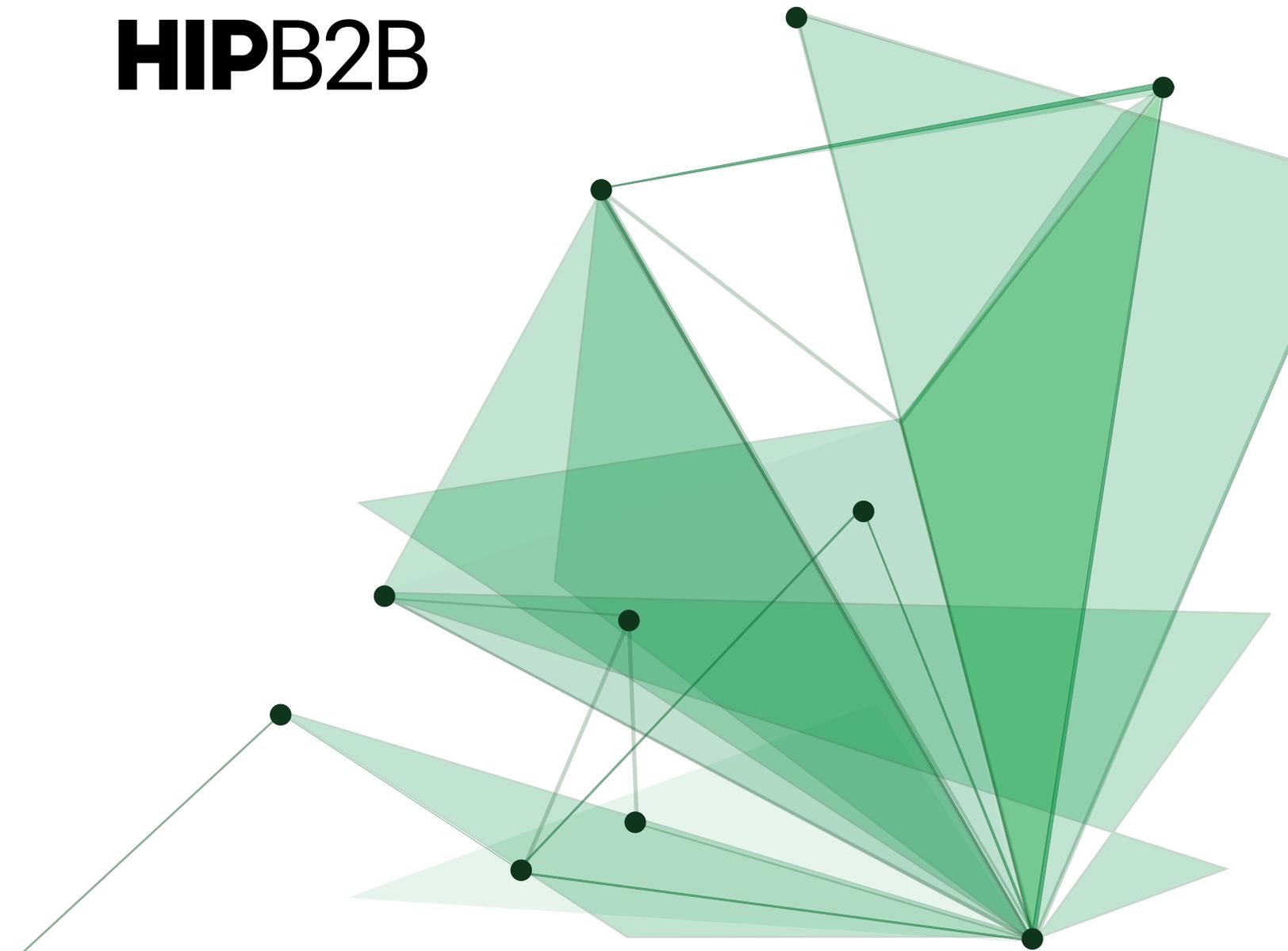


Successful Lead Generation

Is Built on Audience Insight and Text-Based Content

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HIPB2B



Successful Lead Generation: Is Built on Audience Insight and Text-Based Content

Developing and successfully generating leads from text-based content is about understanding audience needs and delivering information that addresses those needs – starting with the content, then intelligently packaging the value in targeted marketing offers.

