

Six-Step Guide to Creating Engaging Content

—
Gordon Fowler, Principal and Co-Founder



Creating two-way conversations and relationships with your audiences.

The 6 Steps:

Know your goal.
Identify your tools.
Build a strategy.
Promote interaction.
Cross-promote.
Measure engagement.

Know your goal.

The most important question to ask is, “what’s our purpose?”

Answers to this question can uncover content that has real value for prospects and customers. There are two levels of value:

- **Practical value:** This is where the content has a function or utility that, when engaged with, solves some problem or answers a question for the user or site visitor.
- **Greater good value:** This is content that somehow enriches a person’s life by the interaction. It inspires them with a story that may be directly connected to the product or service or tangentially connected to the product or service.

Our purpose is...

Identify your tools.

Identify your content channels and who is responsible for them.

What is the best mix of tools for your team and content goals? For best results:

- Think about how you want to use channels. For example, when thinking about social media:
 - » **Instagram** is visually-driven and artistic. Share high-quality, engaging photos relating to your locations, people, programs, or products.
 - » **Facebook** is the perfect channel for sharing entertaining and easy-to-consume brand stories with a combination of photos, stories, and links to your blog and website.

- » **Pinterest** appeals to visual storytellers, enthusiasts, and hobbyists, therefore make it easy for fans to access informative and useful inspirations and tips.
- » **Snapchat** allows users to share messages, images, and videos for a short period of time. Leverage popular digital photography filters and lenses to allow fans to creatively edit photos and share them with their friends.
- » **Twitter** is the ideal means of engaging in two-way, real-time dialogue with fans with precise, entertaining, concise tweets on a frequent basis.

3 Build a strategy.

Have a plan, stick to it, and pivot when necessary.

There are three different categories of content that a marketer can create:

- **Inbound content.** This is content that has the prime goal of building trust and provides value for your customers without expecting anything in return. Examples of such content include social media, blogs, white papers, and eBooks.
- **Outbound content.** This is compelling content that creates awareness about your brand. Examples include sales scripts, email campaigns, call-to-action content, and advertising and promotional content.
- **Passive content.** This is branding content that describes who you are, your online presence, and what your mission is. Examples include slogans, web copy, and tag lines.

Think about your content in terms of:

Content to entertain.

Funny, highly shareable, and able to transform an “organization” into a “group of people just like me.”

Content to educate.

Shows readers and potential customers why your website, programs, or products are worth sticking around for and that they can trust you to know your stuff.

Content to inspire.

Resonates with people in a way they can't ignore and moves them to action.

Content to convert.

Nudges a reader in the direction of some sort of action.

4 Promote interaction.

Ensure conversations are two-way and not just top-down.

Effective use of social media and content tools allows dialogue to open up and encourages informed and relevant conversations between your team and your audiences, both internal and external.

Do this effectively by:

- **Provoking action.** Try to make an emotional connection with the reader by addressing a specific need. The goal is to write as if you are speaking directly to the reader about something they have a defined interest in, addressing the reader's pain points and providing solutions.
- **Ask your audience questions.** Engage your audience by involving them in the conversation. Ask questions, solicit comments, send surveys. A simple “that's our opinion, what's yours?” type of question works well.

- **Say something.** Commenting on someone's content is the ultimate form of engagement. It's even more intimate than socially sharing content. However, the vast majority of content marketers don't maintain a commenting culture on their blogs. Creating and building a culture that promotes audience engagement through comments should be a goal.
- **Focus on the next steps.** Engagement means more than number of visitors, downloads, or webinar registrations. What counts more are the “second steps” – the time spent on site, the other pages visited, the shares, the comments, sign-ups, and the questions. That's how you know that your content is resonating.

List two ideas for promoting interaction:

1.

2.

Cross-promote.

Even the best content is useless if no one sees it. Make sure you're posting it in the times, places, and manners your audience wants and expects.

As both offline and online worlds become more crowded, cross-promoting content is a vital to engaging audiences in multiple places, times, and contexts.

- Ensure your communication platforms are easy to access and tailored to each audience.
- Choose the original content platform. For example, this could be a blog on your website, video on your Youtube channel, or a picture on Instagram.
- Choose the primary sharing platform. This will be the top source for the audience you most want to engage.
- Choose the secondary cross-promotion platforms. This will be links and channel/audience-appropriate content to drive audiences to the original content.

Choose one of your interaction ideas. Think what piece of content could you create to engage audiences?

Original content channel:

Primary sharing channel:

Secondary, cross-promotion channels:

Know what success looks like and starts measuring your progress.

When launching a content strategy, an important step is determining how success will be defined and measured.

There are numerous ways to monitor, measure, and track not just consumption of information but also interaction and, ultimately, engagement.

To measure this use:

- **Primary indicators.** What business objectives are moved forward (e.g., more leads)? These are the kind of metrics that an executive team wants to know.
- **Secondary indicators.** Metrics like new blog or email subscribers, webinar attendees, downloads, etc. These are what content marketers want to know.
- **User indicators.** Metrics like followers, video views, website bounce rates, time on pages, or webinar registrations. These measurements present the early picture and bubble up to inform the secondary and primary indicators.

Measure engagement.

Based on the content idea above, what could you use to measure engagement?

Primary indicators:

Secondary indicators:

User indicators: