

CONTENT MARKETING



ACCORDING TO INDUSTRY  
THOUGHT LEADERS

# HOW TO CREATE A KILLER CONTENT STRATEGY

salesforce

marketing cloud

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## Introduction

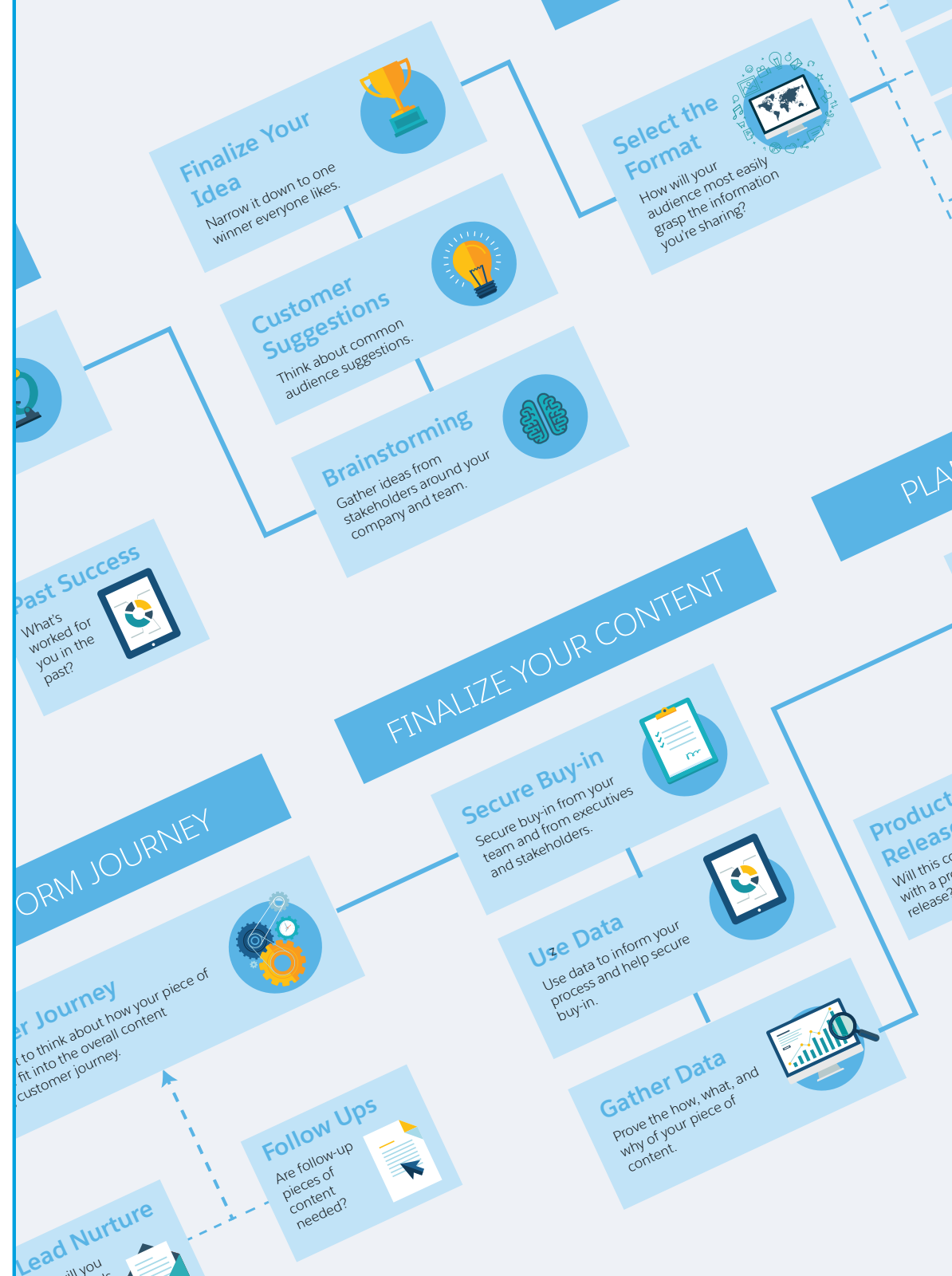
# A Recipe for Content Success

If your company is like most, you've probably tried some type of content marketing already. Maybe you've written a few blog posts or launched an infographic. Maybe you've even established a regular publishing cadence of e-books, whitepapers, or how-to videos on YouTube.

