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THE CONTENT STRATEGIST'S WORKOUT PLAN

Actionable planning and optimization exercises to help you go for the gold

www.losasso.com

ROCK-SOLID CONTENT IN JUST 20 MINUTES

(... if only it were that easy)

If you plan, create or manage content, you've heard the full spectrum of reactive requests from colleagues, supervisors or clients



"Throw that presentation on SlideShare, would ya?"

"Quick, we need a blog post about..."

"Ooh! Retweet that!"

They know that digital content has become a crucial piece of the marketing puzzle—and so do you. But knee-jerk requests don't take into account the fact that competing in today's content Olympics takes preparation, dedication and stamina.

NOT TO WORRY:

Unlike running the 100-meter dash in 10 seconds flat, winning at content is well within your reach.

With the straightforward exercises and tools in this e-book, you'll learn how.

Here's what's inside:



Intro: The Content Conundrum and how to Conquer it

Workout 1: Discovery
Flexing your strategic muscles

Workout 2: Content Planning
Train your brain

Workout 3: Content Ideation
The main event

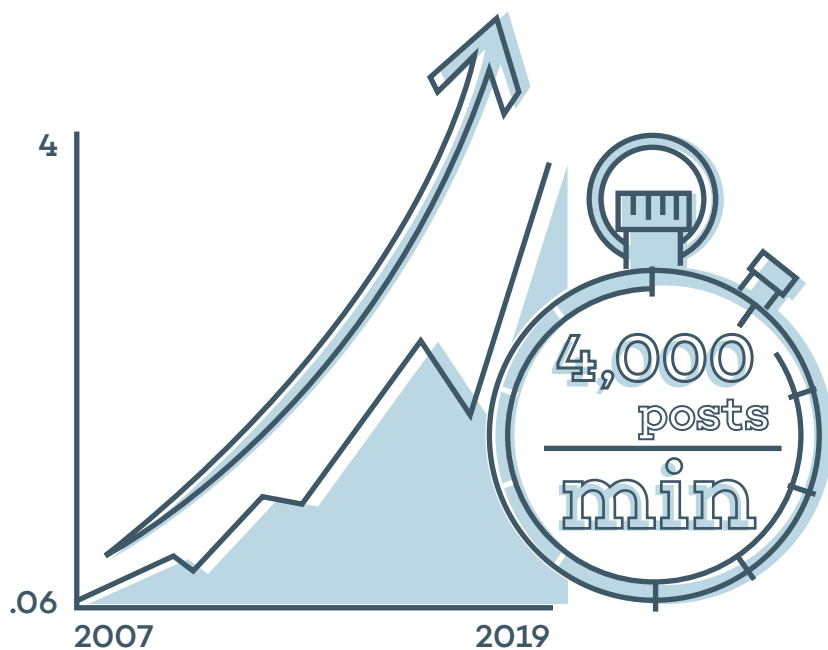
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INTRODUCTION

The Content Conundrum and how to Conquer it

REGAL? MORE LIKE REGULAR.

Feel like screaming every time you hear the phrase, “content is king”? You’re not alone. For us, the revulsion isn’t born of its overuse—but rather its *misuse*.



Only a fraction of the world’s digital content actually wears the crown— and it’s anything but a birthright. Content rules only when it is highly visible and desirable to the people who seek, consume and share it.

So about that highly visible part ...

Think good SEO will make you a shoo-in for the throne? Think again. While digital content overload is nothing new, things are spinning out of control at an exponential rate.

At press time, the internet was gaining nearly 6 million new blog posts per day, on average. That’s roughly 4,000 posts per minute.

And that’s just a sliver of the online content. We’ve all heard the mind-boggling statistics about YouTube videos and social posts; and don’t forget the innumerable images, PDF downloads, landing pages and apps—merely a selection of the categories under the catch-all “digital content” label. Just like the freaky-looking sea creatures that roam our oceans’ darkest depths, some Web content will never see the light of day.

