

opentopic

Surprisingly Simple Content Marketing™

WHAT EVERY CONTENT MARKETER NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT

CONTENT CURATION

INTRODUCTION

As consumers increasingly crave more meaningful and relevant content amidst the deluge of digital information, the traditional process of content curation has brought new meaning to marketers.

Curation is by no means a new convention. Curators at museums and galleries have long been carefully selecting items for collection and display, DJs have made an art out of mixing music, and festivals have curated films, bands, vendors, and more... It's a long-practiced means of helping audiences who may not have the time or expertise on a particular subject to navigate it on their own to find the best and most interesting content.

More recently, savvy marketers have started adopting curation as a cost-effective way to engage consumers. They already recognize the growing need for timely, relevant content, but developing original content on a consistent basis can be too costly and time-consuming for many marketers. By finding and sharing relevant, third-party content, marketers can more cost-effectively engage their target audiences.

This white paper highlights the key benefits of content curation and outlines the important steps and considerations necessary for building a successful and sustainable content curation program.

At a time when marketers are challenged to achieve measurable results with shrinking budgets, content curation has emerged as a popular and viable solution. Why? Let's take a look at some of the benefits of content curation:



WHY CURATION ?

WHY CURATION ?

A) CONTENT CURATION PROVIDES VALUE TO CUSTOMERS.

B) CONTENT CURATION ALLOWS YOU TO CONNECT WITH CUSTOMERS MORE FREQUENTLY.

a. Content Curation provides value to customers.

On one hand, it's incredibly exciting that there is such a vast array of content available to consumers today. On the other hand, it's challenging for consumers to find the right content—particularly in the areas where they lack expertise. By curating content, you're helping customers sort through the mass of content that's available to find information that's worth their time investment.

b. Content Curation allows you to connect with customers more frequently.

Everyone's excited about content marketing, but in reality, the creation of original content is costly and time consuming. As a result, many marketers find themselves battling "dead air"—long stretches of time where they lack content to share with customers. It's during this time, when a company is not actively engaging customers, that those customers become vulnerable to competitive influence. (Remember, if you're not talking to your customers, someone else is.)

Curated content makes it possible to fill those high-risk gaps and eliminate vulnerability. By sharing third-party content with your audiences during otherwise "dead air," you can more effectively nurture your customer relationships and remain top-of-mind.

Example:

A B2B MOBILE TECHNOLOGY COMPANY PUBLISHES A QUARTERLY REPORT ON

WHY CURATION ?

C) CONTENT CURATION BUILDS LOYALTY.

TABLETS AND SMARTPHONES, AS WELL AS TWO ORIGINAL BLOG POSTS PER MONTH. AS A RESULT, THE COMPANY TYPICALLY ENGAGES ITS AUDIENCES WITH CONTENT SEVEN TIMES PER QUARTER. BY ADDING JUST THREE CAREFULLY CURATED PIECES OF CONTENT PER WEEK, THE COMPANY CAN INCREASE ITS ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES FROM SEVEN TIMES PER QUARTER TO 55 TIMES. THAT'S A 600% INCREASE, SIMPLY FROM CURATED CONTENT.

c. Content Curation builds loyalty.

In the digital age, it's often said that every company needs to operate like a media company. And it's true that delivering a steady stream of engaging content to your audiences helps to nurture customer relationships. When you act as a content curator for your audience, you're effectively getting them "hooked" on your company by becoming a trusted resource. That is an exceptionally valuable connection.

Example:

A WORKING MOTHER NEEDS QUICK-FIX, HEALTHY DINNER RECIPE IDEAS. SHE HISTORICALLY HAS RELIED ON A FEW DIFFERENT WEBSITES, EMAILS FROM FRIENDS, AND FACEBOOK FOR SPORADIC INSPIRATION. THAT CHANGES WHEN A NATIONAL ORGANIC SUPERMARKET CHAIN LAUNCHES A WEEKLY NEWSLETTER OF CURATED RECIPES. SHE BEGINS TO RELY ON THE THEIR WEEKLY EMAIL TO DESIGN HEALTHY MEALS FOR HER FAMILY, OPENING IT FIVE TO SEVEN TIMES A WEEK FOR REFERENCE AND, ALONG THE WAY, BUILDING A DEEPER AFFINITY FOR THE BRAND.

WHY CURATION ?

D) CONTENT CURATION SHOWCASES EXPERTISE.

d. Content Curation showcases expertise.

