



RESOURCE GUIDE

INTRODUCTION TO CONTENT MARKETING

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WHAT IS CONTENT MARKETING?

When we think of online content, most of us think about written pages or posts. But content can also include images, videos, audio, animations, infographics, illustrations, cinemagraphs, and GIFs.

Content marketing as a way of telling stories to engage consumers has gained popularity in recent years. Although the term is relatively new, the idea has been around for a long time. According to the Content Marketing Institute:

“Content marketing is a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience – and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action.”

contentmarketinginstitute.com/what-is-content-marketing/

A more basic explanation:

“Content marketing is creating the right content for your target audience and distributing it in a way that makes it easily discovered by this audience.”

Most content marketing is done online and involves the creation and sharing of material like videos, social media posts, and web content that does not explicitly promote a brand. Rather, it is intended to create interest in the business or destination and its experiences.

As consumers, we are regularly touched by content marketing. A good example is the Michelin Guide. Originally published as a way of encouraging people to explore the country on their Michelin tires, it’s now become an iconic food and travel guide. As online marketing tools and strategies advance, good marketers are able to better target customers and serve them with more relevant content. Storytelling is key because it is relatively easy to relate to your audience by telling authentic stories. However, customers are presented with so much content over the course of a day that it’s up to marketers to do their best to cut through the clutter and deliver the right message to their audience.

Think of the last time you saw something online that really caught your eye. When you look at the reasons why it resonated with you, you start to discover some of the pillars of content marketing.

MESSAGE

Did the message behind the content hit home with you? Was the topic of interest to you?

PRESENTATION

Was the content presented in a way that made sense to you?

PLACEMENT

Was the message delivered to you at a time when it was relevant to your needs? Were you presented with the content via a channel that you typically use such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or your favourite website?

FREQUENCY

Did you pay attention to the content because you were familiar with the brand behind it? Had you seen other content from the brand recently?

ACTION

Were you encouraged to take action based on the content? Did it entice you to click on a link, sign up for an e-newsletter, or request more information?

CONTENT MARKETING MODEL

The content marketing model is much like a marketing strategy. Before you can begin creating content, it's important to develop a plan. Here are some key elements to a successful content marketing plan:



PURPOSE

What are you trying to achieve? What message(s) are you trying to convey to your audience? What value can you provide to your audience that no one else can? What's the story you want to tell?

EXAMPLE

"We want our restaurant to be known as the top choice for sustainable family dining in Calgary. We want to show that we can turn healthy, locally sourced ingredients into food the whole family can enjoy."



GOALS

These are similar to your purpose but focus more on tangible metrics like website traffic, leads, and referrals. Regardless of your intentions, creating a loyal and engaged audience should always be one of your goals.

EXAMPLE

"Through our content marketing strategy, we aim to increase our website traffic by 20% and increase the number of online room bookings by 15%."



AUDIENCE

It's hard to create content if you don't know who you're talking to. Your audience needs to align with your purpose and goals. Think of your best customers – who are they? What makes them your best customers? Do they have kids? Where do they live? The target audience tool included in this guide (pages 8-12) will help you identify the individuals you wish to target. You might also want to consider emerging audiences as another focus.

EXAMPLE

"Most of the customers that come to our mountain bike rental shop are between the ages of 25 and 40. They are usually in town for the weekend and are visiting from places like Edmonton, Red Deer, and Drayton Valley. They have a good knowledge of our trail system and of the bikes. They often mention that they ride at home but choose not to bring their own bikes on weekend trips."



STORY

The purpose of your content is to build trust with your audience while demonstrating your product or service. People prefer to do business with those they like, know and trust. It's up to you to build customer trust through your content.

EXAMPLE

"Customers appreciate that our tour company is environmentally conscious. Our content marketing strategy revolves around our environmentally friendly processes and stories of our customers enjoying the region we're helping to preserve."



CREATION AND DISTRIBUTION

Once you're able to clearly define your purpose, goals, audience and story, you can identify the types of content you will create and the distribution channels to use. You will continue to develop this section as trends and technologies change.

EXAMPLE

"After talking with many of our customers, we have determined that Instagram is a channel most of them use. We have started to share a series of "behind the scenes" photos and videos that feature our chef creating our dinner special. Customer engagement with these posts has been great. We're going to expand the same theme on our website."



