

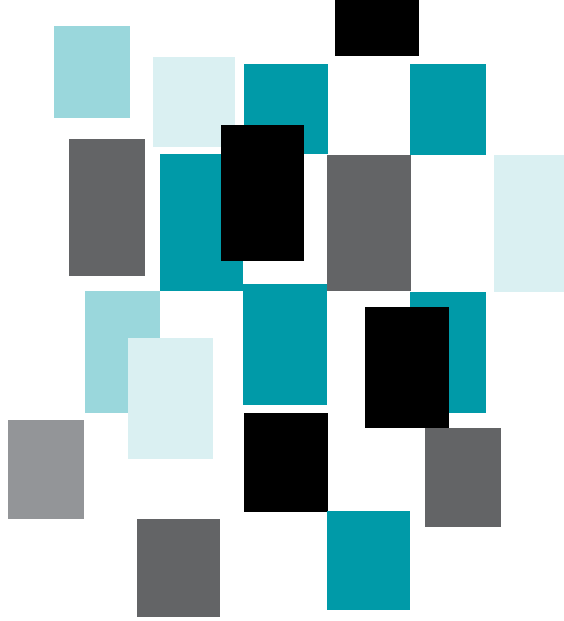


THE **CONTENT** **ADVANTAGE**

[Clout 2.0]

The Science of Succeeding
at Digital Business through
EFFECTIVE CONTENT

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have thoughts and make decisions. That's an incredible opportunity for content to guide and influence users.

So how do you capture more than behavior in a user journey? Include key questions customers are trying to answer and key decisions they are trying to make. For example, the customer journey for student athletes I shared earlier includes questions such as "Will the Rack work with my schedule? How?" The questions your customers ask will likely be different, and capturing them will help ensure that the content addresses them.

- Build on emotional highs and lows with specific user emotions.

Customers are people, so they experience emotions during their journey. Most commonly, customer journeys represent these as highs and lows, peaks and valleys. That's certainly important. But to be useful for content, user journeys need more specifics about emotion. This addition can be as simple as a brief list in each phase of the journey.

How does this detail help content? By providing clues to appropriate topics, priority, and tone. Imagine you're preparing for a trip from the United States to China and searching online for the vaccinations you need. You find that Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) suggests a long list of potential vaccinations. You instantly feel anxiety because you're not fond of shots or lengthy visits to the clinic. Now imagine the ways content from CDC could address this anxiety. For example, explore other formats besides a ponderous list and clarify that most travelers to the region need only one or two shots unless they are visiting a rural area or farm. I'm only scratching the surface, of course.

The emotions your customers experience will be different from this travel health example, but the opportunity to let emotions spark ideas for content in each phase of the journey is the same. You will not be able to make the most of that opportunity without identifying specific emotions in your user' journeys.

- Track multiple channels or touchpoints for the journey.

In our fragmented digital world, our users and customers interact with us through more than the website. If your user journeys ignore this fact, they will have limited usefulness for content and might even cause confusion. The spinning studio Burn, as I described in Chapter 2,

uses touchpoints ranging from the website to kiosks to digital signage to emails.

When you know the channels your users prefer or could use in each stage, you can identify more easily opportunities to

- Reuse content across channels.
- Optimize content for priority channels.
- Distribute content more effectively in each journey stage.

Let's consider an example. A media company focused on the US automobile industry decided it wanted to better support the customer journey for buying vehicles. The company identified the earliest stage as Dream and reviewed its own user research as well as current trends for how millennials in the United States become inspired about vehicles. The company realized that visually oriented social media channels such as Pinterest and Instagram were crucial to supporting the Dream stage. With that clear awareness, the media company could flesh out the content strategy and social media strategy for that stage.

Don't leave your customer journeys open to the risk of being pretty but impractical. Use these tips to make them useful for content planning.

Content Mapping

When you have a solid understanding of your customers' journeys and the existing content (or source material), you can map your existing content to those journeys. This process will help you see

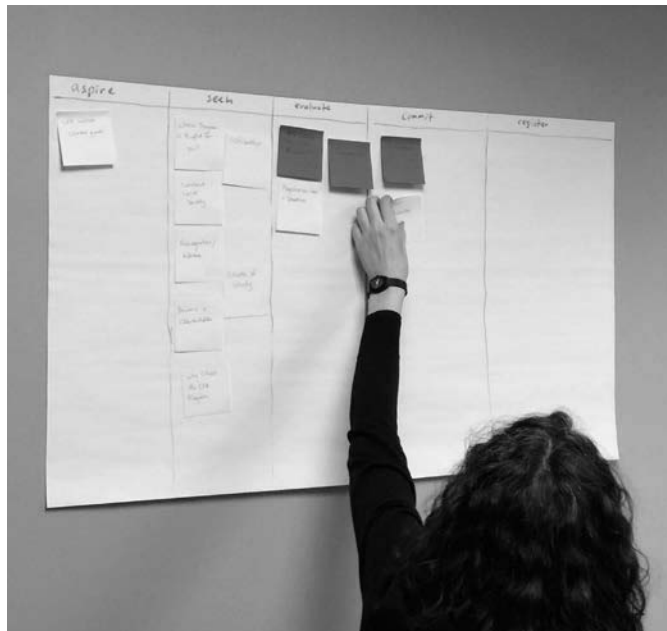
- Where your existing content meets customer needs or could meet those needs with minor changes
- Gaps between customer needs and your existing content
- Overlaps or redundancies in your content, such as having too much content to address one customer need or touchpoint

You can do this mapping yourself, as an individual. Or you can turn it into a group activity with your team or stakeholders. When you make content mapping a group activity, you engage the group early in understanding the current state of your content. Instead of reporting to them, you involve them in the process of discovering the current state, which can be much more compelling than a report.