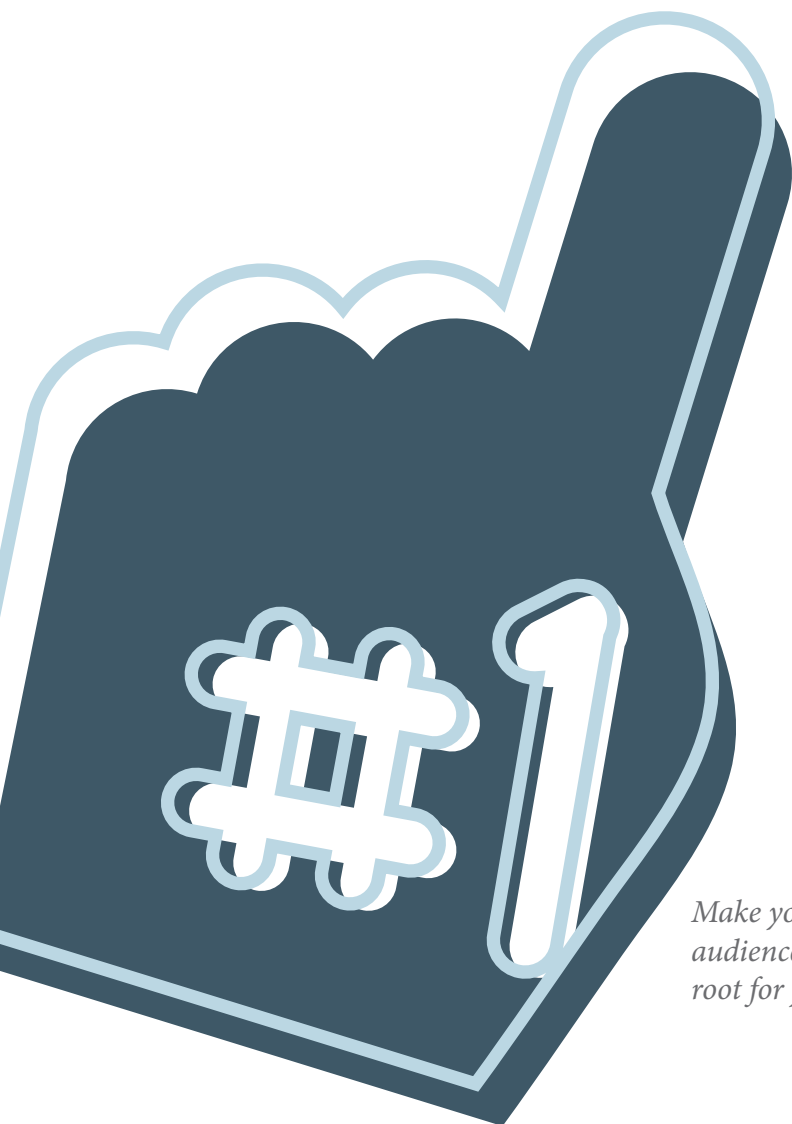
ALSO, WHO CARES?

In the face of this conundrum, even the best content only stands a chance with the right distribution and amplification. What does that mean for the mediocre technical article your boss just slid across your desk? Let's just say it might stand a better chance of consumption with those aforementioned sea creatures. In addition to mastering distribution and amplification (more to come on that later), we have to identify and understand what makes content desirable.

Why do people consume and share content?

- **It makes them look good/cool/smart/in-the-know.** Some recent content research for a client in the RV industry revealed a surprising result. An article from a little-known U.K. news website was one of the most shared camping-related stories on the Web at the moment, according to BuzzSumo: "Children who go camping do better at school and are happier and healthier, Devon study suggests." The likely reason for its popularity? People who like to take their family camping—or had themselves camped as children—were inclined to boast about the benefits.
- **It triggers emotion.** People are compelled to consume and share content that triggers strong emotions—both positive and negative. Tying feel-good emotions to your brand not only has the potential to elevate it, but to propel your message forward.
- **It has practical value.** Educational content is highly sought after in almost any context; what's more, people are inclined to share it—since it paints them as a valuable source of information (see our first bullet point).
- **It's a good story.** People enjoy interesting, exciting and unexpected stories. Think of a fun or touching customer or company story as the Trojan horse for your brand's message.

