B2B CONTENT MARKETING PLAN

WHITE PAPER

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You may have noticed – everything is about content these days. Content is everywhere – blogs, white papers, Infographics, ebooks… you've even succumbed to it yourself.

Among the clutter, however, there is the opportunity to be relevant to the right people, at the right time.

This is the challenge facing B2B marketers – get in front of your target audience, engage them, and convert them.

In This Plan, You Will Learn How To:

- Define multiple user personas and use that information intelligently
- Audit your content and pinpoint areas where you're weak
- Create different types of content for each part of your buyer journey
- Map out a prospect's content journey
- Demonstrate the ROI of your content marketing efforts

We'll Give You Some Simple Techniques That Give You:

- Clarity over who you're talking to
- Clarity over what you're delivering
- Clarity over how you're building your pipeline

WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO DO?

You're trying to generate new business, obviously. If only it were simple…

Today's business decision makers are consumers. People talk of how B2B and B2C are coming together, but the B2B buying process is what makes our job all the more complex.

You're trying to generate new business, but you know that *it takes time*.

So what if you were *always relevant to your prospects,* whatever stage they were at in the decision-making process?

THE BUYER JOURNEY IN B2B

Let's imagine you are in the payroll outsourcing business for a minute. You know that making a prospect switch from one supplier to another is an arduous task. They see it as significant upheaval, and only change if they can see real value in switching providers. And this is especially true the bigger the prospect is.

A prospect would first of all instigate a research phase. Why outsource? Why switch providers? Who has got a good track record? What's the risk? That research phase would gradually get more detailed – what's involved? Does this require HR or Finance's involvement? How long is this going to take? Are there any case studies of similar organisations who have switched?

There might then be a shortlisting phase – who's credible? Who has proved themselves? Once shortlisted – what's the detail? How do their services work? How do they work with their clients?

There's a lot to think about. What if you had content that not only sat within each part of this buyer journey, but ***actually instigated it***?

WHO ARE YOUR BUYERS?

We've already seen that the process can be complex, but so can the layers of hierarchy within the businesses you are targeting. You might want to talk to Heads of IT, for instance. After all, they should be the ones making the decisions. But don't forget their teams, who might be doing the shortlisting and reporting back. Don't forget the Director, who might be rubber-stamping the final shortlist.

And don't forget Procurement, without whom nothing happens. And the Finance Director, who needs to know what the cost is – and what the return is. These are your user personas – the people you need to understand. You need to learn their language, understand their pain points – what keeps them up at night? What do they read? What motivates them?

CREATING USER PERSONAS

The following template will help you develop a full picture of the people you are going to be writing content for.

If you feel you can't answer these, go talk to one of them. There's usually one in your business, and if not, there are plenty on LinkedIn who would be more than happy to help out.

Be concise in your answers – no need for essays here. You're trying to build a picture… not a novel.

Kate – Customer Experience Director, Corporate

"I have cross-business, end-to-end, omnichannel responsibility for improving the customer experience online. I'm aware of the technologies available, but what I want is something that gives me true insight into how we're performing, and how the investment in technology is making a difference."

Needs:

- A clear strategic vision of what is achievable, and what may be negatively influencing the customer experience online
- Clear information and messaging that he/she can use to influence other stakeholders on the board

Key goals:

- Instigate a conversation with someone on the difference the product can make
- Understand the value that the product has delivered for other clients & similar organisations of a similar size

Behaviours:

- Impatient – likely to be unconsciously evaluating the site for its own customer experience
- Fact-finding – needs quick access to the figures and the data – Doesn't want to go technical, needs to be kept to the strategic

We must:

- Stress the value achieved by customers
- Ensure that our own CX is seamless – no dead-ends, no slow-loading, no overloading of calls to action that conflict with each other
- Focus the message around the end user rather than the technology
- Be very clear on the next steps – call, download, e-mail, etc

We must never:

- Get into the technical aspects too soon, or in too much developer detail
- Look like it's too simple to implement & use – We need to impress upon the CXO that this isn't just a piece of code – it's a solution that radically alters the customer experience

What's the outcome?