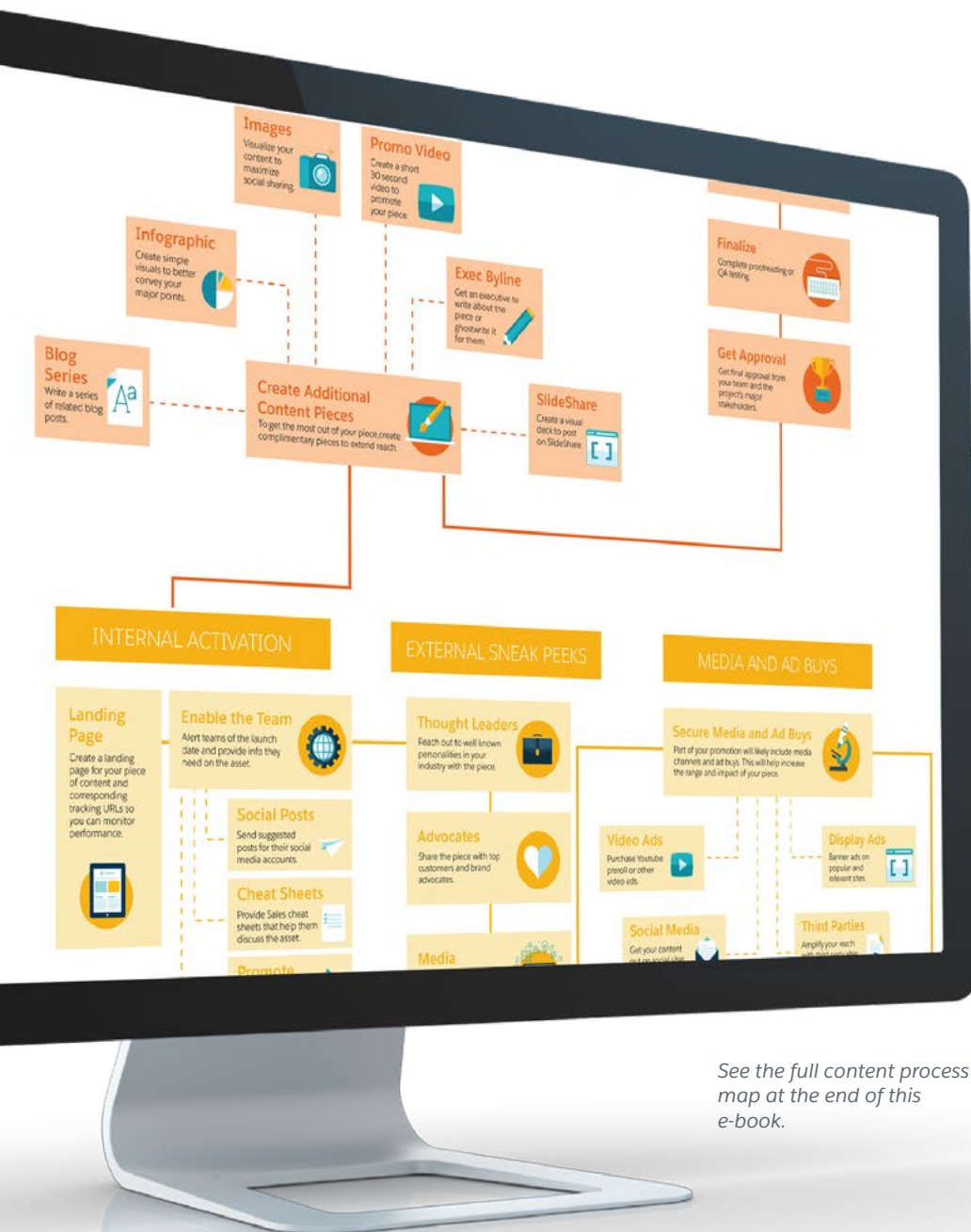
No matter where you are in your content marketing journey, however, you probably could – and want to – do more. Self-proclaimed content marketing geeks are always thinking about the next creative project that will delight audiences and drive mega-sharing. But all too often, obstacles get in the way:

- Too few resources for writing, design, and publication
- Rush-order projects from executives that take higher priority
- Lack of internal enthusiasm about content marketing

And even if you do create a fantastic content marketing piece, you might not have the necessary support to activate it fully across all of your digital channels.