Some marketers have made the mistake of believing that only original content can effectively showcase the expertise of a company or team. But, in fact, it is possible to demonstrate thought leadership and industry knowledge through curated content. For one, the careful and intelligent selection of content is one way you can convey your expertise. Your audience may not readily know where to find the best sources of information on your specialized topic. But, that's not all. You can further demonstrate your know-how by including your own perspective on the article or topic. Adding insight is a key strategy for demonstrating your worth through curated content.

Example:

A NON-PROFIT ASSOCIATION THAT BRINGS ARTS & MUSIC PROGRAMS TO UNDERSERVED PUBLIC SCHOOLS REGULARLY SHARES ARTICLES ON EDUCATION TRENDS AND ISSUES VIA THEIR BLOG AND NEWSLETTER. FOR EACH ARTICLE THEY SHARE, THE ORGANIZATION'S LEADERS ADD AN INTRODUCTION THAT GIVES CONTEXT TO THE PARTICULAR ARTICLE IN RELATION TO THEIR ORGANIZATION'S OBJECTIVES. SOMETIMES, THEY AGREE WITH THE PERSPECTIVES THEY SHARE, WHILE OTHER TIMES, THEY PRESENT THEM WITH A COUNTERPOINT TO HELP INSPIRE AND ACTIVATE THEIR MEMBERS.

e. Content Curation saves time and resources.

WHY CURATION ?

D) CONTENT CURATION SAVES TIME AND RESOURCES.

Another critical benefit of content curation is that it can save marketers significant time and resources when compared to depending solely on developing original content. Rather than relying entirely on original content to keep your blog, social media streams, newsletter, and website fresh, you can leverage curated content to increase the frequency of communications at a fraction of the cost.

To illustrate, let's revisit the mobile technology company example above. Say it costs \$8,000 to produce each quarterly report, plus a day's worth of time investment for each blog post. Increasing their content engagement opportunities through original content would require a larger content budget and/or additional, significant time investment. In comparison, sharing third-party content would enable them to engage customers without costly and/or labor-intensive content development time.

The secret to an effective and scalable content curation program is finding and sharing the right content quickly and easily. (More on that later.)

Now that we understand the real advantages of content curation, where and how does one begin? Outlined below are some of the key points that marketers should consider when jumping into the world of content curation.

Even with all of the benefits of content curation, there is a misunderstanding among some marketers that curation is considered "stealing." But, content curation, when given proper attribution, is widely accepted and encouraged

WHY CURATION ?

CONTENT CURATION BEST PRACTICES:

- 1) ADHERE TO PROPER
ETHICAL STANDARDS;
- 2) DON'T REPOST
ENTIRE ARTICLES;
- 3) ADD INSIGHT.

online. Here are a few best practices for fair content curation:

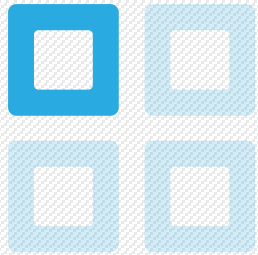
- 1) Adhere to proper ethical standards: always give credit where credit is due by citing (and linking to) your content's author and source
- 2) Don't repost entire articles: highlight excerpts from articles that properly demonstrate key points from the story
- 3) Add insight: providing your own perspective, anecdotes, or comments allows you to participate in the conversation and positions you as a knowledgeable thought leader

By following these simple guidelines, content curation can be one of the most effective ways to drive brand awareness and build long-term customer relationships.



GETTING STARTED WITH CURATION

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A. Establishing a Content Marketing Strategy

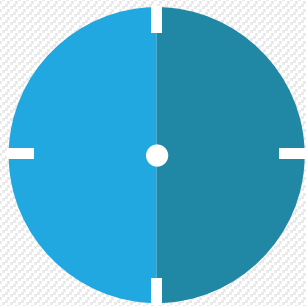
A critical first step in getting started with content curation is determining your company's overall content marketing strategy.

Having an effective strategy is the key to successfully facilitating the delivery of content across all of your marketing channels, and it's what sets the most effective content marketers apart from the pack.

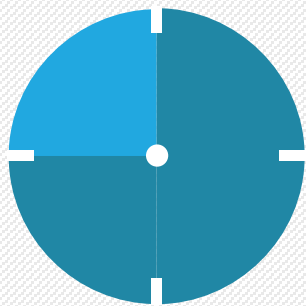
First, outline your content marketing goals. What are you hoping to achieve through content marketing? It's important to think about this in terms of your organization AND your target audiences. What do you want your organization to gain? What do you want your readers to get out of it? Outlined below are a few important goals worth considering:

- Growing trust with your target audiences
- Building brand awareness
- Improving customer service
- Attracting new followers and/or customers
- Educating users on industry trends
- Attracting potential partners
- Attaining customer loyalty

GETTING STARTED WITH CURATION



50%



75%

DEPENDING ON YOUR RESOURCES AND OTHER FACTORS, THE AMOUNT OF CURATED (VERSUS ORIGINAL) CONTENT YOU USE WILL VARY.