Furthermore, why will your people consume—and share—your content? In other words, what types of blog posts, articles, downloads and digital tools get the most traction with your audience (and for your competitors and industry influencers)? More on that in Workout 1.



Make your audience want to root for you!



*Is your content
building you up—
or just filler?*

FINALLY, WHAT'S IT DOING FOR YOU?

As we mentioned, people consume content because there's something in it for them. But as the one creating the content, what's in it for you? A better bottom line—if your content is engaging, that is. A Gallup study found that B2B customers with high customer engagement scores result in 50 percent higher revenue/sales, 34 percent higher profitability and 55 percent higher share of wallet. To maximize this effect, be sure to align all content topics with your overall objectives and positioning.

A pest control company's video could go wildly viral—but there's only ROI if it moves the needle on sales of their latest mousetrap.

WORKOUT 1: DISCOVERY

Flexing your strategic muscles

Workout 1 exercises:

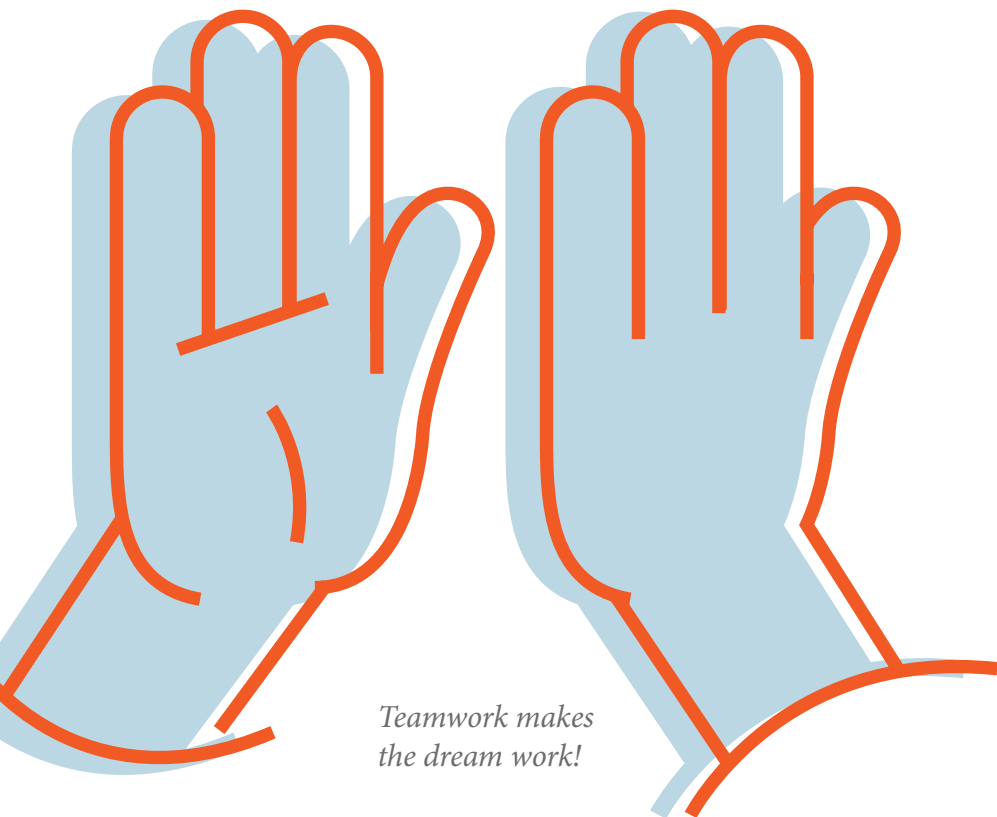
- 1.1: What's happening?
- 1.2: Who's listening?
- 1.3: What's your special sauce?

