

Principles of Effective Content Marketing

I have a love-hate relationship with content marketing. I've been doing search engine optimization (SEO) since 2002, blogging since 2006, tweeting since 2007. I also co-founded one of the first influencer marketing companies in Europe in 2006.

But to be honest, while getting some pieces right, all this time I had trouble to grasp the true importance of content marketing. In true late adopter and life-learner fashion, I'm slowly getting there.

So here are some things I observed after almost 20 years of digital marketing experience:

Have something to say

A great heuristic to live by is [TED's](#) slogan: "ideas worth spreading". You have to stand for something. Have a point of view. Be on a mission. And also, have a great product. If you don't, do your homework first.

A great product and mission is a wonderful opportunity for brand-building and storytelling.

Examples:

- [Patagonia](#) (e.g. [Let My People Go Surfing](#))
- [Tesla](#) and [SpaceX](#) (lead by [Elon Musk](#))
- [Fred Wilson](#) and [Seth Godin](#) who each have blogging daily for almost 20 years

Do what works

As a general principle, observe what others are doing and then [do what works](#). Observe where your audience is, and be there. Experiment, and then double down. Stop what isn't working. Use Google and search for tips, best practices and case studies. Seriously, most people don't use Google. Be the one who does. Tap into the wisdom of the crowds.

Examples:

- Add a call-to-action (CTA) after blog posts like Basecamp ([example](#))
- Use LinkedIn Posts to gain organic reach, and add branded (and contextually relevant) storytelling right after the article ([example](#))
- Use the Garyvee content models ([model one](#) / [model two](#))
- SpaceX [webcasting](#) each rocket launch
- Do giveaways, contests, sweepstakes
- Use paid promotion to increase the reach of your content
- Use your email footer for storytelling and/or call-to-actions
- Use Twitter not only for storytelling, but also as a customer service channel
- Use Google to find hundreds of similar ideas

Take it seriously and make the necessary investment

One way to judge the seriousness of a content marketing effort is to observe the behavior of the CEO/Founder. Often times, the most effective storytelling is the one straight from the horses mouth, the CEO.

Without a buy-in from the top, it's difficult to have the necessary budget in terms of time, manpower, and money.

You need high-quality creators: great long-form writers, witty Twitter people, great video people etc.

Example:

- [Vincent Yu](#), who runs an aftermarket accessories business for Tesla cars, has assembled (and I assume hired) his Twitter friends, to build one of the great up-and-coming [Tesla blogs](#) on the web. The publishing speed of breaking news and the quality are very impressive. This is no half-assed effort. He clearly understands the potential and is making the necessary investment.

Conclusion

To summarize, content marketing is just a fancy word for old fashioned marketing, brand-building and storytelling. The channels and technologies may change, but the principles do not.