In addition, establishing your budget and resources will be critical to determining your content marketing strategy and, specifically, how much of your program should focus on content curation versus creation.

CURATION AND CREATION

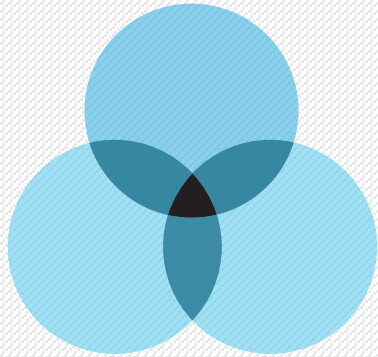
A recent study from Convince & Convert reveals that a well-balanced approach should link content to third-party sites 50-75% of the time. In actuality, your internal resources and budget will influence how you choose to break out curated versus created content.

Example:

A FAMILY-RUN BED AND BREAKFAST IN UPSTATE NEW YORK HANDLES ALL MARKETING IN HOUSE ON A LEAN BUDGET. TO HELP DRAW IN GUESTS, THEY SHARE THIRD-PARTY ARTICLES AND VIDEOS THAT HIGHLIGHT LOCAL EVENTS AND ATTRACTIONS NEAR THEIR DESTINATION. ONCE A MONTH, THEY PUBLISH AN ORIGINAL BLOG POST INTERVIEW WITH A LOCAL ARTIST, BUT THE LION'S SHARE OF THEIR CONTENT MARKETING IS CURATED. THEY ALSO CURATE THIRD-PARTY ARTICLES RELEVANT TO THEIR DESTINATIONS, BUT, AGAIN, THE BULK OF THEIR TIME AND DOLLAR INVESTMENTS IN CONTENT MARKETING IS CURATED.

Compare that to an international hotel chain that invests a seven-figure budget on a weekly series of original video tours for each of their destinations. They might

GETTING STARTED WITH CURATION



**FIND YOUR CONTENT
"SWEET SPOT" - THE
TOPICS THAT ARE
RELEVANT TO YOUR
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CUSTOMERS.**

also curate content by sharing news, articles, and videos created by third parties, but the content investment is much more heavily weighted toward original content.

Done properly, content curation can supplement what marketers can do from a content creation standpoint, providing a cost-effective way to deliver timely information to your target audience, more than you could ever do with your internal resources.

B. Identifying Key Topics

Picking the right topics for curation is critical to making your program work. You need to ask yourself what content matters to your brand AND your customers. What sets of topics would be valuable to both audiences? And, more importantly, what kinds of conversations will be so interesting to people that they'll want to talk about and share them with their friends and colleagues?

Finding the content "sweet spot" that meets all of these needs is critical to the success of your program.

GETTING STARTED WITH CURATION

Example 1:

A B2B MARKETING SOFTWARE COMPANY MIGHT SHARE CONTENT RELATING TO:

- MARKETING STRATEGY
- CROSS-CHANNEL MARKETING
- MARKETING MEASUREMENT METRICS
- MARKETING ATTRIBUTION

Example 2:

A B2C FURNITURE AND HOME GOODS STORE MIGHT SHARE CONTENT RELATING TO:

- HOME DECORATING TIPS ON A BUDGET
- DECORATING SMALL SPACES
- TRADITIONAL HOME FURNISHINGS
- GREAT GIFTS FOR THE HOME

Example 3:

A FINANCIAL SERVICES COMPANY WITH BOTH BUSINESS AND CONSUMER CUSTOMERS MIGHT IDENTIFY TOPICS THAT APPEAL TO BOTH AUDIENCES (E.G., SMB FINANCIAL PLANNING AS WELL AS RETIREMENT SAVINGS STRATEGIES) OR CREATE DIFFERENT DISTRIBUTION CHANNELS TO SERVE THOSE RESPECTIVE AUDIENCES.

GETTING STARTED WITH CURATION

C. Establishing a Cadence

Establishing a regular cadence is critical to developing thought leadership and staying relevant to your audience. But, what is the right frequency for your audience? This can vary depending on your business, the kind of content you share, and even your distribution channel.

