Content strategy definition

Content strategy is the discipline responsible for satisfying business requirements through content creation and distribution. Of course, there are a lot of people out there writing, designing, creating content. Content strategy implies that someone is stepping back and asking, "What should we create, and why?"

What do content strategists do?

The content strategist identifies those business interests that will be satisfied through content and designs a plan for creating and distributing such content. The specifics of the role will depend on the business interests and the proposed strategy.

Some activities are frequent enough that they bear mentioning. Depending on the business goals you're supporting, you may or may not need each of these pieces.

Business intelligence

Without the business perspective, there is no content strategy. Content strategists must be able to understand business requirements. Ideally, a content strategist would be able to help define or refine problems that would benefit from a content solution.

Process, governance, auditing

You need to know whether your content strategy is solving the business problems you're hoping to solve. That could mean managing a team or understanding the data that indicate success for your program. It could also mean maintaining an inventory of content so that the organization understands its content assets.

Audience research

The point of content is that other people will see it. Without the audience, what business problem could you possibly be solving? Understanding the audience might involve persona research, for instance. You might interview or survey as well.

Strategic vision

It might be a summarizing statement or OKR-style outcomes. By creating a strategic vision, a content strategist gives collaborators an easy way to focus their efforts.

Tone-of-voice or brand identity

For content to satisfy both business needs and the target audience, it may be necessary to define a consistency of tone across pieces of content. That is especially important in branding or marketing. Deviations from an established norm might be more acceptable in technical writing, by way of contrast.

content strategy cont..

Ideation

Ideation is the process whereby you generate creative solutions to whatever problem you want to solve. Approaches include brainstorming and design thinking.

Channel strategy

Once content exists, it has to somehow get in front of the user. That might be through social channels, email outreach, organic search, or any number of other channels. Understanding how to plan for and execute in relevant channels is a core competency in the field.

Execution plan

At some point, your content has to go from concept to reality. Exactly how you'll accomplish that will vary from project to project. Activities might include creating a content calendar, designing wireframes, and writing content briefs.

Audience Analysis

Audience analysis involves identifying the audience and adapting a speech to their interests, level of understanding, attitudes, and beliefs. Taking an audience-centered approach is important because a speaker's effectiveness will be improved if the presentation is created and delivered in an appropriate manner. Identifying the audience through extensive research is often difficult, so audience adaptation often relies on the healthy use of imagination.

As with many valuable tools, audience analysis can be used to excess. Adapting a speech to an audience is not the same thing as simply telling an audience what they want to hear. Audience analysis does not mean 'grandstanding' or 'kowtowing' to a public. Rather, adaptation guides the stylistic and content choices a speaker makes for a presentation. Audience adaptation often involves walking a very fine line between over-adapting and under-adapting – a distinction that can be greater appreciated by understanding the general components of this skill. The Communications Department offers tips for analyzing an audience.

Audience Analysis Factors

Audience expectations

When people become audience members in a speech situation, they bring with them expectations about the occasion, topic, and speaker. Violating audience expectations can have a negative impact on the effectiveness of the speech. Imagine that a local politician is asked to speak at the memorial service for a beloved former mayor. The audience will expect the politician's speech to praise the life and career of the deceased.

If the politician used the opportunity to discuss a piece of legislation, the audience would probably be offended and the speaker would lose credibility. Of course, there may be some situations when violating the audience's expectations would be an effective strategy. Presenters that make political statements at the Academy Awards do so precisely because the message's incongruity with the occasion increases the impact of the proclamation.

Knowledge of topic

Audience knowledge of a topic can vary widely on any given occasion, therefore, communicators should find out what their audience already knows about the topic. Never overestimate the audience's knowledge of a topic. If a speaker launches into a technical discussion of genetic engineering but the listeners are not familiar with basic genetics, they will be unable to follow your speech and quickly lose interest. On the other hand, drastically underestimating the audience's knowledge may result in a speech that sounds condescending.

Try to do some research to find out what the audience already knows about the topic. Giving a brief review of important terms and concepts is almost always appropriate, and can sometimes be done by acknowledging the heterogeneous audience and the importance of 'putting everyone on the same

Attitude toward topic

Knowing audience members' attitudes about a topic will help a speaker determine the best way to reach their goals. Imagine that a presenter is trying to convince the community to build a park. A speaker would probably be inclined to spend the majority of the speech giving reasons why a park would benefit the community.

