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The Power of Product Documentation in Content Marketing

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Introduction

The term content marketing was coined in the mid-2000s by Joe Pulizzi, who later founded the Content Marketing Institute. But in truth, all marketing is content marketing. Content contains the company's message. Any marketing tactic—pay-per-click (PPC), traditional and digital media, banner ads, PR, search engine optimization (SEO), social media—doesn't work on its own without content.[1] It enriches each form of marketing, and is what drives exposure and regard for a brand. It is not just about having content and putting it out there, it's what is in the content that matters.

The change in the way people interact with information, both in seeking it and consuming it, has created a new customer journey. Customers are on the go, active and mobile—getting things done in their way and on their terms. In fact, in a recent survey nearly three-quarters (73 percent) of business-to-business (B2B) buyers said that they have less time to devote to reading and research than they did 12 months ago.[2] Customers no longer have as much time or patience, and are looking for context, intent, and immediacy in the information that answers their questions.[3]

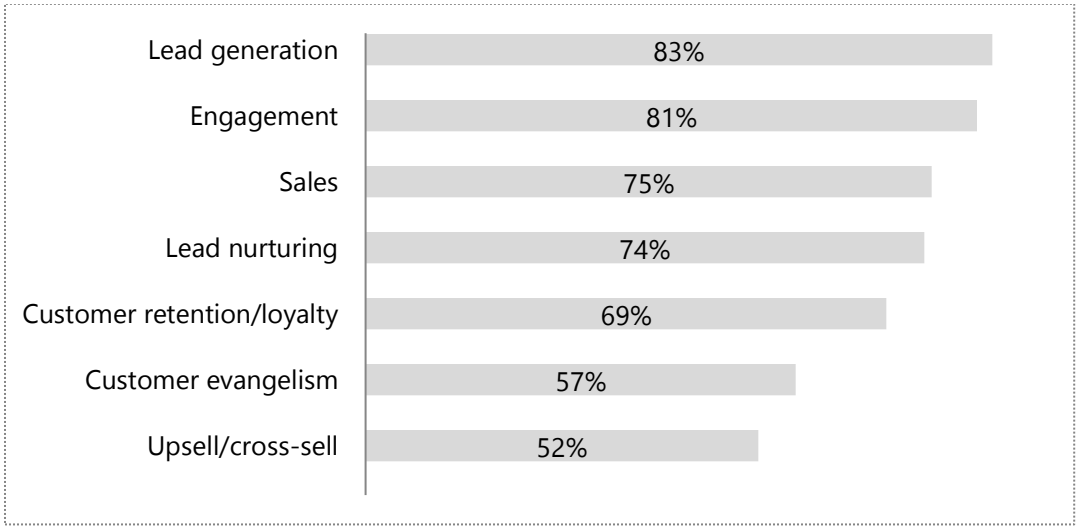
> "Unless our content contributes to a worthwhile experience for the people we want to reach, none of the rest of the advice matters."
> – Kristina Halvorson, content strategy expert and CEO of Brain Traffic

This can be viewed as an opportunity for marketers to meet (and surpass) those expectations by making content meaningful, culturally relevant, contextual, purposeful, helpful and unique. That means answering customers' questions quickly and accurately, fulfilling their requests for information and eliminating the need to go out of their way to get it. The best way to preempt customers' need to go searching for answers is to reach out to them with content marketing that incorporates valuable information from the company's help content.

The Customer Journey

"In addition to creating intelligent content, one frequent message is that we need to focus on all customer touchpoints, both pre-sale and post-sale, and ensure consistent, unified content throughout these customer experiences."
– Tom Johnson, a self-described "API technical writer…who thinks strategically"

The information found in the brand's product and technical documentation can accomplish the goals of content marketing, which were ranked in order of importance as follows in a survey of B2B marketers:



Note: According to Marketo, "Lead nurturing" is the process of developing relationships with buyers at every stage of the sales funnel, and through every step of the buyer's journey. It focuses marketing and communication efforts on listening to the needs of prospects and providing the information and answers they need.