For example, a lifestyle clothing brand is likely to share content more frequently on Facebook than a financial services company. This is due to the nature of the relevant topics and their suitability for the distribution channel—consumers would likely be more receptive to videos and articles around, for example, Yoga in the Facebook environment because it aligns better with the “fun” experience of social.

EDITORIAL CALENDARS

Creating a schedule is a relatively easy yet important way to ensure you’re setting and fulfilling a cadence. With a detailed editorial calendar, you can establish content themes and ownership, as well as how often and where you want to share your content.

Realistically, when you’re relying on external sources for content, you can’t always predict what content will be available. You can, however, anticipate certain topics—for example, retailers know that summertime will inevitably bring “Back-to-School” news—and plan to share content along that theme.



DISCOVERING CONTENT

DISCOVERING CONTENT



So, in keeping an editorial calendar, it's important to remain flexible for curated content. While you may not always know the what, you can always plan for the when.

Now that you have determined your key topics and established a strategy around frequency and distribution, you're ready to start discovering.

What kind of content should you look for?

Here are a few recommendations to consider when looking for content:

- Content should always be reliable and trustworthy. Always consider what sources you use to find content. Stories must be accurate, timely, and high quality. It may be worth conducting an internal poll: What are your employees reading? What does your sales team read?
- Content should always elevate your brand. Finding thought-provoking topics and sources (e.g., credible journalists, thought leaders, etc.) will be immensely valuable in positioning your organization as an authority and can be the key to solving a particular issue.
- Content should always be relevant. So, think in terms of your target audience: "Would I find this article, video, or image interesting?" "What would make the reader stop what they're doing to read this article or watch this video?"

DISCOVERING CONTENT

● And, speaking of video, content should always come in different formats. Articles are great, but visual imagery is eye catching and easy to consume and share. Likewise, video is tremendously popular online. By offering content in different formats, you can keep your content marketing interesting and fresh.

How can you find your content?

Today, marketers have a few different approaches to content curation, depending on their commitment to its success.

The occasional content curator might rely on “passive curation”; that is, sharing content when it comes their way via their regular consumption of news and information, or even through content that’s shared internally. The challenge with passive curation is that it is inconsistent—because you’re not regularly engaging your customers, you’re not getting the full, long-term benefits of the content relationship.

Conversely, there are others who practice “active curation,” which means they are proactively seeking out articles to engage customers on a regular basis. “Active curators” might leverage free tools to discover content by conducting searches on various platforms like Google and Twitter, and then copying and pasting results into various distribution channels. It’s a cost-effective approach for the occasional content curator but can present a challenge for marketers who need content regularly to fuel a consistent, scaled program.

DISCOVERING CONTENT

Those who are fully committed to creating an effective and operationally efficient content curation program can choose to invest in paid tools that specialize in content discovery for the purposes of content curation.

TIPS FOR FINDING THE RIGHT CONTENT CURATION PLATFORM:

WHEN SELECTING A CONTENT CURATION PLATFORM, LOOK FOR A TOOL THAT:

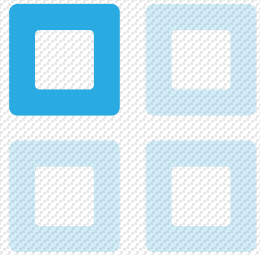
- PROVIDES YOU WITH A CENTRALIZED SEARCH ACROSS MULTIPLE PLATFORMS (E.G., GOOGLE, TWITTER, FACEBOOK, WORDPRESS, AND RSS FEEDS)
- ALLOWS YOU TO SEARCH BY INFLUENCERS AS WELL AS KEYWORDS
- PROVIDES FILTERS TO REFINE YOUR CONTENT SEARCHES
- MAKES IT EASY TO MANAGE CONTENT, INCLUDING THE ABILITY TO EASILY REVIEW CONTENT, FAVORITE THE CONTENT YOU LIKE, AND DELETE THAT WHICH IS NOT INTERESTING
- ENABLES YOU TO PUBLISH QUICKLY AND EASILY FROM THE TECHNOLOGY PLATFORM TO ALL OF YOUR DISTRIBUTION CHANNELS
- IS SCALABLE, TO SUPPORT THE GROWTH OF YOUR CURATION PROGRAM AND BUSINESS

THE KEY TO EFFECTIVE CONTENT CURATION IS FINDING THE RIGHT CONTENT BOTH QUICKLY AND EASILY. ONLY THEN CAN YOU EFFECTIVELY EXECUTE A CONSISTENT AND MEANINGFUL STRATEGIC CONTENT PLAN.



