

Is Your Content Not  
Performing? Here's 5 Things  
That Could Be the Problem

# Is Your Marketing Content Not Performing?



Content marketing has gotten bigger than ever, but not every business is reaping the benefits. When looking at their targeted marketing metrics, many are finding that their content marketing efforts fail to make the needle move.

According to a recent survey, 89% of B2C companies and 93% of B2B companies say that [in 2017 their content marketing campaigns performed better or the same](#) as in 2016. Yet, there are still 4% of B2C businesses and 2% of B2B businesses that say their content is performing worse.

So what can these organizations do to improve? They can start by considering the following five common mistakes below, which can cripple your content marketing performance and stand in the way of building audiences who can become business leads.

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## You Aren't Choosing Topics That Have Value



Too many content teams choose shallow, uninteresting or overtly sales-y topics for their blogs and other content. While these types of topics seem like they may help fulfill keyword-focused SEO goals and marketing objectives, they usually just get ignored.

Even worse, people may learn to distrust a brand or a business that consistently overpromotes. [53% of people have ad blockers installed](#) for a reason, so any blog that feels just like an ad will get tuned out.

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To create more interesting topics, let keywords be your guide. Use them to take a guess at the intent of what the search user was trying to accomplish by typing those words in.

Someone typing “family law attorney,” for instance, may be searching for answers on a situation that isn’t even close to going to court yet. Instead, they may want to know about specific legal outcomes or how the process works for certain cases.

You can get better at predicting intent by looking at things like Google’s related keywords at the bottom of the search results page. You can also look to see what topics are being brought up on open forums like Reddit, comments sections or industry-specific forums. Also, be an active reader within your industry and take note of topics that are currently trending.

Using these techniques and looking to your own data for engagement performance can help you determine what topics audiences go for and which ones they avoid.

## Your Headlines Are a Mess

In many ways, the headline is the most important part of a piece of content. It’s the cover people judge the book by, so to speak. In our current outspoken era, people may even sound off their opinion or share an article based on the headline alone.

There are a few things that help headlines sell:

- **Topic Keyword Signals that trigger interest** — E.g. someone frustrated with ad reach may perk up the instant they see a blog title that mentions “Ad Blocking”
- **Clarity** — A.K.A., does the reader understand clearly understand what the article will be about? Each headline is a promise
- **Action Verbs** — Try to eliminate linking verbs like “is” or “will,” and try and substitute strong action verbs or gerunds near the front of the headline instead. Not “According to Recent Study, Brand X Is Gaining on Brand Y” but “Brand X Pummeling Brand Y, Says Study”

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- **Length** — Blog headlines should be concise and clear, but that doesn't mean they have to be short. eMarketer data shows that [blogs with headlines 90-99 characters long outperform shorter ones](#).
- **Relevance with Article** — Tricking someone into clicking on your article with deceptive “clickbait” headlines improves your views and CTR, but it hurts your goals. Always balance appeal with accuracy.

There are other quirks to headline writing that help you get clicks without making readers feel deceived. BuzzSumo has some [great data on top performing headlines for B2C companies](#) as well as [B2B companies](#). Looking at B2B, for instance, helpful phrases like “How to...” and “\_\_\_ Ways...” perform best, while the promise of emotions like “...will make you...” drives B2C clicks.

## You Aren't Writing in a Way That Engages Your Audience



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You don't have to have Pulitzer-winning talent to get people to read your blogs; you just have to have an organized structure that's easy to follow and a voice that sounds friendly. Try to write in a conversational tone while still being clear and providing valuable information with each sentence.

If you think someone may get lost on your blog, split up your sentences and have each one communicate a single thought. Have each thought logically flow into the next, building up each point one-by-one.

Denser topics may require formatting elements like additional sub-topic headers or a bulleted list. An illustration also tends to help.

If you need help improving beyond that, look to your competitors or hire a content writing expert for stylistic feedback. Everyone gets better over time, but you also have to recognize what makes certain writing engage more effectively.

You may also need to outsource your writing to more-experienced and knowledgeable professionals in order to get the quality your audience wants. You can always commission a test blog in order to gauge how much other writers can boost your performance.

## Your Content Isn't Focused on Specific Goals

60% of B2C companies don't have a documented content marketing strategy, which means their team may have several competing ideas on what their content is supposed to do. Without an aligned strategy and target metrics everyone can agree upon, your content writing will be aimless rather than effective.

Consider that just [2% of the worst-performing B2B content marketers](#) rate the alignment of the metrics they use to track performance and their overall marketing goals as "very good," reports the Content Marketing Institute (CMI). On the other hand, over half of the best performing companies say that their metrics and goals are well-aligned.

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To get content to fulfill your marketing goals, you have to focus on the conversion step you want audiences to take after reading. For instance, if you want to create more leads, then you will need to create free, highly valuable content that entices readers to submit their information to learn more.

Or, if your goal is to earn shares or other forms of engagement, you may have to embrace more topics that people have strong opinions on or ones that elicit strong emotional responses.

Always have a few focused, well-defined goals for your content, know what key performance indicators (KPIs) best represent accomplishing those goals, and create content suited to the purpose of improving KPIs over time.

## You Aren't Promoting Content Enough



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Content marketing success requires not just a budget for content creation but also for promotion. Put simply, the more money you put into promoting your content, the bigger returns you can get from each asset.

That phenomenon is likely why companies that put a bigger budget behind their content find greater returns. According to a 2018 CMI survey, the average top-performing B2C company allocated 38% of their overall marketing budget to content, and top-performing B2B companies allocated an average of 40%. On the flip side, the least-successful B2B companies spent just 14%.

The key to successful promotion is to identify your target audiences and use ad-building tools to find them, specifically. Social media ads, for instance, allow you to serve “Promoted” ad posts within user news feeds to highly targeted audiences. You can even experiment by serving ads to two audience groups to test which one offers the best performance.

Over time, you can not only get more views for your content but get views from targeted people you want to become leads.

## You Need Help From a Professional Content Marketing Agency

Content marketing is complex and hard to master. Those with deep experience and more available tools stand a better chance of getting it right.

Working with a professional writing team that’s part of a content marketing agency could bring the improvements to quality, strategy, targeting and promotion that you need to meet your goals. So, if nothing else is working, consider partnering with someone who has a proven track record of content marketing success.