

The Ultimate Guide for Content Writers.

Create Content Your Audience Will Love



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Overcoming challenges in the life of a content writer.

If you have any experience with either personal or professional content creation, you've probably had to face unexpected hurdles that make the approaching deadline seem hard to reach. I recall spending hours making final edits on a long and well-researched article and then being unable to find the latest version the next day—I saved it “somewhere” under a new file name (it was something random like *ihatethis_almostfinal_final03*).

I've lost a lot of valuable content over the years. For instance, I spent hundreds and hundreds of hours on my fan blog; one day, a hacker broke in, messed up the web design, and deleted most of the blog posts (yep, you guessed it—the blog was the only place where my articles were saved). And the splashy sound of hot tea being accidentally spilled on the keyboard of my old laptop (15 pages of my thesis, irretrievably lost) haunts me in my dreams to this day.

So when I think about all those times when I got irritated while creating content, I can safely say that the problem wasn't a lack of ideas or the people I was working with, but the tools I was using and the way I was creating and storing content. Obstacles and distractions poison your creativity. You can, however, adopt and follow certain processes to ensure that you won't have to deal with unnecessary obstacles that would only slow you down.

We've created this ebook to provide practical answers to issues that every content writer and marketer has: How should you tackle ideation? How to effectively review your content? Is there anything you can do to simplify the publication process? What are the ingredients that make content great?

The ebook is divided into eight chapters, seven of which focus on individual stages in the content lifecycle and give you practical tips on what to do in each stage. The last chapter explains how a content management system (CMS) that was developed with both marketers and developers in mind can make the whole content creation process much easier and actually enjoyable.

We hope that this ebook will help you improve the way you create and manage content. Feel free to [reach out to us](#) and let us know what you think—in case you haven't noticed, we're passionate about everything that's related to content and finding the best way to work with it :).

Zaneta Styblova, Creative Writer, Kentico Kontent



About Americaneagle.com.

Americaneagle.com is a full-service, family owned, global digital agency that is dedicated to providing best-in-class web design, development, hosting, post-launch support and digital marketing services for over 25 years. With a team comprised of 500+ skilled professionals and subject matter experts, Americaneagle.com focuses on achieving measurable results and exceeding goals for all of our clients. Thanks to our flexibility and expertise in a wide range of online services, we have the capabilities to handle any industry at any size, from start-ups to Fortune 500 companies, professional sports teams to government organizations, and small online storefronts to large multi-channel retailers.



Content secrets for the Experience Era.

In 1997, a dying technology company placed a bet for its survival.

With revenues plunging and losses mounting, a group of executives faced the increasingly real possibility of bankruptcy. With no other traditional rescue options left, they came to a decision that was as desperate as it was surprising. They opted to entrust the future of the company to a radical idea from a business consultant, essentially inverting the relative importance of technology and user experience in the product design process.

The bet paid off. Not only was the company back on its feet within a few years, it also introduced a range of revolutionary products that caught old and new rivals off-guard. It grew into one of the world's most admired and most profitable technology companies. It forced an entire industry into a similar shift; the global adoption of a then unfamiliar product development philosophy. The executive group also hired the business consultant as the firm's CEO.

That consultant was, of course, the late Steve Jobs, who returned to the company he co-founded in 1976. He was convinced that the appeal of Apple's products was less in the number of megapixels and gigahertz they offered, but primarily in the experiences they enable. This idea was not exactly orthodox at a time when 'tech specs' were the

primary selling point for technology. But, against all odds, Jobs and Apple scored quick successes with a more personal computer (iMac), a music player fueled by an entertainment platform experience (iPod, iTunes), and a phone that reimagined what a phone could and should be (iPhone, AppStore).

Content drives experiences

Apple's rapid switch to an experience-based product strategy holds lessons for a plethora of industries and organizations. And not just for their products, but significantly for how they communicate them to their audiences through, yes, content. Traditionally, content practices have focused on metrics of quantity in the hope of reaching more goals more quickly. However, just like a pitch consisting of product specifications, content quantity is no longer a guarantee of sustainable success.

As content marketing levels exceed our ability to absorb information, metrics of quality are emerging as the guide that helps businesses open communication channels, engage audiences, and convert prospects. Rather than throwing even more spaghetti at the wall, businesses are now investing in focused, cohesive content experiences. They believe in content as the muscles that enable a website to move: without content, a website is unlikely to go anywhere. A large quantity of random content may get a site into motion, but only the right content can fuel the technology foundation of a website to take an organization on a path to targeted customer acquisition, engagement, and conversion.

5 steps to experience content

Understanding what quality content really is may sound like a trivial first step to building an experience-based content architecture. Yet it is where business owners and content creators disconnect the most. How do you define content? Think about your content in terms of layers that your customers consume passively (text, images), actively (menus, buttons) as well as indirectly (off-site, metadata). If you align the understanding of basic content elements and constantly assess this in the light of your organization's objectives and the needs of your end-users, you are able to remove communication roadblocks on an ongoing basis.

To get to a well thought out content experience, consider these five principles:

1. Know your audience

Identify the empathetic characteristics of your audience. Empathy provides transparency into seeing why you can or cannot attract users, why you can or cannot engage them, and, most importantly, what drives or blocks conversions. Keep in mind that your content serves at least two audiences—your business and your customers. The overlap between what the business needs and what the audience wants is the target you want to aim for.

2. Act on data

Most content strategists feel they are drowning in numbers, even if Google Analytics is their only data source. To use data effectively, begin with describing your primary content goals in simple metrics such as “dollars” and define the dependencies that impact them. Dependencies help build behavior models not only for the status quo of your website but for early indicators of changing user trends.

3. Be the guide

Conclusive user journeys are the blueprints of your content strategy—from entering your content ecosystem to conversion. Similar to a navigation system, your journey has milestones with entry and exit requirements, location markers, and clear guidance. A call-to-action structure that is supported by high content readability and a taxonomy that is consistent in all content distribution channels guides customers predictably to desired site destinations.

4. Remember the whole is more than the sum of the parts

Content structure reaches beyond individual pages. It includes your aggregate content on webpages, in email communication, social media posts, partners, and alliance media as well as paid advertising. More often than not, individual content items impact other content and, as a result, the overall content performance in positive or negative ways. When planning content, consider synergies that amplify content, as well as disruptions that can break user journeys.

5. Build to sustain

Strategic content should be considered a business pillar that requires planning, building, growing, and management. Content management includes content

governance that syncs people with processes and tools—all of which are necessary to help sustain your content performance in the long term. Specific roles for your content team, processes that help define planning through publication, as well as supporting standardized tools give you the best shot at keeping your content buzzing and make that next website redesign much more routine than pain.

Wikipedia explains the nature of content in just under 1,000 words, or about the length of this introduction. While reading the Wikipedia article may leave you somewhat confused, it highlights the fact that content questions are intrinsically complex, bringing together multiple considerations. So it is, of course, impossible to define your content experience in a recipe of just five principles. However, considerations like those described above can help build your foundation of a multifaceted content structure that is undoubtedly the most valuable and essential component in your marketing toolbox. That's why we at Americaneagle.com believe that words move mountains and content moves the world.