- Ideally, a conversation
- Part-way down the chain, validation (case study, about, etc.)

Name:

Occupaiton:

Organisation:

Needs:

We must:

Key goals:

We must never:

Behaviours:

Desired outcome(s):

CONTENT AUDIT

A scenario… you are the new Marketing Manager for a firm that resells CRM software.

You have all the technical details you need – data sheets, detailed software information, with step-by-step guides on how to implement the solution. The previous marketing manager had a very high conversion rate – from very few leads.

Sound familiar? It happens a lot.

He had a high conversion rate from very few leads because they were all ready to buy.

You need to seriously increase your lead numbers, and accept a lower conversion rate. You also need to develop a conversion process, so that weaker leads are cared for at every stage of their buyer journey.

In this scenario – a content audit would reveal that there is *nothing whatsoever* for people who had not yet decided upon a solution.

CRM is a great example, because a lot of people have done it wrong, and a lot of people have done it right.

Maximizer Software are a good example of a business who have got it right. They know how small businesses buy software: they research, they compare, they shortlist, they trial, and then the buy.

That's the user journey.

Let's look at some of the great content Maximizer have created along the way:

STEP	WHO	WHAT ARE THEY DOING?	WHAT TYPES OF CONTENT DO THEY HAVE?	
Pain point discovered	Head of Marketing / Marketing Manager	They've realised that something is wrong with their Marketing and Sales, and they're going to do something about it	Blogs on common marketing issues, e.g. "How these common sales issues are wrecking your chances of ROI"	Blog posts, Videos
Research Initiated	Marketing Manager	They're carrying out broad-based keyword searches to see how the problem could be solved.	White Paper downloads that closely meet search demand, e.g. "How to get more out of your sales funnel"	White Papers, Slideshares, Videos, Case Studies
Research refined	Marketing Manager	They've refined their research down to potential solutions – personnel, software?	Highly optimised top-level pages, e.g. "CRM for Healthcare Companies"	Top-level web pages, Data sheets, Case Studies

Comparison	Marketing Manager / Marketing Executive	They're looking at potential software providers. Features, capabilities, value, ROI… price?	A comparison White Paper which compares the features of your product vs others.	Comparison guides
Shortlisting	Marketing Manager / Marketing Executive	They're creating a shortlist of providers based on best fit, value, features…	A helpful template designed for shortlisting CRM packages, as a download.	CRM Buyer's Guide, CRM Buyer's Checklists
Trialling	Marketing Executive & Team	They're trying out the software – running it for at least two weeks, playing with the data, seeing what happens, trying out alerts, etc.	Email marketing during the trial with 'Top Tips for Using This CRM' – one a day	Daily emails, Blog posts
Making a decision	Marketing Manager / Head of Marketing	They're comparing the results of the trials and they're making a final decision on who to go with	A 'Now You've Completed Your Free Trial' mailshot with helpful 'Next Steps'…	Emails

What's the difference? Maximizer are ***constantly present*** along the buyer journey.

They provide content for every step of the buyer journey – in a relevant manner. They are constantly in the ear of their potential customers, and if competitors drop out at any point of this marketing chain, you can be sure that Maximizer will still be there.

Advantage.

Now you try it – what have ***you*** got, or more importantly, what have you ***not got***?

Here's a fresh template for you:

STEP	WHO	WHAT ARE THEY DOING?	WHAT TYPES OF CONTENT DO THEY HAVE?	

TYPES OF CONTENT

There are so many different types of content that you can create these days – and never assume that it's just *words*... we all know that you have blogs, Infographics and White Papers – but how do they fit into your content strategy?

Let's have a closer look.

'We Know Your Pain' Type Content

There are specific types of content that are designed to reach out to the uninitiated and say 'we know your pain'.

