



# **The ultimate guide for upgrading your content syndication campaigns**

**Drive engagement (and revenue) with insight from top-performing demand gen teams**

# Introduction

The very best marketing campaigns connect people. They're memorable. They drive action.

They're also rare.

The uncomfortable truth is that great marketing takes time. Maybe you don't feel that you have the time to get to great. Maybe you need to launch a campaign now so you can support the pipeline quota that keeps you up at night. Sound familiar?

This guide will show you how to get to great faster, but it's not a shortcut. It will show you how to be more strategic about the marketing assets and experiences you're creating. Afterall, when it comes to content syndication, you want a memorable campaign that drives action. Poor content, poor ROI. Add up enough of those poorly-performing campaigns, and 1) you're not going to hit your OKRs and 2) your CFO is going to be leery about signing off on your quarterly budgets.

Fortunately, this guide outlines exactly what you need to do to create high-quality content and a strong content syndication strategy that drives measurable results.

We've compiled insights we've gained and best practices we've developed syndicating content for some of the world's most recognized corporations: IBM, Lockheed Martin, Dell, Microsoft and others. You'll find proven tactics on what really works to drive prospects to take action—and what pitfalls to avoid.

Let's get to it. Great is waiting.

# Give your audience content they care about

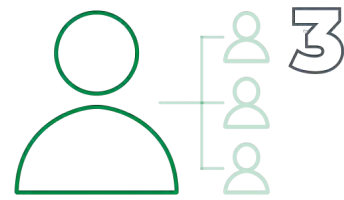
What do your potential customers want? In order to create top of funnel content that resonates with your audience, you need to first know who they are and what they care about. Before you start writing, step back and shine a bright light on the problems your prospects are facing. Fortunately (for this exercise, at least!), most B2B buyers are facing very similar challenges, and they typically fall into one of these three areas:



**Not enough budget**



**Not enough time**



**Not enough goodwill with Sales  
and/or upper management**

The specifics of these challenges will vary by industry and role, but when you whittle down the challenges facing almost every person you talk (or are trying to sell) to, these are the big fish. Partner with your content marketing team to make sure the content they're creating for your campaign positions your product or service as the “win”—the best option on the market for addressing those problems. But, remember, top of funnel content isn't about pushing your product or service as the solution to the challenge you're addressing in your content. It's about getting into position, about establishing trust—and that comes from helping your audience solve a problem, catch-free.

But how do you and your content marketing team know exactly what problems your prospects worry about? Strategic research.

## Speak with your sales team

The sales team is one of the most valuable resources in your company for getting a clear, no-filter view on the issues the prospects they're speaking with are looking to solve. Make it a point to regularly meet up with them and ask:

- What common questions come up on sales calls?
- Are there any concerns that sales frequently need to speak to?
- What additional information does sales need to provide a prospect to close a deal?
- Are prospects also looking at competitors? If so, which ones?
- What are the key benefits they're hoping to get from a partnership with us?

## Visit industry-specific websites and blogs

A great way to keep a pulse on what matters most to prospects is to see what everyone in the industry is talking about. After all, industry-wide movements and trends have a major impact on their day-to-day workload, and chances are, they're going to want help staying in the know and tips on how to do their jobs better. Set up relevant Google Alerts, sign up for industry publication newsletters and visit competitor blogs. As you start to collect all this input, ask yourself:

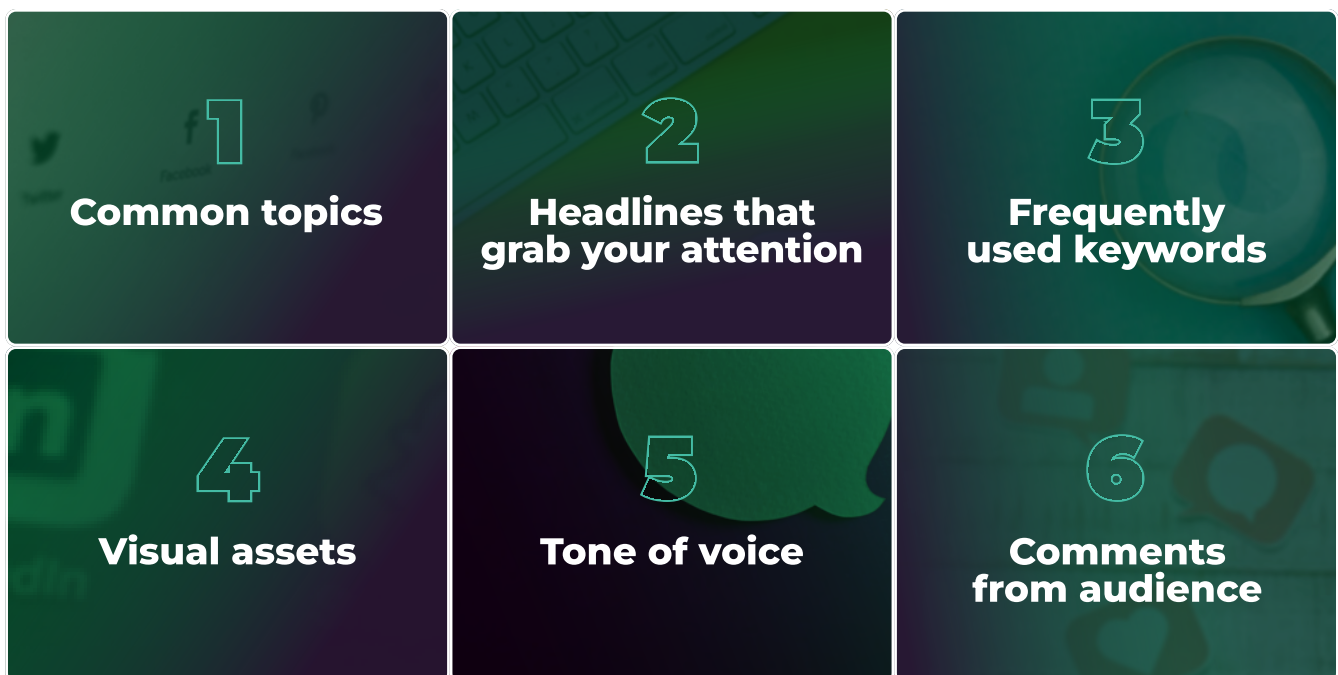
- What are the most popular types of content?
- What are people engaging with?
- If people are leaving comments on the content, are there any common complaints or challenges shared by the audience?

Pay particular attention to any “here’s what we predict for next year”-type content. These can be a powerful source of industry trends or changes you’ll want to incorporate into your own content.

## Perform a social media audit

What you’re looking for here is engagement—content that generates the most likes, shares and comments. (Side note: Likes are fairly cheap currency on social platforms. They’re not a strong indicator of what types of content generate a deeper level of interest, so don’t weigh it equally to shares and comments.) Look for the similarities among the interesting posts that drive genuine engagement.

As you review your own social profiles and those of your competitors, take note of:





Consider all of this research as insurance against a blank page. When you sit down to write, you'll have a much stronger idea of what works to engage your target audience. And, by approaching this task from the standpoint of understanding your prospects' challenges, what you do write will be much more insightful.

### **Create alignment across all your channels**

This research isn't just helpful for writing a content syndication piece. Use what you've learned to develop your editorial calendar, fill in gaps in your sales funnel, create new sales assets and add informational pages to your website.



# Use data to create original, compelling content

What's a sure-fire way to get prospects to read your syndicated content? Provide information they don't already have. And the best way to do that is to present your own data. This is a great middle-of-funnel/evaluation asset because you can showcase original data, demonstrate thought leadership and (lightly) present how your solution addresses the most common problems your customers are looking to solve.

## Where can you find original data?

You are going to be both thrilled and dismayed by the answer to this question. You likely already have access to an immense trove of valuable data on your industry. How?

### Internal software tools

In the internal tools your team uses every day—The software you already use has been collecting valuable data about your customers, website and industry for as long as you've been using it. And if you're in an industry that relies heavily on data science, you might have even more high-quality data at your fingertips.

Here are some popular B2B software tools that can provide rich, valuable information on your customers and your industry:



Now that you know where to find the data, gain some clarity on the story you want to tell. You could discuss how your customers' needs have changed over time, or how a product line you offer has delivered the best results for a specific niche industry. You could dive into purchase trends over the past five years, and how regional or global economic changes have impacted them. There are a wealth of stories hidden within your existing data, you just need to be creative to find them.

### Research partnerships

Why do all the heavy lifting yourself? Co-branded reports or industry studies are popular ways of expanding your audience while splitting up the hard work of conceptualizing, writing and publishing data-driven content. There are plenty of B2B marketing firms that specialize in developing research materials. So, if this is your first time creating a data-rich report, you'd be well served to partner with experts. They'll have a keen eye for the types of information that work best in this format, and the in-house expertise to design and promote the content for a winning ROI.

## Surveys

While surveys are an efficient, highly customizable way to gather data, this method works best if you have access to a large audience. If you're only surveying those in your immediate professional network, you likely won't get enough diversity among your respondents to provide the depth of data that makes for a good report.