MEASUREMENT

Measurement helps determine the effectiveness of your work. As part of your goal creation step, decide which activities you wish to measure. Although there are many fantastic tools to help with measurements, you and your staff are key in the process. Simply asking visitors, "where did you hear about us", will go a long way in determining what pieces of content helped drive sales.

EXAMPLE

"We train our staff to ask certain questions when talking with a customer over the phone or in person. Part of our customer service script is asking the person how they heard about our bed and breakfast. A lot of people mention that they receive our e-newsletter and decided to book with us based on the specials we post there. We can safely attribute 30 bookings over the past year to our e-newsletter."



CASE STUDY – MEDALTA

MEDALTA is an innovative industrial museum, contemporary ceramic arts facility, art gallery, and community hub in Medicine Hat. Using their blog, Medalta consistently produces content from varying angles, using different mediums and telling different stories and narratives. Their written content covers everything from an overview of local history with the story of **Redcliff Pressed Brick**, to displaying some of the items they have for sale in **“The 9 most unique uses for Medalta items.”** They intermittently add video content in the form of a short monthly vlog. These vlogs are usually a minute or two long and don’t require much editing, but that’s what makes them great. The last component of their blog content is artist statements and event announcements and recaps.

Medalta uses their website content to fuel their social media channels. Since they create a considerable amount of content on their own, they are able to maintain their social media using mostly their own content, only occasionally sharing third-party curated content.

Medalta also uses Travel Alberta’s ATIS (Alberta Tourism Information Service) to their advantage. Having a well-maintained ATIS profile offers operators an opportunity to increase their online exposure within the Travel Alberta website. **The Travel Alberta Industry website has some good tips on getting the most out of ATIS.**



WHAT'S NEW @ MEDALTA

MARCH VLOG – ARTIST LODGE TRAILER

Artists from all over the world make the journey to spend time as an Artist in Residence in Medicine Hat. [...]



CALLING MEDICINE HAT HOME FOR XANTHE ISBISTER

Xanthe sure has got us blushing over here with her very flattering portrayal of Medalta (But perhaps not a great [...])



WHAT'S IT LIKE TO BE A VOLUNTEER AT MEDALTA?

Medalta is a lot of things to a lot of people – a workplace, a music venue, an art gallery, [...]



TINA RICHE EXHIBITION

Short description A collection of 36 acrylic paintings by Tina Riche illustrate the vast landscapes of Canada. From the East [...]



HANDS AT WORK IN MEDICINE HAT

Exhibition runs February 8—April 12, 2018 Opening March 8, 2018 A collection of 39 black and white photographs by James [...]



9 MOST UNIQUE USES FOR MEDALTA ITEMS

Our reception staff can confirm – we've seen it all! People get so creative with the ways they use their [...]

Medalta @Medalta Follow

Meet the Artist: Carlos Rojas is one of our year long Artists in Residence. See his work & bio here: medalta.org/carlos-rojas #medhat

6:05 PM - 7 Oct 2017

3 Retweets 2 Likes

MEDALTA
BLOGPOST
AS TWEET

Medalta shared [The Lost Girl's Guide to Finding the World's](#) post.

November 20, 2017 · 🌐

We approve this message 😊
Thanks for including Medalta in your trip!

[The Lost Girl's Guide to Finding the World](#)
November 15, 2017 · 🌐

A complete budget-friendly itinerary on what all you can do in Medicine Hat during a one-day road trip.

Including two meals, afternoon coffees plus a few activ...

[See More](#)

What to Do In Medicine Hat In One Day - The Lost Girl's Guide to Finding the World

The perfect action-packed itinerary of activities, culture and food if you only have one day to explore the city of Medicine Hat.

THELOSTGIRLSGUIDE.COM

Like Comment Share

SHARING OTHERS'
CONTENT ON
SOCIAL MEDIA

Medalta in the Historic Clay District

TripAdvisor Traveller Rating: 195 Reviews

713 Medalta Ave SE, Medicine Hat, Alberta, T1A 3K9 | 403-529-1070

WEBSITE

Share Add to Wishlist Print

Clear, detailed overview

Up to date contact details



OVERVIEW

Medalta is a jewel in the Canadian Badlands - an industrial museum and contemporary arts centre, framed by the dramatic cliffs of the South Saskatchewan River in Medicine Hat, Alberta. Open year-round.



