



Five Business Challenges Content Strategy Can Solve

Learn how well-orchestrated content can position your brand and business for success.

Content means business

There are so many ingredients that go into making a company great. Service, quality, product design, culture, relationships — they're all essential for business success.

But communication plays an enormous role too. In fact, it's at the heart of how you build relationships and deliver value to your customers.

- You have to communicate proactively and consultatively to deliver good service.
- You have to provide expertise, guidance and value to customers to deepen relationships.
- You have to show leadership through original thinking and advice that helps customers succeed.
- You have to constantly communicate why you're different and why it matters to sustain your solid reputation.

Great communication can drive your business strategy. And for great communication, you need great content.

What is this *content* we speak of?

What exactly do we mean by content? Content includes all the ways you communicate with your different audiences — customers, prospects, employees, media, partners and more. Content can include:

Text

- Brochures
- Web pages
- Emails
- Blog posts
- Social media
- Case studies
- Data sheets
- White papers
- Articles
- Reports and research
- Press releases
- Signs
- Presentations
- Postcards
- Ads

Visual

- Photographs
- Illustrations
- Infographics
- Charts and tables
- Diagrams

Interactive or Transmedia

- Videos
- Applications
- Website forms
- Interactive demos
- Webinars
- Live events

Well-planned content can enable your brand to communicate leadership, reputation and difference, and even create value in your customer relationships — all positives for your business. Content can:

- **Complement or enable customer service**
- **Help customers and prospects research options and make better decisions**
- **Provide education, guidance and insights to make customers more successful**
- **Add *emotional* value — through entertainment, empathy or acknowledgement of what your audience truly wants and needs**

Cool. Let's create some more content!

Not so fast! Notice how we used the words *well-planned content* in the last section? To address some of your bigger business and communication challenges, you need to create the right content for the right audience, when and where they need it. And achieving that is no easy task.

Why? Because content is hard: messy, political, resource-intensive, overwhelming. If it's not done right, it may be a wasted effort.

Yet if it's well orchestrated and well executed, your content can be one of the most effective tools you have to drive your business goals.

How a content strategy can help

Content strategy focuses, plans and orchestrates your content, so you can use it to solve some of your biggest business challenges.

In this ebook, we'll first look at what exactly content strategy is and how it works. Then we'll look at five scenarios in which content strategy can play a role in solving a major business problem. With each scenario, we'll examine:

- **The business challenge**
- **The solution content strategy can bring to the table**
- **Outcomes from content strategy**
- **An example from Suite Seven's own portfolio studying how content strategy addressed a similar business challenge**

What is content strategy?

If you're new to the concept of content strategy, the first thing to know is that there are many different ways to define the term. It encompasses a number of different skill sets, activities and deliverables.

At its core, content strategy will let you:

- Tell your unique story ...
- ... clearly and cohesively ...
- ... over time and across channels ...
- ... in ways that are relevant and valuable to different audiences.

Content strategy helps your company understand:

WHY you're producing different kinds of content

WHO you're communicating to

WHAT content is most relevant for your audiences and for supporting business goals

WHERE and **WHEN** content should appear to reach audiences most effectively

HOW you can develop quality content sustainably over time, with the right processes, resources and tools

What do you get from a content strategy?

Content strategy can combine different kinds of work, depending on what a company needs to solve its specific problems. But all of the work leads back to helping you create and manage more effective content. Here are some of the things that can come out of a content strategy process:

- Strategy documents and guidelines
- Content plans or calendars for websites or marketing campaigns
- Search engine optimization (SEO)
- Metadata for websites
- Site maps and/or wireframes for websites
- Content models for content management systems
- Taxonomy frameworks
- Messaging and positioning
- Customer personas
- Voice and tone guidelines
- Content style guides
- Workflows and processes

Content strategy in the business world

Keep reading to explore five big business challenges that many companies like yours face — and how content strategy plays a role in solving those challenges.

BUSINESS CHALLENGE 1

People don't know who you are.

THE CHALLENGE

People don't know your brand well, and it's keeping you off the map. Maybe you're a startup that hasn't generated enough buzz yet. Or perhaps you're an established company that's struggling to stand out in an overcrowded market. Whatever the case, you aren't visible enough for customers to consider you as a company they might purchase from.