However, if they found out ahead of time that most neighbors thought the park was a good idea but they were worried about safety issues, then the speaker could devote their time to showing them that park users would be safer in the park than they currently are playing in the streets. The persuasive power of the speech is thus directed at the most important impediment to the building of a park.

Audience size

Many elements of speech-making change in accordance with audience size. In general, the larger the audience the more formal the presentation should be. Sitting down and using common language when speaking to a group of 10 people is often quite appropriate. However, that style of presentation would probably be inappropriate or ineffective if you were speaking to 1,000 people. Large audiences often require that you use a microphone and speak from an elevated platform.

Demographics

The demographic factors of an audience include age, gender, religion, ethnic background, class, sexual orientation, occupation, education, group membership, and countless other categories. Since these categories often organize individual's identities and experiences, a wise speaker attends to the them. Politicians usually pay a great deal of attention to demographic factors when they are on the campaign trail. If a politician speaks in Day County, Florida (the county with the largest elderly population) they will likely discuss the issues that are more relevant to people in that age range – Medicare and Social Security.

Communicators must be careful about stereotyping an audience based on demographic information – individuals are always more complicated than a simplistic identity category. Also, be careful not to pander exclusively to interests based on demographics. For example, the elderly certainly are concerned with political issues beyond social security and Medicare. Using demographic factors to guide speech-making does not mean changing the goal of the speech for every different audience; rather, consider what pieces of information (or types of evidence) will be most important for members of different demographic groups.

Audience analysis cont..

Setting

The setting of a presentation can influence the ability to give a speech and the audience's ability and desire to listen. Some of these factors are: the set-up of the room (both size and how the audience is arranged), time of day, temperature, external noises (lawn mowers, traffic), internal noises (babies crying, hacking coughs), and type of space (church, schoolroom, outside). Finding out ahead of time the different factors going into the setting will allow a speaker to adapt their speech appropriately. Will there be a stage? Will there be a podium or lectern? What technology aids will be available? How are the seats arranged? What is the order of speakers?

While these issues may appear minor compared to the content of the speech and the make-up of the audience, this foreknowledge will soothe nerves, assist in developing eye contact, and ensure that the appropriate technology, if necessary, is available. Take into account the way that the setting will affect audience attention and participation. People are usually tired after a meal and late in the day. If scheduled to speak at 1:00 PM, a speaker may have to make the speech more entertaining through animation or humor, exhibit more enthusiasm, or otherwise involve the audience in order to keep their attention.

Voluntariness

Audiences are either voluntary, in which case they are genuinely interested in what a presenter has to say, or involuntary, in which case they are not inherently interested in the presentation. Knowing the difference will assist in establishing how hard a speaker needs to work to spark the interest of the audience. Involuntary audiences are notoriously hard to generate and maintain interest in a topic (think about most people's attitudes toward classes or mandatory meetings they would prefer to not attend.)

Egocentrism

Most audience members are egocentric: they are generally most interested in things that directly affect them or their community. An effective speaker must be able to show their audience why the topic they are speaking on should be important to them.

How to do an Audience Analysis?

Step 1: Identify Potential Audience(s)

To address the problem statement and achieve the vision decided upon during the situation analysis, brainstorm and list all potential audiences that are affected by or have control over the health or social problem. For example, if the problem is high unmet need for family planning, potential audiences may be:

Step 2: Select the Priority Audience

An effective SBCC strategy must focus on the most important audience. The priority audience is not always the most affected audience, but is the group of people whose behavior must change in order to improve the health situation. The number of priority audiences depends mainly on the number of audiences whose practice of the behavior will significantly impact the problem. For example, priority audiences may be:

To identify the priority audience(s), keep in mind the vision and health or social problem. Then consider:

Who is most affected

How many people are in the audience

How important it is that the audience change their behavior

How likely it is that the audience will change their behavior

Who controls the behavior or the resources required for a behavior change

Step 3: Identify Priority Audience Characteristics

Identify the socio-demographic, geographic and psychographic characteristics of each priority audience. Include their communication preferences and other opportunities to reach them.

