

Content Strategy

A practical handbook
by Not Fur' Long

**NOT
FUR'
LONG**

Hello!

This handbook is aimed at helping business owners approach their online marketing. Having a content strategy will help to plan, develop and organise everything that you publish for your audience.

This can range from images, videos or writing that is shared via social media, blog posts or email newsletters. Having a plan that considers what your customers might want and need will help to focus what your brand should create, helping to promote your services in a useful and interesting way.

We hope that this will provide an overview of the important parts that contribute towards developing your own content strategy and help you to work through the exercise to establish what content works best for your brand.

Content strategy is a technique used to create and distribute valuable, relevant and consistent content...

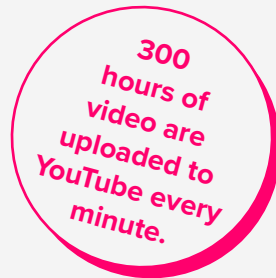
...with the ultimate aim to attract and retain a clearly defined audience.

Why do you
need a
content
strategy?

Cut through the noise

In a world where there is a lot of 'stuff' online, to be noticed your business must work hard to stand out.

Content marketing provides a structure to make your content as valuable and engaging for your customers as possible.



Connect with your audience



With a content strategy you can motivate, educate and connect with existing and potential customers on a personal level.

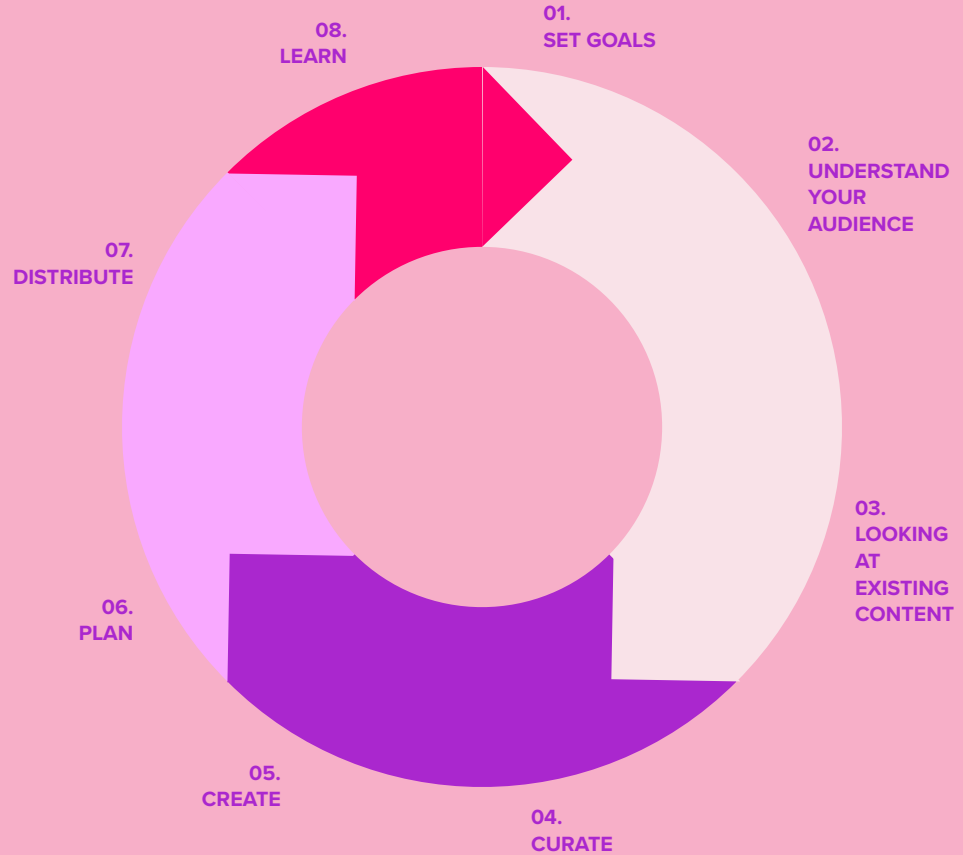
Creating useful content for social media, blogs and newsletters is a low-cost and effective method of increasing the amount of people who know about your brand.

A tailored approach

There isn't one, single cookie-cutter content strategy that will guarantee success. It will vary based on the type of service you offer, what you want to achieve and your customers.

However, there are specific steps and exercises which we'll go through, with the aim to build out a plan that helps your brand connect with your customers.