Source: Joe Pulizzi and Ann Handley, *B2B Content Marketing: 2015 Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends in North America*, Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs/Brightcove, 2015.

Product documentation accomplishes these exactly: in the research, buy, and succeed stages informative content about a product can enable self-service and answer customers' questions, validate their purchase, and solve their problems. Featuring product and technical documentation as well as help content in content marketing materials can:

- meet customers in every stage of the customer journey, thereby nurturing leads
- generate leads by showing up first in Google searches because it contains the best answer to a customer's question about a product
- keep customers engaged by demonstrating that a brand is a reliable source of information
- lead to more sales by showing customers exactly how a product works in advance, alleviating hesitation during the buying decision
- create loyal customer evangelists by establishing trust and showing that content is not meant to trick the customer but rather to help them
- create cross-sell and upsell opportunities by showing customers information related to a product they are either searching for or already own

Know the "when"

Research shows that a significant amount of buyers (47 percent) engage with product documentation to learn about a product before they use it, which may occur pre-or post-sale, while 42 percent seek product information to troubleshoot post-sale.[a] Companies can take this information a step further to pinpoint the exact search terms and trending keywords consumers use when investigating a product, even mapping that data to specific points in the customer journey. This will inform the incorporation of valuable technical documentation into content marketing campaigns for search engine optimization, making even better use of the marketing budget.

[a] SDL, *Measuring the Importance of Product Content in Customer Experience*

"I'm not saying content marketing should consist of verbatim topics from a user manual. But the concepts that you cover in tech docs could certainly be repurposed into larger, more conceptual articles that address strategies around those topics."

– Tom Johnson, *What Is the Technical Writer's Role in Content Marketing?*

Higher Ground

One survey showed that a significant amount of executives in particular (73 percent) rated high-quality product information as influential if it is context-aware, creating an opportunity for businesses to engage this important customer base.[4]

> "Interactive, contextually aware, multimedia product information is a must-have for any customer engagement strategy."
> – SDL, *Measuring the Importance of Product Content in Customer Experience Management*

High-quality content can satisfy customers' desire for companies to recognize the context of their needs by, for example, speaking to targeted use cases and providing how-tos. No higher quality content can exist for a product than the information contained in its documentation and help content.[5]

Straightforward, high-quality, and context-rich content is also preferred by search engines. Documentation is the most likely to contain the best answer to a customer's particular questions—which is exactly what Google's algorithm looks for.[6] Ensuring the context of customer needs is addressed is an important part of delivering a superior customer experience, and therefore should no less be integrated into content marketing as well.

Respondents to an IBM and Society of Technical Communication survey, IBM clients and prospective clients who actively use the company's post-sales technical product information, overwhelmingly agree that high-quality technical information is either important or very important to:

- perceptions of the company who produced the information (97 percent)
- perceptions of product quality (97 percent)
- product satisfaction (94 percent)
- purchase decisions (90 percent)[7]

With results like these, it stands to reason that these reactions apply to marketing content created from that same product information. Influencing purchasing decisions, perceptions of both the company and the product, and arguably even

potential satisfaction with the product are fundamental to effective content marketing. Yet only 35 percent of respondents to a recent survey of technical communication specialists worldwide say they are creating product marketing materials.[8]

Content marketing doesn't usually talk about the product at all. When the respondents were asked what innovations were planned for the future, using documentation in content marketing did not rank in the top three.[9] Why?

Playing "Pitfall"

Perhaps this is due to a need to solve internal difficulties in maintaining content creation and consistency in the first place. A significant amount of respondents—more than one-third in all cases—to the same survey are still dealing with:

- a lack of a unified content strategy,
- a lack of proper software tools,
- departmental silos,
- a lack of governance, and
- an absence of collaboration.[10]

Recognition of these obstacles, especially lack of a unified content strategy and departmental silos, is the first step to correcting the course toward stellar product content that is straightforward in its value delivery to the customer.