See the full content process map at the end of this e-book.

That's where the world's foremost content marketing experts can help. In this e-book, we share brand new content marketing expertise from Jay Baer, Ann Handley, Jason Miller, and Chris Penn to help you create the content marketing strategy you've always dreamed of.

With the right combination of planning, process, and execution, you'll be prepared to see your content marketing project through to completion and ROI. Follow the flowchart for tips on how to manage every step of the process, and turn to our companion e-book [How to Measure Your Content Marketing, According to Salesforce's Content Marketing Team](#) to better measure the fruits of your labor.

## About the Author



**Heike Young**  
Global Content Lead  
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Heike Young is Global Content Lead at Salesforce. Her favorite part of content marketing is getting to discover, research, and execute creative ways to communicate across digital media. Before joining Salesforce, Heike edited the best selling *For Dummies* series.

Follow Heike on Twitter at [@youngheike](#).

Phase 1

# Research and Plan

## Looking for Inspiration

by Jason Miller

So, how do you figure out what your awesome content marketing project should be about? For me, it's a combination of inspiration, creativity, and owning a conversation. Answer the questions:

- What big conversations are my prospects and customers a part of?
- How competitive are those conversations?
- Can I disrupt that space and/or dominate it?

To answer these questions, I start with a combination of keyword research and social listening. Then I put together a list of the questions and topics that my product or service relates to.

If you take your time and do this first step right, you can't miss. With so much data at our fingertips, it's no longer a question of whether or not a certain piece of content will have an audience. Once you find an opportunity, it's full steam ahead. You'll probably find your best ideas in the most unexpected places, so arm yourself with a note-taking app (I use Microsoft One Note) for tracking inspiration on the go.

The next step is to take that inspiration, adopt a unique angle, and add some personality. For me, that personality element usually takes the form of a face-melting guitar solo, KISS reference, or throwback to Black Sabbath or Ozzy Osbourne. For example, the idea for *The Sophisticated Marketer's Guide*

to *LinkedIn* came from a jazz CD cover image I'd seen. The cover paired illustration with vector art, and it just screamed sophistication. I saw an opportunity to create marketing e-books about how to properly market on LinkedIn – in the same sophisticated vein that CD had inspired.



**Jason Miller**  
Senior Manager, Content  
Marketing at LinkedIn


Jason Miller is Senior Manager, Content Marketing at LinkedIn where he leads the global content marketing and social efforts for LinkedIn Marketing Solutions. He's also the author of the Amazon #1 best selling book *Welcome to the Funnel*, and Forbes named him to their list of the World's Top 40 Social Marketing Talent.

Follow Jason on Twitter at [@jasonmillerca](https://twitter.com/jasonmillerca).

# Research and Plan

## IDEA GENERATION

**Research**  
The best ideas come from exploring what competitors are doing and what's been done in the past.




**Competitors**  
What are the hot ideas and channels?



**Past Success**  
What's worked for you in the past?



**Finalize Your Idea**  
Narrow it down to one winner everyone likes.



**Customer Suggestions**  
Think about common audience suggestions.



**Brainstorming**  
Gather ideas from stakeholders around your company and team.



## CHOOSE THE FORMAT


**Select the Format**  
How will your audience most easily grasp the information you're sharing?




- Interactive
- Video
- E-Book
- Slide Deck
- Infographic
- Webinar
- Research

## BRAINSTORM JOURNEY

**Customer Journey**  
It's important to think about how your piece of content will fit into the overall content marketing customer journey.