Wolfgang Gruener is a Senior Digital Strategist and the Content Experience (CXP) lead at Americaneagle.com, a full-service, global digital agency based in Des Plaines, Illinois that provides best-in-class web design, development, hosting, post-launch support and digital marketing services. He has spent nearly 15 years of his career in journalism and publishing in mass media, as well as more than 10 years in corporate digital and content strategy using his experience and passion to build award-winning strategies for audience acquisition, engagement, and conversion.



Introduction.

In January 1996, Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates penned an essay predicting, “Content is where I expect much of the real money will be made on the internet.” The piece was titled [‘Content is King’](#) and almost 25 years later, it’s hard to argue with those sentiments.

Gates, now estimated to have a net worth of around \$110 billion, went on to say: “If people are to be expected to put up with turning on a computer to read a screen, they must be rewarded with deep and extremely up-to-date information that they can explore at will. They need to have audio, and possibly video.”

Even a quarter of a century later, we can use this statement as a fundamental starting point to inform the way we create and manage our content. **Users crave informative, engaging, trustworthy content** and being able to deliver that in a consistent, efficient manner is crucial to the success of any business.

But of course, that’s no easy feat as it is reliant on a number of elements within the content lifecycle working smoothly together. There are many stages a piece of content will go through before reaching the user—from ideation and creation through the review and approval process to publishing and optimization.

This ebook has a chapter devoted to each, discussing best practices for the respective stages and how retaining control of the entire content lifecycle can have a directly positive effect on the quality of your output.



1 Forming the ideas for your content.

Your content can take many forms. Is it a blog? A newsletter? A white paper? An ebook? But before you get bogged down with this conundrum, you need to come up with the ideas—don’t restrict yourself by deciding upon the structure first and then finding the content to fit. Instead, allow the creativity of your team to flow and then work out which ideas are most suited to which forms of content.

Andrew Geoghegan, Diageo’s global head of consumer planning, reinforces this point in an opinion piece for Marketing Week. He says:

“Creativity is the oxygen in marketing—it is important in all aspects, from how we understand and collaborate with the people who use our categories, to making sense of brand challenges, and coming up with memorable solutions which will build our brands, as well as landing a sale. We are all creative and need to draw on that more to generate new ideas, push the boundaries of how we see our world today, and to sustain future growth.”

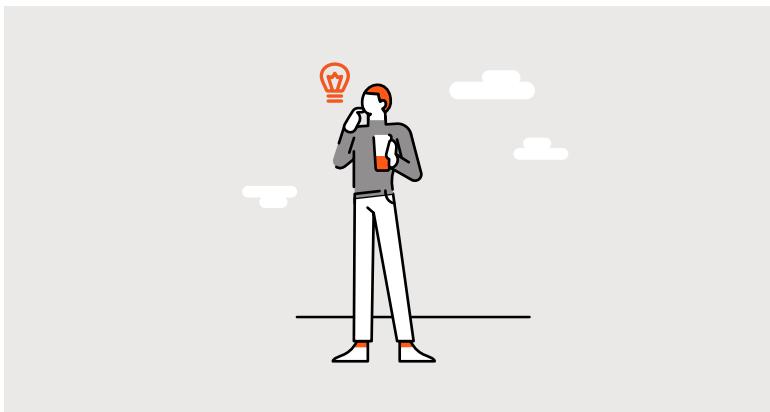
As the first step in the content lifecycle, this is arguably the most important because without it none of the others can follow. But how can you be sure you’re getting the most out of the ideation process? Where do you find the inspiration for your content

ideas? And how do you sort the good from the bad, and cultivate those that you think have the potential to be a success?

Where do we get our ideas from?

The truth is that our inspiration can come from almost anywhere.

Of course, B2B organizations should be guided first and foremost by their customers' needs. What do they want more of? What works for them and what doesn't? Who is their target audience, and what will it respond to? Being familiar with and understanding these challenges should help inspire the ideas that can create solutions.

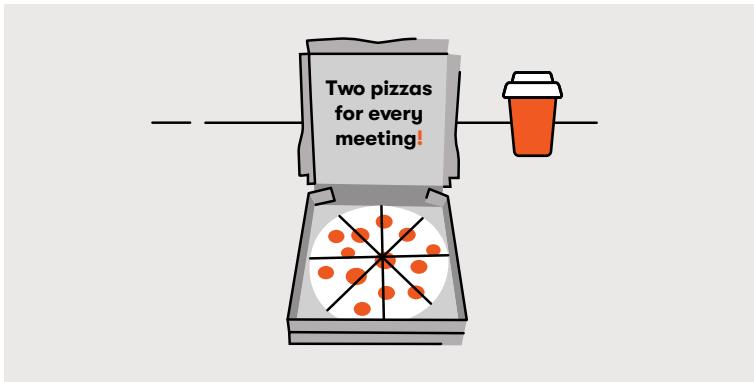


Keyword research, meanwhile, can inform content strategists and writers on the exact terms that people are searching for within a certain subject matter. From there, ideas can begin to take shape backed up by the data and combined with your company's target audience and brand messaging.

Sometimes, the best inspiration can be drawn from everyday life. Encouraging your content team to **see things from a different perspective** and allowing their subconscious to take over may just unlock some innovative ideas that have the potential to greatly enhance your marketing strategy.

As well as taking what might be considered an organic approach, you can also put time aside on a regular basis to sit down and brainstorm various concepts. If doing so as a collective, you may want to bear in mind the general rule employed by Amazon founder

Jeff Bezos, who believes that you should be able to feed the attendees of any meeting with [just two pizzas](#).



How do we tackle ideation?

Bezos' theory is that too many contributors can sometimes cloud the process, resulting in an abundance of ill-formed ideas, while you may find that some in attendance never get a chance to have their say. Inviting a diverse group of people is likely to increase the chances of coming up with a wide range of ideas and giving the attendees a couple of days' notice will give them a chance to do some preparation.

According to an old saying, there's no such thing as a bad idea, but a key element of this stage of the content lifecycle is being able to identify a concept's weaknesses. Once that's been done, the idea can either be discarded or developed until it begins to take shape—there's no sense in spending time on a suggestion that's not going to work when there are others to be discussed.

What else can be done to inform content ideas?

Introspective analysis can be a hugely useful way to inspire your next batch of ideas. By auditing your own content and recognizing its strengths and weaknesses, you'll soon be able to form a picture of where the focus for your inspiration should lie. The use of analytical tools like Google Analytics, Bitly, and Ahrefs can deliver hard data to back up the theory, allowing you to understand which pieces of content are performing better than others.

Similarly, auditing your competitors' content and identifying any areas where they have gained an edge can act as stimulation, while detailed research into [industry trends](#) will help inform your content strategy as you look to put your ideas into practice.

Chapter One's Key Points.

- The fundamental condition for the success of content marketers is their ability to be **creative**.
- Ideas for great content can come from almost **anywhere**—understanding your customers' needs, keyword research, industry trends, competitor analysis and everyday life.
- When brainstorming ideas, invite a **diverse** range of people but don't pack the room. Remember Jeff Bezos' two-pizza rule.
- Give your team time to **prepare** their ideas well in advance, rather than be put on the spot.
- Be prepared to regularly **audit** your own content and identify its respective strengths and weaknesses.