The shift toward producing content marketing from product and technical documentation is, however, underway: 51 percent of technical communication professionals surveyed say it's not only their job to create content for existing customers, it's also their job to craft content for prospective customers. Back in 2012, that number was a paltry 11 percent.[11] This presents evidence that organizations have started to believe that technical content impacts sales.

Know the "Why"

As mentioned on page six, customers are looking for a brand's recognition of the context of their need. The most effective context marketing strategies are customer-centric and focus on understanding customers':

- intentions
- questions
- past interactions
- devices
- behaviors
- frustrations
- expectations
- values
- goals
- activities[12]

Designing marketing materials for outreach and campaigns that focus on customer needs—rather than the company's needs—by delivering the exact information they are searching for has become an imperative. It is the starting point of a content creation process: why audiences are searching, and what they are searching for.[13] Once these are identified, marketers may realize they already have the information audiences want in their documentation, making creating content that informs customers and inspires them to take action that much easier. Just as help content (e.g., user manuals, technical documentation and tutorials) can be transformed from what are often file-based pre-internet formats into bits of smart microcontent to improve the customer journey, so too can they be converted into tools for effective content marketing.[14]

The following table illustrates both the value and effect of various content types on customers' decision making. The most effective in each category are highlighted.

	Content types used to make a decision in the last 12 months (2014-2015)	Most valuable content viewed in the decision-making process
White papers	82%	69%
Webinars	78	62
Case studies	73	72
E-books	67	54
Infographics	66	39
Blog posts	66	n/a
Analyst reports	62	77
Video/motion graphics	47	45
Interactive presentations	36	43

Note: Blog posts were not an option for respondents when asked what content was most valuable.

Source: *2016 Content Preferences Survey Report: B2B Buyers Value Trustworthy Content with Data and Analysis*, Demand Gen Report, February 2016, pages 4–5.

Despite their lower rating, one recent survey found that infographics for example had the greatest increase in usage by content marketers (51 percent in 2014 compared to 62 percent in 2015) showing that the use and effectiveness of this type of content is on the rise.[15] Putting product documentation into well-designed infographics creates an attractive and engaging way for customers to instantly understand the product.

> "What you are really doing is creating an interest—a want to learn more about the brand. That interest leads to more unique website visits, increased interaction, and increased sales."
> – AJ Agrawal, *5 Reasons Every Company Should Be Using Content Marketing*, Forbes

Customers are no longer limited to going to a store and looking around; they are predominantly researching online first to purchase in-store at a later time (known as "webrooming") or researching in-store while shopping online (known as "showrooming").[16] Among their daily activities, customers are for example using their mobile devices to "visit YouTube to find videos of product demos, how-to information, customer experiences and reviews, and alternative product use cases."[17] Consumers are already looking for this information. If packaged intelligently in content marketing materials, help content can reach customers where they are on their journey. It can take leads—people who are actively searching—and convert them into buyers.

There Is Opportunity in User Manuals

Forty-two percent of B2B respondents say they publish new content to support their content marketing program multiple times per week or daily (that number is 48 percent for business-to-consumer or B2C marketers); with "producing content consistently" proving to be their number two challenge after "producing engaging content."[18] Another study revealed that 87 percent of B2B marketers struggle to produce engaging content.[19] Companies are legally required to produce product documentation on their products and services; repurposing that information to craft creative marketing content can mitigate both challenges in producing content that draws customers in by speaking to what they need.

> "Sure, ideas that spread win. But ideas that don't get spoken always fail."
> – Seth Godin, *Poke the Box*

Some companies worry about making their content public. But in 2016, chances are it's already out there. It will be most pure and effective if it comes from the company directly. By keeping it hidden, companies deprive their brand of exposure and dampen their opportunity.[20] There is certainly a level of proprietary information that is preserved for a specific audience or kept internal, but how-tos and user guides, specifications, maintenance, and troubleshooting and support procedures can provide solutions and best practices. These yield the most return if they are external, and content marketing distribution brings that information to a wider audience. Companies that aren't afraid to make their content public control their message, voice, and positioning of the brand in the market. They also reduce the chance that customers will have to turn to third-party sites for product information.