Organize priority audience information in a table (see Audience Characteristics and Behavioral Factors Template under templates).

Step 4: Identify Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices

Understand what the priority audience knows, thinks, feels and does about the problem in order to determine the audiences' stage of behavior change. This allows the program to tailor messages and activities based on the audience's knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors.

There are a number of ideational factors that commonly influence individual behavior and should be considered when examining the audience's knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and behaviors.

How to do Audience analysis? cont..

The situation analysis, stakeholder workshop and any additional quantitative or qualitative research will indicate what the priority audience currently does in reference to the problem and what the audience knows, thinks and feels about the problem or desired behavior. Keeping in mind the ideational factors, examine that research to understand each priority audience. Ask questions such as:

What does the priority audience already know (knowledge) about the problem?

How does the priority audience feel about the problem (attitude)?

How does the priority audience see their role with respect to the problem (self-image)?

Does the priority audience feel at risk of having the problem? How at risk do they feel (risk perception)?

What are the community's beliefs and attitudes toward the health problem (social norms)?

How capable does the priority audience feel about being able to take action to address the problem (self-efficacy)?

What emotional reaction does the priority audience have towards the health problem (emotions)?

What level of support does the priority audience believe they would receive from family members or the community (social support and influence)?

How capable does the priority audience feel about discussing how to reduce the problem (personal advocacy)?

Step 5: Identify Barriers and Facilitators

It is crucial to know what prevents or encourages the priority audience to practice the desired behavior. Identify barriers and facilitators of change in the literature and list them in the table (see Audience Characteristics and Behavioral Factors Template under templates).If the desk review does not adequately identify behavioral factors, conduct additional qualitative research (interviews, focus groups) with members of the priority audience. Some important barriers to consider include:

Habit: People are comfortable doing things the same way they have always done them.

Fear: People expect change to bring negative consequences.

Negative experience: Some audiences may have had a bad experience, such as with the health care system, and thus may be cynical or resistant to change.

If the desired behavior requires adopting/utilizing products or services, consider issues of availability, accessibility, affordability and acceptability.

Step 6: Consider Audience Segmentation

Audience segmentation is the process of dividing the priority audience into sub groups according to at least one similar characteristic that will affect the success of the SBCC effort. Look at the selected priority audience and decide if it is similar enough that it can be effectively reached by the same set of channels, messages and interventions. Ask the following questions about the priority audience to decide if segmentation is necessary:

Are any audience members particularly difficult to reach, requiring a different set of channels?

Do any audience members have distinct views or concerns about the problem?

Do any audience members require a different message to reach them effectively?

Are any audience members at greater risk?

If yes, the audience may need to be segmented further. See the audience segmentation guide for more information on how to identify and prioritize audiences so that messages and interventions can be most effectively targeted.

Some urban women of reproductive age may have different concerns or views about family planning. One group might be afraid of side effects while another group does not use family planning because they do not know where family planning services are available. These groups would require different messages and interventions and should be segmented if resources allow.

Step 7: Identify Key Influencers

Based on the priority or segmented audience, identify the key influencers. Search the situation analysis, stakeholder workshop and any qualitative research findings for indications of who strongly influences the priority audience's behavior (see Audience Focused Literature Review Chart Template under templates). Influencers can be individuals or groups. Their different roles – as friends, family, leaders, teachers, health providers and of course, the media – often determine their level of influence. Consider the following factors to help identify influencing audiences:

Who has the most impact on the priority audience's health-related behavior and what is their relationship to the priority audience?

Who makes or shapes the priority audience's decisions in the problem area?

Who influences the priority audience's behavior positively and who influences it negatively?

Step 8: Organize Influencing Audience Information

For each influencing audience identified, search the literature to identify information about them and their relationship to the priority audience. Look for:

How strongly the group influences the priority audience

What behaviors they encourage the priority audience to practice

Why they would encourage or discourage the desired behavior

How to reach them

Step 9: Develop Audience Profiles

Review the notes about each audience and try to tell the story of that person. Audience profiles bring audience segments to life by telling the story of an imagined individual from the audience.