“Content marketing” is all the rage. The phrase has been assigned so many definitions and benefits that its value could be easily lost or distorted. The propensity to mold the meaning of content marketing to meet individual needs has grown so rampant that a baseline definition is needed to create context for marketing practices we’ll recommend in this white paper. So here it goes:

Content marketing is a strategy to develop and promote content to advance a marketing objective. That’s it, in its simplest form. The definition may be expanded to include these additional traits:

- Includes original, repurposed or curated material
- Takes the form of text (e-book, white paper, blog), webcast, video, social media post and more
- Delivers information in a variety of channels – web, mobile, email, telemarketing

The balance of this white paper will lay out strategies for effective content marketing of text-based content for lead generation outcomes. There are two elements to that effort: developing content to meet specific marketing objectives, then leveraging that content to effect a marketing result. We’ve also created a separate report – recommending optimized practices for delivering engagement on webcasts.

This topic is an important one to marketers: 94% rate ebooks as very or somewhat effective in achieving marketing objectives; 92% give the same rating to white papers, and 60% give those ratings to blogs, according to MarketingSherpa’s 2013 SEO Marketing Benchmark Survey.



Audience-Optimized Content: Foundation for Performance Marketing

It's easier than ever for anyone to generate content. It's for this reason that the market has gotten flooded and the standards for good content are high.



In old-school content development, a writer was the expert who would research a topic and develop content. Editors knew how to massage the content and present it in a way that conveyed quality, timely information – in the editor's eyes – to those who received it.

The old-school model has been flipped on its head by the web, social media and the democratization of content delivery. Virtually anyone can be a publisher in 2017; the volume and uneven quality of content underscores that point emphatically. The result: a countless number of information outlets vie for the short – ened attention spans of essentially the same pool of people.

Textual content, and marketing of that content to influence its intended targets, must therefore meet a whole new set of standards:

- Reflect web click data about topics of interest for an aggregate audience
- What content are those of a particular demographic profile consuming and when
- What is their preferred medium – website, email, mobile device, social media outlet
- Utilize behavioral insights about individuals from marketing automation systems

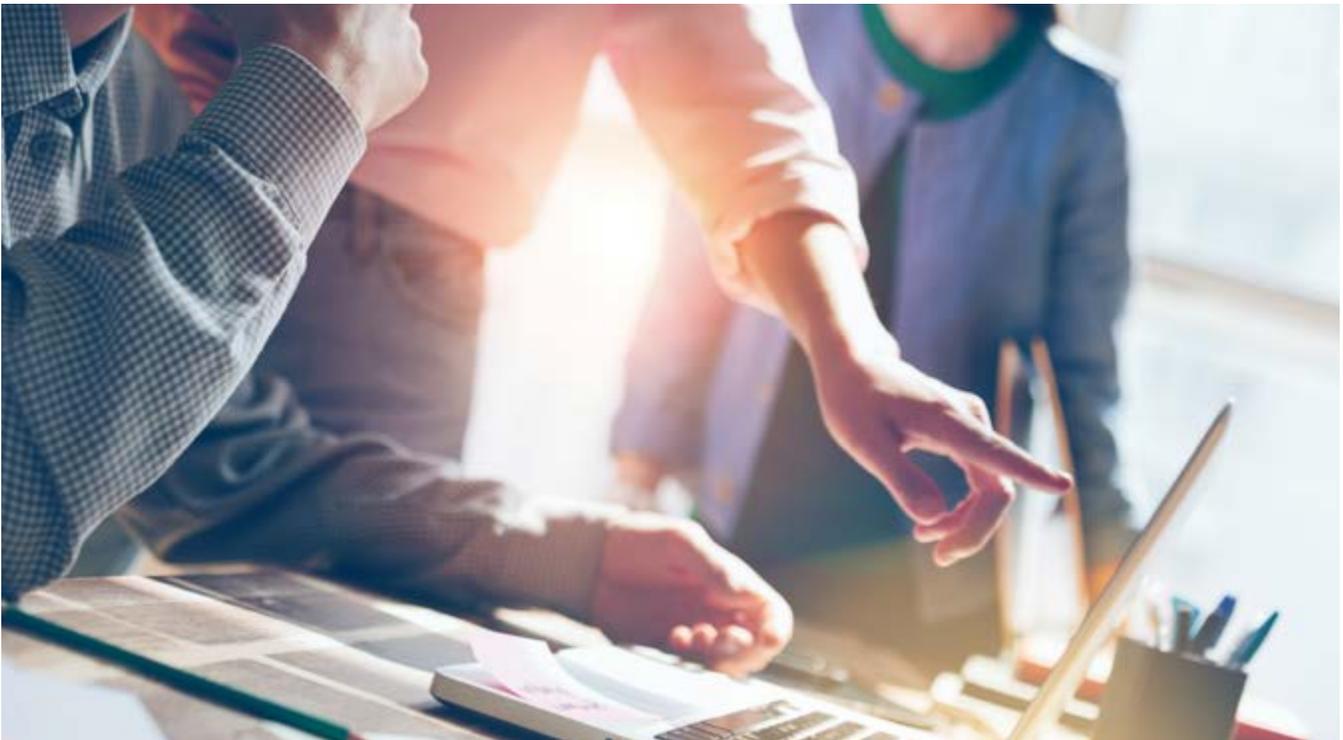
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- Identify targets who are consuming data on a given topic on websites
 - Build profiles of target audience members from email response and engagement data
 - Capitalize on persona and location-in-funnel data
 - Speak explicitly to an individual's professional role and be optimized for the business challenges of such roles – IT exec, finance exec, line-of-business manager
 - Be optimized for a target audience's location in the marketing funnel