Stand Out to Get the Message Across

One commonly cited obstacle is that consumers are getting barraged with content more than ever before and from multiple channels. So the question to marketers is often, how do you cut through? How do you create an inroad to customers through all the noise? The answer echoes Google's advice: creating value by delivering content that's useful to customers.

> "In a crowded marketplace, fitting in is failing. In a busy marketplace, not standing out is the same as being invisible."
> – Seth Godin, *Purple Cow*

The fact that using documentation in content marketing is not yet a completely mainstream idea (see page six) presents an opportunity for companies to differentiate themselves from a sea of competitors all trying to reach the same audience. With the massive amount of content thrown at customers—various types, tones, tactics, and channels of communication—customers are more savvy than ever about what they let in. But there are ways to break through.

> "As people have increasing power and control over the 'inputs' into their lives, it becomes harder and harder to interrupt them with irrelevant, non-useful things. So, the only way to reach them is by pulling them in. Don't try to invade their world, but instead, invite them into yours. And the way to do that is to be helpful, say useful things and be respectful of their time. It's not easy to do, but it's simple—and it does indeed work." – Dharmesh Shah, Co-founder and CTO, Hubspot

Unique, technical information about a product creates a direct line to customers through search engine result pages (SERPs) and has a better chance of showing up than the usual run-of-the-mill marketing material. And if it is presented to them in an unassuming way—not expecting anything in return—the brand will be appreciated by customers who in a micro-moment found what they are looking for with no strings attached.

Content is how buyers experience a brand. Rather than a simple focus on the classic 4Ps of marketing (product, price, promotion, and place), marketing leaders must adopt a truly customer-centric mindset and turn those pillars into:

- Product to customer solution
- Price to customer cost
- Promotion to customer communication
- Place to customer convenience[21]

The first is easily addressed with product help content companies are already producing. Sharing the answers to customers' problems willingly—and before they have them—demonstrates a commitment to customer success. If these adapted 4Ps are thought of in the context of available product and technical documentation, with careful planning and execution of content marketing the rest will fall into place. And with the often hundreds of PDFs and other dense documents in folders spread out across the organization, there's no need to start from scratch on a content marketing campaign: the heavy lift is already done.[22]

Classic Tactics to Avoid

Targeted decisions should be made on what types of content to create that suit the business and its objectives, but there's a caveat: clickbait and listicles are not the way to go.

Clickbait can include listicles, shocking headlines, superficial content, rhetorical questions, and quizzes. It has been simply described as overpromising and underdelivering—even misrepresenting what the reader will find upon clicking through.[23] When people actually do click on clickbait and encounter disappointment, they feel like they have "fallen for" something.

Listicles by comparison are the equivalent of paint by numbers. Content creators may think they are lining fun facts out for the busy reader to consume, making their content entertaining, when really these types of listicles come across as a cop out done just for the sake of putting something in a list rather than to serve a purpose for the consumer.[24] Clicking on a listicle only to find superficial fluff produces the same result as clickbait: a feeling of having been fooled. Obviously, to attract and retain customers, this is not ideal.

> "[People] don't want generic click paths, marketing-speak, creative gimmicks, or friction-filled experiences."
> – Brian Solis, *Mobile Is Eating the World*

Clickbait content exists just to get page views—not to provide information. But if it provides actual information, the value delivered to the consumer increases, which means reputation, trust, and brand engagement increase.