Your keyword research comes in handy here – knowing exactly what your market is saying, and typing into search engines – is what gives you the advantage of everyone else.

This type of content is generally freely available as **blog posts** (not gated as a White Paper). You can diversify and create **videos**, **slideshares**, **Infographics**, and so on, but in order to attract traffic, it has to be optimised for the channel you're promoting it in.

Your primary, most engaged market, will be on search engines – after all, they are *proactively* typing in their pain points. Optimising your H1 and your meta title tags, while writing comprehensively about the problems they might be facing (and potential solutions) gives you the edge.

Finally, don't leave the reader hanging. Create a call to action that leads them on to the next step – perhaps a download or a further blog post – give them the next step in their journey, and if they're ready, they'll take it.

'How To Cure Your Pain' Type Content

This should come hand in hand with the 'We Know Your Pain' content – but it shouldn't be freely available.

There is a trade-off in B2B marketing, and we all understand it. We can give a lot away for free, but if you want the really good stuff – the insight – then you're going to have to give up at the very least an email address, and at most a telephone number.

White Papers are an overused strategy, but they work (as you can see). Make them insightful, distinctive and actionable, and not only do you get your valuable email address, but you get the potential of a follow-up call that *has substance*.

Ensure that you include plenty of examples, and don't use jargon. Speak in your clients' language.

'What's in the pill' Type Content

We've established that we understand your pain. We know that this kind of pain is something we've dealt with before. And successfully.

But as with every patient who is about to take a pill, we need to look at what's in it.

An example. If you have hay fever, you may want to know why certain hay fever pills are worth £5 a packet, while others are £1.80. So what do you do? You look for the active ingredients.

And this is where you understand where your money goes once you've paid.

Now, with hay fever pills, you can probably get away with the 'marketing gloss' and charge a lot more for the same pill. But not in B2B.

When buyers look under the hood, they need to see real proof. That can come in many forms: data sheets, case studies, solutions downloads… your content arsenal needs to be bolstered with watertight proof **a)** of what you do, and **b)** that you are capable of doing what you do.

'Stay Healthy' Content

It's tempting to look at content marketing solely in an acquisition context. It's also wrong.

Firstly, though – the acquisition. In the previous CRM example, this type of content was used to nurture a prospect through the trial process.

Your buying cycle may be longer than others, or more detailed than some – so once the prospect has tentatively decided to engage with you, why not provide them with relevant content throughout the decision-making process?

Secondly – retention. Often overlooked, but remember the 80/20 rule – 80% of your business should come through retained business.

Newsletters, customer-focused blogs, mailshots… they all form part of a wider customer-focused strategy which constantly reminds customers of the best ways to use your products or services, and the best way to grow their businesses.

Next step: Go through your content audit and identify what ***types of content*** you have in the last column. Where are you top heavy? Where are you weak?

YOUR CONTENT STRATEGY

The content strategy that you are going to develop is twofold.

Firstly, you have your ***content arsenal***. This is everything you need in order to ***go to market***. Without it, there's no point even trying.

Secondly, you have your ***editorial calendar***. This is your regular feed of content to keep the search engines happy, to keep the top of the funnel fed, and to show that you're on the ball.

The Content Arsenal

You will have identified where you are weak – or where you are too strong – in the previous stage.

Now is your opportunity to develop an arsenal of content that matches every stage of your buyer cycle. It will be focused on getting plenty of search traffic, and it will ***generate leads***.

Step 1 – Keyword and Market Research

Google Adwords is a decent tool for finding out which keywords your market is researching, but there are better tools out there. SEMRush is worth the investment, as it gives you a better data set, and much more insight into what your market is actually typing into search engines.

Keyword Research methodology is worth a whole White Paper in itself, but the trick here is to be curious. Never assume that what you say is what your market says. You might sell 'holistic IT solutioning services', but the truth is you don't.

You save businesses money and you make sure their IT never fails.