2 The importance of a content strategy.

Once your ideas have been finalized, it's time to start thinking about the mechanics of how the content will be put together. Having a clearly defined plan in place for all to follow is paramount for creating high-performance content, evidenced by the fact that the number of [B2B marketers documenting their strategy](#) continues to rise.

Regarding B2C marketers, a survey found that 71% have a content marketing strategy, with [one third of those](#) documenting it. Of those without a strategy, more than two thirds were planning to implement one within 12 months.

But how should the planning process work? What do you need to consider? And which tools can you utilize to make this stage of the content lifecycle easier to manage?

Achieve clarity during the planning stage

The planning phase of the content lifecycle allows writers, marketers, and strategists to define the form(s) their content will take. This may be in the shape of website landing pages, blogs, emails, social media or any other type of digital content.

During this stage, it's also imperative that everyone working on the project has a full understanding of what's being delivered and when. Timeframes and deadlines must be crystal clear in everybody's mind, as there can be no confusion as to what the team are working towards.

The purpose of the content must also be distinct. What is its target audience? What are its goals? Is it to drive traffic? To improve lead generation? To educate and inform? Where in the conversion funnel is it targeting? Not only that, but you need to consider how the content will transform the behavior of the user. What are you expecting of them once they consume it? What are they supposed to do differently from that point?

Without a definitive direction to follow, it's likely that your content will not fare as you'd hoped when the idea was first proposed. With that in mind, it's also important that the content has a clear business goal and that everybody is aware of the metrics by which you will measure its performance.

Managing the planning process

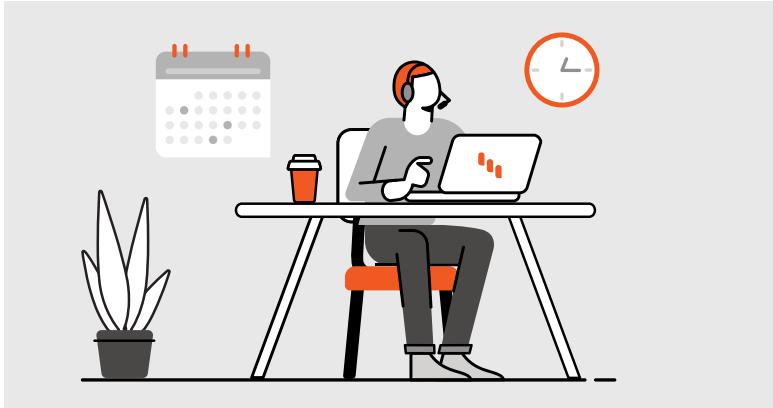
Part of being able to deliver great content is ensuring it is published in good time, in line with any deadlines that may apply. An editorial calendar can be created to detail which pieces are due to go live and when, which means everyone on the team should be well aware of what content is of the highest priority.

The calendar can also be used for scheduling purposes, allowing a piece of content to be created and reviewed well in advance of the deadline and then set to go live at a certain time. This can be extremely useful when planning content around campaign launches, for example, and frees up more time for your team to focus on other stages of the content lifecycle.

Utilizing the right content management system (CMS) can enable you to assign tasks to your various contributors so that everyone is aware of their responsibilities as well as those of their colleagues. This way, there should be no duplication of efforts, which can prove a significant waste of resources and can cause delays.

Also in the interests of avoiding duplication, sharing information across your various teams can help streamline the planning process. In larger organizations especially, content tends to be created in separate groups, each of whom may have their own planning workflows but end up actually producing content that looks markedly similar.

By encouraging these silos to communicate with each other and adopt a unified approach, it's likely that your content will improve and the business will waste less time and money in the process.



The importance of remaining flexible

Of course, while having a clear plan is an essential part of the content lifecycle, it's important to build in a certain amount of flexibility. Expectations that everything will work out as you'd hoped are likely to be unrealistic, which is why you and your team need to be able to adapt to any changes that occur.

These might come in the form of a shifting deadline, which could mean the prioritization of one piece of content over another. Or, once the work has been published, you may find that certain content performs unexpectedly better than others, prompting you to alter your strategy and focus on making the most of those positive results.

The key is to have a plan—but be open to fine-tuning it if the circumstances require. And that goes for every stage of the content lifecycle.

Chapter Two's Key Points.

- It's important to have a **content strategy** with clearly defined goals.
- However, that strategy must include room for **flexibility**.
- There needs to be a distinct **purpose** to your content. You need to know who it is aimed at and which metrics you'll be measuring its success against.
- Management **tools** are available to assign tasks to your various contributors and to schedule the publication of content to fall in line with the likes of campaign launches.
- Encouraging **communication** among the various departments who work on content will help avoid duplication, thus streamlining the process and increasing profitability.



3 Creating content within the right CMS.

Once you've come up with the ideas and planned your content, it's time to start creating. The importance of this stage of the content lifecycle is emphasized by the results of a survey of B2B organizations carried out by MarketingProfs and the Content Marketing Institute, which found that [84% outsourced their content creation](#).

With many businesses requiring a large volume of content to increase performance, it's little wonder that so many are trusting in the experts and outsourcing this part of the process. But how do we go about creating great content?

Julia McCoy is the founder of Express Writers and has been named an industry thought leader in content marketing by Forbes. She identifies these [five keys to creating valuable content](#):

- Be authoritative
- Be informative and comprehensive
- Be readable
- Have a point of view
- Give satisfaction

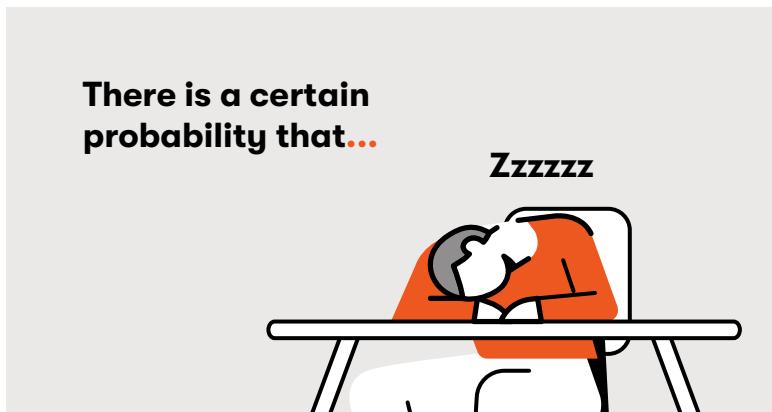
You may find that some of these points are more applicable to certain forms of content than others. For example, if you are producing viral social media content, its purpose is unlikely to ensure it is informative and comprehensive. Instead, it wants to capture the imagination, entertain, and encourage your users to share with their contacts on the platform.

However, if you're creating website landing pages dealing with the subject of car insurance, the content needs to be in-depth, authoritative and must satisfy user intent. Oh, and don't forget—it still needs to be readable. The trick is finding that balance, which is certainly no easy feat, but with the right team in place and the right tools at your disposal, it's certainly not insurmountable.

What to consider when writing your content

By this stage of the content lifecycle, you should already know the target audience, the form the content will take and its purpose. Once you have these three factors clear in your mind, you'll be much better prepared to start work on the project.