In terms of marketing return on investment (ROI), clickbait is a waste of time for marketers. It amounts to one click from the reader. If it isn't what they were expecting, chances are they won't stay long enough to click again and time on site will be nil. If the headline was accurate and the content is engaging, and the user experience good, it can lead to a series of clicks. Because in truth, all consumers need is new, relevant content to get them to click.[25]

Even if clickbait and listicles are created solely to string keywords together, the importance of SEO in content marketing constitutes a delicate balance. Google does not like content that manipulates users into clicking with no actual substance on the other side. Its emphasis on simple, straightforward, useful, unique content cannot be understated:

> "The quality guidelines cover the most common forms of deceptive or manipulative behavior, but Google may respond negatively to other misleading practices not listed here....Webmasters who spend their energies upholding the spirit of the basic principles will provide a much better user experience and subsequently enjoy better ranking than those who spend their time looking for loopholes they can exploit." – Google

Keyword-rich product documentation delivers, it satisfies, and it has positive effects on the customer experience. In fact, if technical writers gain more insight into customers and translate that to the content they create, companies might find that their support sites and help content pages are responsible for the most growth in page views, and that documentation can even generate new business. Conversion rates from pages that provide informative content can often rival the product pages themselves, which bodes well for marketing ROI.

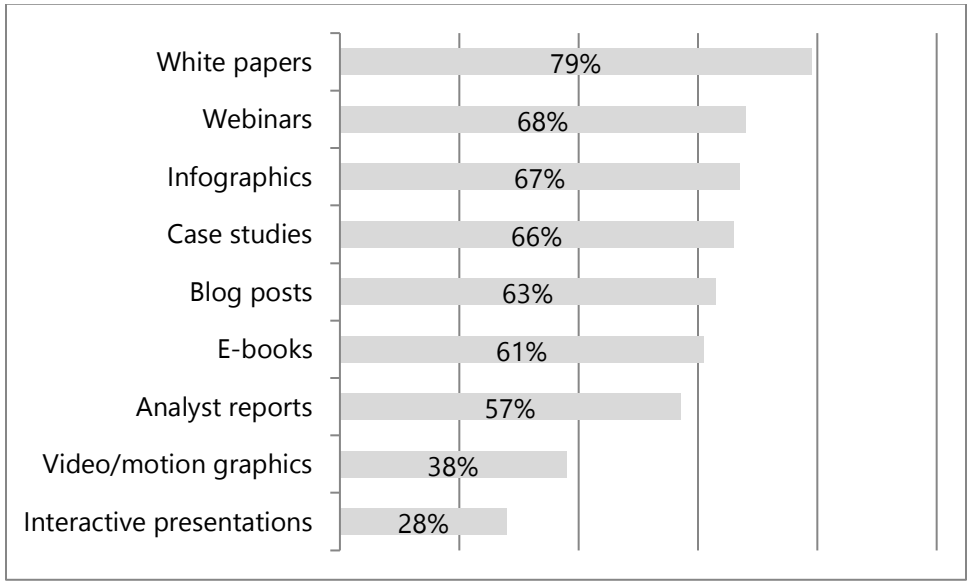
> "When businesses communicate with their customers by providing information instead of offering a sales pitch, the consumer will listen. The message and the brand is no longer an interruption, but a valued information provider."
> – Dan Antonelli, "5 Reasons Your Small Business Needs Content Marketing," *Entrepreneur*

External Benefits

1. Sharing is caring

Essentially, providing content created from a product's documentation is the opposite of clickbait. It's another way to put the customer experience first. Rather than a momentary urge satisfaction, content that provides value induces a more engaged response for a longer period of time as the user not only learns but passes on the knowledge. And that sharing is what companies covet—their product information circulated far and wide.

Including buttons to share the content on various social media outlets also shows that the company is keeping up with trends. Social media icons provide their own call to action without overtly stating one in the content itself.[26] A recent survey of B2B buyers recorded the types of content most likely to be shared with colleagues:



Source: *2016 Content Preferences Survey Report: B2B Buyers Value Trustworthy Content with Data and Analysis*, Demand Gen Report, February 2016, page 10.

