valuable information. If your audience isn't likely to have a use for the content, there's limited reason to invest in it.

Will it be the type of experience your audience will want to share? Again, not every piece needs to be shareable. Assessments and calculators, for example, are by nature more private. But if your goal is awareness, your content should be something compelling or interesting enough to pass on.

Will you have a clear call to action such as lead conversion, purchase or contact sales? If your goal is to get people to convert or move into the late stage of the funnel, your content needs to facilitate that with a clear call to action.

Will it be used across a variety of campaigns and/or types of traffic? How much utility will the content have? Content that can be used in multiple ways and for multiple audiences may give you more return on your invest-

ment—but keep in mind that some highly specialized content for a small audience or tailored for a specific vertical can also be very lucrative.

Is it time-based, or can it be useful over an extended period? There's no sense investing a month of effort into content that will go stale in a few weeks. Evergreen content tends to come with more value, especially in the mid-to-late stages of the buyer's journey.

Do you have the resources to create, launch and manage this experience? If you don't have the resources to create the piece, you'll need to invest in acquiring them—whether in the form of a new hire or an outsourced team or tool. This shouldn't keep you from proceeding—but in some cases, will prove to be a barrier.

Determining Potential Value

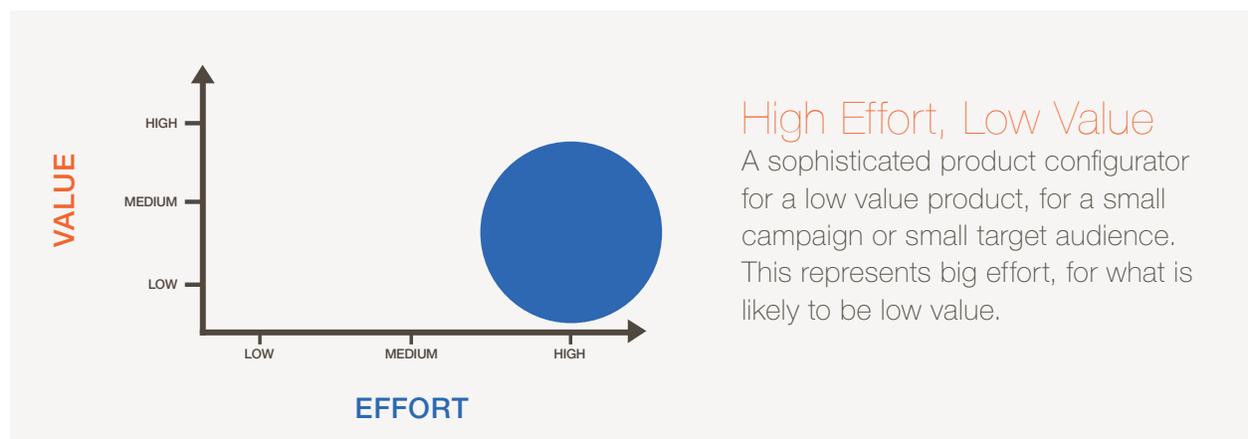
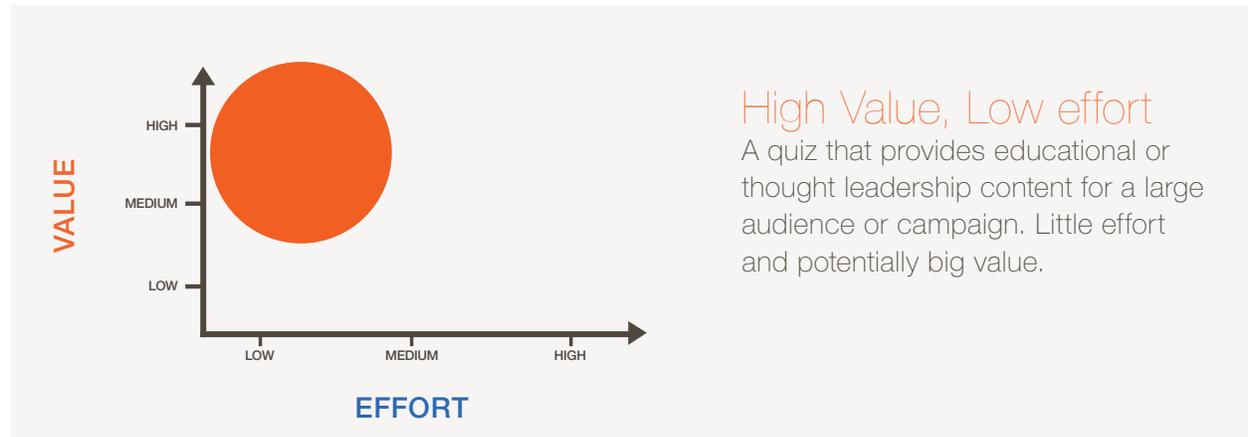
| | | | |
|--|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Will your audience find it helpful or useful? | unlikely | somewhat likely | very likely |
| Will your audience find this entertaining or educational? | unlikely | somewhat likely | very likely |
| Will it be the type of experience your audience will want to share? | unlikely | somewhat likely | very likely |
| Will you have a clear call to action such as lead conversion, purchase or contact sales? | no call to action | moderate emphasis on call to action | primary emphasis on call to action |
| Will it be used across a variety of campaigns and/or types of traffic? | single campaign/type of traffic | across some campaigns/traffic | yes, many campaigns/traffic |
| Is it time-based, or can it be useful over an extended period of time? | 1-3 months | 3-12 months | 12+ months |

