



# Simple Marketing Now's Content Marketing Guide

## Keywords, Personas, Buying Process



Simplify

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# Welcome to Simple Marketing Now's *Content Marketing Guide!*

In a world where over 70% of people start the purchase process online (this holds for B2B as well as B2C) at a search window, getting found during those searches not only makes sense, but matters pretty intensely for a business.

How then to do so?

By bringing together **content marketing**, properly implementing **keywords** and carefully constructed **personas** while addressing the customer's beginning, middle and end **buying process**, you can maximize lead generation and sales to a degree not otherwise possible.

As a result, **you'll know the questions customers ask themselves** as they progress through their purchase journey, and the words they use to describe their problems and needs. You'll also know which customers to focus on and how one group differs from the other.

This knowledge will allow you to craft remarkable content to use on your website, your blog, in white papers and eBooks, in Tweets and Facebook updates and in the conversations you have offline.

**Great content is at the heart of getting found online.** It can't be just any content. Rather your content needs to be relevant to prospects searching for the solutions you have to offer. It must stand out from the other choices listed alongside yours in search engine results. Your content must speak directly to those customers using words they would use to describe the problems they seek to solve at different stages of the buying process.

In other words, keywords, personas and buying cycle – the three critical elements of content marketing – must power your own content!

This ***Content Marketing Guide*** examines each in detail.

## Content Marketing Guide: Keywords

In the digital world, keywords are critical. They define our business, and they tell customers what solutions we offer. They unlock meaning!

Keywords affect our ability to get found online. The right keywords can be elusive, especially if the solution offered represents a problem that prospects may not realize they have, let alone search for on an ongoing basis. They require careful listening offline and online to what prospects say.

Once identified, keywords become a beacon for conversation, website content, Twitter and LinkedIn profiles and blog updates. They become measurable and the basis for ongoing improvement. Keywords bring meaning to content marketing, digital marketing, and social marketing.

1. **Keywords can be single words or multiple words [i.e., phrases] that relate to a core word.** Example: 'books' vs. 'books by Jane Austen'. Pick 3 to 5 relevant to your business. These should not include your business or brand name. Focus instead on words/phrases that capture what your business or product/service is about.
2. **Keywords can help you get found online when you thoughtfully and deliberately focus on one keyword or phrase per web page [this includes blog articles].** You can include variations related to your one keyword. Think of that primary keyword as the thesis or core topic for a web page.
3. **Include that core keyword in your web page's meta description and page title - in position #1 - and in your content.** Your entire page should be about the keyword you have chosen to focus on, making sense of it and the value you offer to your visitors. In other words, write for people! [Note: 'meta' data can be viewed by right-clicking on your browser page and selecting 'view page source'.]
4. Although no longer an element of the Google search algorithm, including **meta keywords forces you to think about and identify the keywords you intend to focus on for that web page.** That in turn puts you in a better position to create content focused on the core thought/keyword of the page in a way that makes sense to readers and visitors.
5. Don't forget to **add <alt> tags that include your keyword to photos and images.** Be thinking, too, of keywords in your headers and anchor text [i.e., the text you use for a link - don't use 'click here' when you can have more descriptive and keyword rich text].
6. **Keywords require that you understand the value you offer customers, and listen to the terms they use.** Always ask: how did you find me? What words did you use to search for me? Be aware of the stages of the purchase process and the words prospects use as a result. Don't forget regional differences affecting how visitors search.

## 7. How to **find keywords**:

- Look at Queries in Google Analytics or Google Search Console. Be aware that **searches using your name represent people who know you already**. These may also be visitors who are ready to buy.
- Google Adwords offers a tool to explore terms based on a URL as well as search terms. The results can be downloaded into an excel spreadsheet.
- Don't forget: 'Google suggest' and 'Google related terms' for ideas.
- Consider “reverse-engineering” competitors’ sites for insights on how to position your business and which keywords to focus on

8. **Pick your focus keywords based on relevance to your business and customers and difficulty.** Realize that words with huge search volume results are hard to rank for, whereas ones with small search volume are much easier. Also realize that general, generic terms [i.e., single words such as 'book'] aren't necessarily relevant to your business and customers.

9. Tools like Spyfu.com and Google Search Console Queries show you what terms you rank for so you can **validate whether what you think your site focuses on is what it ranks for.**

10. **Publishing blog articles allows you to focus on a specific keyword topic exclusively and build content that makes meaning for a reader.** Blog articles allow you to address issues of relevance to a persona [i.e., type of visitor at a certain point in the buying cycle] and address the questions s/he has. And building exhaustive Pillar Pages allows you to become an authoritative source on a topic.

## Content Marketing Guide: Personas

Have you identified personas for your business? Do you tailor your content marketing to personas?