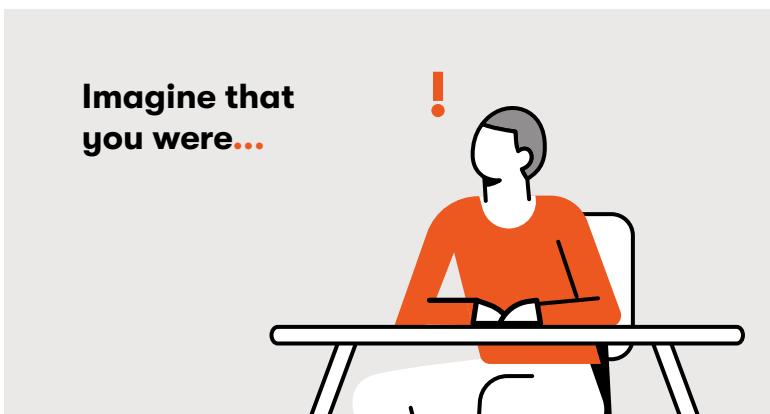
It's important to be engaging. For example, content is unlikely to perform well if it is dull, lifeless or uses overly complicated sentencing structure. And it can pay to speak directly to the reader, drawing them in and making them feel like they are involved in a conversation, rather than a lecture.



Where you are satisfying a search query, the content needs to be detailed and comprehensive. If it doesn't cover all of the salient topics adequately, the content is not serving its purpose and cannot be regarded as valuable to the user. Google's 2018

Medic update was a clear indicator of the importance of these factors, extolling the virtues of pages which demonstrated high levels of [Expertise, Authoritativeness and Trustworthiness](#).

Being able to differentiate yourself will help enhance the performance of your content, and this is where your competitor analysis during the planning stage of the content lifecycle can inform you. If, for example, you're vying for volume of traffic on a specific topic, what can you do differently that will make you stand out from the crowd? It could come in the form of an innovative content hub, with plenty of supporting content, or it may take shape in a unique structure or tone of voice that appeals to the reader and improves their user experience.



Creating the content within your CMS

During the planning phase, you will have decided on the channels to which your content will be delivered. This in turn defines the form of your piece(s) and how you work within that structure in the CMS. Using structured content ensures it will be fit for purpose when it reaches the front end during the publication phase.

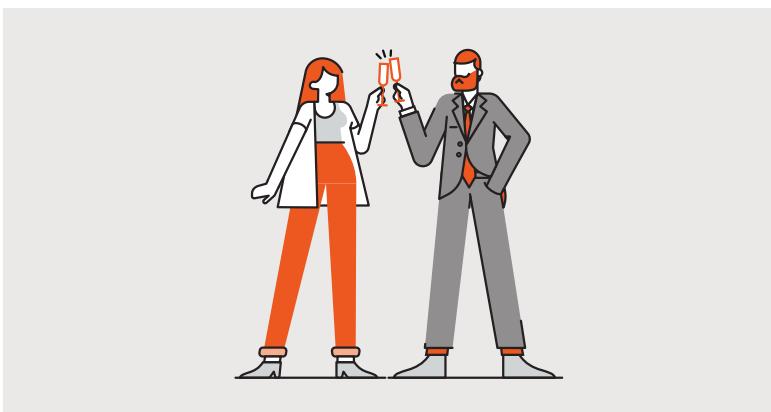
Using a CMS that allows its users to create and collaborate on the content directly within its interface could be a lifesaver. Content writers can remove time-consuming practices from the workflow, such as sharing their work via email and online documents or copying and pasting from other applications into the CMS. Not only does this streamline the process, but it ensures everyone is able to view the latest version of the content, and updated editions do not get lost in a mass of communication.

You may even consider implementing role-based access controls, restricting which team members can view the content and make any updates that might be necessary. That way, your content will be safe from any unauthorized edits, which can cause confusion and trigger harmful delays in the creation process, as well as pose a security risk in certain cases.

There is also the opportunity to reuse content that already exists within your CMS. This way, your team will avoid a duplication of efforts in creating pieces of work that have been produced at least once previously. Instead, the content can be repurposed in order to save both time and money.

Where a greater level of expertise is required—as discussed earlier with Google’s Medic algorithm update—content authors can tag in a subject matter expert. These specialists can then help with the authorship of the piece, or can at least provide invaluable help and guidance, offering suggestions as to what ought to be included or omitted.

Being able to **create valuable content that your audience will enjoy**, find useful and want to share requires a careful combination of factors. You need to be authoritative, entertaining, and informative while always bearing in mind your target audience. By having the right CMS in place, you can greatly improve the efficiency of the workflow and allow more time for creating content of the highest quality.



Chapter Three's Key Points.

- To create great content, you need to be **authoritative, informative, readable** and provide satisfaction to the user.
- It's imperative to let your **target audience** and the content's **purpose** guide you at all times.
- Following Google's algorithm update in 2018, content that displays high levels of **expertise, authoritativeness** and **trustworthiness** will perform more favorably.
- Working **directly** in the CMS can streamline the content creation process and ensure contributors are all looking at the latest version.
- Tools such as **access controls** can be set up to aid content creation, helping make the workflow more efficient. This in turn can carve out more time to focus on other stages of the content lifecycle.



4 Streamlining the reviewal process.

To ensure you're delivering the very best content, it will have to undergo a careful review, as it's highly unlikely that any piece of content cannot be improved from its first draft. This phase of the content lifecycle is where significant and potentially costly delays can occur, which means it's imperative for you and your team to help smooth out the process as much as possible.

It's estimated that only [18% of creative projects](#) are approved within a maximum of two rounds of review, while 17% require six rounds or more. Being able to position yourself within the former category relies heavily on two factors: creating strong content in the first place, and removing unnecessary layers from the reviewal process.

How to review your content effectively

By setting out a template for how the reviewal process will work, you'll enhance consistency across your organization and create a workflow pattern for everyone to follow. Of course, this is likely to differ from one business to the next—there's no one magic formula that will work for everyone—but having a procedure in place as a guide will provide clarity for your content team.

Part of that process is ensuring strong communication among all parties involved. That includes making any approvers aware ahead of time that the content will be sent to them on a certain date for review. This way, they'll be able to make room in their schedule and will not have the stress of dealing with a task that has been dropped on them at short notice.



During the planning phase, all those involved in the content production process should have been fully informed as to the purpose of the project. However, when your content is up for review, it can also be worth sending a reminder to the approvers so that they can check the work is meeting those requirements.

Use the CMS to your advantage

As with content creation and collaboration, some CMSs allow you to review your work directly, without leaving the interface. This means that any contributors are working on the project from the same place and can be sure that they're looking at the latest version.

If the CMS allows, proofreaders or anyone else involved in the approval process can provide suggestions for amendments directly on the document, rather than go back and forth with multiple comments. It's critical to use a single, centralized hub so that everybody contributing to the content can be certain they are working on the latest version. This decreases the likelihood of work getting lost or edits being made to the wrong version.



A recent study shows that the volume of demand for work is classed as a [significant challenge to 72% of creative teams](#), while 77% say the speed at which they are expected to work is also a major obstacle to overcome. With those figures in mind, it's worth doing all you can to streamline the reviewal process and reduce your creative team's workload as a result.

Giving feedback and making amends

Of course, in an ideal world, any feedback on your content will be largely positive and any tweaks will be minor. And although that's what we're all striving for, in reality the story can sometimes be very different.

