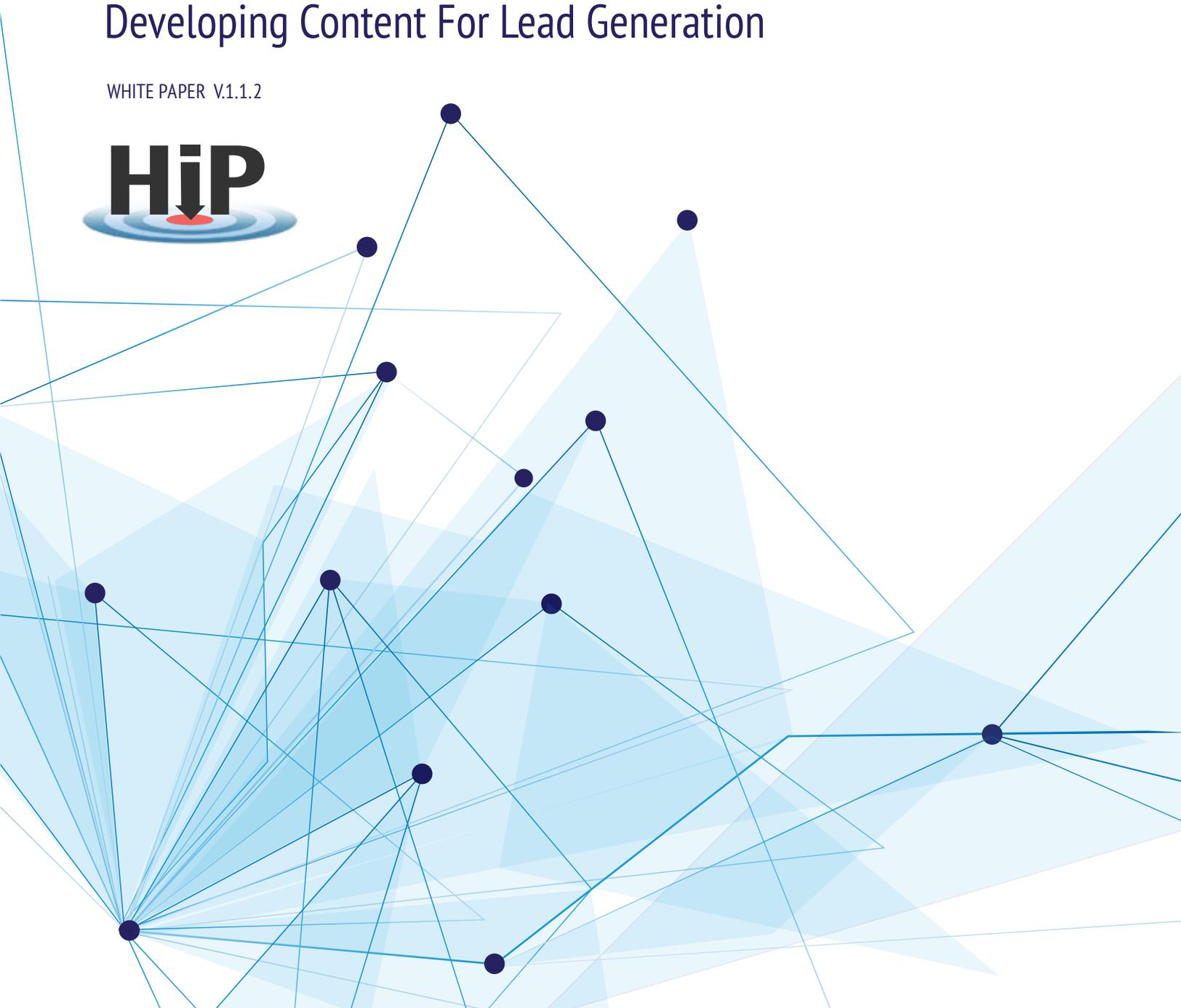


CREATING CONTENT THAT CONVERTS

Developing Content For Lead Generation

WHITE PAPER V.1.1.2



6 Strategies to Create Content for Marketing Results

Start with a goal and work backwards. Sales-ready leads. The marketing funnel. These are terms that sales and marketing executives bandy about when discussing how their business is performing.