CONTENT STRATEGY'S SECRET INGREDIENT

Relevance

Before you think about launching an awareness-building marketing campaign, clearly identify what you can offer to target customers that they can't get anywhere else.

- How are your story, perspective and expertise different from other companies'?
- What questions do prospective customers need to answer or decisions do they need to make as they explore their options?
- What do your customers or prospects need that you can uniquely offer them?

Content strategy can help you plan and create relevant, differentiating content for websites, social channels, email marketing and sales. It also helps you optimize online content for search engines, so prospects can easily find you when they start researching solutions.

CONTENT STRATEGY OUTCOMES

A plan for content that:

- Improves your search engine results
- Communicates your unique story and difference
- Educates, informs and supports people in their research
- Boosts the affinity people have for your brand
- Generates leads by offering high-quality, useful content in exchange for prospect information

FROM THE SUITE SEVEN LABS



Raising the profile of an under-exposed software brand

Suite Seven worked with a division of a large software company on a content strategy to help improve brand awareness and lead generation. The division's resource planning software for small and mid-sized companies had been on the market since the 1980s, but due to numerous acquisitions, the software had effectively been unmanaged for years. Many people forgot it existed.

We uncovered a great brand story in our work with the client: the product was truly the best choice for its niche group of companies. The software company's employees truly understood its customers' problems firsthand. We developed a content strategy that focused on bringing this unique story and expertise to the forefront of all communication.

Results:

Our content strategy helped the division organize information more clearly on its website, emphasize the software's advantages, and develop a steady stream of supportive content to generate interest and nurture prospective customers.

BUSINESS CHALLENGE 2

Your company is fragmented (and it shows).

THE CHALLENGE

It's not unusual for a large company to operate with many different divisions and departments — and for those groups to work largely in silos. But when the internal fragmentation becomes external frustration for customers, then you have a problem. Your complex “org chart” may be eroding customer loyalty when your customers get conflicting messages from different divisions, experience multiple sales relationships for different products, or juggle 10 different online portals to manage their accounts.

You also may be losing out on the ability to cross-sell solutions to the same customers.

CONTENT STRATEGY'S SECRET INGREDIENT

Integration and Clarity

Content strategy starts your company speaking with one voice, expressing a common vision, and presents a unified brand. Even if each of your divisions operates with its own value proposition, a content strategy develops the umbrella story of who you are, what you offer and how you're different for each audience you serve. This unified storyline lets you:

- Break away from just talking about product features, so you can tell a story that excites your customers
- Clearly and powerfully communicate your brand difference and why it benefits your customers
- Establish a common voice and set of cohesive, memorable messages that permeate through every customer channel

Content strategy builds an integrated messaging platform and common voice and tonality. It develops guidelines and a detailed plan for creating a clear, cohesive brand experience for customers.

CONTENT STRATEGY OUTCOMES

- An integrated messaging framework, with brand-level value proposition statements and key messages for each customer segment
- Verbal brand guidelines for voice and tone and editorial style
- Integrated content planning and information architecture that provide structure for even the most complex, multi-departmental organization to communicate clearly to external audiences
- Organizational governance and content processes to manage cohesive, customer-friendly content sustainably
- New pathways that promote cross-selling solutions among various customer channels

FROM THE SUITE SEVEN LABS



Smoothing the cracks in the surface

As an environmental services company grew, its management decided the best structure would be to create multiple business entities working independently of each other, loosely grouped by a holding company. The result was one of the biggest and most prestigious companies, a leader in many of its areas of specialty.

But the structure was starting to be a disadvantage for the company, especially as the independent divisions began to recognize they had to team up to win larger accounts or offer integrated services.

Suite Seven interviewed dozens of internal stakeholders and customers and guided the company toward brand messaging that tied all the divisions together. We developed a framework that cross-referenced services and business-unit organization on the company's websites.

Results:

The strategy helped the company better rely on its website to cross-promote services and tell a better story about its approach and capabilities, while allowing businesses to still go to market independently when it made sense competitively.