The content strategy cycle



Set your goals

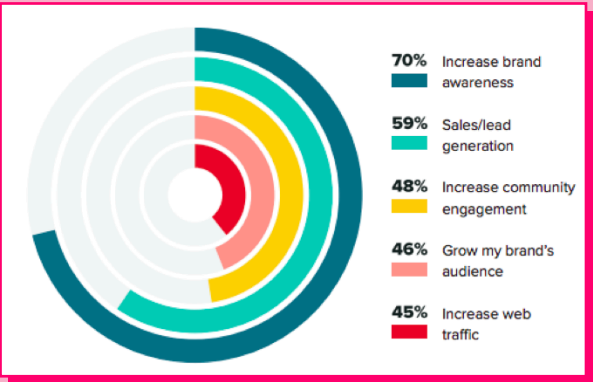
The first step towards creating a long-term content strategy is to establish what you want to achieve, these are your content goals. Having these in mind will help to plan and guide the type of material that is most useful to your brand.

These are likely to be informed by your brand values, combined with your overall marketing goals. The more specific these goals, the better you will be able to adapt content to suit these needs.

Tip! Make sure you write these down, as it's helpful to stay accountable and be able to return to these and review.

Questions to consider:

- What is the most important measure of success for your brand?
- If you had to prioritise your top 3 goals, what would they be?
- What do you want your brand to be known for?



Under- standing your audience

CONTENT STRATEGY

As with any aspect of marketing, it's really important to have a clearly defined understanding of who you're talking to. Your customers are your audience.

It's likely that your audience will consist of several groups. Their differences may be down to demographics (age, gender, profession etc.) or psychographics (lifestyle, beliefs, values etc.) but having a broad understanding of these segments will help to determine their needs and what style of content will be most relevant.

Questions to consider:

- Currently, who do you think your audience is?
- Does this differ to who your target audience should be?

Remember! As your business grows, your audience may also change and evolve. Therefore, it's important to regularly revisit your audience and track any noticeable changes.

Tip! As a starting point, we'd recommend having a look at your social data. If you have a business page, all social media platforms can provide top-line insights on your followers.

CONTENT STRATEGY

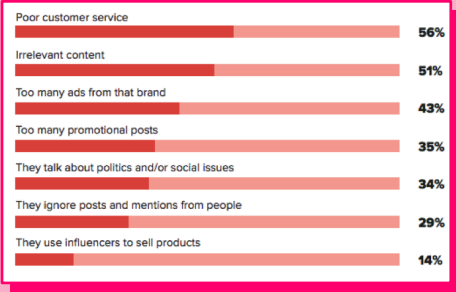
Audit existing content

Once you're clear on your goals and audience, it's time to conduct an audit on the content that you've created so far - we'll primarily be talking about social channels but this is applicable to blog content too.

Look at which posts performed well and which ones didn't; a simple and quick way of calculating this is to compare the total number of engagements on each post, but you may also want to consider the reach, which is how many of your followers actually saw it.

Again, each social media platform can provide data on post and page analytics.

Remember! Your audience chose to follow your brand for a reason. To keep them interested you need to create unique content that reflects who you are as a brand.



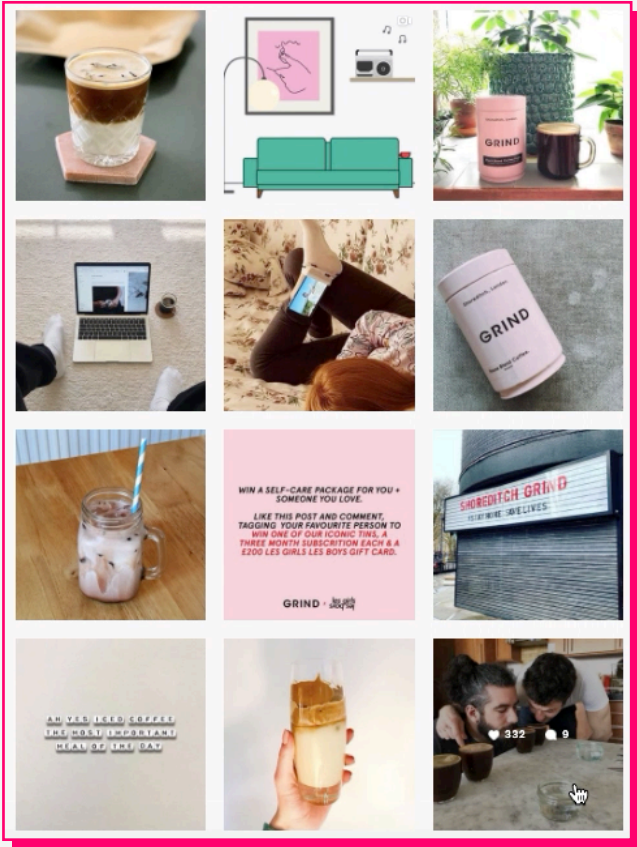
REASONS WHY CONSUMERS UNFOLLOW BRANDS
SOURCE: SPROUTSOCIAL

Questions to consider:

- Are there recurring themes between the best and worst performing content? Look at content formats as well as subjects.
- Can you identify any opportunities based on content that is currently missing?

Case study: Grind

CONTENT STRATEGY



CONTENT STRATEGY

SOURCE:
@GRIND

Case study: Grind

CONTENT STRATEGY

The best performing content included a competition in partnership with another brand which will have helped to boost reach and engagement of this post.

This example on the right is a high quality, aspirational piece of User Generated Content (UGC) that also performed well.



CONTENT STRATEGY

SOURCE:
@GRIND

Case study: Grind

CONTENT STRATEGY

These two bits of content didn't perform as well as the previous examples.

They're less polished than their usual content and neither make the coffee as appealing as other bits of content.

There is also no reference to the brand.



SOURCE:
@GRIND

CONTENT STRATEGY

Curate your content

CONTENT STRATEGY

Rather than approaching content on a piece by piece basis, it helps to think of it like a jigsaw, where each individual piece should have its own purpose and contribute to the overall picture.

Within this, you can cluster groups together to form content themes: a subset of topics that contribute to your overall content strategy.

The benefit of defining content themes are three-fold:

- **Organisation:** Helping to ensure your content covers all the necessary topics for your brand.
- **Targeting:** Defined themes can help to guide specific content for specific groups of people.
- **Ideation:** This is the part that a lot of people find tricky, however, setting content themes helps to refine relevant topics.

CONTENT STRATEGY

Questions to consider:

- Ask yourself, what's the purpose of each content theme?
 - Are you trying to educate, entertain, attract or advertise?
 - Ultimately, what are you asking your audience to do?
- Within this, is there scope for every piece of content to be useful and relevant?

Case study: Proper

Proper have four clear and consistent content themes. These themes allow them to plan and organise content that’s relevant for their audience all year round. It also gives them enough variation in terms of the types of content they create.

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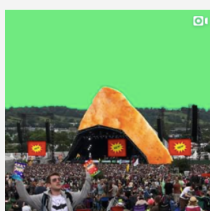
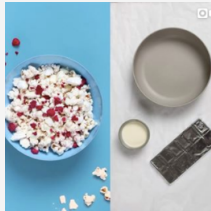
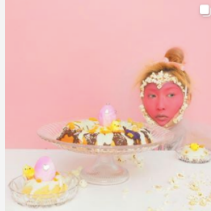
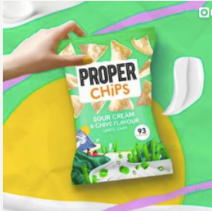
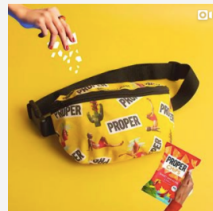
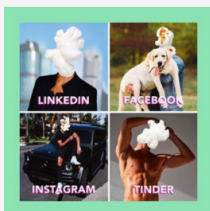
CONTENT STRATEGY

CAMPAIGN + PRODUCT

USER GENERATED CONTENT

RECIPE INSPIRATION

REACTIVE/SEASONAL



SOURCE:
@PROPER

Creating content

CONTENT STRATEGY

There are a variety of options for content that you can create for your audience, known as your **owned content**. This can include video, images, infographics, case studies, to name a few. Owned content helps to promote your brand, helping to build trust and relationships with your audience.

However, you can also integrate **earned content** into your strategy; this is all the content and conversation around your brand

shared by somebody else on your behalf. Don't underestimate the power of word of mouth marketing - **74% of customers consider word of mouth to be the key influencer in their purchasing decisions!*** Make sure you re-share any positive reviews or images customers take featuring your product, this is known as **User Generated Content**.

*SOURCE: NIELSEN

Questions to consider:

- In the past, what content formats have you tried? What's worked well for you?
- What help would you need to bring this to life? (e.g. videographer, animator, designer)
- What type of content is your target audience engaging with?