The audience profile consists of a paragraph with details on current behaviors, motivation, emotions, values and attitudes, as well as information such as age, income level, religion, sex and where they live. The profile should reflect the primary barriers the audience faces in adopting the desired behavior. Include a name and photo to help the creative team visualize who the person is. Answers to the following questions can lead to insightful profiles that help the team understand and reach audiences more effectively: The audience profiles will feed directly into the creative brief process and will be an integral part of the SBCC strategy. See the Samples section for an example of an audience profile.

How to do audience analysis? cont..

Brief history of Blogging

The Early Years

Blogging dates all the way back to 1994 when a college undergrad named Justin Hall created his site Links.net.

According to Hall, he created the site so he could get his writing online. The site was very simple and contained a collection of links Justin found interesting while browsing the web, along with a couple of photos.

Thanks to his site, however, he was dubbed the "founding father of personal bloggers."

Following his example, many others started sharing their personal lives online. Those early publishing attempts were called "online diaries" or "personal pages."

 wasn't until 1997 that the term "weblog" was coined by Jorn Barger to describe a log of his internet activity.

Just like the blogs we know today, the most recent links Barger collected appeared at the top of the page, pushing the older entries further down the page.

Just one year later, a first blog was published on an established news site, when the reporter Jonathan Dube chronicled Hurricane Bonnie for The Charlotte Observer.

The Rise of The First Blogging Platforms

The following few years saw an emergence of the first blogging platforms, the most notable one being Open Diary which launched in 1998 and had a membership model allowing members of the community to leave comments on other people's posts.

Open Diary circa 1999

After that, another important event occurred in the history of blogging: Peter Merholz shortened the term "weblog" into "blog." What's more, three new blogging platforms came to life: Xanga, LiveJournal, and Blogger.

LiveJournal was founded by Brad Fitzpatrick as a way of keeping in touch with his high school friends.

Blogger was originally founded by Pyra Labs as a commercial platform and later acquired by Google, who made it free and available to everyone — a move largely responsible for bringing blogging into the mainstream.

This was also the year that the first version of RSS was released for use on My.Netscape.Com and renamed into Rich Site Summary from its previous name RDF Site Summary.

RSS was (and still is) crucial for blogging as it allows publishers to syndicate data automatically and allows people to stay up to date with their favorite bloggers or news sites.

As far as Xanga goes, it was originally intended to be a social networking site similar to MySpace. It went on to add blogging and commenting features as well as the ability to like user's posts in 2000.

The emergence of blogging platforms made it easier for more people to create their blogs. It also made it so blogging started to become taken more seriously.

The Growing Period

The beginning of the new millennium brought about another blogging platform in 2001. The platform in question was Moveable Type which was released as a self-hosted platform for bloggers and later introduced the Trackback feature (the ability to alert blogs that you have linked to a specific post on their blog) which is now widely adopted across all blogging platforms.

2002: An Eventful Year For Blogging

2002 marked the launch of Technorati, the first blog search engine. But what really marked the year is the fact that a blogger, Heather B Armstrong, was fired for writing about her coworkers on her personal blog, dooce.com.

That event sparked a lot of controversy and raised questions about online privacy. The term "dooced" is now considered synonymous with "being fired because of your blog/online presence." Nowadays, Armstrong runs dooce.com as her full-time job while also being a full-time mom.

While Armstrong dealt with the consequences of writing about her professional life on a personal website, Melinda Roberts founded the first "mommy blog" on the domain name TheMommyBlog.com. Her blog paved the way for a niche that continues to remain popular, with over 3.9 million mommy blogs in North America alone.

During the same year, Blogads, the first ad network that aims to connect advertisers and publishers, launched as well.

Aside from personal blogs, a number of political blogs started cropping up as well as blogs featuring in-depth tutorials and guides on blogging which are often called "meta blogs." Blogs like Gizmodo, Gawker, and Boing Boing-which have huge followings nowadays — were also created during the early 2000s.

2003: The Birth of WordPress and TypePad

Work on WordPress dates back to 2001 when Matt Mullenweg and Mike Little decided to make a fork of Michel Valdrighi's b2/cafelog, the then-popular platform that discontinued its services. However, WordPress officially launched on May 27, 2003 and had a small selection of templates and a brand new admin interface. The plugins architecture was introduced a year later which allowed developers to extend its functionality.