If you've got more yellows and reds than greens, chances are that your content won't bring back the kind of value you're hoping for.

That said, some reds and yellows are to be expected, as not every piece will have the

same goal. You're not looking for 100%—just a majority of positive signals. Red and yellow indicate that you should consider limiting the investment in that interactive experience. Green shows it will provide higher value and is worth your time, effort and budget.

Now, Map Out the Expected Value of Your Content Against the Effort You'll Need to Invest.



As you might've guessed from this chart, you're looking to identify and avoid pieces that require a high amount of effort for very little payoff. Any content with a potential mid-to-high value is worth at least considering—but you still have

some decisions to make. You can employ the matrix on the next page to help you choose whether or not to go ahead with an idea based on the value of the content and level of effort to produce it.

Effort vs. Value

In this matrix, effort levels are defined along the left-hand side, and value is listed from highest to lowest on the right.

| Balancing Effort & Value | high value | mid value | low value |
|-------------------------------|------------|-----------|-----------|
| High Effort 1-7 Days | Yes! | Consider | Avoid |
| Mid Effort 2-4 Days | Yes! | Yes! | Avoid |
| Low Effort Less than 1 Day | Yes! | Yes! | Yes! |

High effort denotes resource-intensive content that will take 1 – 7 days (or more) to create, while **low effort** pieces could be created in a very short period of time—often less than a day if using a software platform or customizable pre-built templates.

Value is as we defined it earlier. Pieces that are more likely to entertain or educate, facilitate sharing, drive a conversion and have utility across multiple channels are seen as higher value assets with a greater potential for ROI.

Any asset that is going to create a high level of value and is within your means to create should be pursued.

Pieces with a mid-level value that require mid to low effort are still great candidates—but if the effort is high, proceed with caution.

And content pieces that have low value aren't typically worth investing in, unless the effort required to produce them is also proportionately low.



What's Next?

Now that you've taken a hard look at not only what types of assets are feasible, but which will have the greatest payoff, it's time to roll up your sleeves and get it done! In the next chapter, we'll introduce a process you can follow to create interactive content while avoiding snags and hassles.



CHAPTER 5

Defining Your Process

Ready to get started with interactive content? Your great content ideas need to be coupled with a great process. Otherwise, you'll get results that aren't... well... great.

The most common stumbling blocks in interactive content are easily sidestepped if you take some time to plan your approach. At ion interactive, we follow a simple, 8-step project management process when building content experiences for our customers. This framework works well for every type of interactive content—from calculators and configurators to quizzes and ebooks.

In this chapter, we'll be digging a little deeper into each one and giving you some tips to help your initiative go off without a hitch.

8-Step Project Management Process

-  **Brainstorm**
-  **Quality Assurance**
-  **Concept Brief**
-  **Launch**
-  **Interactive Wireframe**
-  **Promote**
-  **Design & Build**
-  **Review & Measurement**



Step 1: Brainstorming

Let's be honest—coming up with great ideas doesn't just happen. Earlier in the toolkit, we shared some exercises you can do to identify opportunities for content based on your buyer's journey or the types of traffic you're driving. Make sure you pull these back out when you head to the brainstorming table.

