

Mission Possible: Quality Content Marketing

Optimize Your Content Strategy Through Marketing Automation and Social Media



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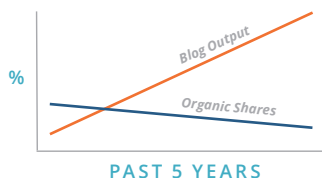
About the Author

Travis Simpson is a content marketing consultant and President of Symbolscape Media, a boutique content marketing studio based in San Francisco. He works with clients to create and deploy custom B2B content marketing solutions on the marketing automation technology backbone.

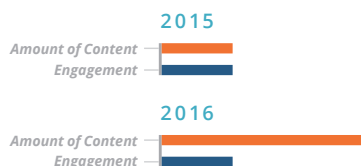
In the ebb and flow of content marketing trend analyses comes the return of the “content fatigue” narrative—that we’ve somehow recently discovered that people are growing tired of content (both making it and consuming it). We see statistics like these:



Just 5% of the total content produced generated 90% of the consumer engagement, meaning that 19 out of 20 pieces of content marketing have little if any impact. - [Beckon](#)



Blog output by brands has increased 800 percent in the past five years. However, in that same period, organic social shares of blogs have gone down by 89 percent. - [TrackMaven.com](#)

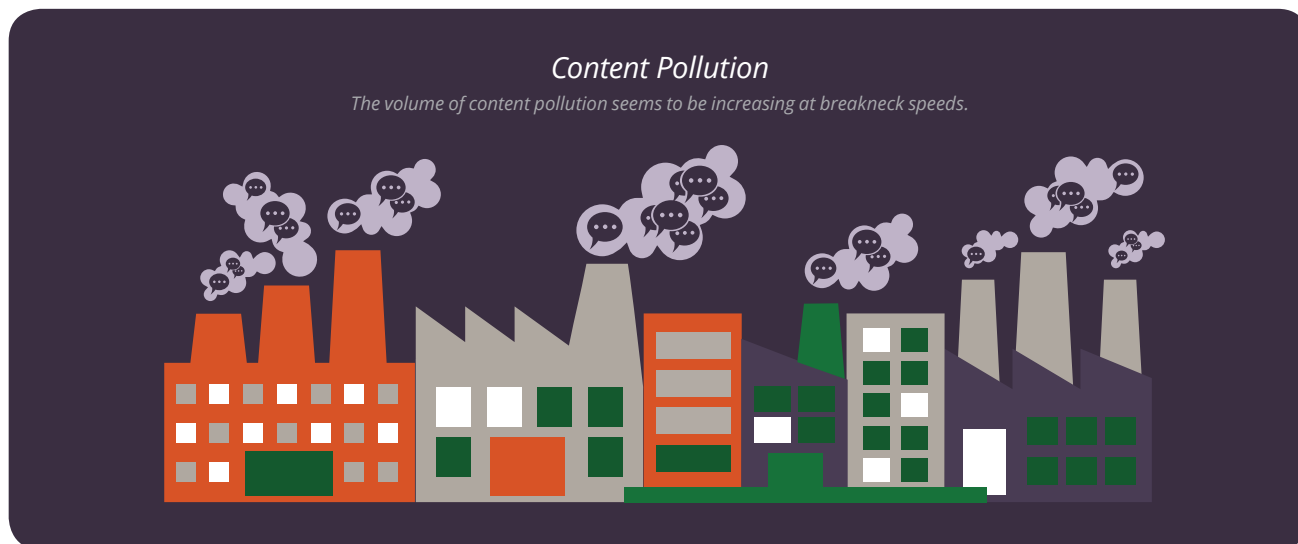


Although the amount of content being marketed has tripled in the past year, there has been no increase in engagement. - [Beckon](#)

As a result, we’re told content marketing doesn’t work as well as it used to, that it’s redundant and that there’s too much of it. We’ve heard this over and over again.

It's all about quality

Like anyone else, I can't help but notice that the volume of **content pollution** seems to be increasing at breakneck speeds. We've watched as marketers have mobilized the corporate arsenal to produce heaps of content over the past five or so years, as organizations all across the globe—suddenly thrust into the content development business—have scrambled to catch up and make sense of the brand publishing paradigm.



But while the evidence is clear that not all content is created equally, and while different strategies and tactics perform better than others, as a content marketer I am still convinced that content is [all the marketing that's left](#). Frankly, as long as we have the Internet, content is going to be the playing field for our sport. So the question isn't whether or not we should be doing content marketing, but rather how we can make our content marketing better. What tools, strategies and tactics can we deploy? How do we create compelling content that will provide real value for our audiences?

That's not in my job description...

Unfortunately, creating engaging and valuable content was not originally part of the marketer's job description, so the vast majority of people who are now forced to produce new content initiatives are all too frequently working well out of their domain of expertise. The result is an Internet increasingly full of content produced by people who are not trained media professionals. Content that falls flat. Content that nobody uses.

But this should tell us that the phenomenon we're calling "content fatigue"—and the [diminishing performance](#) content marketers are starting to report—is not about audiences getting tired of content. In fact, if anything, [people are consuming more content, not less](#). Instead, what I think we're noticing more and more is the [rise](#) of

60 percent to 70
percent of content
created by B2B
companies is
never used.

– Sirius Decisions
Summit Presentation

something that psychologists call “[selective attention](#)” in our media consumption choices. As we are increasingly bombarded by information, we’re also all becoming more tech savvy. We more deftly navigate the digital symbolscape, learning more and better ways to quickly filter through the junk to find exactly what we want.