CURATING YOUR CONTENT

CURATING YOUR CONTENT



You've found awesome content—great! But your job isn't done yet. Now, you must select from the most meaningful content to share with your audiences. But effective content curation doesn't mean you simply select and push out a series of links to content from third parties. Rather, you want to contribute insight to the content. Adding your educated perspective, comments, or anecdotes is the key to separating curation from simple aggregation.

There are a few different approaches. A simple curated article might be presented on a blog with a summary of highlights from the piece. But it's recommended to go beyond a summary and bring more to the conversation by adding insight or commentary to the post. To that end, here are a few questions to consider:

- Do you agree with the key points in the content? Why or why not?
- Is there anything that was omitted that should be considered?
- Are there current trends in your business that this particular content impacts or relates to that aren't directly addressed?

And, as mentioned earlier, as a content curator, it is your responsibility to appropriately credit your sources. You'll find that most content writers, creators, and producers want their content to be shared, but a standard curating practice should always include crediting and linking back to the original source.



SHARING YOUR CONTENT

SHARING YOUR CONTENT



Now that you've gathered your content and determined your distribution vehicles, which channels should you use? The benefits of content curation can be leveraged for all of your digital channels:

- Newsletters
- Social media
- Blogs
- Websites
- Microsites

At this stage, it's important to know what type, format, and length of insight is needed for each channel. For example, the content you post on Twitter is limited compared to what you can include in a blog or newsletter. Likewise, it's important to understand best practices for each distribution channel, such as using hashtags (#) on Twitter and Facebook to help audiences find your content.

SAVE TIME WITH TOOLS

THE PROCESS OF PACKAGING AND PUBLISHING CONTENT ACROSS DIFFERENT CHANNELS CAN BE TEDIOUS, PARTICULARLY IF YOU'RE SIMPLY CUTTING AND PASTING CONTENT FROM ONE BROWSER WINDOW TO ANOTHER. LIKE CONTENT DISCOVERY, THIS IS WHERE TECHNOLOGY CAN HELP YOU SAVE TIME. AN EFFECTIVE PLATFORM WILL ALLOW YOU TO EASILY PACKAGE AND SHARE CONTENT OF DIFFERENT FORMATS (E.G., ARTICLES, VIDEO, OR GRAPHICS) ACROSS ALL OF YOUR RELEVANT CHANNELS.



MEASURING YOUR SUCCESS

MEASURING YOUR SUCCESS



As with any marketing campaign, you can't determine if you have a successful content curation program until you measure your results. Tracking metrics for clicks, page views, shares, and comments, or conversions to leads or sales, are critical in not only getting buy-in from your organization, but also in showing where you need to make adjustments to your program.

Pay close attention to performance, feedback, the evolving marketplace, and customer needs, as well as seasonality. All of these factors impact the success of your program and will need to be adjusted and refined as needed.

The most important thing to remember is that content curation is a long-term, relationship-building process that should not be expected to achieve overnight success. While the benefits and results can be substantial, there's still a certain amount of patience required to succeed with content curation—as well as content marketing in general. Remember, you're growing relationships, and that takes time.



CONCLUSION

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Marketers have long been trying to find ways to differentiate themselves and vie for the attention of knowledgeable—yet increasingly time-crunched—consumers. To add to this pressure, marketers are now faced with the task of “feeding the content beast” and leveraging it effectively to help improve their business as well as their customer relationships.

With 90% of B2C marketers now using content marketing (up from 86% last year*), and 58% of B2B marketers planning to increase their content marketing budgets over the next 12 months, it’s only going to get more difficult for marketers to break through the noise.

This is where content curation becomes uniquely critical—by providing a way to effectively navigate—and even leverage—the noise to generate meaningful customer engagement. While it may take some time to see the fruits of your labor, the benefits of content curation—if done correctly—will be substantial.

*Content Marketing Institute http://contentmarketinginstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/B2C_Research_2014-withlinks.pdf

This white paper was brought to you by **opentopic**



Opentopic makes it surprisingly simple for marketers to engage and acquire customers with a steady stream of meaningful content. Opentopic’s easy-to-use content marketing platform reduces the time it takes to discover and distribute meaningful content across the web, including websites, blogs, newsletters and social media, and generates results for marketers, such as a 350% increase in click-through. To learn more about Opentopic visit www.opentopic.com or email contact@opentopic.com.