NEARBY

[Accommodation](#) [Visitor Service](#) [Attraction](#)
[Event](#) [Food & Entertainment](#) [Guided Tours](#)
[Natural Attraction](#) [Rental](#) [Transportation](#)

ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHTS

[Canadian Culture](#)

SOCIAL FEEDS



Good mix of high quality images



OFFERS



MUSEUM PACKAGE

Overnight stay in a standard room with hot breakfast buffet for two, two passes to Medalta Museum & Medalta souvenir, two passes to the Esplanade Arts & Heritage Centre.

Expires: June 30, 2018 12:00 AM MST

\$144 *
SAVE 24%

VIEW OFFER



5-DAY CANADIAN BADLANDS TOUR

Journey through the Canadian Badlands on this 5-day/4-night history and culture tour.

Expires: September 30, 2018 11:30 PM MST

\$1,299 *

VIEW OFFER

EVENTS



PAPERPLASTER MOULD MAKING WITH TRUDY GOLLEY

Medicine Hat, Alberta

June 9, 2018 To June 10, 2018 MST

READ MORE



WOODFIRING WITH TARA WILSON

Medicine Hat, Alberta

August 4, 2018 To August 10, 2018 MST

This seven day workshop will focus on the fundamentals of woodfiring.

READ MORE

Events added to ATIS

MEDALTA'S ATIS PROFILE (WITH NOTES)

ATIS articles

See All Articles +

ARTICLES



FIVE WAYS TO BEAT THOSE BLUE MONDAY BLUES

By: Michael Hingston

The holidays are over. The bills are coming in. Here's how to remedy the dreaded January doldrums.

Published: January 9, 2017

READ MORE



UNIQUE GIFTS FOR EVERYONE ON YOUR LIST

By: Jennifer Allford

All they really want for Christmas can be found right here in Alberta.

Published: December 6, 2016

READ MORE



MEDALTA HISTORIC CLAY DISTRICT - THEN AND NOW

By: Jane Usher

This factory museum in Medicine Hat is home to history and local artists.

Published: February 4, 2016

READ MORE

TripAdvisor reviews

TRIPADVISOR REVIEWS

VERY INTERESTING

Reviewed Mar 8, 2018 By AME283, YYC

driven through Medicine hat lots, first time we stopped here, very interesting, reasonable entrance fee of \$10.00

GREAT HISTORY OF MEDICINE HAT

Reviewed Mar 4, 2018 By kptravel2002, Canada

Went here for an office event and tour. It was interesting to hear the history of pottery making in Medicine Hat. The collection of pottery is very interesting and a generous donation.

AWESOME MUSEUM

Reviewed Jan 29, 2018 By Rovadeli, Canada

Great place to check out, lots to see. Lots of different pottery from all different years and places lots that were made in this place

HISTORIC PLACE

Reviewed Dec 21, 2017 By Marilyn B, Canada

Great place with lots of crafts and food and we enjoyed all the history involved in the pottery. I would recommend it as a place to see if you are visiting our beautiful city.

INTERESTING BUILDING.

Reviewed Nov 26, 2017 By Alfred K, Canada

I am here for a concert. Monkeyjunk is playing tonight. Very interesting place. I will come back when it is fully open.



TOOL: TARGET AUDIENCE IDENTIFICATION

Before you can dive into creating content, it's important to clearly identify your audience. Understanding who your customers are and what they want in an Alberta vacation experience is fundamental to your marketing success. Environics Research Group, one of Canada's leading marketing and social research firms, worked with Destination Canada to develop the Explorer Quotient™ (EQ). The Explorer Quotient builds a link between travellers' social values and their travel behaviours and preferences – a psychographic method of defining your target audience based on EQ profiles.

Travel Alberta offers a three-part workshop series that introduces tourism businesses to this EQ segmentation tool, with a focus on the travel preferences of Albertans. This workshop is a good option to learning about customer segmentation. For more information about workshops that may be offered in your area, contact your Travel Alberta Experience Development Manager.

Creating an audience matrix is another means to help guide your content marketing strategy. Answer the following questions in the checklist below.

QUESTION 1

Which of the following groups of travellers best represent the customers you wish to target? (Choose 3)

1. Families with young children
2. Empty nesters
3. Young professionals with no children
4. Students
5. Tour groups
6. Business travellers
7. Events and conventions
8. Sports teams
9. Other

QUESTION 2

Which of your products or services are most popular with each target group?