The dangerous part of the “content fatigue” conversation is that if you’re not paying close enough attention, it can be too easy to conclude that content marketing has stopped working, that your audiences want less communication—or worse—that they want no content at all!

Rather, as content proliferates and as it grows more difficult to figure out how to make an impact with our brand communications, we should be focusing on making better content, intelligently designed content that actually provides value to our audiences.

What the “content fatigue” discussion should tell us is that, more than anything else, we need to focus on making better content. Not less, not more—just better.

Of course, as always, determining what is and is not “better content” depends on the unique requirements of your communications context:

Who is your target audience?



What makes up their media diet?



What channels do they use?



However, when it comes to the [standard content marketing model](#), the primary factors for distinguishing between bad, good and better content will always be value and relevance. What pains are your audiences dealing with? What information can you find, reveal or create that will help them solve those pains?

Leverage social to give them more of what they want

One way to figure out how to be more relevant to your audience is to figure out what information they're consuming and engaging with online. By now you have probably established some connection with your audiences on social media channels. You have an idea of which keywords they're searching for and which publishers, influencers, competitors and domain partners they care about. But how carefully are you listening?



Having on-demand access to this living-and-breathing market intelligence allows us to craft better content for our audiences, not only by using it to figure out what types of content resonate best, but also to gain insights about which topics consumers care about most.

So what does this actually look like in practice? What are some concrete steps you can take to analyze and make use of the content your audiences are interacting with on social media?

Step 1



Start building out lists of your target audiences and topics/hashtags. We do this on Twitter using tools like [Followerwonk](#) and [Electoral](#), but if you're more a fan of spreadsheets, then you might prefer a tool like [Twitter Archiver](#). There are literally [hundreds](#) of ways to do this. What is important here is that you've figured out where your audience is and what content they're engaging with most.

Step 2



Once you have figured out a way to start monitoring content engagement and you've done the proper work in understanding what your personas are struggling with, you can use some editorial judgment to filter out which pieces of content will be the most useful for them. Make a list of the best stuff and keep it close.

Step 3



Share and distribute this content. Part of having an intelligent and comprehensive content marketing strategy is figuring out how to carry your messaging across all your marketing channels in an organized and concerted way. While you can, and should, retweet and reshare content inside your social channels themselves, recognize that your audience has diverse media consumption patterns. Where else can you share this content to optimize your reach?

Marketing automation makes content marketing effective

As a marketing professional, you probably already know that content marketing can only be successfully implemented when paired with a robust marketing automation solution. And if you're properly using marketing automation, you're marketing to a list of subscribers that have opted in to receive your marketing communications. Aside from using your marketing automation platform to do [email nurtures](#) and [abandoned cart emails](#), one content format that you may find success with is a weekly or monthly "digest" or "news roundup" email.

Take your list of hot content, sort it according to the audience segments you've defined for your subscribers, and build out an email template. Drop in thumbnail images with links to the content you've discovered, and include a quick teaser to explain why the piece is included.

While platforms like SharpSpring do have elegant drag-and drop email builders, to make the content curation process easier, you might check out [Publicate](#), a new tool we recently found that helps content marketers quickly and easily build out newsletters using curated content. Also using an intuitive drag-and-drop interface, Publicate creates snackable snippets that incorporate headlines, featured images and excerpts from any link you can find on the web. If you're a SharpSpring user, you can export and [save the HTML file as a zip using this process](#) to quickly prepare your email digest in the email creation dashboard.

Of course, the advantage of using SharpSpring for this tactic is that we can track the content engagement. This is especially useful when using a digest news format, because it gives us an indication as to whether or not the content we've identified in our curation strategy is actually hitting the mark. Not only can you use this to adjust your editorial decision-making for the digest itself, but you can also start to build a stronger understanding of what sort of content your subscribers are interested in. Say for example you have some questions about where your editorial calendar is headed next quarter—you can test content ideas in your digests to see whether or not your audience is likely to engage.

If you would like to see this process in action, we've developed a digest using [ContentQuarterback](#), our content marketing news curation feed on Twitter. If you fill out our subscribe form and tick Top 10 Content Playbook, we'll send you our monthly rundown of the most highly engaged content on the feed.



Be the messenger, not the message

A final word of advice when devising your curation strategy: **be the messenger, not the message**. You have to remember that, especially when it comes to content marketing, it's not about you. People don't care about our brands and products—they care about how we can help them solve their problems. Of course it's understandable that you might not want to showcase content that flatters your competitors; that's fine. But if you go out of your way to take every opportunity to push brand messaging, your content marketing is going to fail.



Save your positioning for your product pages and your brochures. Content marketing is about helping your audiences. Use this strategy with the faith that over the long haul, your audiences will learn to associate your brand with valuable content, and that trust and credibility will pay its dividends in higher engagement rates, increased shareability and word of mouth, zealous brand loyalty, and greater customer lifetime value.



See how adding marketing automation to your agency's services can drive revenue from existing clients and help you add new ones. Schedule a demo with a partnerships specialist to chat about your specific needs.

Get a Demo



SharpSpring is the marketing automation platform of choice for more than 1,000 digital marketing agencies and their 5,000+ clients. Since 2014, SharpSpring has provided its powerful marketing automation solution to businesses around the globe. In the short time since its inception, the company has gained significant market share from industry leaders with its competitive pricing, agency-focused business model, and robust platform.

Visit www.sharpspring.com for more information.



Symbolscape Media is a boutique Inbound Marketing consulting firm that offers managed services and content creation for core business initiatives in content marketing, social media and marketing automation. Symbolscape helps clients deliver the right message, to the right place, at the right time, providing real value for audiences while leveraging the latest marketing technology.

Visit www.symbolscape.com for more information.