

THE EDENFIELD GROUP
WATERTOWN, MA 02472
KEN@EDENFIELDGROUP.COM
cell.617-834-9217
office.857-383-9410

WWW.EDENFIELDGROUP.COM



TheEdenfieldGroup

Industry Perspectives

WHY CONTENT MARKETING WORKS

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF CONTENT MARKETING

By Ken Carson, Principal Technology Analyst

The Edenfield Group

The Psychology of Content Marketing

Content marketing is not new. Before it was called content marketing, many people referred to it as “education-based marketing.” The only thing that is new is the number of channels available for promoting and engaging people with educational, engaging and informative content. I’m referring of course to social media.

Since education-based marketing, sorry, content marketing is a time tested marketing strategy, I thought it might be interesting to analyze why it is so effective.

Imagine that you are the CEO of a company that sells a technically sophisticated B2B solution. You’re speaking to a good friend and he tells you he is very interested in purchasing a solution for his company that is virtually identical to the solution you sell. You offer to buy dinner and answer all his questions about this very sophisticated solution.

Since you are an astute business person, you begin the conversation by asking a lot of questions about the business problems your friend is attempting to solve by implementing this solution.

You ask what concerns he has about the current business issues he is dealing with, his concerns about a new solution.

Once you have a complete and comprehensive understanding of your friend’s business issues, current problems, workflow issues and all of his personal and professional concerns (note well I said **personal** concerns) you are now prepared to offer some very informed and insightful advice. You now offer that advice on a point by point basis. You re-state every concern he has articulated and tailor your advice to thoroughly address each concern. Once you have addressed all of his concerns, you now address issues, concerns and technical problems that your friend has not even thought to ask because he was not aware of them.

However, you know everything about your solution and have seen every issue that can possibly arise.

Your friend is immensely grateful for this crucial advice that he never even knew to ask about. He is now acutely aware that without this knowledge it could well have spelled disaster for his project and perhaps even his career. Your friend is so grateful he gets a bit choked up in his effusive expressions of gratitude.

What just happened here? You just executed a perfect content marketing program. Let's tease apart each element of our dinner conversation and place them in the context of a B2B content marketing program.

Your "friend" is your universe of sales prospects. They are your followers on Twitter™ and FaceBook™ fans, people searching on Google™, your in-house prospect list that your sales team is working, the members of your LinkedIn™ groups and your website visitors.

Now, back to our dinner conversation.

You started the conversation by asking a lot of questions. However, in a content marketing program, the reality is that you already know the vast majority of business issues and problems that your prospects are facing.

If your sales team is doing their job correctly, you also know many of the *personal* concerns that your prospects have. That's because your sales team is trained to ask questions like "Anne, what are your concerns about moving to a new solution?" and then follow up by saying "What else?" and "Anything else?"

When I talk about personal concerns, I'm referring to the fears that every business decision maker has regarding any change to workflow, business process or technology.

Make no mistake, every executive lives in fear of making a decision that results in a corporate disaster. The bigger the deal, the higher the fear level.

Executives may be reluctant to talk about their personal fears but if they are not properly addressed, the deal will never close. Good content marketing acknowledges and assuages that fear in a subtle but effective manner.

This is accomplished by demonstrating genuine empathy for your prospect. Empathy is the emotional counterpart to intellectual understanding. Both the intellectual and emotional aspects of your prospect's concerns must be addressed in effective content marketing.

Lastly, you offered advice that your friend did not even know to ask about. It was a "Eureka" moment for your friend and it elicited an emotional reaction in the form of gratitude. From a content marketing perspective, this last piece is often the most difficult to achieve. The point is not that your prospect is actually going to become truly emotional.

Rather, you are trying to share information that demonstrates your willingness as a company to be very open with your sales prospects and obtain permission to begin a conversation. Today's buyers are more informed than ever before in history, so a whitepaper touting features and benefits is not going to be effective. As a company, you are demonstrating a willingness to share truly valuable business information in a non promotional fashion.

In fact, studies have shown that today's business buyers have already completed 70% of their research on a solution before they even begin to contact vendors. That's one reason that companies are increasing their marketing spend on publishing content. They need to be part of that 70% of buyer research just to be in the game, so to speak. Content marketing experts are fond of saying that every business is a publisher now. While that may be true, I believe it may be more accurate to say that all businesses are, or should be, educational publishers.

In summary, effective content marketing addresses both the intellectual and emotional issues of most concern to your sales prospects.

The intellectual component can be addressed through your detailed knowledge of business processes, technology, change management or any other aspect of business that your solution impacts. The emotional component is usually most effectively addressed by empathizing with your prospects personal and professional fears. Empathy is the single most powerful sales tool in the world when used correctly.

However, it is not enough to simply understand, you must also unequivocally demonstrate the business acumen and proven expertise to both understand and present a solution that addresses the root cause of the fear. If you can accomplish that, you have created a truly powerful content marketing program.



TheEdenfieldGroup

www.EdenfieldGroup.com