So on the one hand, you can research the 'end of funnel' keywords – IT services, IT solutions... but on the other, you can research to 'top of funnel' keywords – 'reduce IT costs', 'reduce IT downtime', etc.

The following table could help you define keywords which you can use in your content to optimise for each stage of the buyer journey. Fill in your buyer stages and the user personas who might be involved, and try to develop a picture of the keywords they might be using at each stage.

Here's a quick illustration for one we did for a company who manufacture insulin pumps for people with type 1 diabetes:

STAGE	USER PERSONAS	KEYWORDS
Diagnosis	Parent, Carer, Patient	type 1 diabetes diagnosis, does my child have type 1 diabetes, what is type 1 diabetes?
Coming to terms	Parent, Carer, Patient	Living with type 1 diabetes, diabetes lifestyle tips
Making a choice	Parent, Carer, Patient	Insulin pumps vs injections, should I use an insulin pump? Which insulin pump?
Using the pump	Parent, Carer, Patient	Living with an insulin pump, bolus dose, basal dose, travelling with an insulin pump
Renewal of warranty	Parent, Carer, Patient	Insulin pump comparison, compare insulin pumps, renew insulin pump warranty

Now it’s your turn:

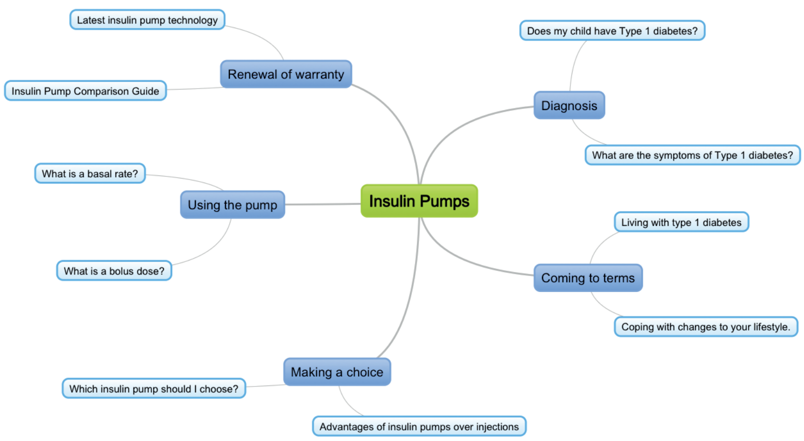
STAGE	USER PERSONAS	KEYWORDS

Step 2 – Identifying the Gaps & Filling Them

The work you completed earlier will have shown you where the gaps are, now it's your opportunity to fill in the gaps.

Now you know your keywords, you have the opportunity to start fleshing them out into content ideas. I've always found that mindmaps are the best way to come up with multiple content ideas – and now you know the many types of content that you can create – you should have multiple ways of delivering that content.

Here's an example mindmap based on the Insulin Pumps example.



What you should have here is a list of content items that are relevant for all prospects. You should have a mixture of different media (given that people are different and consume their content differently).

You will need your case studies, your brand stories, your White Papers, your comparison documents – in short, anything that is *evergreen*.

You'll also need to ensure that the content you want to 'gate', i.e. the content you want people to give up their details for, needs to be on a landing page with a form. Without that, anyone can get your best content, and it's a free-for-all.

Step 3 – Getting it written

We have to underline here that ***good writing costs money***. You're not paying for each word, you're paying for the experience that goes behind those words and ties them together.

There are some very good reasons for outsourcing your content writing.

1. You need someone to define a language for you – create some guidelines
2. You need someone to ensure that language is respected and maintained throughout all of your literature
3. You need someone who is outside of the hubbub of daily product and service development

That person – or those people – need to be the guardians of your internal language.
It should reflect the way customers speak, and it should be benefits-focused, at every step of the way.

So getting it written is often the hardest part of any content marketing strategy. Your content arsenal is your artillery – the heavy machinery that you're taking to war. You don't want something that has been patched together by amateurs – you want the full monty.