**Lead Nurture**  
How will you nurture leads from this piece?



**Follow Ups**  
Are follow-up pieces of content needed?



## FINALIZE YOUR CONTENT


**Secure Buy-in**  
Secure buy-in from your team and from executives and stakeholders.



**Use Data**  
Use data to inform your process and help secure buy-in.




**Gather Data**  
Prove the how, what, and why of your piece of content.



## PLAN YOUR LAUNCH

**Launch Date**  
Decide when you will launch your piece of content.



**Product Release**  
Will this coincide with a product release?



**Internal Campaigns**  
Can your content align with a campaign?



**Holiday**  
Should your content align with a specific holiday or date?



# Tips and Pointers

- **What form will your content marketing piece take?** We usually think of written content when we imagine content, but don't rule out a webinar, video series, or even slide deck. It all depends on how your audience will most easily consume the information you're sharing. If it's more detailed information they'll return to again and again, maybe an e-book is best. If it's information best shown rather than told, maybe a video is just the ticket.
- **When should you publish?** With a little planning, you can perfectly time the launch of your content to match up with important events. For example, content themed to coincide with a major holiday can be highly shareable, but keep in mind that you want to invest time and resources in content that will be evergreen, not shared for a week and then forgotten.
- **What does it really mean to use data to inform your content creation process?** When we say to use data to inform your content creation process, what do we really mean? Ultimately, it's all about focusing on your customer. The more research you do in the beginning of your content creation process, the better your final content will resonate. Seek data from your customer service and social listening teams to see what questions are top-of-mind for customers. Ask your web team which keywords and calls to action are most effective. You can rely on a wealth of data to help you drive better content.

*The Sophisticated Marketing* series was born, and it's been the most successful content series for LinkedIn to date.

Another one of my favorite content ideas came from *Behind the Music*, a VH1 series that told the story of successful musicians' rises to success. I thought this concept could apply to my favorite marketing campaigns, to take readers behind the scenes from the marketers who conceived the ideas. The best part of that campaign was that the Dollar Shave Club CEO replied to our request and shared the story behind his wildly successful viral videos. Taking it full circle, we originally reached out to him on LinkedIn!

Where do your passions and content marketing goals meet? That's the gateway to your best content marketing idea ever.

No matter what type of content I'm creating, I refer to the best advice I ever got in my marketing career from Ann Handley (see more of her great advice later in this e-book). Ann told me that if I could figure out a way to inject my personality and love for heavy metal into my content marketing (especially at a time when B2B content was seen as stale and boring), I might be onto something. She was right. Where do your passions and content marketing goals meet? That's the gateway to your best content marketing idea ever.

## Thinking Strategically Before You Get Tactical

by Jay Baer

The goal of any major content marketing initiative is not to create great content, but rather to improve your business because of that great content. Unless you're selling ads, this content needs to drive meaningful customer behavior, not just aggregate eyeballs. That's why it is so critically important to understand the customer journey *before* the content is produced.

The first step is understand in what stage of the customer funnel this content execution lives. Is it targeted to people who have no relationship with the company (or maybe no awareness at all)? Is it targeted to people who have heard of your business, but have never tried the product, done a demo, etc.? Or, is it targeted to people who have already “kicked the tires,” and this content is intended to push them the last mile toward becoming an official lead (or sale)? All of those are viable funnel stages for this content to occupy, but they are very different in terms of what you want someone to do after they consume your amazing content.

And that's key to content success at the strategic, business level: knowing what a content consumer is likely to know about your business before reading/watching/downloading, and specifying precisely what you want them to do after they experience the magic of your content. What is realistic at that critical point, when they've just finished enjoying your content? Do you want them to buy? To call? To sign-up for a more detailed webinar? To subscribe to your email or YouTube channel? To like your Facebook page?

The best practice here is to articulate your top three desired behaviors after someone consumes this content execution.

Create an optimal “share of behavior” pie chart to better understand this. For example, the ideal next steps in your customers' journey might be: “For every 100 people that view this amazing, un-gated Slideshare presentation, we expect 50% of them to provide their email address in exchange for an e-book; we expect 25% of them to sign-up for a pre-recorded webinar, and we expect 10% of them to request a software demo. The other 15% we expect to do something else, or nothing.”

Then, pay attention to what *actually* happens. If your behavior ratios are way off your expectations, you may need to better align your content or your calls to action.