As You Brainstorm, Try to Keep in Mind...

What's the goal?

Are you trying to generate new leads, or nurture existing ones? Is the goal a direct sale, or are you trying to create awareness? Do you want visitors to consume the content? Share it? Be specific.

Who's the audience?

Who are you trying to reach, and what do they care about? What do they need?

Where's the traffic coming from?

How will you be driving traffic to the piece, and in what context will a visitor be engaging with it? Will the primary driver be organic? PPC? Email? Display? This matters, because the intent of a visitor from each channel may differ. You'll also want to be certain that the campaign messages align with the content you're driving people to—

consistency is key to conversion. Match your traffic source message to the experience the visitor lands on.

What stage of the journey is the buyer in?

Different content formats are suited to different stages of awareness, interest, consideration and purchase, though it's not a hard and fast rule.

Are we repurposing—and if so, how?

If you're working from a piece of existing content, which pieces can you chunk out, and how will you repurpose them? Determine what's possible to create from what you already have, and be open to embracing multiple different formats to suit different audiences.

Two Quick Tips to Get You Going:

Bring a Team

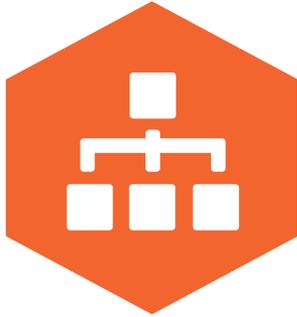
They say two heads are better than one, and when it comes to brainstorming, the more the merrier—to an extent.

It's wise to bring in those who will have different roles in the content production process—marketers, content strategists, copywriters, *developers and designers—to get multiple perspectives on the problem and avoid thinking too narrowly.

*If you're building your experiences with the ion interactive platform, you won't need these—but if you're building from scratch, make sure they're invited!

Eavesdrop on Your Customers & Talk to Sales

If you're struggling for ideas, seek out on-line conversations where you can listen in on customer pain points, concerns and wish lists. Forums like Reddit, Quora or LinkedIn groups can be a great launching point, while reviews and testimonials (both your own and your competitor's) can spark fresh ideas. And sometimes, the best source of inspiration is your own sales team. What conversations are they having? What resources would make their job easier? They know your buyer better than anyone and can provide a ton of strategic inspiration.



Step 2: Concept Brief

Once your brainstorming is complete, it's time to create a project brief. Don't skip this step! Documentation might not be sexy, and it's rarely the fun part of creating interactive content, but having a written plan is crucial if you want to make sure everyone is moving in step and understanding the idea in the same way.

What is a Concept Brief?

At its most basic, a narrative of the experience that describes the interactive content and organization as clearly as possible.

It doesn't need to be exhaustive—for example, you don't need the exact copy you'll use in the

experience or have every last detail figured out. But you DO need a framework to guide the development of the rest. You need to document the organization and functionality of the experience, so everyone is on the same page about what is being created.

Brief Background

Source content—(if any)

Traffic sources—Consider where traffic will come from and how the piece will be promoted—whether organic, PPC, social, trade shows, etc.

Success measurements—Define the metrics you'll use to measure your performance and ROI. This might be conversions, signups, increased awareness, social sharing or any other metric you define—but make sure these metrics reflect actual outcomes and insights, not just vanity metrics.

Technical considerations—Note any custom development, integrations, programming details or other technical elements that need special consideration.

Samples and examples—It can be helpful to draw on the work of others, or ion's Quick Start Cloud library of pre-built experiences. Having a comparison or reference point makes it easier to provide an idea of the expected user experience.



Brief Details

Overview—Write a paragraph or so that describes the overall experience.

Content outline—Lay out, at a very high level, what content will go where. This might include where on your site it will live as well as a basic layout of the content inside the interactive experience (though you'll do this in greater detail with an interactive wireframe).

Brief Data Flow

Expected marketing insights—A list of the aggregate data from your visitors that you plan to surface and analyze.

Expected sales insights—The individual visitor data that can be provided to a sales person

to help inform great sales/buyer conversations and align sales & marketing.