At the wide top of the marketing funnel, a white paper or e-book should assume limited knowledge of the marketplace in which the B2B marketer competes, so education and awareness should be primary goals. At the narrow bottom of the funnel, content developers



CREATING CONTENT THAT COUNTS

For marketers to create effective content, it is important to utilize insights from the data and analytics you've already collected. Determine your buyer personas using this data, then create content that is the best fit for those groups.



should assume the lead has created a shortlist and is close to making a product selection. Granular information about products, services, implementation/usage, customer case studies and the like should be ideally suited to informational needs and driving a decision.

Marketing of Text-Based Content: A Six-Step Plan

We've given a clear overview of the steps to optimize text-based content. Once you've completed those steps, it's time to shift into high gear on part two – marketing the content to achieve an objective. What follows is a six-step plan.

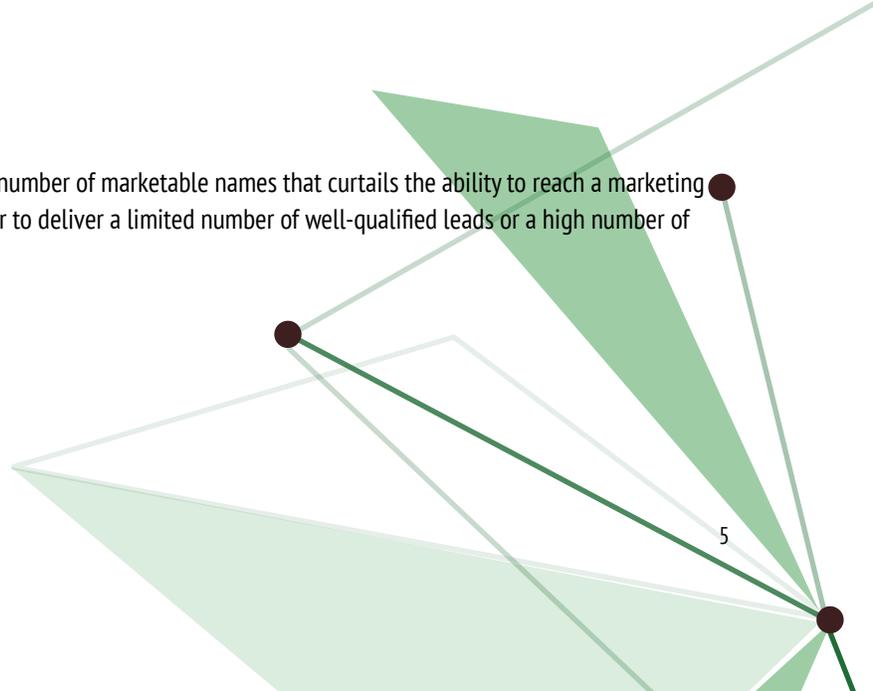
1 Target Accurately

Every marketing campaign – and the offers that support it – should begin with an outcome in mind. Is it geared toward creating new, top-of-funnel leads? Is it designed to advance leads currently in a database further into the funnel? Raise awareness? Build audience via opt-ins? These goals will determine how and to whom the offer is targeted. Most often targeting will involve selecting a list of names to email, or leveraging marketing automation to determine which offer is presented to a website visitor, and when.

Variables to use in selecting and narrowing a list of targets – tied to the content's location in the funnel – include:

- Professional persona and buying authority
- Job title
- Company size
- Geography

Applying all of the above “filters” may yield an extremely small number of marketable names that curtails the ability to reach a marketing goal. Ask yourself this question: do your goals indicate it's better to deliver a limited number of well-qualified leads or a high number of lightly qualified leads?



2 Use Best Practices to Drive the Offer and User Experience

Developing a great offer includes a copywriting exercise that spans email, pages, possibly social media and more. Writing style and quality count – a lot. They'll determine the reception to your message and brand. The copy should be concise and economical. You're competing for attention with people whose attention spans are increasingly influenced by Twitter, Facebook and a barrage of emails so don't overwhelm with detail.