Whether it's proofreaders, compliance or clients that are reviewing the content, it's important that feedback is honest and constructive. Don't just point out something that's not quite right—explain why it's wrong and suggest a tweak that will improve the piece.

Making the changes quickly is another important part of the reviewal process. Putting off any amends can cause problematic delays, especially where there are non-negotiable deadlines to meet, such as a campaign launch. By suggesting and then making alterations swiftly, it allows content teams to tick off that part of the process and begin to consider reviewing the content in terms of how it will look and perform once published.

Thinking about the next phase of the content lifecycle

During the latter stages of the reviewal process, you need to think about how the next stage—publication—impacts on your project. For B2B organizations, for example, the content needs to be able to [integrate](#) effectively with any internal systems at the client's end.

Meanwhile, being able to **preview the content in various channels** will give you an idea of how it will look across different platforms, such as on desktop or mobile. You can ill-afford to set the content live and then find out that it's not suited to the medium for which it was designed, which is where preview features built into the CMS can come into their own.

Reviewing content is about so much more than just proofreading. There needs to be an awareness of timescales for approval, amends to be suggested, changes to be made as well as previewing of the work to ensure it will meet the requirements from both a technical and practical point of view.

Chapter Four's Key Points.

- You can bring important consistency and clarity to the reviewal process by forming **guidelines** for all contributors to follow.
- Clear **communication** is needed so that everyone working on the content understands when items have been submitted for approval and when amends are ready to be acted upon.
- Working **directly** in the CMS means all contributors can be sure of updating the correct version, and content does not have to be shared for review via other means such as email.
- Feedback needs to be honest but **constructive**, suggesting solutions to any problem areas rather than simply pointing out issues.
- Having the right CMS can help you **preview** the content before it goes live and ensure it will display properly on the appropriate platforms.



5 Publishing your content made easy.

After putting a significant amount of time and effort into planning, creating and reviewing your content, publishing it will hopefully prove a more straightforward process. However, there's more to this stage of the content lifecycle than just clicking a button and setting your work live, which is where implementing the right CMS can prove crucial.

If your content needs to be published across many channels, or needs to be able to integrate with a variety of internal systems, it can cause a major headache for developers. However, cloud-based solutions such as [a headless CMS with Content-as-a-Service capabilities](#) can help you overcome these issues, affording you more time to focus on other areas of the content lifecycle.

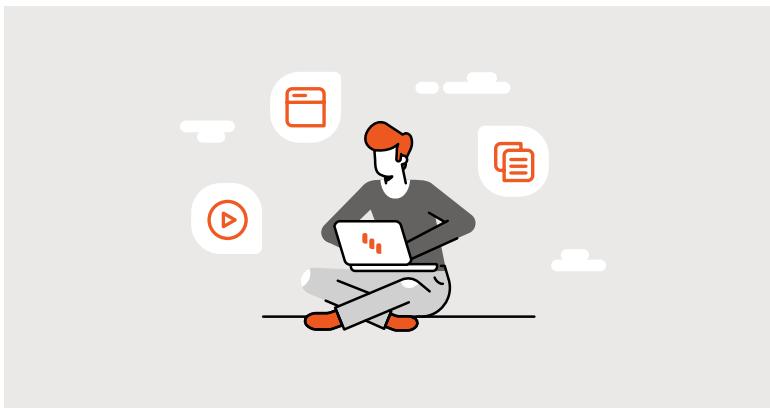
Delivering content that's ready to go

The [Digital Marketing Institute](#) explains: “Content is the currency of the internet, and there are hundreds of types that brands can focus on creating to engage audiences, reach new target markets, provide value to customers, and entice new prospects.

But with all the different types of content that are out there, it can be difficult for brands to know which ones to focus on.”

Of course, by this stage in the lifecycle, you've already decided upon the type(s) of content you want to focus on. But you don't want to be restricted to producing only one form, and **the right CMS can enable you to publish your work across multiple channels**. Best of all, it can be delivered directly to the front end as clean, structured content that does not contain any problematic formatting issues.

This means that whether your content takes the form of blogs, infographics, video, E-A-T landing pages or anything else, it can be incorporated into any website design, integrated with any system, and viewed on any device.



Simplifying the publication process

There is more than one way to publish your content. It can be done manually, with an approved contributor accessing the system and pushing the work live as the deadline arrives. Or, as we discussed during this ebook's chapter on planning your content, you can use the editorial calendar to schedule publication.

Operating in this way allows content to be created and reviewed well in advance and then set live at a pre-determined time and date, ensuring deadlines are not missed and nothing slips under the radar.

As part of a wider project, you may have a number of associated pieces of content that are all ready to be published at the same time or within quick succession. This is where

a scheduling tool becomes invaluable as it allows numerous items to go live in a short period of time, avoiding the potential delays and difficulties that may arise with manual operation.

Webhooks can play a pivotal role with this particular function. Webhooks, along with polling, are one of two ways that applications can talk to each other, although they do so via different methods. Allow [Zapier](#) to explain with the following analogy:

“Polling is like knocking on your friend’s door and asking if they have any sugar. Webhooks are like someone tossing a bag of sugar at your house whenever they buy some.”

PayPal informing your accounting app when you get paid is a more literal example of a webhook in action, and they can also be used in the publication of content. By sending data automatically from one system or app to another, they trigger other processes and notifications that are tied into the content that has been published initially.

You may also have varying requirements across different regions, which is likely to influence which pieces of content get published where. For example, as of January 2018, [92% of internet users](#) in China watched online video content on any device (the figure for the United States and India, by comparison, was 85%—reflecting the value of that particular medium).

And, with [30% of internet users in China](#) watching online video content every day, this example indicates the importance of targeting the right audiences with the appropriate forms of content. All being well, these considerations will have been made during the planning phase, but that theory is only useful if you possess the technology to put it into practice at that stage of the content lifecycle.

Just as reviewing your content has many more facets than just proofreading and fact-checking, publishing it can be more complex than simply setting it live at the touch of a button. Having the right CMS in place can enable you to deliver clean content that adapts seamlessly to a range of platforms, meaning your creative team can work on multi-dimensional projects safe in the knowledge that the finished product will be presented in optimal fashion.

Chapter Five's Key Points.

- Utilizing the **right CMS** can make the publication of your content an altogether smoother process.
- You can deliver different types of content so that they **integrate** effectively with a range of designs and devices.
- **Regions** can be targeted with different forms of content, capitalizing on the geographic analysis carried out during the planning phase.
- Publication itself can be done either **manually** or it can be **scheduled** via a content calendar tool.
- **Webhooks** can be set up to trigger notifications and processes in other associated applications once the content is published.



6 Using data to assist optimization.

Even once you've published your content, there's still so much more you can do to ensure it performs as well as possible, and optimization can play a huge role in achieving your goals. SEO-optimized blogs, landing pages, and E-A-T content will already have been enhanced on the back of the keyword research carried out during the ideation and planning stages, and this work will hopefully produce the desired results upon publication.

But there is a secondary stage of optimization for you to consider post-delivery—one that relies on the analysis of the content's performance, which informs the appropriate action to be taken thereafter. According to recent research, 55% of creatives say they "rarely" or "never" receive quantitative feedback on the performance of their content from marketing teams. By comparison, only 17% said they receive feedback "often" or "almost always".