Data hand off—Of the data you collect, what can and should be exported—and where is it going?

Additional Content Opportunities

Sometimes when brainstorming a single piece of interactive content, lots of ideas pop up for other, related content experiences. It can be helpful to summarize these ideas here for future notice, or current

considerations if there's some element of the interactive you're creating that will overlap. After you've finalized your concept brief, you're ready to begin assembling your interactive wireframe.



Step 3: Interactive Wireframe

Next to the concept brief, this is the most critically important stage of interactive content development—and sadly, one of the most overlooked.

Unlike a paper or static wireframe, with interactive content it's best to begin by building an interactive wireframe based off of the concept brief you've already put together. This may be a coded version, or one built right in the ion interactive platform.

You don't need finalized graphics or copy at this point—filler images and text will do.

This allows you to see how the experience is shaping up in real-time, including the user experience, content organization, logic and functionality of the content you're building.





Step 4: Design & Build

Now that you've built out the skeleton for your interactive experience, it's time to let the developers, designers and copywriters do their thing.

If you're using a platform, you'll be able to skip the compiling and coding because your experience has already mostly been built during the wireframing stage, and focus primarily on the design elements.

This makes your team far more agile and efficient.

If you're not using a platform, you might think of this step as split into two different steps: A design phase, where the wireframe is fleshed out into a more final state, and a build phase, where the elements that have been designed are brought to life through code.



Step 5: Quality Assurance

It's tempting to push your content live the moment it looks done—but resist. A quality assurance phase will make sure you've worked the bugs out of your experience.

Use the content experience and do your best to break it—looking for ways to make things go wrong. If you can't, you're on the right track!

You'll want to conduct both functional AND browser testing to make sure the content is delivered correctly. It's also wise to test out your tracking and measurement before you launch to make sure you don't miss out on the important data you're trying to collect.



Step 6: Launch

And... you're live! It's time to go back to your concept brief and implement the content as you planned—whether embedded into your site, or served up as a stand-alone experience.

The first few days after launch, it's

important you stay vigilant, watching how your visitors interact with your content, adjusting your strategy if uptake is poor, and making sure promotion is heavy and hard on the mediums you planned for promotion and distribution.



Step 7: Promote

Speaking of promotion—you DO plan to promote, right? While we could write an entire white paper on just this phase alone, one important tip we can share is to keep in mind all of the different channels available to you in the form of paid, owned and earned media.

Paid Media

Paid media is, as you might expect, paid advertising. This format of promotion is great if you don't have a large community of your own yet, or you're hoping to gain exposure into new channels. It can also be very useful to ramp up traffic in a short period of time, and because spending is predictable (you set the price), the C-suite will have an easier time getting behind it.

Owned Media

Owned media refers to the promotion channels you directly control—your social media accounts, websites, blogs and so on. It is fantastic for gaining initial traction, as your own community is likely to be among the most responsive in the early stages of your content launch. Keep messaging consistent across channels, and promote frequently.

Earned Media

Earned media is that coveted “going viral” everyone talks about—natural sharing by those who found your content compelling and want to pass it on, whether that's on social, in their own blogs, or through word of mouth.

It's the hardest kind of media to capture and is completely out of your control—so don't put all your eggs in the “going viral” basket. The other two media channels can help give you a push in the right direction and facilitate sharing, but don't count on the masses alone to carry your strategy.



Step 8: Review & Measurement

You didn't just launch your content for fun, did you? You want results—and measurement helps you gauge them.

It's important to have a strategy for surfacing the insights you're getting back from your data to your salespeople and marketing teams, as the data you collect will give them some serious insights

for future content, messaging and campaigns, as well as ideas for improvement in goal attainment within the experience itself!

We cover measurement in more depth in an upcoming chapter, including the metrics to watch and some tips on how you can collect them to assess your impact.



What Kind of Timeline is Reasonable?

The unpopular answer is—it depends on your situation. It depends on the type of asset your creating, the team you have at your disposal and the way you're going about creating the interactive content.