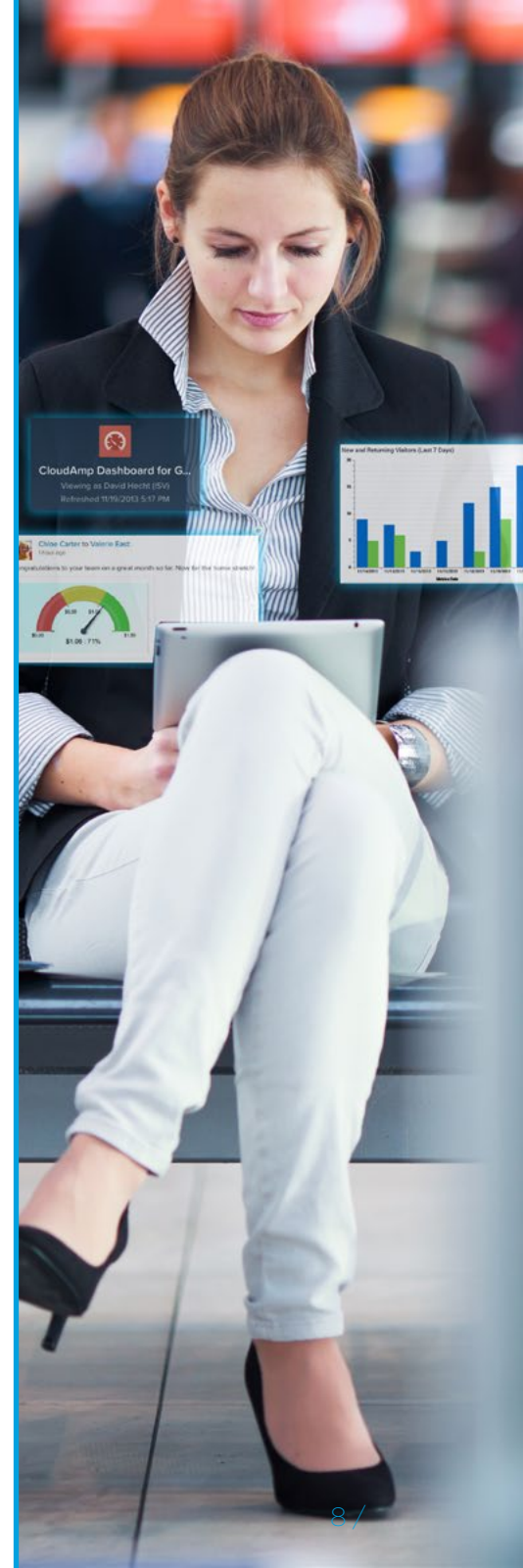


Jay Baer

Bestselling Author, Global Keynote Speaker, and Entrepreneur.

Jay Baer is author of four *New York Times* best selling books, including *Youtility*, a new marketing framework for the age of information overload. He is also the founder of Convince & Convert, a strategy consulting firm that helps prominent companies gain and keep more customers through the smart intersection of technology, social media, and customer service.

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## Phase 2

# Create Assets

### Writing GPS

by Ann Handley

The writer Andre Dubus (*House of Sand and Fog*) has described writing as inching your way along a very dark, very long tunnel: you can make out the next few feet in front of you, but you're not quite certain where you'll end up or when you'll get there. What helps with the uncertainty and enormity of the task is to start with some kind of process to guide the way.

*Process?* Ew. I know. *Process* is one of those things that in many parts of life I consider hopelessly boring and mind-numbing. Like alphabetizing canned goods. Or peeling beets.

But in writing marketing content, process is necessary, because you need a road map to get you where you need to be.

Here's my 12-step Writing GPS for creating longer content pieces like blog posts, e-books, and whitepapers.

**1. Set your goal.** What's your business goal? What are you trying to achieve? Anything you write should align with a larger (business or marketing) goal.

**2. Reframe.** Put your reader into it. Reframe the idea to relate it to your readers. Why does it matter to them? Ask yourself, "So what?" and then answer, "Because..." Repeat that "so what/because" query and response string as many times as necessary – until you've exhausted any ability to come up with an answer. Express your reframed idea as a clear message.

**3. Seek out data and examples.** What credible source supports your main idea?

**4. Organize.** What structure helps communicate your point? A how-to guide? A client narrative? Case study? Organize using a format that suits that type of story.



**Ann Handley**  
Chief Content Officer  
Marketing Profs

Ann Handley is the author of the *Wall Street Journal* bestseller *Everybody Writes* (Wiley) and the Chief Content Officer of MarketingProfs. Get to know her at [AnnHandley.com](http://AnnHandley.com).