If documentation and detailed product information is infused into content marketing, producing effective content, it may even become infotainment—much better than the empty promise of value from clickbait. This provides an engaging experience that satisfies a need at the same time. And once broken up into easily accessible microcontent, documentation in the form of content marketing is in a format more conducive to sharing on social media sites… letting customers do your content marketing for you.[27]

2. Visibility

Google looks for informative, authoritative, and unique content. These are some of the main principles of search engine optimization. The surest way to rank highly is to meet those credentials, which is easily achieved by product and technical content and can lead to increased visibility in the market. Customers are searching for product information in all three stages of the customer journey: research, buy, and succeed. Infusing documentation into content marketing captures the opportunity to draw consumers in and turn them from passing researchers into leads, while at the same time eliminating third-party sites from the equation. Creating content marketing assets around technical and help content also exposes detailed product information to various distribution channels, reaching a wider audience than just those seeking help on the support site.

Getting the target audience's attention with something unique and informative as part of a content marketing campaign also helps keep the brand top of mind as customers' lives unfold in a series of micromoments. Examples of these micro-moment opportunities are when a potential (or existing) customer is:

- waiting in line
- traveling or commuting
- walking
- dining or enjoying a drink
- shopping in a store
- relaxing
- waking up, or laying down to sleep[28]

Increased visibility and brand recognition can lead to sales.[29] If customers have the answers in their hands, they feel empowered before they even begin to purchase or use the product. Putting product content into a company's vast collection of content marketing enables ease of adoption, which leads to favorable views of the product and the brand. This ease of use has the same effect post-sale: it reduces or even eliminates the need to contact an agent.

> "Technical writers should repurpose their information-rich content into content marketing deliverables that can be used to build relationships with potential audiences in the market. This content can help establish thought leadership, visibility, and trust with your audience so that when you start releasing and mentioning your 1.0 product, your audience adopts it." – Tom Johnson, *What Is the Technical Writer's Role in Content Marketing?*

3. Earning trust

Customers appreciate content that helps them become successful.[30] Companies that provide information that is useful about a product or service, rather than content that simply teases and ends in a call to action, stand to gain credibility and greater market share. Marketing material certainly has its place, but proving value creates the strongest message. Credibility makes customers more comfortable and gives them a better impression of the product and the brand, improving its position in the marketplace. If the content is trusted, the brand will be too. And a surprising number of buyers (95 percent) are open to considering vendor-related content as trustworthy.[31] Consumers want to trust the brands they come in contact with, so the door is wide open.

Product documentation should be used as a means to build that trust. It results in content that is genuine, unique, and done with the intention of making the customer's life easier. Readers believe the message if the content is authoritative and could only come from the provider of that product or service, especially if it's put out there without the expectation of anything in return. Trustworthy content has a reputation for a cohesive message and thoughtful content along with an observed customer-centric mindset. As discussed on page 14, clickbait has the opposite effect: it is one of the easiest ways for a publisher to lose its audience's trust over time.[32]

> "[Readers] won't just take everything as gospel, they might even look elsewhere for reassurance that your content is based on fact rather than fiction…If they get an inkling that your content is masquerading as an advertorial, they'll be off. And who could blame them?"
>
> – Ben Hollom, M2 Bespoke: Content Planning & Production, *Is Your Content Trustworthy?*

If credible content is a regular occurrence, that creates the impression of a brand customers can rely on—the content is always there, and is routinely forthcoming. Seventy-three percent of consumers say that regularly getting useful information from a company is the most important attribute when selecting a brand.[33] Of course customers would prefer a reliable brand—reliability implies a quality product as well and a company that is on the up-and-up. Overwhelmingly, 100 percent of B2B buyer respondents said that vendor content has to come from a reliable source in order to impact their buying decision.[34]

> "People don't want to be sold or persuaded. They want to be informed, engaged, and empowered."
>
> – Xceed.com: Pushing Web Development Excellence, Mobile Apps Meeting Customers When It Matters

Publishing insightful, valuable content strengthens the customer relationship and will even grow the audience as word of mouth spreads. Using product documentation to provide the specialized information customers will need throughout the customer journey means aligning with their needs and interests—and it'll show.

