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It's Time to Uncomplicate Your Content Marketing

By Rob Berman and Cindy Donaldson

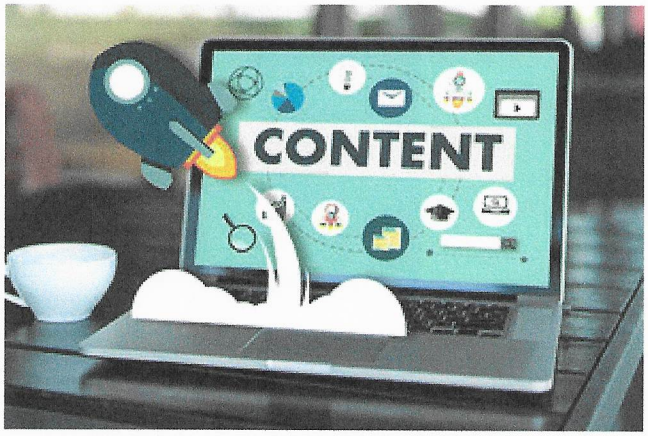
Editor's Note: Still can't see patients in your office (or experiencing a downturn in visits) due to COVID-19? There's no better time to optimize your online content marketing. Here's why and how.

Content Marketing: The buzz phrase has been around for a while, yet still causes so much confusion. Simply stated, content marketing is the creation *and* sharing of online content via a myriad of channels that does not necessarily promote your brand or your products / services; rather, it is intended to provoke conversation and peak interest. In other words, you are creating storytelling, thought-leadership content, not sales pitches.

If you think about it from your personal buying experience, content marketing makes sense. When was the last time you wanted to be "sold to"? (Our guess is never.) In fact, today's customer goes through a complex customer journey and in the process, is bombarded with content 24/7.

So, How Does It All Work? Let's Start at the Beginning...

People buy for only two reasons: to gain pleasure or avoid pain. They buy emotionally and justify the purchase logically after the fact. Most importantly, people buy from people they know, like and trust; and it happens in that order. They need to get to know someone, then decide to like someone; but they will consider buying only if they reach a point of trust.



That's the basic science. Content that pushes at people to *buy* before the know and like stages fails. Content marketing builds a relationship, tells a story, engages the buyer to think. You guessed it: Content marketing creates an avenue to get to know and like the author or the company they represent.

People need to relate to your brand and/or to you before they will consider becoming your patient. This is another reason reviews and "five stars" are so important. People will buy or not buy based on others' opinions of you.

Where Should You Start?

Forget about ME; think about YOU. From your website to your social media, you need to put yourself in your patients' shoes. What's in it for them? Why should they care? If you were the patient and didn't know anything about you the doctor – what would inspire you to call (beyond the fact that you are in their insurance network)?

Your website: It needs to tell a story and not just be pages of your products and/or services. Do you have testimonials? Do you have a blog that offers thought-leadership content? Do you have pictures of your team – because yes, people do want to know. Use images and less content, and think like your patient.

Your social media: Eighty percent of what you put out there should be thought leadership; 20 percent should be focused on products and/or services. Again, go back to #1: What would *you* click on, share and like if you were viewing your social feeds? What articles would *you* read?

Don't be afraid to share third-party content, pictures of your team building a house for Habitat for Humanity, etc. Be transparent, be human – remember: Know, Like ... Trust.

Trusted partnerships and masterminds: Invite trusted advisors, your inner circle of "brand evangelists," to guest blog for you. Ensure they share the articles on their social feeds. Again, this is about building trust and knowing that people will "buy" from you based on the recommendation or even the opinion of others.

If Life Coach Jan, who is well-respected with a huge following, writes an article for your practice on "Stress and the Modern Family," and you share that on your blog, what message does that bring? Jan's loyal followers will put you at the same level as Jan – *trusted*.

Uncomplicate Content Marketing

In the end, content marketing isn't complicated at all. It's transparent, authentic storytelling that builds trust.

Look at your current content and your digital marketing channels. Are you pushing the sale too much? If so, take a step back and rethink your strategy. Don't sell, but do inspire!

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