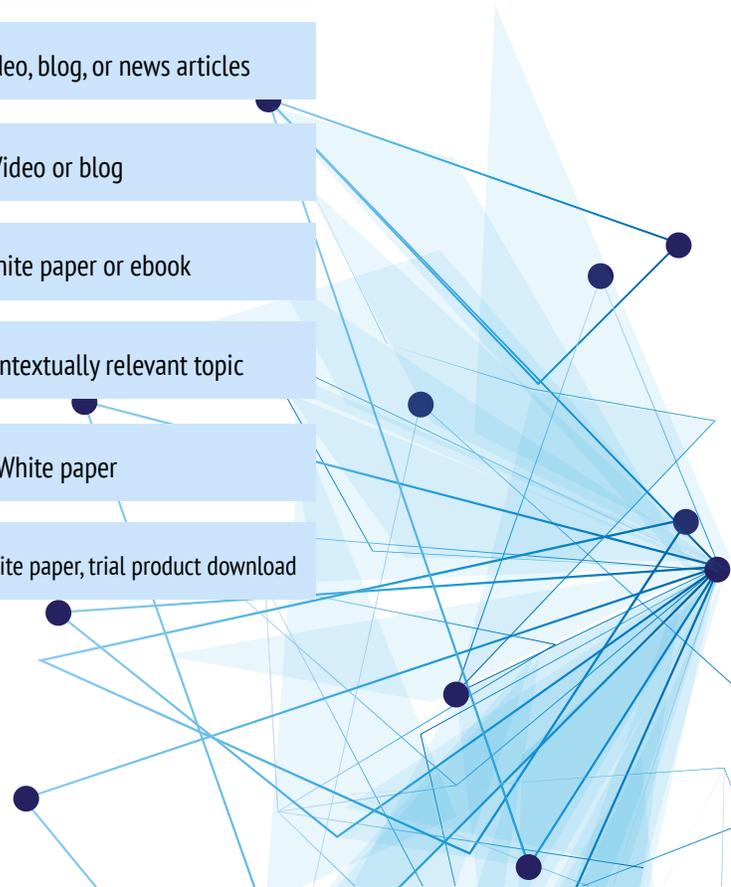
Since content development is being funded to contribute to marketing goals, its contribution to those goals will be measured, as will the work of content developers. So get used to it and, even better, embrace it as the new world order in content development. Your content must perform, or you won't be the one developing content in the future.

Before embarking on any content development project, the required outcome should be the starting point to define the topic, content type and format. Frequently used marketing goals include:

- Drive traffic and visibility to a website
- Create brand awareness and value
- Exhibit thought leadership in an industry or category
- Capture registrations for an event or asset
- Effect downloads of a content asset
- Advance a lead from one location in the funnel to another

With each of these goals, there are proven practices for content types and approaches:

GOAL	CONTENT TYPE
Drive traffic and visibility	Banner ad, video, blog, or news articles
Brand awareness	Video or blog
Thought leadership	Blog, white paper or ebook
Register for event or asset	E-book on contextually relevant topic
Download and engage	White paper
Advance a lead in the funnel	Webcast, e-book, white paper, trial product download



Decide the one or two primary goals from the outset and you can start building a content development plan. The next step on the road to success is to...

Erase the Line that Divides “Content” and “Marketing”

Interact with enough corporate marketing organizations and you’ll find a common thread among those that struggle to achieve goals with content: there’s the “content” organization and the “marketing” organization, and never the twain shall meet.

Where it exists, the dichotomy is a remnant of the era in which content was developed more or less in the eye of the writer, then passed to a marketing organization with a mandate to drive performance. Or to put a lead-generation slant on the process, a corporate marketing organization creates content that it believes will appeal to an audience, then hires a lead-generation firm to create leads with that content. The lead-gen firm may or may not believe there’s any ability to drive leads – in fact, as often as not, the lead-gen firm believes the content is more of a barrier than a source of engagement.