TARGET GROUP	POPULAR PRODUCTS OR SERVICES

QUESTION 3

What problems are you able to help solve for each target group?

TARGET GROUP	PROBLEMS SOLVED

QUESTION 4

Who is the person responsible for making the travel decisions in each of your target groups?

TARGET GROUP	DECISION MAKER

QUESTION 5

What are some of the reasons each of the decision makers choose your business over your competitors?

DECISION MAKER	REASONS FOR CHOOSING YOU

QUESTION 6

What are some of the features and benefits of your product/service specific to your selected audience?

FEATURES	BENEFITS

QUESTION 7

What are some of the words your target audiences use to describe your business?

WORDS TO DESCRIBE YOUR BUSINESS	WHY DO THEY CHOOSE THESE WORDS?

QUESTION 8

What needs, desires, and potential frustrations do your audiences have?

NEEDS, DESIRES, FRUSTRATIONS

QUESTION 9

What motivates your target audiences?
What are their core values?

**PERSONALITY TYPES, ATTITUDES, VALUES, INTEREST/HOBBIES,
LIFESTYLES, BEHAVIOURS**

QUESTION 10

What mediums do your target audiences use to consume information?
Which types of content are they interested in?

**MEDIUMS THEY USE, CONTENT THEY LIKE, WAYS THEY
CONSUME INFORMATION, THINGS THEY NEED TO KNOW**

Once you have identified your audience, you can begin working on the next part of your content marketing strategy.

TYPES OF CONTENT

Content comes in many forms. A good content marketer creates a diverse content mix and uses engagement data including social media engagements, website traffic, and reviews to determine which topics and content types are most relevant to their audience. As trends and technologies emerge, a significant portion of content marketing involves constantly refining the pillars of your message, your presentation, and content placement, frequency, and action.

Here are a few content types to consider including in your content marketing foundation:

QUICK TIP

Create content with your audience in mind. Keep your own interests and biases out of the process.

VIDEO, AUDIO, AND IMAGES

It's easy to include videos and images that help to bring your marketing to life in a travel content marketing strategy. Although there is no substitute for professionally created video and images, advances in technology such as smartphones have made it easier for business owners to create their own. A smartphone gives you the opportunity to easily create great content for your business. A good story, consistency, and relevance are more important than perfection in quality, so don't be afraid to get inspired.

WRITTEN

When people hear the word "content", they often think of written pieces like blog posts. Most content marketing strategies contain some aspect of written content. Not only is good written content a fantastic way to get travellers thinking of your destination, it assists in your search engine optimization efforts. Search engine optimization (SEO) is the process of optimizing your online content so that a search engine, such as Google or Bing, can retrieve the key pieces of information from your written content to show it as a top result for certain search terms. With good SEO practices in place for your written content, potential customers are more likely to find your business when they search for certain terms or phrases. Written content today is what you write in social media, captions to the photos on your website or Instagram, titles for your videos, or itineraries – it's not always a long form written story.

MICROCONTENT

Microcontent is easily digestible content created for social media, such as short video clips, audiograms, image galleries, or image quotes. It is also a great opportunity for you to research more about the types of shareable content that are suitable for the channels you use. As customers spend more time on social media, they are exposed to more content than ever before. This inundation of information is leading to a decreased attention span and retention rate. Companies that are able to make high quality, entertaining, and informative microcontent cut through the clutter.

REPURPOSED CONTENT

Sometimes the foundation for your content marketing strategy is right in front of you. Most tourism businesses are sitting on a wealth of potential content. Think of all of the brochures, e-newsletters, and advertisements that your company has made over the years. There is potential for this content to be repurposed into digital pieces and used in your content marketing strategy. Be careful though – content marketing is not about selling but about engaging. When you repurpose the content, ensure that it's more than a sales pitch.

CURATED CONTENT

Content curation is finding, organizing, compiling, and sharing existing content with your audience to provide additional value while building relationships. This involves sifting through content from various sources related to your industry to present it to your audience in the best, most meaningful way. For the tourism industry, a lot of material and resources are available online through businesses and organizations with information relevant to your work and audience. Customers are also a good source of curated content through their social posts, and they are usually thrilled to share. Always make sure you have the appropriate permissions to use any material. If in doubt, better to ask and obtain confirmation!