That said, you can build a larger network while improving your brand awareness and generating survey responses at the same time. If you'd prefer the customization and speed of running your own survey, here are some tips on making it a winning effort.

Data-driven content, executed well, can drive new visibility for your business, provide valuable insights and move prospects further down the sales funnel. Not bad results for a bit of number crunching.

### Tips for running a successful survey

- **Make it fun.** Software tools like SurveyMonkey offer gamification, gifs, and easily customizable templates to engage respondents, which dramatically improves response rates.
- **Use your existing social and professional networks.** Add a link to the survey in your email signature, and ask your colleagues to do the same. Share it on your LinkedIn profile and within relevant LinkedIn groups. Send it to your vendors and customers. Now widen your reach. Pitch industry influencers to share it with their own followers. Connect with the editors of industry-specific blogs and websites and ask them to share it with their audience.
- **Offer a prize to encourage responses.** It's amazing how motivating a \$100 gift card can be.
- **Ask for your respondents' email addresses.** At the end of the survey, let them know you'd like to send them the final report. (And while you're at it, ask them to share the survey with their audience too.)

# Build trust (and authority) by sharing actionable insights

The fastest way to build trust is to provide value. No matter the context—whether it's a TED talk, a guest blog post, a speaking opportunity, a whitepaper or an email newsletter—you need to focus on providing actionable insights whenever you communicate. Otherwise, you'll get lost in a sea of noise. (Or, in some cases, the spam folder.)

What do we mean by “actionable insights”? These are clear directives that help your prospects address their challenges. What information can you provide to help them get more out of their marketing or supplies budgets? Have you learned a valuable process for streamlining large-scale campaigns, with multiple teams pitching in? What about ways to improve alignment between teams, or a tried-and-trusted method of reporting to C-suite executives?

In the course of doing your own work, you've likely stumbled onto processes and tools that make your job easier. Share those things, and be generous about it. People will likely forget the details of your product specifications or the specifics of why your firmware beats out the competition, but they won't forget that key insight you shared that helped them trim \$10K off the quarterly budget. Or that easy filter trick that helped them cut down on unwanted emails. Don't hoard this knowledge. Share it and, in so doing, you'll build trust and a reputation as a thought leader.

Building trust is especially important if you're implementing a content syndication campaign. It's much easier to get a prospect to actually read your content if they're already familiar with your name. But you can help that name recognition along. Here are a few ideas:

- **Social proof.** Are you active on Twitter or LinkedIn? Do you regularly communicate with other thought leaders in your industry? Share screen caps of those interactions when they are relevant and can provide additional support for your point of view. (If these interactions are private, be sure to ask for permission before sharing them publicly.)
- **Guest posts.** Remember the industry and website blogs you included in your initial research? Those are great targets for pitching guest posts. Not only are guest posts good for your SEO, but they also help to cement your reputation as a thought leader in your industry and boost brand awareness.
- **Speaking engagements.** There's no better opportunity to present your valuable point of view—and promote your product or service in the best light—than speaking opportunities. And there are plenty of these. Look into local opportunities with business associations or community groups. (This approach is particularly great if you're nervous about public speaking and just getting started, since it's on familiar turf.) Reach out to your own vendors and clients and see if they're interested in doing a co-branded speech at an industry



conference. And keep an eye out for digital opportunities like podcasts or video interviews.

- **Awards.** Every year there are thousands of opportunities to gain additional recognition, and build trust, through awards. Every industry has them, and they send a strong signal to potential customers that you're reliable and trustworthy. Most award organizations offer a digital badge you can include on your website that acts as a trust signal for prospects. You'll also want to make sure you toot your own horn by writing up a blog post or a press release to share the news.

Building trust isn't something that happens overnight, but with perseverance and diligence, you can establish a reputation that will have prospects knocking down your door. (And that are much more likely to engage with your content marketing efforts.)

# Attract and engage your ideal customers

In marketing, content gives you a unique opportunity to connect with your audience in a format they're already consuming. Sadly, content marketing is no revolutionary idea and there's plenty of saturated channels and stale content out there to prove it. To cut through the noise, you need great content.

The difference between good and great content can make or break your campaign. While your readers are the ultimate judge, the recipe for great content boils down to the right message, for the right audience, in the right format, at the right time. Life is too short for bad content.

To produce engaging, ROI-boosting content every time, follow the content checklist.

## Is your content helpful?

Value is the cornerstone of great content. The best way to build rapport with your audience is to share value. No strings attached. Your content should help your audience solve a problem or level up their skills, regardless if they use your product or services. Giving your readers this leg up positions your brand as a trusted thought leader all while keeping your readers engaged.