If you decide to make content mapping a group activity, I suggest take the following steps:

1. Print a list of the content. If you have a lot of content, you can group it into categories (such as troubleshooting articles), or conduct a series of group activities until you have included all of the content.
2. Set up a whiteboard or easel pad with the major stages of the customer journey.
3. Provide group participants with a copy of the content list, sticky notes, and markers.
4. Have participants work together to write an item from the list on a sticky note, and then place it on the whiteboard or easel pad. If you have many participants, you can have them work in groups of three or four. (See **Figure 4.6**.)
5. After participants finish mapping the content, lead a discussion about the gaps, overlaps, and the content that does not seem to fit at all.

Figure 4.6: A group collaborates to map content to a customer journey.



Assessing Content Effectiveness

An analysis area that I've developed with the Content Science team is content effectiveness, or how effectively your customers perceive the content. I am enthusiastic about how this analysis sheds more light on why and how content performs as it does with your customers. We developed this assessment out of our studies of content credibility and trust, where we focused heavily on how people perceive content.

Why do I care so much about customers' perceptions of content? Because, to paraphrase the adage, your customers' perceptions are your reality. Your customers' perceptions, colored by their beliefs, emotions, education, and more, drive their behavior. You cannot change their behavior, such as persuading them to use your self-service content, without managing or influencing their perceptions. Your biggest opportunity to do so is content.

In our research, we identified six elements of content effectiveness (**Table 4.2**), and these elements have held up over the course of collecting data from more than 150,000 people.

Table 4.2 The Six Elements of Content Effectiveness

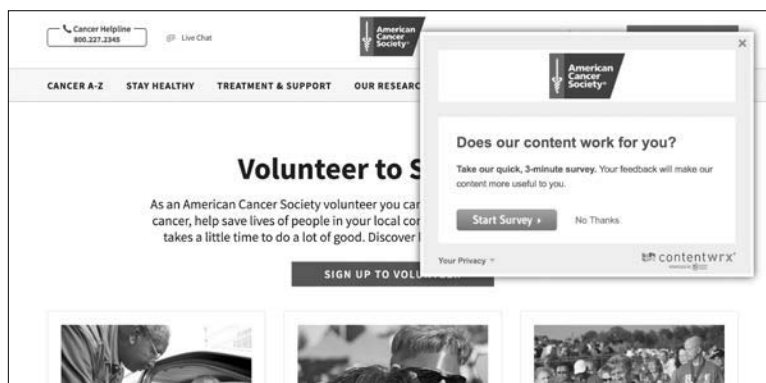
CATEGORY	QUESTION
Discoverability/Findability	Does the content seem easy to find?
Polish	Does the content format and style seem to be high quality?
Accuracy	Does the content seem correct and up to date?
Usefulness	Does the content seem useful or helpful?
Relevance/Meaning	Does the content seem relevant and meaningful?
Influence/Persuasion	Does the content aid in completing a goal or making a decision?

The Content Science team developed a tool called ContentWRX to help automate this assessment, from collecting data to creating a content effectiveness score. You can also conduct this assessment by assembling and reviewing the following types of data:

- **Voice of customer data:** Mentions of content in survey or poll responses; comments on your content; email and chat inquiries; phone call inquiries

- **Social listening:** Mentions of content in social media and online forums
- **Microanalytics:** Understanding where people linger, click, save, copy, and more to help explain their reactions to content (**Figure 4.7**)

Figure 4.7: National Cancer Institute assesses the effectiveness of content on cancer.gov.



Understanding your customers' needs and perspective will complement your content analysis. You also will benefit from considering the context surrounding your content and customers.

CONTEXT

As a retired US Army general and the former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Martin Dempsey is no stranger to developing and executing strategy. He once observed, "Strategy is, at some level, the ability to predict what's going to happen, but it's also about understanding the context in which it is being formulated." I could not agree more. Let's turn to four contextual factors that will be important to consider in your content strategy.

Content Maturity

This area focuses on what happens "behind the scenes" with your content. After encountering company after company with unrealistic expectations of their content capacity, the Content Science team and I developed a set of content maturity models. I'm sharing our simplest and most widely applicable model in **Figure 4.8**.

Content Maturity Checklist™

Where are you now? Where do you want to be?

CONTENT MATURITY LEVEL	INDICATORS	
1 Piloting	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	1. Have you successfully launched a small content effort? 2. Are you seeing results, such as a boost in sales or sales leads, from your small content effort?
2 Scaling	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	1. Are you developing a broader vision for content at your organization? 2. Have you won more budget to invest in content efforts? 3. Are you applying lessons learned from your piloting phase to other brands, channels, products, teams, or areas of the customer experience?
3 Sustaining	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	1. Are you investigating how marketing and content automation can make your approach more efficient? 2. Are you establishing content guidelines and tools to make your content approach easy and efficient to repeat? 3. Are you developing a plan to evaluate your content approach in terms of big goals and small indicators that you're progressing toward those goals?
4 Thriving	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	1. Is your approach to sustaining running smoothly, so you're free to experiment with new content approaches, formats, and techniques? 2. Do your teams have the right processes and technology in place to support agility? Can they respond to problems, such as customer concerns, and opportunities, such as tweeting a clever response during the Super Bowl, quickly? 3. Is your evaluation showing progress toward your goals or achievement of your goals? Are you seeing boosts to your reputation, earned media, sales or sales leads, and customer satisfaction?

My Current Level: _____

My Target Next Level: _____

Figure 4.8: A sample content maturity model