BEST PRACTICES FOR SHARING CURATED CONTENT

DO NOT COPY AND PASTE

Simply copying and pasting an article from somewhere else and using it as your own without permission is plagiarism. You must credit the creator of the content you are sharing by attributing and linking to the original source. On social media, this may come in the form of tagging them in a post or tweet. In addition, putting a link to the article provides little context or value to your audience. Rather, consider capturing snippets of the piece, use excerpts from the original source, and give your audience the gist of what it is about.

PERSONALIZE IT OR ADD VALUE

Even though you are sharing someone else's content, add your own point of view to it. This is a way of providing value to the audience that goes beyond simply sharing the content. You give them your own perspective and commentary on things.

KEEP YOUR AUDIENCE IN MIND

Make sure what you are sharing is relevant to your audience and their interests.

BALANCE BETWEEN QUANTITY AND QUALITY

With engagement and storytelling as the focus, quality and quantity go hand in hand. Look for high quality content and provide a steady stream of it to keep your audience engaged. At the same time, you want a balance between curated content and your own original content to provide a good mix.

CONSIDER ACQUIRING THE BEST CONTENT

Sometimes creating your own photo library isn't feasible. Consider searching out photos of your business that others have taken and purchasing some of your favourites.



TOOL: **CONTENT CREATION BEST PRACTISES**

Have a content calendar – Inconsistency when posting content is one of the biggest mistakes for your content marketing strategy.

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

If you know the personas of your audience, the content you create for them builds brand awareness and equity, drives sales, and retains customers.

KNOW AND USE YOUR COMPANY VOICE

Regardless of what type of content you create, you should maintain a unique voice that can be easily identified with your company.

TELL A STORY

Keep it simple and tell your story in a natural, authentic manner.

CREATE VALUE

Don't just create content for the sake of having something to post. Create meaningful and valuable information that your audience relates to. It increases your chances of engagement.

ALWAYS HAVE A CALL TO ACTION (CTA)

Every type of content you create needs a purpose. What do you want the audience to do? A CTA does not mean sell, sell, sell. It can be an e-newsletter sign-up form, a link to a social media profile, an opportunity to leave a comment, or something else. Make it attractive, make it creative, and make it convincing.

QUICK TIP

**Choose one or two
content creation tools
and master them**



photo: Parks Canada/Adam Greenberg

CONTENT DISTRIBUTION CHANNELS

WHAT IS CONTENT DISTRIBUTION?

Content distribution is the means used to promote content you create or that you've curated to targeted online audiences through various channels. There are a number of potential distribution channels to consider when distributing and amplifying your own content. You don't want to get stuck in a continuous content creation cycle and not get it to the right audience.

Not all content distribution channels are equal. Your selection(s) must be informed and, armed with the right data, align with your business strategy, goals, and available resources. One aim is to tap into existing, active audiences to benefit your tourism business. Now that you know your target audience, where do they spend their time online and how do you effectively reach them?

THE HUB AND SPOKE MODEL

As you review possible distribution channels, keep the hub and spoke model in mind. Think about how your channels fit together. Create a content hub and place it in the middle of your distribution map. Adding this hub gives your distribution model some clarity and organization.

What makes a good hub?

A GOOD HUB IS THE PLACE WHERE MOST OF YOUR CONTENT RESIDES. Although some information will be housed elsewhere, a customer should be able to visit your hub and get a good understanding of the type of content you produce.

A GOOD HUB HAS ANALYTICS AND TRACKING AVAILABLE. The more information you can collect about visitors to your hub, the more informed decisions you can make. You should be able to easily identify how many people visited your hub, what they did when they were there, and where they came from.

A GOOD HUB IS A GATEWAY TO CONVERSION. Conversion takes a potential customer who is considering a purchase to a sale. Think back to your content marketing goals and what you're trying to accomplish through your efforts. Your hub should have calls to action and logical next steps for your customers.

A GOOD HUB IS MOBILE FRIENDLY. Many of your customers rely on mobile devices. If your content is housed in a place that is difficult to navigate on a smartphone or tablet, your customers may choose not to continue reading.