Internal Benefits

1. Unification and collaboration

Communicating cross-functionally, between marketing and the documentation team, actually benefits both marketers and technical writers. The marketing team's knowledge of the product is deepened, and technical writers will understand the company's message better as well as its target audience. Typically, engineering has one perspective, technical doc writers another, sales another, marketing yet another.[35] Keeping technical documentation separate from marketing can lead to silos and inconsistencies, but combining the communications skill set of marketing writers with the expertise of engineering and technical documentation writers encourages interaction, connection, and information sharing.[36]

Here are just a few side effects of doing this:

- Breaks down silos between marketing, engineering, technical editors, QA, and support[37]
- Creates organizational alignment
- Ensures a consistent approach for the entire company to understand the customer and how they use the product
- Creates a unified voice
- Promotes coordination with marketing in a strategic, organized way[38]
- Encourages marketing teams to keep up with the industry
- Allows marketers to gain technical expertise

> "[Technical writers] have to understand what people want with this durn product. Who is going to use it? How are they going to use it? How can we make the installation easier on them? What issues are they going to bump into that will make them reach for the phone to call support? What are the most important use cases that will help them out? And for the answer to a lot of these questions, the marketing folks have the answers, or at least are out there trying to get them."
>
> – Doug Moran, *Why Technical Documentation Belongs in Content Marketing*

The wealth of content that organizations are already producing on their products and services equals more opportunity to tell the company's story. Marketing teams are always hungry for more content to send out to potential leads. With the incorporation of product documentation, they will have instant access to a larger set of product knowledge.[39] As the product changes and documentation keeps step with it, a steady stream of content becomes available to refresh the

company's website and establish a professional image—customers can tell if a website is stale.[40] Tech writers will also gain a new perspective on the overall objectives of product content, as opposed to creating articles based on how they think the product should/will be used. Back on the marketing side, business intelligence data can inform new research on how customers are using the product.[41]

2. Better documents

The unification of marketing and technical writers will even benefit the documentation itself. To begin, a greater understanding on the part of tech writers and editors of the company's messaging makes user manuals and product documentation even more appealing. The quality is improved when the wording is on message and in line with the story the company wants to tell. Incorporating product content into marketing material, which marketers want to distribute regularly, also provides a reason to keep help content up to date. Audiences are always attracted to timely content out of curiosity to know the latest information.

As new features, models, or iterations become available marketing can pull that documentation from the support site to showcase innovation—even link to the site itself from the company's marcomm (marketing/communications) site. Links strengthen domain authority, and with product documentation under the eyes of marketers, the SEO value of that material will be improved.[42] This also gives marketing materials technical credibility and gives the content the power to grow the audience as the product evolves. As soon as new content is available, it should funnel right in to the content marketing strategy.

> "Your help content (including technical documentation, product information and release notes), is your opportunity to woo, educate and dazzle your customers. No, not with sales-pitchy platitudes; those your customers will tune out, guaranteed. Your customers want to know the real stuff—how your product works, how to get your service going, and how your product can make them happy."
>
> – Lily Moessel, *Time to Get Your Technical Writer out of the Closet*

Putting These Ideas into Practice

Understand the customer first

The primary motivation for any initiative is to meet customer needs. Therefore, whether on the product or marketing side, measure every idea up against questions like, "Would our buyer persona like this?" "How does our target audience interact with our content?" "Would this idea resonate with our ideal customer and move them to action, converting them to leads?"[43]

In doing this, here are some data to consider that can be gleaned from marketing tools:

- Individual consumer demographics (age, gender, location)
- B2B customer demographics in particular (title, role, org, industry, reporting structure)
- Customers' buying behavior
- Search terms indicating problems customers needed to solve
- Where the company's typical consumers get their information in terms of the kinds of content they already consume[44]

As user adoption is the major focus of product documentation, understanding who is going to use the product or service and how they are going to use it leads to content that can make adoption easier on the customer. Down the line, this clear idea of product use cases can pre-empt issues users may encounter that would lead to a support call, putting the company a step ahead of the competition while alleviating pain points for the customer. This has an impact at every stage of the customer journey as it creates understanding, not just in the succeed stage.