WordPress.org – circa 2004

The same year, the software company Six Apart launched TypePad which nowadays hosts blogs for some famous news companies such as ABC, BBC, and MSNBC.

The last notable event of 2003 was Google's acquisition of Blogger and the launch of the AdSense advertising platform.

With a decent selection of available blogging platforms as well as the ability to earn income from their blogs by placing third-party ads, many people started dipping their toes into blogging as a career. It was also around that time that meta blogs skyrocketed in popularity and blogs like ProBlogger.net and JohnChow.com started pulling in significant income teaching others how to turn blogging into a career.

2004-2006: The Rise of The Video

Nowadays, you'd be hard pressed to imagine a blog without accompanying visual content. But it wasn't always like that. In fact, the first blogs primarily consisted of text and an occasional image.

In 2004, however, everything changed when Steve Garfield decided to hook up his digital camera to his laptop and upload "short clips of protest rallies, traffic short-cuts and even news events onto his personal Internet site."

He dubbed it the year of the video blog. The following year marked the launch of YouTube which started out as a dating site before focusing on general video uploads. It was later acquired by Google in 2006.

March 2005 was another turning point in the blogging era when Garrett Graff became the first blogger to be granted a press pass for the White House.

Along with the launch of Huffington Post only two months later, the lines between blogging and traditional news reporting began to blur as more and more "cyber journalists" emerged and started covering current news, culture, and sporting events.

The MicroBlogging Era and Blogger's Code of Conduct

As the blogosphere continued to grow, a different form of blogging appeared, called microblogging. The beginning of microblogging was marked by the launch of Twitter in 2006, first as an internal messaging service for Odeo employees and made public in July of the same year. Dorsey and other members of Odeo formed Obvious Corporation and acquired Odeo and Twitter.

A year later, Twitter spun off into its own company and grew quickly in popularity. Today, the platform boasts around 6000 tweets being sent out every second. But Twitter was only the beginning.

In 2007, Tumblr was launched as the first official microblogging platform that encouraged users to

post brief content as a way of allowing those who don't have time to publish long-form content to still have their voices heard.

With the rise of microblogging platforms and the maturing of established blogging software, communication became easier than ever, and people started feeling more confident about expressing themselves online.

Considering the fact it was easy to hide behind an online moniker, some people abused the power of online publishing by sending out spiteful tweets as well as harmful comments. This largely indicated a need for boundaries.

Buzzfeed circa 2007

A Need for Rules In 2007, prominent blogger Kathy Sierra, who is also a programming instructor and game developer, received several death threats which caused her to cancel her public appearance at the O'Reilly ETech conference in San Diego.

The event sparked a debate in the blogosphere. Sierra is quoted in the BBC article indicating that some kind of general code of conduct is needed to define acceptable behavior online.

As a result, Tim O'Reilly and Jimmy Wales came up with a preliminary draft of the Blogger's Code of Conduct.

Well-intentioned as it was, many bloggers felt the proposed rules infringed upon freedom of speech and numerous controversial debates emerged yet again.

Around the same time, and on a lighter note, Eric Nakagawa and Kari Unebasami launched I Can Has Cheezburger? — one of the most popular blogs ever — which shares funny photos and regularly receives more than 1.5 million hits per day.

The Slow Years

After 2007, things slowed down in the world of blogging — largely because blogs had become so common and accepted. One notable event that was indicative of this was the launch of the White House Blog in 2009. Additionally, the movie Julie & Julia was very popular. The movie was based on Julie Powell first book about becoming a successful food blogger.

In 2008, a new blogging platform emerged called Posterous which allowed users to post short content via email or an online client. It was a project started by Y Combinator and designed in response to the rise of mobile devices. However, the service was short-lived and shutdown in 2013. Another significant event during the slow years of blogging is the Google's Panda update in 2011, the purpose of which was to weed out sites with low-quality content and rank them lower in the SERPs (search engine results pages). This resulted in many blogs falling off the search results due to their excessive use of keywords and lack of substantial content. Blogs that focused on providing high-quality, informative posts started ranking higher, however.