## Is your content exclusive?

Great content is exclusive. The best assets bring something to the table that is exclusive to you and your team. Do you have internal data, studies or findings? These are the perfect metrics to flaunt as they're unique to your brand. Sharing exclusive findings attracts readers and priceless backlinks back to your site, which is great for SEO.

## Is your content readable?

The goal of content is to make an impression, so first and foremost it should be readable. You've worked hard to get your audience to your page, don't lose them with pretentious prose. Start your reader off with a thought-provoking (or hilarious) headline and keep them engaged with copy that's short, sweet and easy to read. Studies find that some of the best content reads at an eighth grade level. Not sure how to simplify your tone? Readability tools can help you test your copy to make sure it flows at the right level.

Formatting your content is another important piece of readability. Breaking up your content with headers, short paragraphs, bullets, and numbered lists will help your reader digest your message and ultimately stay on your page longer. Think about the time your audience has to devote to a piece. Be informative and helpful and, most importantly, concise.

### **Is your content optimized?**

Your carefully-curated content won't get far if your users can't find it. To ensure your content doesn't get lost in the crowd, make it SEO-friendly. Weave keywords into your headline and throughout your body copy (without stuffing every other sentence). Capitalize on the SEO fields by including metadata descriptions, internal links back to your site, and alt tags on your images. Taking advantage of every available element will help you bump your content up the search ranks and into the right hands.

### **Is your content shareable?**

Now that your readers can find your content, make sure it's easy to share. Social plugins simplify social sharing, making it easy for readers to post your content on LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, you name it. Highlighting juicy grab quotes is a great way to set your reader up for a quick tweet. Reducing the amount of time it takes to share your content will help your asset double its reach.

### **Is it audience approved?**

Ultimately, great content is dictated by your audience. The difference between good and great content comes down to how it holds up with your readers. The content that heeds the most traffic, backlinks, social shares and engagement is your greatest content. Listening to your audience and designing assets accordingly will help you produce great content, every time.

# Fine tune your campaign strategy

A lot of B2B companies invest in content syndication as a channel, but few of them do it really, really well. To help you get better results faster, we've outlined the easy things you can do to improve your syndication campaigns.

## **Include keywords and pain points in the title**

Obvious? Sure. But you'd be surprised how many marketers opt for clever titles instead of ones that clearly address the problems their prospects are facing. The subject—and benefit—of engaging with your content should be clear from the outset.

## **Write for a specific stage of the buyer's journey**

Know where your prospects are in the journey, and meet them there. For example, a Gartner Magic Quadrant brief is useful to a prospect who has already started the buyer's journey and actively wants to change their current processes. They're looking for a solution, rather than simply looking for information. The content you write should take a prospect's place in the journey into account. If they're already convinced that the status quo sucks, there's no need to dedicate copy to making that argument.

## **Align your content to the segment**

Whom, specifically, are you trying to reach? Your messaging needs to change depending on if you're targeting an enterprise-level firm or a three-person agency. An enterprise-size business is going to have several more layers of stakeholders that need to sign off on a budgetary request. You'll want to write content that accounts for this complexity. For an agency, there are fewer decision-makers and they've got different concerns than a larger company, so tailor your content accordingly.

## **For successful top-of-funnel, focus on the problem**

Everyone wants to be heard. By focusing on the problem in your content, readers will know that you understand the unique challenges they're facing. You have the opportunity to explain how your product or service solves those challenges, but don't forget the prime reason for top-of-funnel content: to provide helpful information. What is going to be genuinely helpful for your audience? What can you share that will help them to be more effective? Help them succeed, and you've laid the foundation for a lasting business relationship.

## **Make it easy to move further down the funnel**

Even while you focus on providing top-of-funnel-type informational content, you should also provide links to resources that are further down the funnel. Highlight your most valuable content, (i.e. those assets that perform most effectively in terms of conversions and engagement). Include links to whitepapers, case studies, demo videos and how-to articles where relevant, so your prospects can engage with them when they're ready.



## **Optimize**

As you run syndication campaigns, ask your vendor for engagement metrics so you can determine how well your content is performing. Some things you may consider testing are asset titles, design, CTAs and content length.

# Give your campaign—and strategy—the best chance

Will your campaign move the needle enough to prove an ROI? Can you feel confident in presenting this as a new budget line item for the next quarter?

If you've read this far, then you won't be surprised that our answer to the above questions is YES. But there are things you can do to tip the scales in your favor, before you contract with a syndication vendor.