It's imperative that you place yourself within the latter category in order to understand your content's strengths and weaknesses. By doing so, you'll be in a much stronger position to optimize it effectively.

Allow performance analytics to guide you

Once your content is published, you can track its performance through Google Analytics or other tracking tools. Doing so allows you to identify which items are performing strongly as well as those which aren't quite moving the needle as hoped.

[Moz explains:](#) “No matter how well you know the people you’re targeting, your content marketing efforts will always have room for improvement. Some things you think will be explosively popular will fizzle immediately after they’re released, and some things you’re sure will fall flat will take off in ways you never expected. There are important lessons in those times, and in order to learn them, you’ll have to know how to understand what happened.”

This is where building flexibility into your strategy during the planning stage can prove a prudent decision. As it becomes clear which pieces of content have hit their mark and are driving strong traffic, improving conversions, or reducing bounce rates, you need to be able to capitalize on those positive results.



With the right CMS, those **items can be repurposed and delivered across a greater number of channels** in a variety of forms, with the aim of extending their reach to as many pairs of eyes as possible.

You can also identify those authors who are producing the best performing content, which will help foster an environment of good work being rewarded. It may also give you a steer as to your team members’ areas of expertise for future projects and influence task delegation in the early stages of the next content lifecycle.

On the other hand, content that is not having the desired results can be archived and returned to at a later date as you focus on repurposing those items that are delivering. Alternatively, you can use the lessons taken from the analysis of the high-performance pieces to try and improve struggling content.

What to consider when analyzing your content's performance

There are many metrics by which you can measure the success of your content. They include:

- Traffic
- Engagement
- Conversions
- Bounce rate
- Brand awareness
- Dwell time

You should know by this point which metrics are most relevant to your project. On top of all this, you need to understand the wider context of the metrics you're using as the primary indicators of success and failure.

Moz describes this as “measuring smart” and goes on to say: “Metrics mean nothing unless you combine them with your brain. Don’t just gather numbers for the sake of gathering numbers; make them matter. When you show them to a client or boss, be able to answer the question, ‘Okay, but what does this mean? Why are these good?’ Remember, it’s on you to prove the value of content.”

All of these technical insights are invaluable tools that need to be utilized properly, as they remove the subjective element of distinguishing “good” content from “bad” content. Instead, it enables you to adopt a data-driven approach to identifying those pieces that are performing better than others. This knowledge, in turn, can be used to good effect when you come to revisit the planning phase of the content lifecycle.

Chapter Six's Key Points.

- You should be using **analytics** to inform the optimization of your content once it's published.
- There are many **metrics** by which you can assess performance. You need to ensure you measure those most **relevant** to your content, and that you report them in **context**.
- With the right CMS, content that is performing well can be **repurposed** and subsequently **extended** across a wider range of digital channels to optimize its reach.
- Less successful content can be **archived** and revisited later or **improved** upon in the immediate term.
- All of the data gathered—whether it displays positive or negative results—can help shape your content **strategy** in the future.



7 Making your content personal.

The final stage of the content lifecycle is where you can make your audience feel truly valued and appreciated via personalization. Of course, no single piece of content can satisfy the needs of every individual customer—there's no magic formula to make that happen, otherwise we'd all be doing it.

Instead, you need to be able to tailor your users' experiences based on their profiles and the data that you have access to. Hopefully, that will reap benefits in terms of seeing an increased return on investment, but you need to have the right tools at your disposal in order to do so.

Recognizing the importance of personalization

A recent study from [Evergage](#) found that 98% of marketers believe that personalization helps advance customer relationships, while 70% felt that its impact was either “strong” or “extremely strong”. However, achieving effective personalization is a difficult balance to strike.

Robert Rose, Chief Strategy Officer at [The Content Advisory](#), explains: “The best content experiences aren’t those that are conspicuously personalized. They’re personal, relevant, and welcome.

“People are unlikely to share a piece of content that was personalized based on easily trackable behavior. Content that they want to share is something that moves them to say, ‘Hey, you all have to check this out!’ It’s content they see themselves in and believe others will see themselves in, too. When your audience has an experience of, ‘Wow, this is exactly what I needed’, that’s when you win.”

Personalization in practice

So, how do you actually go about personalizing your content? Being able to publish across multiple channels opens up a vast array of opportunities. By integrating with internal and third-party systems, you gain access to your visitors’ rich user profiles, meaning you profit from a greater understanding of a number of factors. These can include their location, the type of device they’re using and where in the conversion funnel they sit—all of which helps inform the type of content you should be targeting them with.

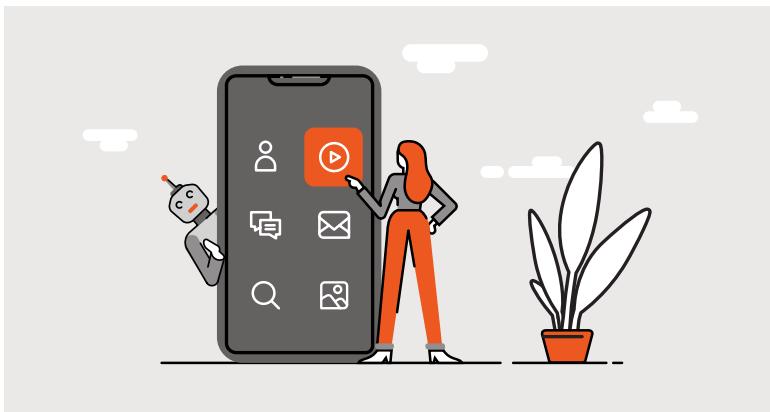
By drawing up a fuller picture of their profile and understanding their intent, you can personalize your content to **make sure you deliver the right output at the right time for the right audience**. That, in turn, will hopefully have multiple benefits, including increased customer loyalty, higher engagements, reduced bounce rates, and improved conversion rates. As Robert Rose referred to, it may also encourage that user to share your content, at which point you begin to expand your reach and attract more consumers for whom your content can be customized.

A/B testing, smart recommendations, and artificial intelligence

Conducting A/B tests, where you assess the performance of two identical pieces of content but with one variable element—such as the headline—offers an insight into the performance of your project. It enables you to make any changes that are necessary, ensuring the content is customized as well as possible in line with the user’s needs.

You can also make use of [smart recommendations](#), which can increase exposure for a larger volume of your content. These recommendations are made in relation to the content a visitor is currently viewing as well as other factors, such as their location and

device. Artificial intelligence (AI) will then process that information and identify which other pieces of content the user may be interested in, thus enriching their experience.



All of which brings us onto our next point, which is that AI is having an increasing influence on how organizations manage their content. It can certainly prove a useful tool within the personalization stage of the lifecycle.

Lilach Bullock, named in Forbes' top 20 female social influencers, [points out its advantages](#): “Given all the data available about content and web visitors, why not use it to your advantage? Using AI the right way will help improve results in multiple aspects of your content marketing. Using these tools, you can save more time on the manual tasks and present messages that your audience is more likely to engage with.”

In order to **create content tailored to each user**, you need to be able to gather large quantities of consumer data that can then be evaluated and used to inform your strategy. AI can do exactly that, collecting the information provided when a customer visits a website and using those details to create a consumer profile.

The recent and rapid developments in AI mean that this is a technology that’s here to stay, so it’s important that you’re making the most of its functions and maximizing its capabilities, or you risk getting left behind by the competition.