MASTERING CONTENT INTEGRATION



Content strategy thrives with integration into the bigger picture—not as a separate line item in your digital marketing budget. In fact, there isn't a single digital marketing effort that shouldn't involve some type of content—from website creation and social media to email and PPC. When we think about content as the lifeblood that feeds ALL of our efforts, rather than a standalone tactic, suddenly things make sense:

Content isn't a muscle in our body of digital marketing—it's the sustenance we need to grow it.



*Teamwork makes
the dream work!*

WORK TOGETHER TO MAKE CONTENT WORK

Here's a perfect example of why a savvy content strategist deserves a seat at the planning table of every digital marketing campaign:

Tasked with rebuilding a client's website, we quickly discovered an interesting challenge. Thousands of pages of content existed, but the large majority were impossible to find—hidden under layers and layers of complex navigation. What's more, the content was doing little to aid in one of the client's main marketing objectives: lead generation.

On the other hand, many of these long-buried blog posts, newsletter items and technical downloads provided highly effective fodder for search engines—and thought leadership efforts. Trashing them and starting fresh was unthinkable—both from an SEO and a branding perspective.

This dilemma made it especially important to cement a solid content management strategy—and a plan for feeding the right content to the right site visitor at the right time. By mapping that out before we landed on the final site structure, we laid a solid foundation for website creative, functionality and user experience—saving time, stress and unpleasant surprises down the road.



*What gives your
content wings?*

FIND THE BIG IDEA

We all know the importance of laddering all content up to our big-picture marketing objectives. But even the best of us have been guilty of the previously mentioned knee jerk (it was late, you were overworked, and you needed something to fill that tragically overdue e-newsletter). But since you've made it this far in our workout plan, you're already on the road to a less reactive existence.

Now comes the fun part—identifying the driving forces of your content machine:

- **What's happening?** (current marketing programs and objectives)
- **Who's listening?** (audiences/personas)
- **What's your special sauce?** (unique brand positioning)
- **What's working?** (current content landscape)

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Your current marketing programs
and objectives

EXERCISE 1.1

Let's get on the road to better integration of content into all marketing disciplines. Make a list of the categories in your current digital marketing mix. Keep them in mind as we move into the planning process.

(Example: PPC and landing page campaigns, social media, digital PR, etc.)

What big/new/noteworthy marketing programs are happening right now in your company? (Are you redesigning your website? Starting an email program? Pushing to position your leadership as experts in the media?)

What are your organization's TOP TWO marketing objectives?

(Hint—"increase customer/prospect engagement" is an objective; "gain more social media followers" is a strategy to achieve that objective)

- 1) _____
- 2) _____

WHO'S LISTENING?

Or, more importantly, who do you hope will listen? If you've already checked off the audience research and persona development box, you're in great shape. If not, spend a little time thinking about your target personas—it can go a long way toward more targeted content planning. **Using this very e-book, here's an example to get your wheels turning.**



EXERCISE 1.2

Who is it?

John, mid-level marketing manager, 35 years old

If he were researching products/services in your industry, where would he get his information?

Word of mouth from friends and colleagues; Google

What keeps him up at night?

Being cornered by his boss, the marketing director or company president, to ask why the team isn't exploring the hottest trend in marketing automation.

What motivates him?

Bringing the hottest trend in marketing automation to his boss FIRST.

What's the most important factor in his selection of your company's type of product/service?

He needs an agency that is ahead of the curve when it comes to digital performance optimization of all kinds—marketing automation, nurture stream strategy, digital audience targeting, etc.

WHO'S LISTENING? (Continued)

TIP: Invest in persona development

The ins and outs of persona development could fill another e-book. But the time and money spent to do so pays dividends—not only for content creation and planning, but the full spectrum of marketing activities.