### What are personas?

Personas are invaluable for shaping online content as FutureNow's "persuasion architecture":

*"There is no average visitor. The path to mediocre and uninspiring conversion results is lined with project managers who imagined every visitor would think and behave in exactly the same way. People have varying strategies for accomplishing tasks, conducting research, managing their time and making decisions. The very concept of an average user makes it impossible to construct a persuasive process that will motivate a broad spectrum of individuals..."*

Personas represent another way of 'walking in your customers' shoes'. They go hand-in-hand with customer centricity and force a business to ask customer-targeted rather than product-centric questions about how to deliver value. From an online, digital and inbound marketing perspective, personas help shape content so it addresses the needs and pain points of one vs. another.

### How many personas should you have?

Your business may have only one primary persona. Or, it may have 3 or 4. The best way to figure out is by observing your existing customers and noticing commonalities.

- Do your customers have similar titles and responsibilities?
- Do they perform the same roles in their companies?
- What size company does each work at?
- How similar are the industries the companies operate in?
- How similar are their pain points?

As you notice similarities – perhaps in company size, title and pain points – you will have identified a distinct persona. Differences will highlight other personas you may want to consider as well as help you determine which ones are most profitable and worth focusing attention on.

### How to develop personas?

To develop personas for your content marketing, consider the following 5 tips:

1. **Think of your customers.** How does one differ from the other? Perhaps you notice a pattern consisting of solo-decision makers as well as more complex buyer-committees consisting of CMO, CFO and CEO.
2. **Consider each individual a distinct persona.** Give each one a name and a role. You may even want to add a picture to make each even more real.
3. **Detail each persona's biggest concerns and pain points.** What does each one need? What keeps each up at night? What terms does each use to describe the business problem you could help with?
4. **Consider the questions the different personas ask.** How do you answer them? How might you solve their problems and simplify the decision process? Which products and services would be most valuable and why? How would they be used? How would your solution be unique? What constitutes a 'deal killer'? What matters for establishing your trustworthiness?
5. **Which are the best tools to use as you develop the content that addresses your personas' needs?** Think both physical - e.g., a business card - and digital - e.g., links to a landing page on your website with specific and relevant information. Does one persona live by text message? Is another tied to a desktop computer? Think how you might use several tools to support and promote a primary message. Remember to write for people and, more specifically, your personas.

As you do your research, be sure to speak to actual customers. Listen carefully to the language they use. Ask open-ended questions as you probe for insights about painpoints, success factors, preferences and resources used.

## Personas in business: an example from retail

If you're looking for a reason to focus on customer personas for your business, an article titled *Everything that's wrong with retail summed up in one question* makes a strong case for **personas as a means for connecting with profitable customers**.

The article describes a conflict between focusing on a business' most profitable customers [i.e., those who pay full price] and bargain hunters [i.e., who wait for sales]. Despite a rational response that a business is better off focusing on profitable customers [i.e., an important persona], many focus on bargain hunters [i.e., a minor persona].

As the article states:

*"... everything that's wrong in retail today. **We're willing to ignore the needs and interests of our most profitable customers to cater to people who don't really value what we have to offer and won't buy unless we offer them a discount...."***

The end result for customers is schizophrenic and reinforces a focus on bargains. What goes through customers' mind is a variation on:

- This retailer hasn't made an effort to understand customers, especially loyal ones.
- This retailer can't be trusted to be consistent in its product pricing.
- This retailer believes customers are fools and can be taken advantage of.
- Customer says: *"I will not be taken advantage of, oh untrustworthy retailer!"* and proceeds to bargain hunt all s/he can. After all, **when businesses aren't trusted, price becomes the primary decision factor.**

Imagine if that bargain hunter focused retailer had fully understood and embraced that a specific customer persona [i.e., non-bargain hunters] represents the business' primary source of revenue and profitability: the constant sales events and promotions would be banished. The bargain hunter would be discouraged and the profitable customer made to feel appreciated!

You might even consider the bargain hunter to be a negative persona, one not to focus on.

## The value of personas in business

Personas require that a business accept that it cannot be all things to all customers.

Personas require that a business focus consistently on who's important without being distracted by minor players.

Personas demand that a business commit resources to fully understanding customers relevant pain points and needs.

Personas force businesses to stay focused.

Personas help business be consistent in their content, their communications, their policies, their pricing...

Personas enable businesses to connect with customers.

## Content Marketing Guide: Buying Process

Do you think much about your **buyer's purchase process** aka their buying cycle? It's sometimes referred to as the sales funnel and includes a top or beginning, middle and end or bottom.

From what I have observed researching websites and speaking with business people, many don't. Call it a legacy of the website-as-brochure mentality.

- You'll see this manifested via a home page that never gets to the essence of what's being sold on the site. Or one that offers no distinct path into the website to learn more.
- Or, no calls to action based on whether a visitor is at the very **early stage of the buying process and educating** him or herself, at the **mid stage validating the options available**, or at the **end stage of that process and ready to purchase** a solution from you.

With so many of our prospects spending time online - researching, educating themselves, gaining perspective on options - it's time to think about that purchase process and how it affects our buyers.