CONTENT AND MARKETING GO HAND IN HAND

The divide between content and marketing should not exist. Content that is created must drive leads down the pipeline. But oftentimes, content is created and marketers are forced to work with it. That is ineffective when content creators aren’t using data to figure out the preferences of their target audience.



Study the Market for Qualitative Insights

Could we add a little sentence here that is similar to the other sentences in blue on the other pages? It feels left out since there's no blue on this page and there is on all the other pages. We could even afford to make it slightly loner since this page is a little light when it comes to copy.

Back to the point raised above – content development remains at least one part art. Our intent isn't to diminish the art, but to emphasize that the creative process now requires augmentation with science and data.

Any experienced writer can tell you that delivering on the art – informative, authoritative, elegantly crafted content -- requires knowledge of a topic developed over time, as well as good, and frequently exercised, writing skills. Still, there's another element: direct, hands-on research.



While data pulled from a system on audience interests and behavior is critical, it's always going to be a rollup, a view of what a large number of people are doing. There remains – and always will – a need to talk one on one with the individuals you're creating content for.

Understand their issues, in their terms, on their timelines, in their organizations. Only they can express those so that another person can respond to them.

Think of it as research or interviews, due diligence or just simply conversations. Whatever you call it, it's fundamental to quality content development. Talk to your audience and get inside their heads to ensure the content you develop delivers value to them on a personal level.

Avoid the Predictable

Could we add a little sentence here that is similar to the other sentences in blue on the other pages? It feels left out since there's no blue on this page and there is on all the other pages. We could even afford to make it slightly loner since this page is a little light when it comes to copy.

Nod your head if the following white paper titles sound similar to white papers your organization has created – or that you've read – in the last several months:

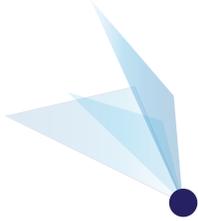
- 5 Ways To Get The Most Bang for Your Virtualization Buck
- 7 Must-Have Mobile Marketing Tips
- BYOD Best Practices for IT



These titles were made up for purposes of this discussion, though it's very likely that if you entered them in Google, you'd find examples of "content marketing" that use the same or very similar titles. These fictitious titles demonstrate a point about content development broadly: in the zeal to pack titles with keywords and make them easily digestible, marketers have sacrificed their capacity to take a unique slant, deliver original information or say something new.

Even if the above white papers were real, and they featured great content, they're unlikely to prompt any engagement because their titles are so unimaginative.

It's incumbent upon developers to come up with a unique spin when creating their content. Say something new, and promote it in your title, cover page, webcast or video. It's true that you should play to the popular topic categories and ensure your content can be found in Google. But you must go further, and you must ensure you've got value and insight that can only be received by engaging with your content. Then market that differentiated insight as your value add.



A CONTINUOUS LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Content creators need to be constantly analyzing their audience's response to the content they create. This is achieved using A/B testing, then looking at the analytics to determine the results. This testing culture must be an integral part of a marketing organization.

Test, Analyze, Rinse and Repeat

It was posited earlier that content creators must become comfortable with – even embrace – analytics and data as disciplines that enhance their ability to create content that resonates with an audience. The analytics required are not a one-time, or point-in-time, exercise. Instead, they are an ongoing practice of studying audience response to content in order that the content can be tweaked, adapted and marketed until the optimal information and promotional message can be found.

That's not a trait of one individual or marketer – rather, it's a discipline that either does or doesn't exist in a marketing organization. It requires measuring content from the outset by building plans based on a required outcome, creating and monitoring performance at checkpoints along the way, then adapting it as the marketing effort plays out.

Few, if any, pieces of content will be a home run on the first promotional effort. Tweaking and evolution are central to the process, and they must be embraced as part of a testing and analytics culture.

Conclusion

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