So get it written by a professional, and don't expect it to be cheap. The benefits are obvious:

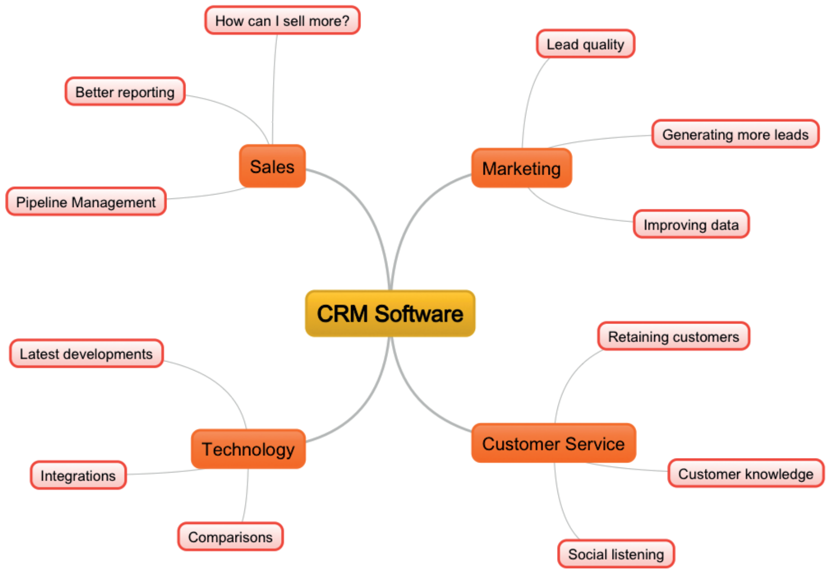
1. Consistency of message
2. Clarity of message
3. Quality of output

Your Editorial Calendar

As we've mentioned, there's the stuff that you can get out there immediately, and you need a place to put it. That's your arsenal.

Now for the regular stuff, the scheduled blog posts, the accompanying tweets and Facebook posts, the *timely stuff*.

Again, collecting these ideas always starts off best with a mindmap. Here's a mindmap for CRM software blog posts which could give you some inspiration:



Remember, it's customer-focused, so in this case, we've defined our customer sets and we've looked at their pain points, and created topics that will satisfy the top of the funnel, as well as parts of the funnel lower down.

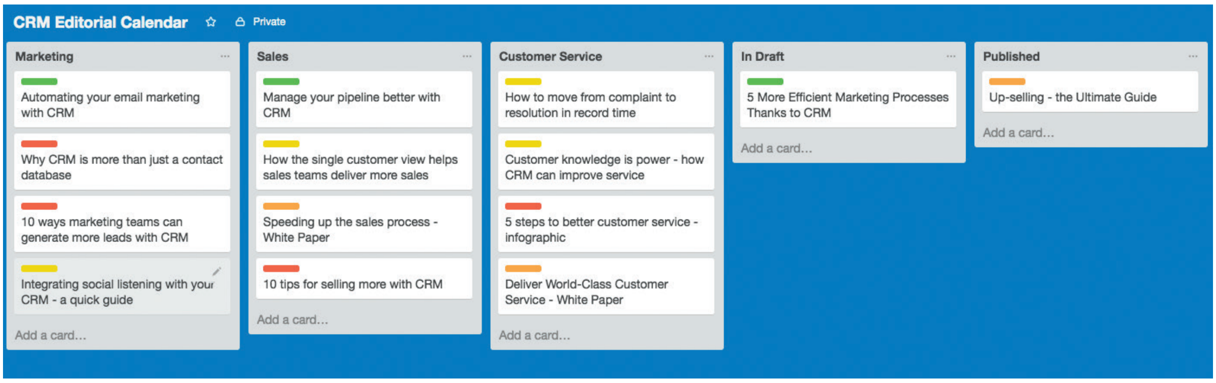
Keywords are not just *evergreen* – they tend to 'trend' throughout the year, so you will find keywords that are popular in some months, but unpopular in others. You will find some related to events – for instance, the Payroll industry tends to get very busy in the run-up to Tax Year End in April, and National Payroll Week in September can also be an interesting time.