Just as the content that drives the offer must deliver unique insight that can't be found anywhere else, the same is true of the marketing copy that promotes it. It must call out clearly what is different in your content when compared to many other offers on the same or similar topics.

The subject line or page heading should include the dominant or most important keyword (don't forget the role Google will play in helping web pages get found) as well as the unique insight that the content brings to bear.

The call to action should be unmistakable. The word you choose to include in a button, as well as the button's appearance and location, should provide only one option of what to do.



USER EXPERIENCE TACTICS THAT WORK

Optimizing your user experience is key aspect of successful lead generation. Ensure that your audience is getting the best experience by creating a clear CTA and ensuring that your headlines and subject lines are clear and relevant.

The experience must be simple and painless for the person you want to engage with the offer. When a registration form is involved, make it as minimal as possible and assemble profile data on the back end whenever possible. A "submit now" or "register" button should take a person directly to your text-based content. It should download quickly and easily. More steps only frustrate, confuse or reduce the level of engagement.

3 Answer *THE Critical Question: What's In It for Me?*

Marketers can never lose sight of the fact they're seeking engagement by a person – not a computer, not a company, not a department – with pressing business needs. That means the offer must have a clear value statement with meaning to them, reflecting their persona and location in the funnel.

The copy must emphasize value to the recipient over the brand or message you're tasked with promoting. It should lead to a thought process about your brand. A top-of-funnel offer should adopt an educational, informational tone that assumes limited knowledge; bottom-of-funnel offers should assume significant knowledge from an individual that is close to making a decision.

From start (email subject line, web page heading) to finish (call to action, confirmation page post registration) your copy and presentation should always be answering the, "what's in it for me?" question.

4 *Make Connections in a Highly Social Business Climate*

If there's any lasting effect of Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn on information consumption, it's that consumers can know virtually anywhere or anytime what colleagues, friends, coworkers and peers are reading and recommending. Sharing this information has become part of our social fabric.

The content you develop and market should capitalize on the social sharing trend to maximize visibility and performance of your content. Make your content, as well as your marketing promotions, easily shareable with prominent social icons displayed in your text based content. With a sharing action, your audience is implicitly or explicitly endorsing your content, and that's almost always a good thing. Take tangible steps to facilitate such connections in marketing offers. If you have a high percentage of audience that has consumed one piece of content as well as another, share that insight by sending a related asset to those who've engaged with one of the assets but not the other. If those who fit a given professional persona have broadly embraced a piece of content, put that content in front of those with similar responsibility, and convey the fact their peers have derived value from the content.

Statements such as: "many of your peers have downloaded this content" will resonate, provided the content is closely aligned with the audience's needs.



5 *Treat Registration as a Conversation Starter – Not the Final Word*

Many content marketing offers are geared toward creating top-of-funnel leads. Even those that aren't should have a realistic goal of advancing leads in the funnel, not necessarily advancing them to the bottom of the funnel or sold business.

Don't think one piece of content can serve as a be-all/end-all that will make your marketing goals a reality. Rather, a solid, informative piece of content is a great opportunity for a brand to put its best foot forward, without stomping on the reader with its brand message. View it as a way to start building trust and respect. The brand can be a thought leader that strives to give value to prospective customers and, over time, nurture them into paying customers. Engagement by a lead is a core part of building a nurturing strategy over time – and should be managed from that perspective.

6 *Rely On Analytics – And a Thick Skin*

There's a unique benefit to being a marketer: you can classify any perceived – or actual – failure as a test. A strong marketing organization is always testing within campaigns and offers. Even content itself must be developed and deployed on a test basis to maximize the understanding of audience preferences. Marketers need to be prepared for high scrutiny and a knee-jerk tendency to hit the panic button

when an offer, campaign or other marketing initiative fails or gets off to a slow start. The content marketing plan should include, at minimum, a Plan B and possibly even a Plan C. Those alternate plans should be developed in parallel with Plan A. Strong analytics discipline, with realtime analysis of results, is needed to determine test results and iterate as needed.



Plan B – or your test plan – can iterate based on any of the following parameters:

- Target list for emails
- Call to action wording
- Call to action button appearance
- Email subject line

And those are just a start. It can take repeated tests to find the right message and positioning for a textual asset.

Conclusion

Follow the guidelines laid out above, and you will have the content, marketing message and insight to connect with your target audience when marketing text-based content. Optimization is critical. Without it, you'll find that your content falls flat and with it, your lead generation.

Successful lead generation using text-based content isn't easy. In fact, it takes quite a bit of work. But if you implement the strategies mentioned above, you will find your user experience is drastically improved.

With tools like automation and A/B testing, your content will become what your audience craves, driving performance, and conversion. If you're ready to begin, HiP is a natural launch point to start building your audience.

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