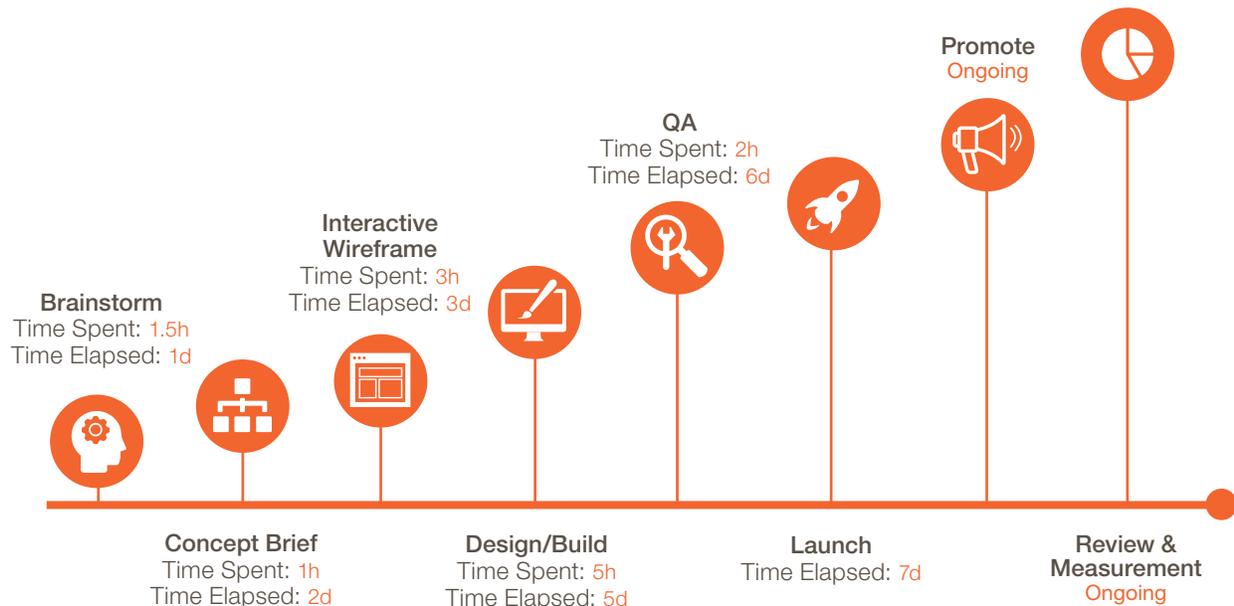
A relatively simple content experience like a quiz will take a shorter time to launch than a detailed interactive white paper.

A small and focused team may be able to

execute very quickly, for example, while a large team might spend more time coordinating and planning. And if you're not building the experience using a software, the design and build stages will take much longer than if you are.

But many people are surprised at just how quickly a piece of interactive content can be put together, launched and measured—some in just a few days, and many in just over a week or two!

Here's an example of what your timeline *might* look like:



Day 1 & 2:

Your team comes together to brainstorm, using about an hour and a half to take stock of your existing content, identify which part of the buyer's journey you need to target, and generating some ideas for suitable content. Reviewing the ideas, you pick a winner to pursue, then quickly write it up in a concept brief that outlines your approach.

Day 3, 4 & 5:

Using a software platform, a designer builds out the content experience using both pre-built templates and a few easy-to-customize elements. You've now got a skeleton of what the experience will feel like. Your graphic and copy people collaborate with those building the skeleton and get to work creating the content needed to bring the experience to life.

Day 6 & 7:

The experience is polished and tested, with multiple team members reviewing what you've built and trying to find problems or break it. Your measurement and analytics are set up and tested, so you're certain you'll be able track your impact and engagement. With the testing complete, you launch!

Ongoing:

Once the experience is live, you continue to measure the response, surfacing insights to sales and learning from the feedback you're getting in real-time.



What's Next?

You've got a great process—but who do you need on board to see it through? The next chapter zeroes in on the tasks, roles and people you need on your side to make great interactive content happen.



Building Your Team & Allocating the Work

Before you rush off to start building your new interactive content experience, it's smart to consider the different roles and tasks you'll need to account for to create your content. Some of the roles that will need to be filled include:



Marketing Manager

In addition to helping brainstorm, plan and enforce brand consistency, a marketing manager's primary role may be taking the reins on promoting your new content once it's built.



Copywriter/Editor

There's no replacement for a great wordsmith. Your messaging and communications need to be clear—which is exactly where a talented writer will shine. If you are re-purposing content, the copywriter will simply be editing existing content, slicing it up to work in its new form.