BUSINESS CHALLENGE 3

Times they are a-changing.

THE CHALLENGE

You've been in your industry for years, and suddenly something funny (and not the ha-ha kind) is happening. Everything you know to be true is changing. Maybe new roles are making buying decisions at client companies. Perhaps the demographics of your industry are beginning to change, so you're selling to different customers. Maybe a new competitor has entered the market with an innovation or new way of doing business that's turning everything on its head. Whatever the case, you know that standing still is a death sentence for your business.

CONTENT STRATEGY'S SECRET INGREDIENT

Leadership

It's time to leapfrog your competition and establish your position at the head of the pack. By refocusing your content strategically, you can better leverage your expertise and experience in a way that your customers and prospects will connect with.

- Who are your specific audiences, and what do they care about?
- How do your prospects define their problems — and what criteria do they establish for their solutions?
- Why should they choose what you have to offer?
- What foresight or insight do you have about what's happening today and what's coming around the curve for your customers?

Content strategy guides your company in building a platform of thought leadership, so you establish (or re-establish) your position as the company with the solutions your customers need.

CONTENT STRATEGY OUTCOMES

- A framework that focuses your content development on relevant topics and original perspectives
- A plan that maps content for audiences in ways that shape thinking around key topics

FROM THE SUITE SEVEN LABS



Helping a leader stay a leader

For more than 30 years, our client company was the dominant player in a complicated but much-needed space, offering call center management and software to support a nationwide public safety program. Now, everything was changing. Professionals in the industry were beginning to "age out," resulting in a new crop of professionals who did things very differently, relying more on mobile technology and lightning-fast communications than their predecessors had. And for the first time, the company faced fierce competition from startups focused on stealing market share.

We developed a website content strategy that clearly told the story of our client's experience, leadership and proven results. Our plan presented solution-focused content for multiple market segments. Then, we guided our client toward developing a content marketing strategy built on thought leadership – educating audiences about industry trends and changes from a company uniquely positioned to understand them.

Results:

The website positioned the company as a thought leader in its field, while at the same time boosting its search engine rankings to the top of the charts for targeted SEO keyphrases. The website became a hub for the company's events and marketing campaigns.

BUSINESS CHALLENGE 4

You're soooo misunderstood.

THE CHALLENGE

You clearly have the best product in your space. It's so obvious to you. Yet there's a public perception that your competitor is better. They get all the credit — and many of the sales.

Or, perhaps you've earned a reputation for being the go-to company for one kind of solution, when you in fact have a whole portfolio of superior products. Even your own customers don't know about everything you offer.

CONTENT STRATEGY'S SECRET INGREDIENT

Positioning and Voice

You can't expect people to change their minds about your company, brand and product on their own. It's your responsibility to tell a better, more compelling story — and to make sure that story permeates everything.

- What do you want people to think and feel about your brand and products?
- What is different and special about what you have to offer?
- If your brand were a person, who would it be? Is this person somebody your customers like and can relate to?

Content strategy positions your company in the market, develops your defining messages and plans for weaving your story through all your content. It also helps you develop and convey a unique voice: how your brand sounds and what you have to say that formulates what your brand stands for. This creates a rewarding, compelling experience for customers throughout their relationship with your brand.

CONTENT STRATEGY OUTCOMES

- A messaging platform that includes value proposition, positioning, key messages and proof points
- Tonality guidelines to develop your brand's unique voice
- A content plan that maps key messages through your website and marketing content, so you deliver the right messages at the right time

FROM THE SUITE SEVEN LABS



Transforming the image of an established retail chain

A retail grocery store chain in operation for nearly 50 years had a problem. After decades of positioning itself as the “bargain” store, the brand needed to educate shoppers about its commitment to quality foods, variety of offerings, friendly and convenient service, and fresh, local produce. But, *fresh* and *friendly service* was a space its biggest competitor, an upscale supermarket, already dominated.

Suite Seven worked with the retailer on a website content strategy that fleshed out its positioning as a grocer focused on freshness and healthy lifestyle, while differentiating the brand by prominently displaying its commitment to everyday savings.