Follow her on Twitter at [@marketingprofs](https://twitter.com/marketingprofs).

# Tips and Pointers

- **Content creators work best when they're not in silos.** Try to set up a meeting with your writer, designer, videographer, or any other creatives early in the process. Then everyone can collaborate to be sure all content they create megaphones the overarching ideas of your piece.
- **Don't forget to have an outside pair of eyes read your content.** It's science! According to a recent [Wired article](#), "When we're proofreading our own work, we know the meaning we want to convey. Because we expect that meaning to be there, it's easier for us to miss when parts (or all) of it are absent. The reason we don't see our own typos is because what we see on the screen is competing with the version that exists in our heads." So partner up for a better finished product.
- **Think of your dream content marketing project as a Thanksgiving turkey.** According to Rebecca Lieb's analogy. She explains, "You cook up this giant bird to serve up on one glorious occasion and then proceed to slice and dice this thing for weeks on end. If you are like most families, you are going to be repurposing this bird as leftovers for quite some time creating everything from sandwiches, to soups, and more. Your content marketing strategy can be thought of in the same way."

**5. Write to one person.** Imagine the one person you're helping with this piece of writing. And then write directly to that person.

**6. Produce The Ugly First Draft ("TUFDF").** Just barf up that first draft. Get it out. Don't worry about grammar, complete sentences, or readability. You'll tackle all that later.

**7. Walk away.** Put some distance between your first draft and the second.

**8. Rewrite.** Shape that mess into something that a reader wants to read. In your head, swap places with your reader as you do so.

**9. Give it a great headline or title.** Spend as much time on the headline as you do on the writing itself. Respect the headline.

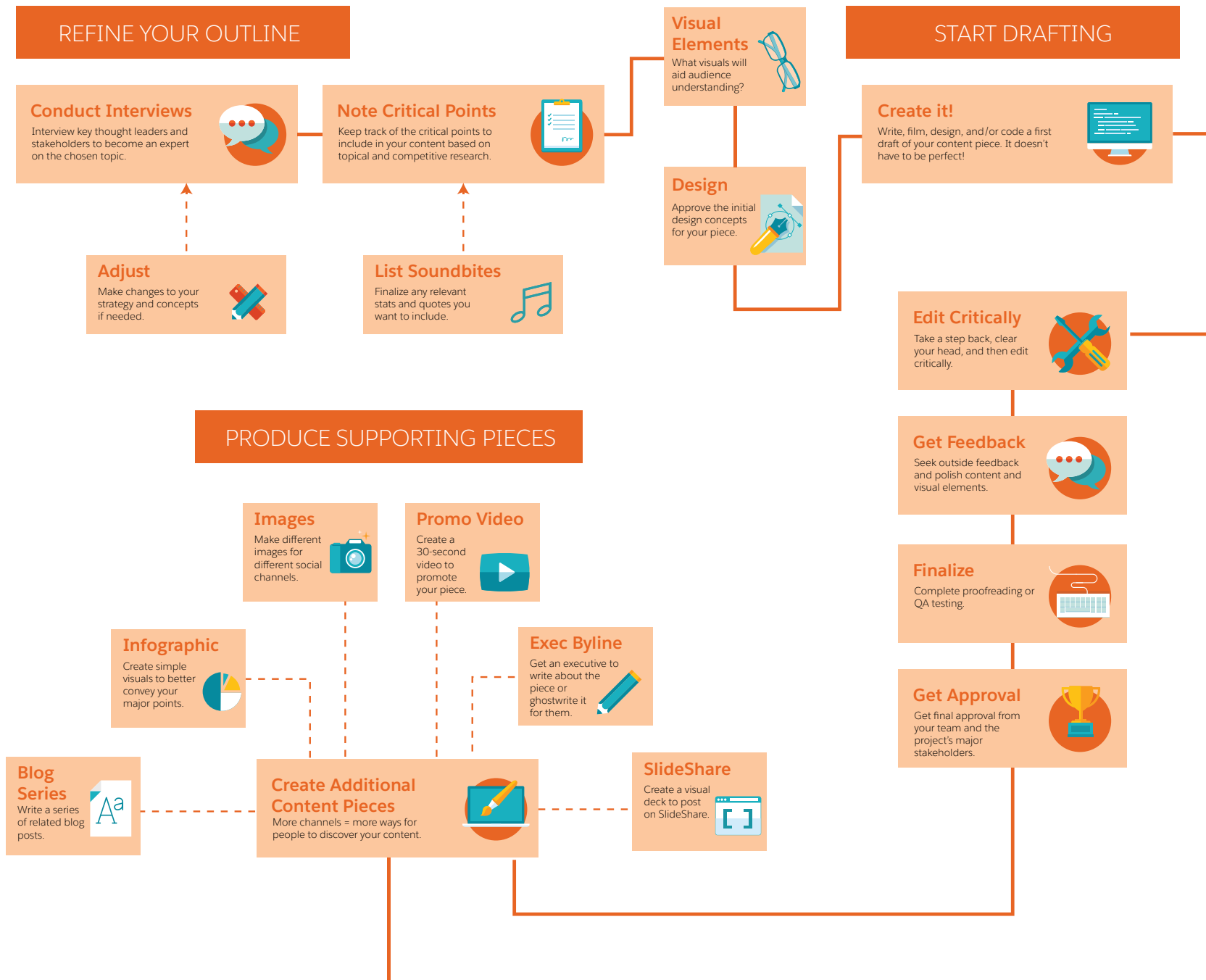
**10. Have someone else edit.** Ideally, the person who edits your piece will have a tight grip on grammar, usage, style, and punctuation. Like a bona fide editor.