DISTRIBUTION CHANNELS

Although content hubs vary based on the needs and strategy of the organization, there are a few common channels that companies turn to. A company website is a popular choice for a content hub. A smaller company with fewer marketing resources may use a Facebook page or YouTube channel as an alternative.

Popular content distribution channels include:



WEBSITE

Websites offer organizations several flexible ways to display content. Tourism websites often contain conversion points like booking engines, ticketing systems, e-newsletter sign up forms, information request forms, and contact information.

- **Pro** – Websites can be customized to fit the needs of the organization.
- **Pro** – There is potential for websites to attract organic traffic (visitors via search engines), through search engines and quality content.
- **Pro** – Many customers see a company website as one of the most trusted forms of information.
- **Con** – Websites can be costly to create and maintain.
- **Con** – Without the proper care and attention, an old or outdated website can quickly become a detriment to your brand.



SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media has quickly become one of the most popular content distribution methods. Each social media channel caters to different audiences that require different strategies to ensure effectiveness. No two social media channels are alike; therefore, they cannot be treated the same.

- **Pro** – Using most social media channels is free.
- **Pro** – Social media sites like Facebook and Instagram lend themselves well to the tourism industry.
- **Pro** – Social media allows brands to reach audience groups that were somewhat unreachable previously.
- **Con** – Social media is a cluttered space filled with content. It's becoming increasingly difficult to organically grow a social media channel without paid advertising.
- **Con** – It's easy to get caught up in social media and overextend your resources. Social media requires a lot of content and many businesses don't have enough to fill their needs. At the same time, not all travellers are on every social channel.



E-NEWSLETTER

E-newsletters are one of the most trusted and effective forms of online communication. Newsletter programs like MailChimp are constantly evolving and are able to provide users with better customer data than ever before.

- **Pro** – Canadian laws are tough on spammers and the e-newsletter sign up process has evolved because of this enforcement. Customers signing up for your e-newsletter are committed to wanting your information.
- **Pro** – Email lists can be segmented according to interests and actions. Segmentation is a great way to target specific groups of people with the type of information they're looking for.
- **Pro** – Email marketing is relatively inexpensive.
- **Con** – Email marketing requires a level of commitment by the business. People sign up to get information from you; if you don't deliver, your subscriber list will slowly deteriorate.
- **Con** – Creating an e-newsletter takes time. Having the content already developed makes the process much easier.



INFLUENCER MARKETING

Influencers are people who have worked to create their own audience network (both online and offline) and are willing to work with brands to help create and distribute content. Working with individuals with established audiences is a great way to get your content to potential customers.

- **Pro** – Tap into new audience groups without having to grow them yourself.
- **Pro** – Influencers are often skilled content creators that can bring new ideas to a brand.
- **Pro** – The pool of influencers is large. Finding the right match for your business is key.
- **Con** – Researching to find the right influencer for your business can take time. Does the influencer's brand match your brand? Does the influencer get excellent social engagement with their fans/followers? Are they genuinely interested in representing your brand?
- **Con** – Depending on the arrangement, influencers often require compensation for content they create and for access to their audience. Negotiating how much compensation they receive can be challenging if you have never worked with an influencer.
- **Con** – Creative differences can occur when you let someone else tell your brand story.



ONLINE ADVERTISING

You pay to create a presence on platforms that potential customers are already using. This could be one of the social media platforms previously mentioned or dedicated platforms specifically for this purpose such as **Google Adwords** or **Bing Ads**. Online advertising often works best by directing customers back to your main content hub.

- **Pro** – You have control over who is exposed to your advertisement. Allows more effective and efficient segmentation and targeting for you to connect to your audience.
- **Pro** – When done right, online advertising is cost-effective and has more trackable results than traditional forms of advertising.
- **Pro** – Very timely. Your online ads can start being delivered to your audience within minutes of making the decision.
- **Pro** – There is a wealth of data resulting from online advertising that can help in future decision making.
- **Con** – There is high competition between businesses to be visible online. In turn, the cost of advertising can increase in the competition for visibility. This varies by platform.
- **Con** – Finding the right balance between budget, platform, and return on investment is challenging.
- **Con** - Steep learning curve if you want to create and implement ads yourself.

THE ALBERTA TOURISM INFORMATION SERVICE (ATIS)

A free digital marketing service provided by Travel Alberta that allows you to easily and effectively promote your tourism products and services.