There are topics in HR, for instance, that you constantly see cropping up at certain times of year. Christmas Parties is not a topic you want to be pushing out through Twitter in March.

Trello is a great place to collect all of your ideas, allocate them out to people, and categorise them. Trello is basically *cards* – you have a card for each topic, and you can categorise those cards however you like. You could create a list of cards for each user persona, and you can then label each card depending on the category or type of content.

We like to create a 'draft' column as well as an 'in review' column for pieces of content that require someone else to carry out a more detailed review, as well as 'published' and 'discarded' columns, for obvious reasons.

Here's an example of a content calendar for CRM software:



PROMOTING YOUR CONTENT

It's one thing to have a lot of content.

It's another to get people to read it.

Content marketing is nothing without promotion – and without a large amount of Domain Authority, or sizeable social followings, you will struggle to get your content seen by anyone unless you ***pay to promote it***.

That's the new world and we have to accept it.

So let's go back to our user profiles.

Remember one question we asked – what do they read?

You can extend that question out by asking – *where do they go?* In a B2B environment, you might not find many people lurking on Facebook – but you might find them on LinkedIn and Twitter.

You might find that a lot of your audience read a specific industry website. Do they offer display advertising? Is there a guest posting opportunity?

Go where your users go. It's as simple as that.

Don't waste your advertising spend on anything that is likely to bring irrelevant readers to your site. It's not about the volume of the people who come, it's about the quality and their propensity to buy.

Here's the best ways of getting your B2B content in front of your audiences:

LINKEDIN

PROS:

- Very targeted – you can drill down to the precise job role & location you want
- Decent reporting

CONS:

- Can be expensive – the tighter your demographic is, the more you pay

TWITTER

PROS:

- Improved demographics means you can target followers of certain accounts, for example, or people who have used specific keywords
- Quick source of traffic

CONS

- Lack of transparency, click cost is seemingly random and they use your exact budget in the exact amount of time you specify
- You do have to work hard to generate business from Twitter; often quite casual visitors

FACEBOOK

PROS:

- Cheap – very cheap
- Their demographic targeting is among the very best, at least for B2C. You can replicate some of this to find your B2B targets in a different context.

CONS:

- Very much B2C focused, hard to convert B2C in a Facebook mood.

REMARKETING

PROS:

- Free advertising – you only pay when someone clicks on your advert
- The audience knows you already – remarketing ads display only when someone has been ‘cookied’
- Very cheap when people do click

CONS:

- People can become ‘fatigued’ by your advertising

ADWORDS & BING ADS

PROS:

- Some search terms can be very 'end-of-funnel' and transactional
- Long-tail keywords can be quite cheap
- Bing Ads can be even cheaper than Google Adwords

CONS:

- Requires very tight management of keyword targeting

With this in mind, let's go back to your user personas and establish what is the best way to get their interest? Fill in the following chart with your user personas, where you're likely to find them – and which advertising method is likely to work best:

USER PERSONA	WHAT DO THEY READ & WHERE DO THEY GO?	TYPE OF ADVERTISING THAT WOULD WORK BEST

HOW TO DEMONSTRATE THE ROI OF CONTENT MARKETING

So you've done all the following:

- Defined who you are targeting
- Defined where your content offering is weak
- Built a content arsenal
- Built an editorial calendar
- Started promoting your content to your audiences

And then someone is bound to ask: what's the return?

It's a valid question. After all, this is a significant investment in many regards, not least of all, your time.

Once more, we go back to our buying cycles – they are often very long, so an immediate ROI isn't going to happen. We're not selling shoes.