**11. One final look for readability.** Does your piece look inviting, alluring, easy to scan? With short paragraphs and bold subheads? Are lists numbered or bulleted?

**12. Publish,** but not without answering one more reader question: "What now?" What do you want readers to do next? Sign up for email updates? Buy something?

There is no one way to write, just as there is no one way to roast a turkey or raise a child. But the Writing GPS can guide you in the right direction – or at least, keep you from getting hopelessly lost.

# Create Assets



Phase 3

# Share and Measure

## Is Your Content Infectious?

by Chris Penn

“Build it and they will come” has been dead for quite some time. It is relevant in the early days of any new platform, from SEO in the late 1990s to the newest social network, but once the early days are done, “build it and they will come” ceases to be meaningful.

You’ve got great content and no one’s sharing it. No one’s talking about it. Your content isn’t driving the business or even moving the needle. What do you do? To better understand this, let’s turn from marketing to biology.

Three factors play a role in the spread of every infectious disease: transmission, symptoms, and severity/lethality. Of course, you don’t want to compare your content to a disease, but you do want it to be infectious. If we transmute these three factors to content marketing, we can make some comparisons between the spread of infections and the spread of content.

Transmission becomes the methods by which your content spreads and reaches new people. It’s tempting for marketers to focus heavily on social media, but this is a mistake. Limiting yourself to one content distribution mechanism reduces your effectiveness. At SHIFT Communications, we focus on five core media types for content distribution: search, social media, earned media, owned media, and paid media, in what we call our Reflex Media Framework. Any sharing plan should incorporate all of these media types.

Symptoms become the ways content engages with the audience. In infection, symptoms become ways for infectious agents to spread—like sneezing. How does your content inspire others to share? How vigorous a reaction does it provoke? How well optimized is your content for sharing, from obvious things like share buttons to portability of content across disparate advertising systems?



**Chris Penn**  
*VP, Marketing Technology*  
*SHIFT Communications*

Chris Penn is Vice President of Marketing Technology at SHIFT Communications, a data-driven PR and marketing agency; a co-founder of PodCamp with Chris Brogan; a co-host of the Marketing Over Coffee marketing podcast with John Wall; and professor at the University of San Francisco online.

Follow Chris on Twitter at [@cspenn](https://twitter.com/cspenn).



# Share and Measure

## INTERNAL ACTIVATION

### Landing Page

Create a landing page for your piece of content and corresponding tracking URLs so you can monitor performance.



### Enable the Team

Alert teams of the launch date and tell them what the piece is about.



### Social Posts

Send suggested posts for their social media accounts.



### Cheat Sheets

Help sales reps discuss with prospects.



### Promote

On employee newsletters, groups, or bulletin boards.