EXERCISE 1.2 - TARGET 1

Who is it?

If he/she were researching products/services in your industry, where would he/she get information?

What keeps this person up at night?

What motivates this person?

What's the most important factor in this person's selection of your company's type of product/service?

WHO'S LISTENING? *(Continued)***EXERCISE 1.2 - TARGET 2**

Who is it?

If he/she were researching products/services in your industry, where would he/she get information?

What keeps this person up at night?

What motivates this person?

What's the most important factor in this person's selection of your company's type of product/service?

WHO'S LISTENING? *(Continued)***EXERCISE 1.2 - TARGET 3**

Who is it?

If he/she were researching products/services in your industry, where would he/she get information?

What keeps this person up at night?

What motivates this person?

What's the most important factor in this person's selection of your company's type of product/service?

WORKOUT 2: CONTENT PLANNING

Train your brain

Workout 2 exercises:

- 2.1. SEO strength-building

CONTENT TYPES

The amount of digital content types is nearly as head-spinning as the content glut itself. Breaking things down by category can help you get a handle on things.

High-value downloads

Examples: e-books/whitepapers, digital magazines, checklists

This content is unique, valuable and substantial. Gating it with a short form can also be a viable form of lead generation.

Articles

Examples: blog posts, case studies

This includes shorter, quicker-hit written material that provides an ongoing stream of supplementary content without as much of the investment necessary for larger pieces.

Interactive tools

Examples: product selectors, quizzes

Digital content goes way beyond words and pictures thanks to interactive tools. These promote engagement and education and can also be a great way for you to gain deeper insight into your targets.

Videos

(‘nuff said)

Videos offer the opportunity to educate in a quick, engaging way, while vividly expressing your brand’s special sauce.

Visuals

Examples: infographics, photos

Visually driven content is share-worthy and eye-catching, and perfectly suited for several digital channels.

User-generated

Examples: testimonials, guest blog posts, influencer content (social)

Sometimes, your targets themselves create the most compelling content—which, given permission, you can repurpose and distribute.



#CONTENT GOALS

So which types of content should you prioritize and why? The better question is: Which distribution channels/tactics will drive the distribution of your content, and why? Your overarching marketing objectives will drive your content promotion/distribution strategy, which in turn, will help you narrow in on the types of content and the topics/themes you should prioritize. Here are some examples:

If your objective is related to boosting awareness/promoting thought leadership...
you might explore PR or SEO as distribution tactics

PR and SEO are earned—and therefore come with added credibility. When prospects and customers discover your content through organic searches or in the publications they consume, your message carries greater weight. And that goes a long way if your objective is related to awareness and perception.

If your objective is related to lead generation and/or nurturing...
you might explore paid promotion as distribution tactics

When the powers-that-be are clamoring for leads and sale, content isn't always the go-to tactic. But sometimes, it should be. High-value gated content can be used to get a foot in the door with top-funnel prospects. Snag their name and email in exchange for a download and you can convert them over time with help from email nurture streams and retargeting ads (loaded with more relevant, related content). In this case, paid distribution (promoting your high-value content through ads on Facebook or LinkedIn, for example) allows for greater control and targeting—ensuring you'll capture the right eyeballs at the right time.

If your objective is related to customer or prospect engagement...
you might explore owned channels as distribution tactics

Staying in the good graces of known prospects and current customers is easier with strong content. If that's your goal, focus on distributing content through owned channels like organic social and email—including automated email nurture streams.



SEO STRENGTH- BUILDING

Even if SEO isn't the main way you intend to get your content to your audience, it's wise to include it in your content arsenal. Start with some basic research:

- **Keyword research.** What is your target audience searching for? What are the exact words they use? Use tools like KWFinder and Answer The Public.
- **Competitor research.** Which content is netting the most search traffic for your competitors? How/where can you do better? Use tools like SEMrush and AHREFS.
- **Historic performance audit.** Which content is netting your site the most search traffic? What makes it successful? Use your Google Analytics and Google Search Console.