CONTENT STRATEGY

Planning your content

Thinking beyond the types of content to create, you'll also need to consider how to organise this content. Creating a content calendar is a helpful method of managing your content, allowing you to gain a big-picture approach to your content planning. Your content calendar will be a hub for everything you post and be useful to visualise how all your ideas will fit together.

Don't worry about repurposing content across different social

channels but make sure that it is optimised for the platform (you can learn more about this in our Social Media Marketing Handbook).

There's no golden rule to the frequency of posting. If anything, consistency and quality is more important than quantity, so plan for a maintainable amount!

Tip! The majority of social platforms allow you to schedule posts in advance.

Questions to consider:

- Which channel gets the most engagement from your audience?
- How often do you want to post?
- Are you under or over creating certain types of content themes?

Helpful tools

You can access a content calendar template to **download here**. You'll need to make a copy to edit it.

Alternative paid for scheduling platforms can be found in the Tools & resources section of our Social Media Marketing Handbook.

DOT FOR LONG		[MONTH]													
Day		Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Date		01st	02nd	03rd	04th	05th	06th	07th	08th	09th	10th	11th	12th	13th	14th
Cultural Dates (example: International Coffee Day)															
Platform	Instagram (in-feed)	Content Format: (image, video, UGC) Content Subject: Which content theme does this post fall under? Purpose of Post: What do you want your audience to do? This will inform the call to action + caption. Time of posting: Keep a record of this to see what performs best													
	Instagram (Stories)	Content Format: (image, video, UGC) Content Subject: Which content theme does this post fall under? Purpose of Post: What do you want your audience to do? This will inform the call to action + caption. Time of posting: Keep a record of this to see what performs best													
	Facebook	Content Format: (image, video, UGC) Content Subject: Which content theme does this post fall under? Purpose of Post: What do you want your audience to do? This will inform the call to action + caption. Time of posting: Keep a record of this to see what performs best													
	Twitter	Content Format: (image, video, UGC) Content Subject: Which content theme does this post fall under? Purpose of Post: What do you want your audience to do? This will inform the call to action + caption. Time of posting: Keep a record of this to see what performs best													
	CRM														

Distributing content

Following all the planning, it's time to publish your content and ideally, you'll want as many people to see it as possible.

Recognising when your audience is active will help to maximise the reach of the campaign. Likewise, hashtags will help to reach a wider audience who are searching via a specific interest or trend. However, make sure to use hashtags selectively.

Finally, you could collaborate with other brands and media partners. You can do this either by exchanging value, for instance by reposting content and sharing each others audience or paying to feature on a channel with larger reach. This can help build credibility for your brand.

Questions to consider:

- What time are you going to post content on each channel?
- Which hashtags are relevant to your brand?
- Are there any existing communities you can try to tap into?
- Could you partner with loyal customers/brand advocates who could share your content on their channel too to help increase reach?

Test & learn

CONTENT STRATEGY

Importantly it doesn't end there! The last step towards an effective content strategy is measuring the results of your efforts.

Tracking and analysing what's working and what's not on a monthly basis will help to inform planning for the next month. Don't be afraid to make tweaks and adjustments to see how they perform.

Most of the social platforms have analytics built into the platform which cover most of the base metrics you'll want to track.

If you want to go a step further there are paid planning and tracking tools like Sprout Social which can provide deeper measurement.

Questions to consider:

- What metrics are you planning on measuring?
- How often are you going to review your content?
- What benchmarks will you use to decide whether content is successful or not?

CONTENT STRATEGY

Best practice

Here are our best practice tips to consider when planning your content strategy:

- Consistency is key (both visually and tonally), this will help to strengthen your brand identity and differentiate you from competitors.
- Think about using storytelling to engage and communicate with your audience.
- Make your content work hard for you. Optimise content by considering post timings and include relevant hashtags to increase discovery.
- Be reactive and relevant. Although a content calendar is great for planning, don't overlook new opportunities to create content that latches onto cultural trends as long as it's authentic to your brand.
- Always measure the results. Content strategy requires an ongoing test + learn approach, so make sure you're constantly applying learnings.

Farewell!

Not Fur' Long is a collective of marketing professionals providing strategic and creative support for small businesses & charities to keep them alive and thriving during the COVID 19 pandemic.

This is just one of our collection of handbooks helping business owners and entrepreneurs understand different types of marketing. Please visit our website for information on how to access the other handbooks.

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