



B2B Brands-as-Publishers: Succeeding with Content Marketing Best Practices

by [Nancy Pekala](#)

Log on today to any major B2B website and you'll find a brave new world that's a mix of journalism, marketing and technology. That's because today's B2B organizations are now charged with attracting and engaging prospects in fresh, new ways.

Amidst a myriad of heated discussions about the "next big thing" in social media, this year's SXSW conference included a session led by NPR's Tom Ashbrook in which a standing-room only crowd hotly debated today's "Brave New World" where marketers are now acting as publishers. Increasingly, companies-- including B2B organizations—are using content marketing and curation to build their brands and engage their customers.

The hour-long [debate](#) included insights from [HiveFire's](#) Pawan Deshpande, Carrier Evolution's Gary Kim, TechCrunch's Lora Kolodny and Junta 42's Joe Pulizzi and focused on how marketers should—and should not—operate in this changing landscape. HiveFire suggests marketers follow these content marketing best practices:

- **Think like a media company.**
Make it worth your audiences' investment in time. Content that is relevant, interesting and helpful will keep their attention. When developing and delivering content, marketers need to consider the same factors that a traditional publisher would: who the audience is, what their needs and pain points are, and what would be a compelling story for them.
- **Be transparent.**
Distrust is rampant among today's consumers. Misleading your audience is the surest way to lose them as customers. Make sure your content is appropriately sourced and attributed. Be very clear about the original source of the content and link back to the complete text where possible. Also clearly disclose if a news portal or content has been sponsored by a company.
- **Support with resources**
Be prepared to provide sufficient resources to create and manage a successful content marketing plan. According to a recent [study](#), "*B2B Content Marketing: 2010 Benchmarks, Budgets and Trends*," conducted by the Content Marketing Institute and MarketingProfs, approximately 26 percent of marketing budgets are now being dedicated to content marketing initiatives.

Holger Schulze, author of the syndicated blog [Everything Technology Marketing](#) and manager of the 20,000-member [B2B Technology Marketing Community](#) on LinkedIn recently revealed results of a survey he conducted with the group's b2b members about how they are addressing the issue of content marketing. Based on 500 responses, Schulze found that content marketing is, indeed, growing by leaps and bounds within the B2B sector, with more 71% doing more content marketing than a year ago. Industry-wide changes in how traditional marketing tactics are being received in the marketplace are prompting B2B organizations to focus on ways it can drive awareness, generate leads and engage prospects. In fact, B2B companies are spending, on average, 20 percent of their marketing budget on content marketing, according to the survey results.

Yet, content marketing is still a fairly new and complex initiative for most B2B organizations. It is no surprise, then, that nearly a third of the survey's respondents indicated a lack of resources and talent ranks as their fifth biggest content marketing challenge. Getting content to the right audience also makes the top five list of challenges. And over 31 percent of B2B marketers have difficulty measuring the results of content marketing.

Not surprisingly, leaders are the metric the vast majority (73%) use to gauge content marketing success. Content views and downloads (53%) also rank highly in terms of measurement.

However, B2B organizations must be careful when creating a strategic plan for content initiatives. They need first to make decisions on who they are trying to reach and how the content positioning should be defined. Should the content be segmented by product, buyer persona, buying stage, market segment or a mix?

Most respondents (55%) indicated that the most effective segmentation is market segment, followed by product category (40%).

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