EXERCISE 2.1

Based on the numbers (clicks, traffic, downloads, shares, likes, etc.), list your top five most successful pieces of content:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____

List a few pieces of content that you know (either anecdotally or qualitatively) have gained traction (among your targets) for your competitors and industry websites/publications.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____

Is a pattern emerging? Take note!

WORKOUT 3: CONTENT IDEATION

The main event

Workout 3 exercises:

- 3.1. Content themes
- 3.2 Content matrix

CONTENT CREATORS: ON YOUR MARK!



You've put in the training, and now it's time for the main event: content ideation. Thanks to your preparation in Workouts 1 and 2, you should be perfectly primed to perform (say that three times fast). Moving forward, remember to keep the big picture in mind and strive for larger themes (more on that next)—rather than one-off pieces of content.

THINK THEMES, NOT THINGS

Now you're in a good place to start thinking about a few larger content themes. These themes will spring from your objectives, your brand positioning and your targets' wants and needs. When you're sure these big-picture content themes align with those things, you can begin to craft specific pieces of content with more confidence.

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EXERCISE 3.1

Our agency's content themes:

- *Fresh perspective is crucial to modern day marketing*
(Seeing things—audiences, tactics, strategies—with a new lens can help you level up.)
- *When creativity meets accountability, wonderful things happen.*
(Today's marketing landscape demands communications that cut through the clutter—with compelling aesthetics and messaging AND results-focused, measurement-oriented strategy)
- *Love your job, love your life.*
(A fun, happy office culture is a non-negotiable. LoSassins thrive off camaraderie, a good work-life balance and a passion for our careers—and our clients reap the benefits)

What are your content themes?

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

FILL IN YOUR MATRIX

Now comes the fun part! You've got all the information you need to fill in your content matrix.

TIP: What is my primary distribution channel?

Most content calls for the use of nearly all the distribution channels at your disposal. But depending on the nature of the content (the content type, its place in the funnel, and the nature of the content itself, for example) you'll likely choose a primary distribution channel—one with which you'll garner the most traction with your target audience.

EXERCISE 3.2

Here's the breakdown of what's in the matrix:

Content idea

What's the content concept?

Content type

Which content type (See page 19) best fits the content idea?

Targets

Who is the target audience/persona? Refer to exercise 1.2.

Primary and secondary distribution channels

How will you push out the content? Refer to page 20.

YOUR CONTENT MATRIX

CONTENT IDEA	CONTENT TYPE	TARGET AUDIENCE	PRIMARY DISTRIBUTION CHANNEL	SECONDARY DISTRIBUTION CHANNEL
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CONTENT THEME 1

<i>What is the topic?</i>	<i>What kind of content (blog, ebook, infographic, video, etc.)</i>	<i>Which persona are you targeting?</i>	<i>How will you promote/distribute your content</i>	

CONTENT THEME 2

CONTENT THEME 3

FEELING STRONGER?

MAINTAIN YOUR CONTENT
FITNESS WITH THESE
FANTASTIC RESOURCES

[BuzzSumo](#)—great for analyzing what content performs well within specific topic areas and industries

[Content Marketing Institute](#)—all things content marketing

[Moz blog](#)—content as it relates to SEO and the health of your digital presence

(And now for the shameless plug) ... our own **[LoSasso blog](#)**



STRONGER TOGETHER!

We hope this ebook was helpful and enlightening. Looking to bring more clarity and focus to your content marketing strategies? Let's talk.



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ABOUT LOSASSO

Integrated marketing strategy experts since 1989

With a focus on strategy and constant evolution, Chicago-based agency LoSasso helps marketers in B2B and high-consideration segments drive growth. And while we've been around the block a few times, we notice something new on every trip. Our clients know that this passion for progress—and obsession with optimization—helps them move the needle. After more than 30 years, we still feel like a start-up—always applying a fresh lens to keep our clients one step ahead.

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