Attention to this information also allows marketers to make content personalized, which is a dominant strategy currently in content marketing. If the company adopts an organization-wide customer-centric mindset, draw on that to concentrate on what customers can relate to when they are seeking information on a product. Make meaningful connections by appealing to personas and allowing them to choose their unique solution paths to fit their needs.[45]

> "When users are exploring a company, they may listen to a webinar, watch an overview video, explore a demo site, read a blog article, download a white paper, and so on. After they buy the product, they may interact with other types of content: a "getting started" tutorial, a support article, emails from support agents helping customers, interactive show-me videos, forum posts, KB articles, and more."
>
> – Tom Johnson, *What Is the Technical Writer's Role in Content Marketing?*

How-to content created from technical documentation is a powerful tool as it visually demonstrates someone succeeding with a product. All at once this kind of content answers questions and creates the feeling of wanting to experience the capabilities of the product, therefore validating the purchasing decision.

A new kind of content marketing

In the spirit of the hybrid collaboration between marketing and technical writers, when infusing product content into content marketing the principles of both functions should combine. Put simply, these are education and engagement. As the wording of help content is transformed into content marketing materials, it becomes enriched with input from the brand's subject matter experts (SMEs). Those SMEs now have a direct line to the consumer and can speak to the target audience with substance and a helpful intention that will not go unrecognized. Tying that expertise to buying trend data and lead generation strategy increases the probability of reaching that audience. Again, however, to increase effectiveness "the content should look and feel similar, with the same messaging, terms, tone, and style."[46]

When creating the various forms of content on page 16, companies would be wise to remember customers' desire for context in vendor content and engage in context marketing. Some principles of context marketing include:

- answer questions in context
- provide necessary information in micromoments
- deliver infotainment
- facilitate transactions
- continually deliver value by for example sharing innovative use cases[47]

Check for correlations

In terms of the effect of documentation on growth of site traffic as mentioned on page 15, marketers can perform a correlation analysis between the two and the company's annual revenue. Is there a causation? In addition, what are the top 100 companies doing in this area? There are public ways to find out this information. This presents a way to look for conversion opportunities, align product documentation content with various content initiatives that have proven successful.

Another thing to keep in mind is to check the new content against the customer's search intent alongside Google's evaluation of content effectiveness in speaking to that intent. Google itself advises companies to make pages for users not for search engines, which is wise because its algorithm always changes. But if the content is unique, if it answers the customer's questions—and if it is structured and easily retrievable smart microcontent—Google will find it no matter what its current algorithm.[48]

Strengthening both content marketing and product documentation by allowing the two to influence each other will put the company and brand at the forefront of SERPs—and foremost in consumers' minds.

About MindTouch

MindTouch is a leading SaaS solution for customer success/engagement management helping companies create smarter customers to accelerate the sales cycle and drive product adoption. MindTouch not only transforms the product but also helps transform content a company already produces into a customer engagement channel. Users can bring the customer record (CRM) and the customer's self-service behavior together for insight into their experience with their brand. Users can also create a mobile-ready, SEO optimized site for all of a company's content. MindTouch can help companies double organic web traffic, triple user time on their site, and reduce the bounce rate by 50%.

About the Author

Megan M. Hard is a Market Analyst at MindTouch, where she studies trends in the tech industry and how they tie together with consumer needs and behavior. After six years as a journalist and writer, she spent eight years as a Senior Editor at The Conference Board, a nonprofit business research think tank.

ENDNOTES

[1] Dan Antonelli, "5 Reasons Your Small Business Needs Content Marketing," *Entrepreneur*, November 24, 2015; and Samuel Scott, *Everything the Tech World Says about Marketing Is Wrong*, TechCrunch, April 12, 2016.

[2] *2016 Content Preferences Survey Report: B2B Buyers Value Trustworthy Content with Data and Analysis*, Demand Gen Report, February 2016, page 2.

[3] Brian Solis, *Mobile Is Eating the World*, Sitecore, February 2016, page 7.

[4] *Measuring the Importance of Product Content in Customer Experience Management*, SDL, September 2012, page 7.

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