Here are some basic steps you need to get in place in order to truly justify the value of your content marketing:

Goals

Google Analytics is all about conversions. You can set up a goal for every time someone downloads your white paper.

You can then track that goal back to the source. For instance, you may have sent out a mailshot via MailChimp. Use Mailchimp's analytics tagging, and you'll see it come through in your Google Analytics.

You'll also see how many leads you obtained through organic and paid traffic, as well as each social channel. It's simple, and powerful.

Phone Calls

Google Analytics will let you track Click-to-Call functionality, but not when someone picks up their handset and talks to your switchboard.

Train the people answering the phone to ask some basic questions about how they found you. "Oh, I've read your White Paper" should be followed up with "Which White Paper did you read" and "Perhaps you'd be interested in…".

In my experience, for every email enquiry you get, you should receive three phone calls.

IP Tracking

IP Tracking can be very powerful, but beware – despite the claims of some sellers – it doesn't give you every single company.

In short, it allocates an IP address against a visitor so you could tell, for instance, that Cathay Pacific have viewed your Payroll Outsourcing page three times in a day.

That's powerful information, but it doesn't tell you exactly who.

What it does do, though, is give you a picture of your content journey – what are people reading, and what is the natural 'shape' of a conversion?

STEPS TO PROVING YOUR ROI

1: Define a Conversion for Each Piece of Content

A blog post can convert into something – it could convert into another blog post being read, for instance. That would be a good sign.

A White Paper has an obvious conversion – through a landing page.

Each piece of content should have an objective – and you should be able to measure that objective, otherwise there's no point in doing it. So choose an Analytics goal, and test the efficacy of your content marketing.

2: Get Alerts for Known Users

If someone has downloaded a White Paper, there is software that will let you track subsequent activity. IP trackers do it, Hubspot is an alternative for those who have the budget…

This is important for your sales team. If you are to prove that your strategies are working, then they have to know *when to contact your opportunities*. If a downloader comes back for a second or a third visit, you could surmise that they are more interested than most other visitors.

3: Dominate Your CRM

If you're using a CRM, be a pest. Make sure that the lead source is attributed to the piece of content that was first downloaded. Ensure that all subsequent pieces of content are listed as contributory in the CRM – if that person has viewed several blog posts or white papers after the first download, they contribute towards the ultimate sale.

Remember, the buying journey is long and you have to be there at every point. So dominate your CRM and make sure that everything is recorded.

4: Report on the Pipeline you are Creating

The pipeline starts with the blog traffic – how many views are you generating at the top of the funnel?

How many downloads are you generating?

And then, how many of those downloads become leads? You can track your pipeline all the way down the buyer journey. If they're downloading comparison guides, then they're hot and need to be contacted immediately, and you can report on them as warm leads.

And once the value is attributed in your CRM, make sure that you get the credit, and that the respective piece of content is given a value.

PIECE OF CONTENT	BUYER STAGE	NUMBER OF DOWNLOADS	NUMBER OF LEADS CONFIRMED	VALUE OF LEADS CONFIRMED

CLD CAN HELP YOU GENERATE MORE LEADS

So we've talked a lot about content, and how getting the right content in front of the right people at the right time is what makes the difference.

It's all about leads. It's all about developing the engagement among those who are not yet ready to buy, and pushing them further down the funnel – or saying the right thing to those people who are not yet ready to get in touch with you.

It's all about putting your brand front of mind, and changing the conversation so that your message is front of mind when they come to make a decision.

CLD is a digital agency with performance at its core. We can help you craft those messages, design those user experiences, and build the content that truly resonates with your target audience.

We'll develop the knowledge of your customers and your business that truly reflects who you are, and we'll help you generate the leads that your business needs to grow.

To hear more about how we can help you build a content marketing strategy, get in touch today.

Call me on **01628 631668** or email directly: **gareth@cld.agency**.

And if you're not ready just yet – why not follow me on Twitter: **@clevergareth**