Project Manager

The answer to “who's in charge?”, the project manager is there to guide the process, weigh opinions and feedback, coordinate between team members and bring the project from concept to completion. They are on point to make sure it gets done, and gets done right.



Web Developer

If you're not building on a platform or you don't have the tech savvy or time to build it on your own, you're going to need a developer who can bring your experience to life.



Content Marketer

A subject-matter expert in creating and distributing content, the content marketer brings important insights to the planning and promotion of content—especially when it comes to assessing your current assets or determining the best approach to reach your customers in the right stage of the buyer's journey.



Web Designer

Your user experience needs to be beautiful, easy and intuitive—which is exactly what a good web designer can help you accomplish.



Web Analyst

If you're not measuring, you'll never know what's happening, the outcomes and results. A web analyst is helpful in setting KPIs, evaluating data and measuring your impact.

What Happens, and When?

The chart below lays out the different phases of the project where the various roles ought to be involved. As you'll see, some roles span multiple stages, while others only come in as they're needed.

| | brainstorm | concept brief | interactive wireframe | design & build | QA | launch | promote | measure |
|-------------------|------------|---------------|-----------------------|----------------|----|--------|---------|---------|
| Marketing Manager | | | | | | | ■ | |
| Project Manager | ■ | | | | | | | |
| Content Marketer | | ■ | | | | | ■ | |
| Copywriter/Editor | | | ■ | | | | | |
| Web Developer | | ■ | | | | | | |
| Web Designer | | ■ | | | | | | |
| Web Analyst | ■ | | | | | | | ■ |

If This All Has You Thinking, “Yeesh—That’s a Lot of People!”—You’re Not Alone.

In an ideal world—one where specialized people work for free and big teams are easy to build—you’d have different people handling all of the above roles. But that’s just not realistic or prac-

tical for most businesses—and thankfully, that’s OK! With the right platform, small teams wearing multiple hats can be just as effective.

For a Smaller Team, a More Realistic View Might Look Something Like This:

| | brainstorm | concept brief | interactive wireframe | design & build | QA | launch | promote | measure |
|-------------------|------------|---------------|-----------------------|----------------|----|--------|---------|---------|
| Marketing Manager | ■ | | | | | | | |
| Web Designer | ■ | | | | | | | |
| Web Analyst | ■ | | | | | | | |

In the Smaller Team Example:



1. Marketing Manager

The marketing manager also serves as the project manager, leading the project from start to finish and coordinating the other team members. If they've got the talent, they can also fill in on the content marketing and copywriting end of things, and they're also a part of the ongoing measurement.

2. Web Designer

The web designer works with the marketing manager to map out the interactive wireframe, put together the creative elements and build out the content on the platform. With the right platform (like ion interactive's!), you may even be able to skip the designer if you are in a resource of budget crunch.



3. Web Analyst

The web analyst (or stats person) uses past data to help brainstorm ideas and define KPIs, then takes ownership of measurement once the content is built.



Simple, Small and Effective

Interactive content doesn't need to be intimidating! Contracted help can be brought in to help with areas of weakness, or in the case of ion interactive, you could use our professional services to manage your program on your behalf—from strategy to concept to launch.



The Big Takeaway? Assign Roles!

No matter how big or small your team, make sure that you've assigned ownership of the different parts of the process before you begin to keep things on track and avoid surprises as you're moving things out the door.

What's Next?

By now, you're ready to launch! In the next chapter, we'll be taking a look at one of the biggest challenges for modern marketers—measurement.



CHAPTER 7

Measuring Your Impact

Every year, the Content Marketing Institute asks marketers what they find most difficult in content marketing.

And every year, “measurement” is routinely one of the biggest challenges for B2B and B2C marketers alike. Fifty percent reported challenges

in measurement last year—and that’s just the honest ones!

But if you want to justify your investment in content marketing, optimize your buyer’s journey and—most importantly—improve your sales, you’ve got to get the measurement part figured out.