## Know your campaign goals from the outset

Done well, you can get a lot out of a syndication campaign, but you need to be very clear on what you're looking for before you kick one off.

- **SEO and improving site authority.** If your content is shared on a website with a higher domain authority than your site has, content syndication can be incredibly helpful as long as there is a “dofollow” link from that website to your own. Greater site authority means that it will be easier for your website and content to rank for the keywords that matter to your business. Better rankings equals more qualified organic traffic. For new businesses with new websites, this will be an important focus.
- **Brand awareness and reaching a wider audience.** This is perhaps the most common reason most B2B marketers cite for running a content syndication campaign. Just like life, sometimes you need an introduction from a trusted someone to get your foot in the door. In partnering with a syndication vendor, your content will be presented to a large) new audience. The new audience will be more likely to engage with it, since they've likely already received content from the vendor before. It's trust by association.
- **Lead gen.** But let's get real. Will content syndication drive new leads and revenue to your business? Yes, and it's why most B2B companies include these types of campaigns in their overall marketing plan. With the right vendor, and the right targeting parameters in place, you can get in front of prospects that will be your next best customers.

## Choose your most useful top-of-funnel content

Hard truth? You won't get a lot of opportunities to get this right. If you run your first campaign with low-quality content, you are building a brick wall between you and potential customers.

## What's low-quality content?

- **Sales-centric.** Remember the tip at the beginning of this guide? Be useful. Don't focus the entirety of your content on why a prospect should choose your product or service. People don't want to be sold at the top of the funnel. This is about building goodwill. You know the problems your existing customers are facing, so speak to these with smart, insightful solutions they can implement and benefit from.
- **Ugly.** Design matters. While you don't need to hire Madison Avenue's finest (an Upworker will do fine), your asset should adhere to your existing branding and style guidelines. It's human nature; we judge books by their covers. Your asset should look polished enough that your prospect is enticed to read it, and when they visit your website to learn more, it should be a consistent visual experience.
- **Typo City.** Double-check your content for grammatical and spelling errors before sending it to your vendor. These sorts of silly, easily avoidable gaffes subconsciously signal to your readers that you're not good with details. And that's never the message you want to send when you're trying to win someone's business.

## Make sure your targeting is laser-accurate

Correctly identifying and connecting with the right target audience has been historically difficult for most marketers. (Some might even say this is the bane of their marketing existence.) It's why—as a field—we're constantly trying new approaches and processes, developing buyer personas and refining our ideal customer profiles. And it's why conversion rates are so abysmal.

Case in point? In a typical programmatic display ad campaign:

**99.6%**

of B2B buyers will never click on your ad

**99.2%**

of B2B buyers don't visit your site and will never become a lead

**99.2%**

of leads never become customers

It amounts to a staggering amount of wasted ad spend.

**The good news?** It's not your fault. Companies haven't had the data they need to make highly accurate targeting decisions. Like you, they've been using data—like SIC and NAICS codes, headcount, revenue, job titles—that don't tell the complete story of what a company really does and who we really need to be speaking to.

**The bad news (that actually isn't)?** We do have to fix it. We say this actually isn't bad news, because demand gen teams now have access to tools and data that can help them make highly accurate targeting decisions.

Tools and data. It's not one or the other. This is important. Tools like artificial intelligence can deliver [B2B lookalike audiences](#), prospects that are mathematically similar to your existing best customers. Paired with machine learning, the targeting model can improve as you run campaigns and provide performance feedback.

And data. The world now has accurate, current B2B data that tells us how much a company is involved in a range of industries and activities. [Exeographic data](#)—the deep insights that tell us how a company executes its mission—can tell us things like a company's sales tactics, strategy and hiring practices—so you can better understand and target others just like them.

And, depending on what product or service you offer, you may need specific details you didn't even know you need to consider as part of your ICP. In the case of Rev's client Oracle, a key commonality for their most successful customers was the use of Apache servers.

Marketing, as a whole, has been relying on instinct and inaccurate data to drive targeting. To move forward, demand gen teams need to rely on the intelligent tools and data to uncover opportunities they don't even know to look for.

When this type of targeting is pointed at a [content syndication campaign](#), it results in campaigns that are more effective, efficient and profitable. You're not wasting money reaching people who will never become customers. Your content is delivered to prospects that are more likely to become happy, long-term clients. You understand their challenges, and provide useful, engaging information that helps them do their jobs better. You've built goodwill from the get go—before your sales team ever picks up the phone.

That's what makes great campaigns and strong bottom lines.

**The best content syndication campaigns start with the best targets.**

Contact us to learn how we can help you get MQLs that look and act like your best customers.

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