

Is sharing part of your content strategy?

I can't believe that in mid-2016 I am still complaining about this, but it happened to me again just this morning. I came across an interesting blog post about—get this—content strategy, and it had NO SHARING BUTTONS. None. Zilch. There was no easy way to share this content out short of me cutting and pasting the URL or using an extension such as Buffer (as Jonathan Rick helpfully pointed out on Twitter).

Think about the user

Here's the thing, content strategy is supposed to keep the "user experience" (or UX) in mind. That means, that you, the content strategist or website/blog owner, need to think about your site's visitors: How do they use your site? What do they need to do on your site? What do they want to learn about you? How can you make the process easy and intuitive *for them*?

It's about being social

Sharing buttons have been around for years. There are dozens of plugins that allow this functionality in WordPress, and I am sure in any other blogging platform. Not having sharing buttons means you do not want your content to be shared. Which means you do not understand the purpose of content or the social aspect of social media (blogs are social media).

It's not difficult: **Your content strategy needs to include an easy way to share content.** And by the way, sharing content also includes being able to email it or print it (don't get me started on how many recipe sites don't have this functionality).

Make sure it works

But it's not enough to stick a sharing plugin on your blog or website and call it a day. You have to check that it actually works. And that it is providing the right information. And that it is easy to find and use. (Just yesterday, I came across another blog post that I wanted to share, and it did have a sharing button, microscopic, but there, and guess what, it didn't work.)

You will find sharing (and printing) buttons at the bottom of this post. Please consider sharing this so that we can get all the non-sharers on board.

Is content marketing necessary to business success?

Content must be the buzziest term in the communications /marketing field right now. Everywhere you turn it seem you find discussions of content strategy and marketing. There are articles on how to create or re-purpose content. There are discussions on what is the best content and what channel is it ideally shared on.

But is content marketing absolutely necessary for you to achieve your business objectives?

What is content marketing exactly?

First let's start with a definition of content marketing. According to the Content Marketing Institute (I highly recommend you check it out for its excellent and useful

information), content marketing is:

the practice of creating relevant and compelling content in a consistent fashion to a targeted buyer, focusing on all stages of the buying process, from brand awareness through to brand evangelism.

Basically, you create content in order to sell something (your ideas, your product, your service) or obtain something (support).

I agree wholeheartedly with the theory that you should be providing information for your potential customers or supporters to make informed decisions. I am a huge fan of blogs in particular as an easy way to create and share content.

But, what about those that don't "do" content

That said, how do you explain the success of a content strategist I know who doesn't even have a website, much less "content"? Or the digital media expert who has so much work she hasn't blogged in months? Or the public relations agency that last tweeted in 2012?

And then there are the many successful small businesses (e.g., plumbers, caterers, etc.) that may have websites but that don't usually have the staff, budget or time to handle blogging, tweeting, creating infographics, etc.

Another type of lead generation

What do these non-content producers have in common? Positive word-of-mouth. These business thrive on referrals and generally do not rely on internet searches as their main source of leads. (As an aside, there are referrals that come in the form of online reviews, and this is a subset of search engine optimization that relies on local search.)



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Content is not always online

Here's the other thing: content is not always online. Content—a fancy word for information—can be shared face-to-face, in person. What you say to others about your business helps to market your business. This is why we develop key messages and elevator pitches. This is why we attend networking events. This is why we host coffees and get-togethers.

Yes, content works to achieve business objectives

The bottom line is that content marketing works, but it is not always the online and social media versions that are the most successful.

What are your thoughts? How much content do you produce? Is content at the heart of your marketing strategy? Let me know in the comments

6 marketing and communications lessons from 2012

1. Understand the basics (who you are and what you do) before doing anything else. I worked with one client this year who had launched a website, hired a marketing person and even commissioned a video without ever having examined what the company's main message was, defined a target audience or main competitors and certainly hadn't thought out its USP.

2. You don't have to market everywhere, just where you are likely to find your target audience. There's no need to spread your marketing message far and wide. You can have success by focusing your efforts where you are likely to find your audience.

3. There is only one content strategy (getting your target audience to read your content). Everything else is a TACTIC. I have read many articles about content marketing, all claiming to have new "strategies." In most, if not all, cases, these strategies were really tactics.



4. Acknowledge the reality on the ground. This year we have seen several advertisers (and a politician or two) who just did not get it. Like Pepco, who continued patting itself on its back about “reliability” when hundreds of thousands of customers were without power during extreme heat for several days.

5. Depending on Facebook (or any free, third-party service) as a marketing platform will cost you. Sure, you can have a Facebook page for free, but figuring out its ever changing policies will cost you in time and effort.

6. Stop scheduling your tweets! Tweeting about your fun weekend ahead while people are mourning 20 dead children is tacky and preventable. Twitter is about immediacy, engagement and responsiveness. Scheduled tweets are just the opposite.

What lessons did you draw from the year that was? Anything jump out at you? If so, please share in the comments.