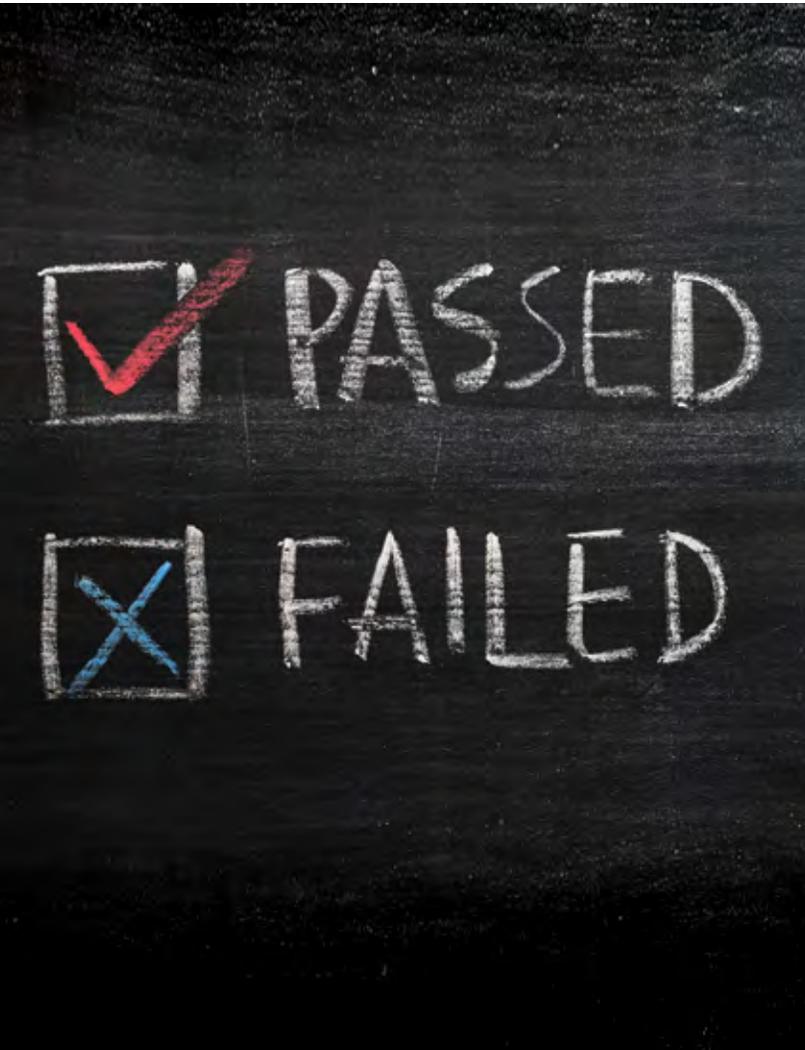
Here's the Surprising Truth: You Don't Need More Data, You Just Need to Use it Better.

Even if you've only used static content up to this point, you already have access to a huge array of data on visitors that can help point to effectiveness, including...

- Unique visitors
- Bounce rates
- Time spent
- Exit rate
- Open rates
- Conversions



And much, much more.



The Trouble is that with Static Content, These Metrics are Very Pass/Fail.

- A visitor either downloaded your ebook, or they didn't.
- A customer either opened your email, or they didn't.
- A lead either converted, or they didn't.

Once a lead has downloaded a white paper, for example, there's a big "black box" where you can't be sure exactly how they engaged with that information. This leaves huge holes in the picture we're trying to paint of our customers and their individual journey.

Interactive Content Gives You Deeper, More Individualized Data on Every Customer.

With interactive content, you can collect data from inside of the “black box.” For example, with interactive content, you can see:

- How much of the content was consumed
- Which parts of the content were most compelling
- How qualified the lead is based on answers to assessments and configurators
- How engaged the user was while consuming your content

And if you’ve collected an email throughout the engagement, you can tie all of that information into your CRM and get a thorough understanding of your prospects on an individual level. Suddenly, you’ve got marketing insights that can help your sales team deliver a more tailored pitch.



Assessing Your Measurement Maturity

| | | |
|--|----|-----|
| You measure bounce rate for the interactive content experience, by traffic source and/or campaign. | no | yes |
| You measure time spent for the interactive content experience, by traffic source and/or campaign. | no | yes |
| You measure conversion rate for the interactive content experience, by traffic source and/or campaign. | no | yes |
| You track and evaluate visitor behavior to understand what’s working, and what’s not. | no | yes |
| You use engagement scores for your interactive content to understand content consumption. | no | yes |
| You surface visitor behaviors, outcomes and engagement scores to sales in a contextually meaningful way. | no | yes |

Measurement Gap Exercise

If you're unsure whether or not you're measuring the right things, or if you want a clear picture of where the gaps in your measurement might be, here's a simple exercise you can go through to bring clarity to your measurement. Ask yourself whether or not you are currently measuring any of the questions below. As with other exercises, the more answers you have in the red (or answered "no" to)—the more measurement needs to become an area of focus for your business.