All of the points covered in this chapter—accessing user profiles, conducting A/B testing and utilizing AI—can help your organization deliver more engaging, high-performing content through personalization.

Your customers will feel more valued and appreciated and are therefore more likely to convert their sessions, share your content and remain loyal—all of which is key to building a successful organization. Not only that, but all of this information can be harnessed to inform the ideation and planning phases, as the content lifecycle begins all over again.

Chapter Seven's Key Points.

- The overwhelming majority of marketers believe personalization **improves** customer relationships.
- By integrating with other systems, you can gain access to your users' **profiles**.
- This information can be harnessed in order to create a more **specific** and **engaging** customer experience for the individual.
- **A/B testing**, **AI** and **smart recommendations** can help inform the personalization process, by assessing the performance of content and retrieving and analyzing your consumers' data.
- All of the information obtained during the personalization phase can be used to **influence** the early creative and planning stages of the content lifecycle when it comes to future projects.

Explore the headless CMS that was developed with both marketers and developers in mind.

TAKE A GUIDED TOUR



8 The CMS for creating content your audience will love.



Unleash your creativity

We've mentioned that using a CMS that allows its users to create the content directly can be a lifesaver. Having a place where all your content is stored, where you can get into your writing flow and collaborate with your colleagues will make your job substantially easier.

Before you can start writing in Kentico Kontent, you need to define at least one content type. Content types serve as templates for content items—for example, you can create one that will help you organize your ideas and identify the goals of the content piece so that your writing is effective. (If you want to learn more about content types and content modeling, [click here](#).)

Content creation 101

Article **Content brief**

The Target Audience
Who are we creating this piece for?
This article is intended for content creators/writers and marketers.

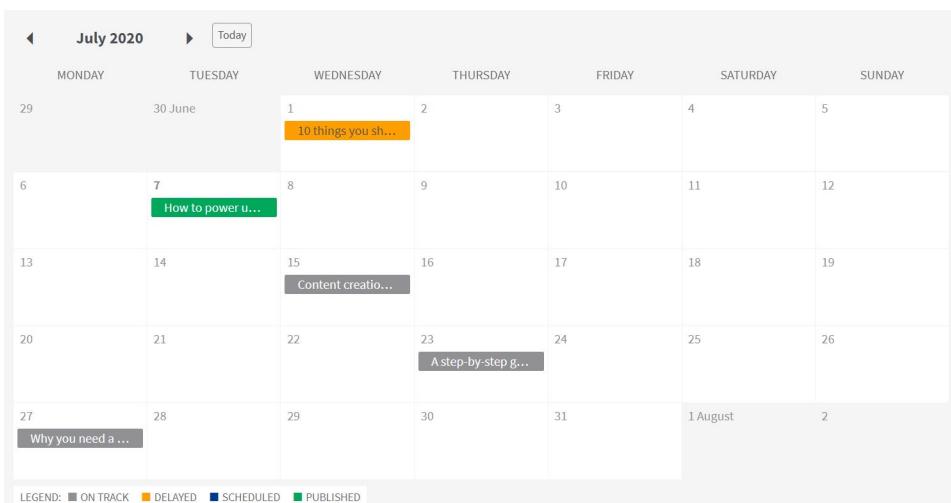
The Purpose Of This Content
What do we want to achieve?
We want to produce a blog post that will provide the target audience with practical tips on how to create and manage great content.

Content Outline
Create a list of the main ideas that you want to discuss in your article.
Intro - why content creation can sometimes be a daunting task
7 tips on how to create high-quality content (TBD with Christina and Dustin)
Conclusion - the 7 key takeaways summarized in one paragraph



Start planning your content

After you've created a new item and set a due date, you can utilize **Kontent's editorial calendar** to align your content production with project deadlines and campaign launches. The calendar offers real-time status updates on all content items, giving your authors a single view of all their content and offering stakeholders insight into the progress of each project, helping to identify any barriers that may need to be addressed.



As the next step, you can invite **contributors** and assign **tasks** to them so that everyone is aware of their responsibilities, which will help you avoid duplication of efforts and streamline the content creation process.

The screenshot shows the Kentico Kontent interface. At the top, there are several action buttons: Preview, Add task, Change workflow, Publish, Set due date, Assign contributors, and More actions. Below these, a navigation bar includes items like Home, Content, Items, Media, Contributors, Images, Testimonials, and File.

Chapter 8: The CMS for creating content your audience will love

Unleash your creativity

We've mentioned that using a CMS that allows its users to create the content directly can be a lifesaver. Having a place where all your content is stored, where you can get into your writing flow and collaborate with your colleagues will make your job substantially easier.

Before you can start writing in Kentico Kontent, you need to define at least one content type. Content types serve as templates for content items—for example, you can create one that will help you organize your ideas and identify the goals of the content piece so that your writing is effective.

A preview window shows a document titled "Content creation 101" with the text: "This article is intended for content creators and marketers. It provides an overview of how to create content and manage content versions." Below it is a file preview for "content_creation.pdf" (71.15 KB, 2.69 MB).

Start planning your content

As an initial step of content production, your team can define content models that form the structure for each content type to be created. With these models in place, you can utilize Kontent's editorial calendar to align content production with project deadlines and campaign launches.

A preview window shows a document titled "Content creation 101" with the text: "This article is intended for content creators and marketers. It provides an overview of how to create content and manage content versions." Below it is a file preview for "content_creation.pdf" (71.15 KB, 2.69 MB).

Workflow Step

Writing

Tasks

Contributors

Note

Last content change



Create and collaborate on high-quality content

Once you have a clear idea of what needs to be done, your team can focus solely on creating the high-quality content that your audience craves. Kontent enables collaboration at scale through **granular access control, versioning, comments, and suggestions**. You can also configure your own **workflow**—and make it as simple or as complex as you need to—so you can track in which state your content is.

Workflow steps

Draft Published Archived Proofreading

Name: Proofreading

Label color: A row of colored circles (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple) for step transitions.

Steps that transition to Proofreading: Draft

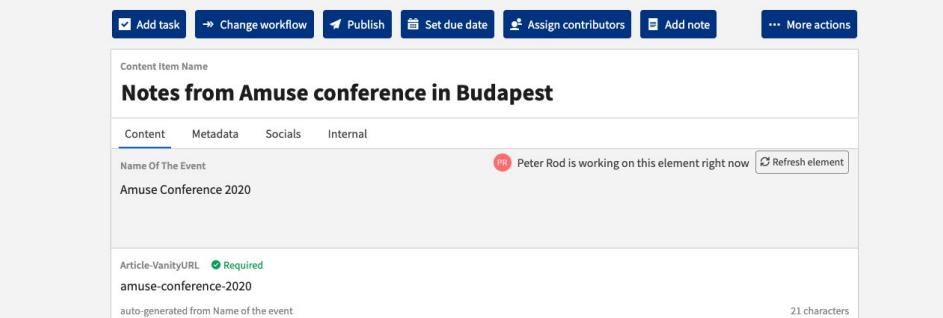
Proofreading transitions to: Ready for graphics, Published

Roles that can work with this step: All roles

Transitions from this step:

- Ready for graphics → Published → Final review
- Final review → Published
- Scheduled / Published
- Archived

As the only headless CMS, Kontent supports **Simultaneous Editing**. If two and more users open the same content item, a bar pops up to tell them who else is looking at the same content piece. Whenever someone starts working on a specific element, the element will “lock” itself to prevent other users from editing and will show the name of the person working on it. When the person stops editing, the element “unlocks” and after refreshing its content, anybody can continue working on it.