- **Pro** – The resource is free. There are no barriers to entry for tourism businesses – you simply need to invest the time to get started.
- **Pro** – Exposure to audiences that you may not otherwise be able to access on your own. This includes regional, domestic, and international audiences.
- **Pro** – The ATIS system and Travel Alberta website are highly indexed and are a good way of getting exposure in a crowded digital space. Indexing is the process of adding webpages into Google and other search engines. Highly indexed websites rank well on these search engines and show up high on the search results for various search terms. Any content on ATIS has a good chance of being found.
- **Pro** – As a trusted authority with multiple distribution channels, using Travel Alberta’s reputable platform is a plus for any Alberta tourism business. Your product will appear on the Travel Alberta website among other digital advertising and e-marketing mediums.
- **Pro** – Increases your opportunities to work with a bigger tourism community and resources.

As you add channels to your distribution map, think about how each relates to your hub. This hub should be the place where the majority of your content resides. The spokes are the different marketing mechanisms that help drive traffic to the hub. Not all content needs to drive traffic somewhere else, but your goal is to make your customers more familiar and comfortable with your brand. As you begin to build trust with your customers through your stories and content, the chances of them engaging with you increases dramatically.

QUICK TIP

Use different channels for different types of content. Don’t make it all the same. Give your audience a reason to follow you on several channels.



CONTENT TOOLS

There are many fantastic tools available to help with researching, creating, distributing and measuring your content. The following list includes some of the more popular and accessible tools.

CONTENT CREATION

- **TRAVEL ALBERTA MULTIMEDIA LIBRARY** Full of visual elements that you can use with varying degrees of attribution. Tourism Calgary, Edmonton Tourism, Banff & Lake Louise Tourism, Tourism Jasper, Tourism Red Deer, and other Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) have photo/video libraries and media galleries with images you can use (also with varying degrees of attribution).
- **CANVA** Similar to Photoshop, but much easier to use. Make custom social media images, blog headers, and more using one of the many premade layouts – or start from scratch. The drag and drop feature and the ability to import your own photos means you can create custom graphic designs without background experience in the field. Canva has free and paid subscriptions.
- **LUMEN5** A video creation tool that uses artificial intelligence to turn written blogs into easily digestible “explainer videos”. Videos or slideshows are overlaid with snippets of text that are customizable to your brand. Lumen5 has paid and free subscriptions.
- **FLIXEL** Turn video into stunning cinemagraphs that help bring attention to your graphics. Cinemagraphs are still images with one moving element. Flixel is limited to iOS and macOS. It comes with a free trial, and has a paid plan available if you want to enjoy the full site.
- **GIPHY** GIFs are short pieces of animated or video content that are integrated to social platforms, such as Twitter and Facebook, and can also be embedded into blog posts. You can use GIPHY to turn a series of photos or small bits of videos into GIFs, allowing you to create new content from existing content. GIPHY is free to use.

CONTENT CURATION AND INFLUENCERS

- **NEWSLETTERS** Have you subscribed to Travel Alberta’s e-newsletter? How about your local DMO? Signing up for e-newsletters is one of the simplest ways to find industry-related and shareable content.
- **TRAVEL ALBERTA EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT TEAM** Contact them to obtain ideas and material you could use for your content curation efforts.
- **SOCIALBLADE** A free analytics website that allows you to track statistics and measure growth across multiple social media platforms, including YouTube and Instagram.
- **SOCIALRANK** Analyze and sort your **Instagram** and **Twitter** audiences. Find potential influencers and micro-influencers within your social media community. Simple things such as retweeting relevant material they post could put your business on their radar. A paid Market Intel account allows you to examine any public Instagram or Twitter profile, allowing you to vet potential influencers.
- **TWITTER LISTS** Easily find the latest tweets from accounts you care most about, and group accounts into topics or categories.
- **BUZZSUMO** Develop superior content strategies by tracking and analyzing what content performs best for a topic or industry.
- **KLOUT** Provides a service to research, segment, manage influencer lists, and engage influencers.
- **REDDIT** Often overlooked as a social medium, Reddit offers business owners the chance to discover hyper-local and niche content to curate for their own use and to join in discussions.