Bounce Rate

What percentage of people leave your content immediately after entering?



Time Spent

How long are they spending on your content?



Behavioral Insights

How are users navigating through your content? What do they find most compelling?



Engagement Scores

How much of your resource is a lead consuming? What are they clicking on?



Conversion Rate

How many people are taking your desired action—whether that's buying a product, downloading a resource, submitting their email, etc.?



Sales Insights

Who is the customer, and what do they care about? What prices did they configure—or how did they score on an assessment? How interested or qualified are they, really?



Results by Traffic Source

DON'T just measure these numbers in aggregate. Look at them on a campaign by campaign basis, or compare traffic sources! Which channels are sending the most engaged leads? Which types of visitors are most likely to bounce?

"The most important thing is to identify from the outset of the content marketing initiatives what will be the metric sought for each content asset or approach utilized. Every metric—from video views, to emails opened, to tweets retweeted, to wall posts shared and, yes, to products and services sold—can then be woven together into a narrative of how well the initiative is (or is not) working."

~ Russell Sparkman @fusionspark

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IS YOUR TRAVEL PARTNER A PERFECT MATCH?

IS YOUR TRAVEL PARTNER A PERFECT MATCH?

When you think of your travel partner, do the birds sing, does the sun shine brighter, do the butterflies flutter in your stomach? Well, probably not... But, is your travel partner really the right fit for you? Or, is it time to find a partner that makes your heart beat a little faster?

Take this quiz to find out.

BEGIN

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CHAPTER 8

Best Practices

Even if you've gone through the brainstorming, evaluated effort against value, assembled a great team and launched a successful piece of content, it's wise to keep a close eye on whether or not you're going about your content

experience the best way. As a final practice for this white paper, we've compiled a quick set of questions you can use to assess how well your content is sticking to best practices, and where you might improve.

Questions to Assess Your Content



Is it useful, educational or entertaining?

Are your customers actually benefiting from the content you create? Would they miss it if it wasn't there?



Do you analyze results for insights and areas of opportunity/improvement?

Are you deliberate and rigorous about measuring the results of your content—and are you using those insights to make existing and future content efforts better?



Do you surface visitor behaviors or outcomes to sales?

Have you been able to take the knowledge of your customers gained from interactive content and turn it into tools your sales team can use to close more deals?



Do you A/B test this interactive content?

Are you comparing and contrasting variants and content types to see which are working best for you in different contexts? Are you looking at your results on a campaign/traffic basis?



Is it a good user experience?

Based on both qualitative feedback from customers and your data (bounce rates, time on site, etc.), is the experience intuitive and easy?



Is there a clear call to action?

Have you added a “so what?” or a prompt that helps customers move into the next stage of their journey? Is it obvious how a visitor can take action?



Is the interactive experience responsive?

Is your content designed to be consumed on any and every device, or are you alienating an important part of your audience?

Take Action

If you can answer “Yes” to most of these questions, you're doing great! If not, you've got some work to do to improve your content and measurement—but don't be discouraged! By now, you've seen how straightforward and methodical interactive content can be, and you're armed with the resources you need to make it work for your business. All that's left to do is take action!



about ion interactive

ion interactive helps modern marketers produce engaging, interactive content that stands out while generating leads and revenue. Rapidly deploy stunning user experiences across your content marketing, social marketing, email marketing and advertising campaigns using our scalable, agile interactive content platform.

Powerfully creative, gorgeous and highly interactive experiences can be created and tested without developers. ion's assessments, quizzes, lookbooks, eBooks, interactive white papers, calculators and more are used to differentiate brands, increase engagement, boost sales and improve conversions.



Let's Talk

Speak with an ion interactive professional, share your needs and learn how we can help you rapidly deploy interactive content without development. Visit www.ioninteractive.com

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