Results:

The result was a new brand image online that clearly told the supermarket's story while providing an informative and user-friendly online experience for loyal shoppers. In the first month after the site launch, the website's bounce rate decreased by more than half, while page views tripled and average time on the site doubled. The company increased results for its goals by up to 500% in the first six months.

BUSINESS CHALLENGE 5

People don't know they need what you offer.

THE CHALLENGE

Sometimes your biggest competitor isn't another company. It's the many other ways customers think they can solve their problems, whatever those problems happen to be. They DIY the job instead of hiring a contractor. Outsource the work instead of buying software to handle it. Take a cruise instead of buying the diamond necklace.

Sometimes this happens because they don't know your company's solution can solve their problem better. It takes considerable education, awareness-building and mind-changing before your prospective customer is even ready to thinking about buying what you're selling. And that means you can't start the relationship with that customer by talking directly about your product and how much it costs. First you have to create desire.

CONTENT STRATEGY'S SECRET INGREDIENT

Education

Gently educating your prospect over time can be one of the most effective strategies for winning customers, especially when your solution is in a new category or people need to understand the reasoning behind changing their approach. It takes strategic patience: knowing how to build up to the product sell without getting too eager.

Content strategy can help you orchestrate the many facets of educating your customer, from showcasing your expertise to making a slow and steady case for your solution. With a content strategy, you can:

- Plan what website, blog, email, white paper or other content can answer people's questions and aid them in their research as they examine how to solve a problem
- Establish a framework for the many different topics people may be interested in as they take on a challenge
- Map content topics over time and across communication channels, to gradually educate people and shift their mindsets about how to approach a problem
- Subtly build brand affinity and loyalty as you become the educator and guide for people in their journey

CONTENT STRATEGY OUTCOMES

- A content framework, establishing your company's point of view and a set of topics, level of depth and angles all mapped to different audiences at different stages in their mental or emotional "journeys" toward purchase
- An editorial calendar planning content across time and channels
- A workflow process and content standards for ensuring content stays focused and quality remains high

FROM THE SUITE SEVEN LABS



Changing the rogue mindsets of software developers

A technology company offered a SaaS development platform — a brand-new option for a population of mobile app developers who traditionally took pride in writing code from the ground up. The company was setting out to sell this solution, and its advanced features, to developers.

Suite Seven concluded that the majority of developers didn't even know about the SaaS solution as an option — meaning that rather than positioning the client against its competitor companies, we needed to focus on DIY development as the real competitor.

We developed a content strategy that laid out a steady cadence of blog, website and ebook content educating developers about the advantages of partnering with a company to grow and monetize their app creations. Regular publication of blog posts and ebooks focused on measurement, design best practices, expert advice, and the productivity and technology benefits of a development platform. The website content mapped to the customer's own "journey" in developing their mobile apps and looking for tools and solutions to help.

Results:

The company quickly saw skyrocketing results in its lead generation activities — including a 43% conversion for the first ebook it promoted through an email campaign.

To drive your business strategy, think strategically about your content.

If poor brand perception, misinformation or fragmented communications are hurting your sales, it's not just “marketing's problem” — it's the business's problem.

Investing in content strategy can help your business:

- **Tell your unique story ...** leading to deeper brand affinity and customer loyalty.
- **Attract, educate and persuade prospective clients ...** by putting customers' needs first, providing the right content to support them and, over time, building their preference for your brand and solution.
- **Create more value in the customer relationship ...** leading to better customer retention, more upsell opportunities, and more referrals and general goodwill.

Obviously your content strategy plays a small role in your larger business strategy. But it can pervade every part of your business.

If you're experiencing any of the five business challenges we covered in this book, we encourage you to take a look at how you can realign your content and communication as part of your plan for overcoming them. A well-orchestrated content strategy will help you increase your brand awareness, more clearly position yourself to your target customers, and build customer loyalty and stronger relationships.

Content strategy is good for business!

Want to learn more about how Suite Seven can help you address your business and marketing challenges?

Visit www.suiteseven.com to learn more.

Or get in touch today! Call 510.292.4544, option 1 or email hello@suiteseven.com.