## EXTERNAL SNEAK PEEKS

### Thought Leaders

Reach out to well known personalities in your industry with the piece.



### Advocates

Share the piece with top customers and brand advocates.



### Media

Share widely to media outlets and industry journalists.



## MEDIA AND AD BUYS

### Secure Media and Ad Buys

Paying for extra reach can help when you first launch a piece of new content. Just make sure you're targeting a highly specific audience.



### Video Ads

Purchase YouTube preroll or other video ads.



### Display Ads

Buy banner ads on popular and relevant sites.



### Social Media

Where is your audience most social?



### Third Parties

Amplify your reach with third-party sites and channels.



### Top Sites

Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn

### Niche Sites

Spotify, Snapchat, Meerkat, and beyond

### Newsletters

Industry e-newsletters and podcasts

### Paid Posts

Sponsored or paid blog posts and articles

## PERFORMANCE REVIEW

### Save Files

Make sure you save all campaign assets and workflows.

### Monitor

How is the customer journey progressing? Can it be improved?

### Assess

Were there any data or knowledge gaps to be fixed?

### Wrap Up

Where is most referring traffic coming from? Prioritize those channels for the next time. Set up meetings to fix any process issues.

### Next Time

A content marketer's work is never finished! Start planning your next launch.



### Track Performance

Track both short-term and long-term performance.



### Note Feedback

Record what customers say about your piece in comments and on social.



### What's Not?

What parts of the production process didn't work?



### What's Working?

What parts of the production process worked well?



## LAUNCH TIME

### Publish!

Make sure your piece – and all corresponding assets – are set to publish on launch day with proper enablement.



### Schedule

Make sure you have a steady stream of content. Don't frontload.



### Tweak

Adjust social posts and blog titles based on what's working.



## Tips and Pointers

- **Be a better internal activator.** One of the most fail-safe ways to improve your content marketing's performance is to improve how you activate content internally. For example, explain to your sales team how this piece of content will prepare leads to buy. Or tell your service team that this content answers a top FAQ. Make people at your company enthused and compelled to share, and your reach will benefit exponentially.
- **Even the most recognized brands pay to boost their content.** Just watch a few pre-roll ads on YouTube and you'll see some of the biggest names in advertising. Paying for extra reach can really help when you first launch a piece of new content and no one has seen or started sharing it yet. Just make sure you're targeting a highly specific audience that you're certain will benefit from the content you're sharing.
- **After launch day, start paying close attention to what you can learn for next time.** Where is most of your referring traffic coming from, whether social, a bylined article, or a blog post? Prioritize those channels for the next time you launch a similar piece. Looking back on your production process, where were your hangups? Set up some meetings to fix those issues.

Finally, severity/lethality translates into how fast your content burns out. How fast do you lose attention? How fast does your audience move on? If you create content that is entirely topical (for example, newsjacking blog posts) and nothing timeless, then your content will always burn out quickly. Of course, if you create nothing but timeless content, chances are it will lack the engaging vigor needed to convince people to share.

Last, let's briefly touch on measurement. Medical organizations that track epidemics use reach, symptoms, and severity as metrics to determine levels of response to infections. Marketers should be looking at reach, engagement, and action to measure content's spread

If you create content that is entirely topical (for example, newsjacking blog posts) and nothing timeless, then your content will always burn out quickly.

through the five core forms of media. Using tools such as Salesforce Social Studio, Salesforce Pardot, and Google Analytics should be a mandatory part of your measurement toolkit to effectively track how your content is spreading.

## Conclusion

Let's face it: Not every project will be a dream come true. Bumps in the road might include changes in direction from product marketing, rebranding, a less enthusiastic response from customers, and so much more.

But sometimes – and increasingly often as your content marketing skills improve – you'll create content that fires on all cylinders:

- Engages your audience
- Gets lots of love on social media
- Inspires comments and conversation
- Drives leads, clicks, or whatever metrics you care about
- Inspires existing customers to stick with your business

As Jay wrote earlier, “The goal of any major content marketing initiative is not to create great content, but rather to improve your business because of that great content.” Keep that ultimate goal at the forefront of any content marketing endeavor, whether big or small.

## Keep Learning:



### How to Measure Your Content Marketing

[Check it out>>](#)

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