### 4 Lessons about Your Buyer's Purchase Process

1. Not every visitor to your website is ready to buy from you. Neither is every person entering your store, showroom or office.
2. Just because someone isn't ready to buy doesn't mean that you shouldn't connect and start to build a relationship.
3. The best way to start building a relationship is by offering information that educates a prospect.
4. Once educated, a prospect can appreciate the evidence of your expertise
5. The job isn't over when your prospect makes a purchase.

[By the way, you may have heard reference to AIDA - awareness, interest, desire, action. Ardath Albee refers to the 'sales funnel' as the buyer experience in *A B2B Marketing-Sales Funnel Disconnect* and details the "**Buyer Experience Funnel as Interest, Attention, Value, Engagement, Buying Committee Involvement, Conversation, Purchase.**"

### How to Address Your Buyer's Purchase Process with your Website Content

At the very **top of the funnel**, once a prospect has become aware of a need and has established interest, consider articles and blog posts about industry trends, product neutral



information. Focus on how to **educate**. Can you create a check list, a white paper, a buyers' guide to help him/her make sense of the category and the options available?

**Mid-funnel** is when you can offer content that **highlights your expertise**: webinars demonstrating successes, free trials, demonstrations, case studies...

At your prospect progresses toward the **bottom of the funnel**, you may want to offer **evidence of your competence**. For example, product or service comparisons, customer stories, product sheets, one-on-one consultations, and eventually pricing for a specific solution.

Here are Ardath's suggestions "for **Content that builds a better buyer experience**:

- *Education: Where, What, When, Why How (not about the product, about the problem that they're solving)*
- *Expertise: Industry Trends, Methodology, Strategic Insights, Futuristic. (Add your take on general trends – what does this mean to your customers and what they care about) Show that you have more to offer than the product. Are you a partner or a vendor? Give enough actionable information for prospects to implement and see an effect so they come back for the “rest of it”.*
- *Evidence: Customer Stories, Analysts, Earned Media, Reputation, Credibility. Build trust – people buy from people they trust.”*

## Website Content, Keywords and Your Buyer's Purchase Process

Let's tie the buyer purchase process with two other concepts: Keywords and Buyer Personas.

If you are listening carefully to your prospects and customers - online and in real life - you will notice differences in how they refer to your product or service depending on which stage of the buyer purchase process they find themselves.

You will notice differences depending on which buyer persona is interacting with your organization.

The more you pay attention to these differences, the better you will be able to develop website content that delights customers because it makes their purchase process so much easier!

If you go visit your website and experience it as would one of your prospect personas, what do you see? Do you stay for more or do you go? What would you modify so your website homepage engages visitors even if they aren't yet ready to buy?

## Content Marketing Guide: Summary

This Content Marketing Guide outlines the three critical parameters for developing remarkable content that will get you found online and on the path to connecting with customers: **Keywords, Personas, Buying Cycle**.

- As you think about what your business offers potential customers, consider your solutions and perspectives in terms of how they apply to specific **personas**.
- Listen for the **keywords** those personas use to describe and search for solutions to the problems they face.
- Remember that not all prospects come to you ready to buy: how can you develop a relationship as they progress through the **buying cycle**?

Those insights will allow you to develop remarkable content that your customers want to read!

We wish you great success in your content marketing. We welcome your questions and invite you to share your success stories.

## About Simple Marketing Now LLC:

**Simple Marketing Now**, an inbound marketing strategy consultancy, helps organizations get found online using content marketing and social media.

Simple Marketing Now publishes the *Content Talks Business Blog*, issues the *Social Flooring Index* which monitors the social state of home, tile and design and writes *Flooring The Consumer* about exploring the customer experience in-store and online.

Simple Marketing Now is a certified HubSpot Partner.

For more information, visit <https://www.SimpleMarketingNow.com>.

## About Christine B. Whittemore:



**Christine B. Whittemore** is Chief Simplifier of **Simple Marketing Now LLC** and has been immersed in content and social media marketing since June 2006 when she launched her first blog, *Flooring The Consumer*.

Whittemore has been a columnist for Hearst's *Floor Covering Weekly*, where she wrote about the customer retail experience.

She contributes to Floor Covering News about social media marketing, content marketing and inbound marketing, as well as to MarketingProfs and the Content Marketing Institute.

A frequent speaker on the topic of customer experience and marketing with social media at industry events, she has presented on the topic of *Social Media for Lead Generation* at the MarketingProfs B2B Forum and *Content Curation: Making Meaning Out of Chaos* at Info360, and *A Social Media Listening Strategy to Build & Protect Your Brand* during the DigitalSummit FocusOn: Social virtual event

Christine served on the Columbia Business School's Alumni Club of New York Board of Directors, the Kinnelon Public Library Board of Trustees and on the Surfaces Education Advisory Council.

She earned her undergraduate degree from Smith College and MBA from Columbia University.

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