DATA AND RESEARCH

- **GOOGLE AUTO-FILL** Google does a lot of the work for you, revealing what search terms people are using with the search engine's auto-fill feature. This handy tool is right at your fingertips.
- **GOOGLE DOCS** Perfect for creating content in various formats such as Word documents and PDFs. Best of all, it's free!
- **GOOGLE TRENDS (EXPLORE TOPICS)** Search and compare Google Search topics and keywords, learning about their search frequency, seasonality and similar keywords that people use across Canada and the world.
- **ONLINE REVIEWS** TripAdvisor, Facebook, Yelp, and beyond. Use reviews to your advantage to create content that answers frequently asked questions, addresses misconceptions about your business, and highlights things that people particularly enjoy about your business.
- **SOCIAL MEDIA SEARCHES** Use in-app search functions on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook to find interesting content about your business, topics you're interested in, and much more. Snapchat's Snapmap can help you find out what people are most "snapping" and sharing publicly while visiting your physical location. This is useful for seeing things your guests love about your business and potential areas of improvement.

TRACKING AND ANALYTICS

- **GOOGLE ANALYTICS** A free tool that is easy to install on your website. Provides information on who the visitors to your website are and what they are doing while visiting.
- **FACEBOOK INSIGHTS AND OTHER SOCIAL MEDIA ANALYTICS** Most social media channels have free analytics that give you insights into your followers.
- **WORDTRACKER AND GOOGLE KEYWORD PLANNER** Helpful in researching keywords in any industry.
- **HOTJAR AND LUCKY ORANGE** Tools to see how people interact with your website and content to gather qualitative data. These tools include heatmaps, funnel tracking, and surveys.
- **GOOGLE ALERTS** Helps you keep track of any mentions of your business name that occur online. With automated emails sent directly to your inbox that highlight the latest industry news, you can continually find new things to talk about.

QUICK TIP

You don't need to be on every platform to maximize your online visibility.



TOOL:
CONTENT MARKETING
ACTION PLAN

QUESTION 1 – OBJECTIVES

What results do you want to achieve from your content marketing?

LIST YOUR TOP THREE RESULTS

QUESTION 2 – STRATEGY:

Who uses your distribution channels, and what are they using them for? (List your top 3).

CHANNEL	TARGET AUDIENCE	WHY DO THEY USE THIS DISTRIBUTION CHANNEL?

QUESTION 3 – STRATEGY:

What topics and types of content work best on these distribution channels for your target audience?

CHANNEL	FEATURED TOPIC(S) AND TYPES OF CONTENT

QUESTION 4 – STRATEGY:

What is the ideal posting frequency?

CHANNEL	HOW MANY TIMES A WEEK WILL YOU POST CONTENT?

QUESTION 5 – CALLS TO ACTION:

What actions do you want your audience to take?

LIST THREE CTAs YOU WANT TO ATTACH TO YOUR CONTENT PIECES

QUESTION 6 – KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPI):

What are you measuring from the above?

LIST TWO KPIS YOU WANT TO MEASURE FROM YOUR CONTENT PIECES

NEXT STEPS – GETTING STARTED

Now that you've learned more about content marketing and the process behind it, it's time to start building your strategy. Using the tools and information in this guide, follow the outline below to begin the process.

1. **CHOOSE YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE** – Look closely at who your customers are and identify those groups of people that you aim to attract with your marketing.
2. **IDENTIFY YOUR CONTENT HUB** – Determine where you would like to send customers to learn more and, ultimately, to purchase your product.
3. **IDENTIFY YOUR CHANNELS** – Based on the needs of your audience, select the distribution channels that best align with them. Don't be afraid to start small. Once you have a better handle on your content creation, you can add other channels as your resources permit.
4. **DEVELOP YOUR MESSAGING** – Identify the messages that you wish to convey to your audience. Be sure to use these messages as underlying focuses of the content that you create.
5. **DETERMINE YOUR MEASUREMENTS** – Based on the goals that you developed, determine what measurements best track what you're trying to achieve.
6. **TELL YOUR STORY** – Every brand has a story. Create content that shares your story and demonstrates how you can provide your visitor with a memorable experience.

Don't be afraid! One of the great things about content marketing is that customers don't expect perfection. Think of it as an ongoing process of telling your story – you'll get better the more you do it, and you can adjust as you go based on what succeeds and what your customers tell you. If you are real and authentic to yourself and your story, your customers will evolve with you.

QUICK TIP

Only take on what you can reasonably handle in your business.



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