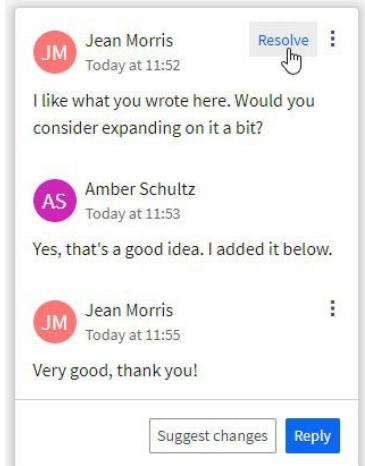
The screenshot shows a content item named "Notes from Amuse conference in Budapest". At the top, there are several action buttons: "Add task", "Change workflow", "Publish", "Set due date", "Assign contributors", "Add note", and "More actions". Below the title, there are tabs for "Content", "Metadata", "Socials", and "Internal". Under the "Content" tab, there is a field labeled "Name Of The Event" containing "Amuse Conference 2020". A status message indicates "Peter Rod is working on this element right now" with a "Refresh element" button. In the "Internal" tab, there is a field for "Article-VanityURL" with the value "amuse-conference-2020", described as "auto-generated from Name of the event". The URL is 21 characters long.



Accelerate your review process

Every piece of content should undergo a careful review; however, the review process shouldn't take too long. With Kontent, your team members are always able to **view the latest version** and will never lose any changes thanks to versioning. When reviewing a content item, your contributors can add in-line comments or suggestions and advance it through the necessary workflow steps.

You can use **the preview capabilities** to see what the content will look like in various channels, ensure it meets the needs of stakeholders and that it adheres to any compliance requirements or front-end displays.

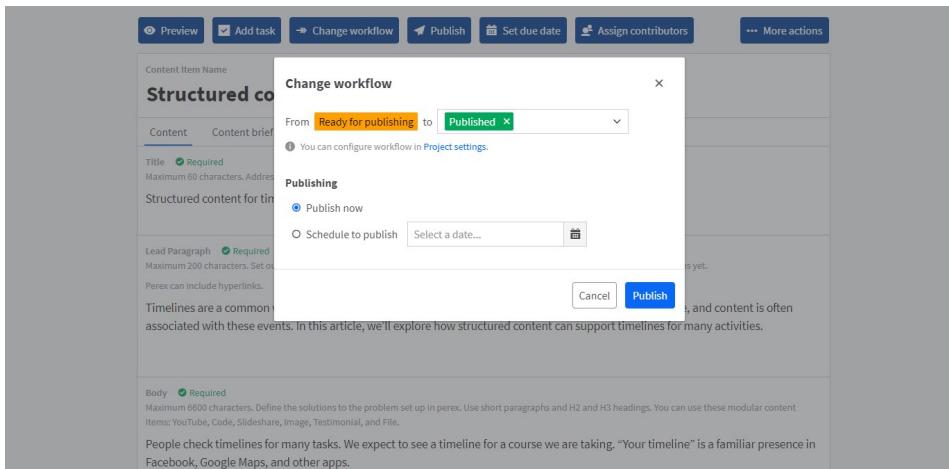


A screenshot of a review conversation. Jean Morris (JM) says, "I like what you wrote here. Would you consider expanding on it a bit?" Amber Schultz (AS) replies, "Yes, that's a good idea. I added it below." Jean Morris (JM) then says, "Very good, thank you!" At the bottom, there are "Suggest changes" and "Reply" buttons.



Publish your content across multiple channels

You can either **publish your content manually** or prepare and **schedule content changes** that are automatically published at a specific point in time. Each piece of content is delivered to the front end as clean, structured content, free of extraneous markup or formatting. This means all content can be seamlessly integrated into any design, device, internal or third-party systems.

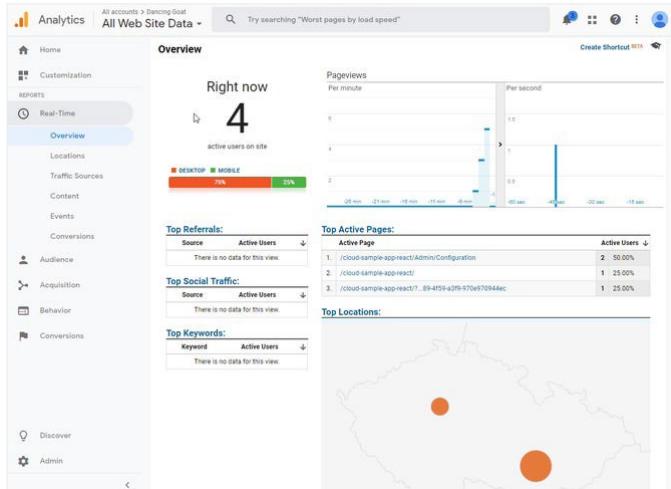


In addition to that, Kontent's extensible **webhooks** can be triggered to kick off any additional processes or notifications at the time of publishing.



Optimize your content to boost its performance

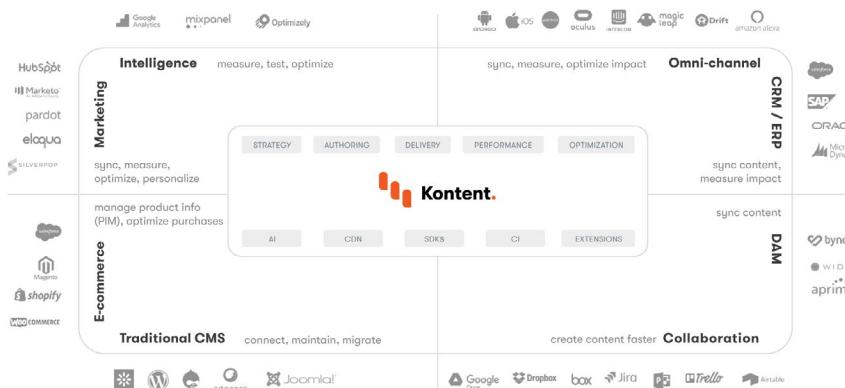
After you've published the content, **performance analytics** can help you understand which items are performing well and which aren't. High-performing content items can then be repurposed or extended for use across additional campaigns or channels, and less performant content can be archived or updated in hopes of improving results.



Personalize the user experience

With these new insights available to distinguish the good from the bad, content teams are better prepared when they revisit the planning stage of the content lifecycle, with new strategic content items already identified and ready to be repurposed across any number of initiatives.

The ability to **deliver content to every channel** creates even more opportunities to integrate with internal or third-party systems, leading to engaging experiences based on a visitor's entire profile. Content can be displayed according to rich user profiles that combine data across multiple systems—CRM, business demographics, location, device type, etc. These more personalized experiences lead to higher conversion rates and improved loyalty among existing customers.



Try the headless CMS that simplifies content production for marketers and frees developers to focus on building engaging online experiences!

SEE KONTENT IN ACTION