



9 Experts on **Rethinking Demand Generation**

Strategically Target Your Content and Lead Generation Campaigns to Disrupt the Status Quo and Facilitate the Sale





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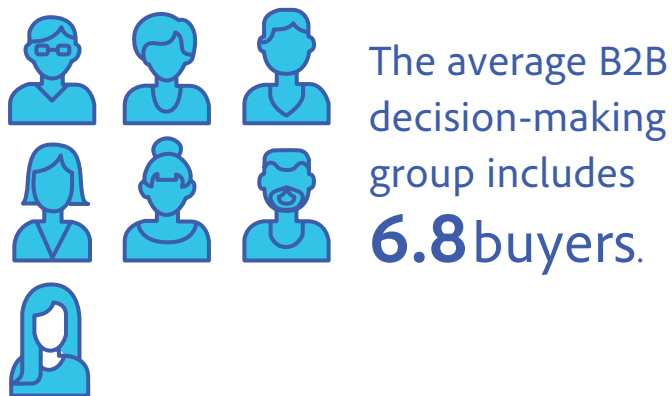
INTRODUCTION – RETHINKING DEMAND GENERATION

Marketing says,

“Sales refuses to follow up on all these leads we’re giving them.” Sales says, “The leads marketing gives us are a waste of time.”

Sound familiar? It should, because these very arguments play out over and over in companies that suffer from slow conversions, bloated sales pipelines, and weak conversion rates. Even though these are familiar challenges that many companies share, most have no idea how to address them. NetLine, one of the world’s top demand generation companies, sees that most of its customers go for the C-Suite leads, but it believes that huge, undertapped potential lies in leads beyond the executive level.

Given how critical quality lead generation is to driving sales, we have partnered with NetLine to dig more deeply into this question. We discovered early on that sales pipelines often fill with prospects that give off positive buying signals but never actually buy anything. Many professionals are simply confirming their own status quo bias. In other words, they actually look for reasons *not* to buy. Sales and marketing people agree that the chances of closing a prospect who plans to make a change are high, while prospects confirming their status quo rarely convert. Unfortunately, most demand gen strategies fail to distinguish between these two types.



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These authoritative and diverse guides provide a full view of a topic. They help you explore, compare, and contrast a variety of viewpoints so that you can determine what will work best for you. Reading a Mighty Guide is kind of like having your own team of experts. Each heartfelt and sincere piece of advice in this guide sits right next to the contributor’s name, biography, and links so that you can learn more about their work. This background information gives you the proper context for each expert’s independent perspective.

Credible advice from top experts helps you make strong decisions. Strong decisions make you mighty.

INTRODUCTION – RETHINKING DEMAND GENERATION

To learn more about identifying and nurturing true high-value prospects, we reached out to nine top experts on demand gen, people who have written books on this topic and pursued innovative demand gen content strategies of their own. This eBook collects essays based on our discussions with these experts and consolidates their insights into fresh approaches to demand gen content creation and lead nurturing. The book is structured in two parts:

Part 1. Content That Converts. The experts explain how to use disruptive content to sell change. If customers aren't ready for change, they will not buy. The experts also discuss how to design demand gen content to support the kind of collaborative buying that dominates today's markets.

Part 2. Lead Gen and Nurturing Strategies. The experts explain how to market beyond the C-Suite, which is critical because non-C-Suite employees have twice the influence on buying decisions as their C-Suite bosses. The experts also show how to identify the most valuable leads in the decision-making group.

These essays show that nurturing key people in the buying group—the Mobilizers—requires new content tools, different messaging strategies, and new lead nurturing methods. They offer practical advice and actions you can take to improve your demand gen game. If you're interested in capturing high-value leads—not to mention improving relations between sales and marketing—you will appreciate what you find here.



All the best,
David Rogelberg
Publisher,
Mighty Guides, Inc.

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FOREWORD – RETHINKING DEMAND GENERATION

In my twenty plus years of experience working with organizations worldwide on lead generation programs, challenging the status quo to sell change within any organization is a high hurdle. Furthermore, the mindset necessary to create 'change driving content' is a massive pivot away from the marketing laurels of selling values, benefits, and solutions. To challenge the status quo, you must think differently and this eBook beautifully outlines multiple perspectives to aid in redefining your approach. It's no longer just about selling 'the dream' but also 'how to avoid failure and loss'. While these concepts are extremely logical, they're still very difficult for marketers to apply...which is why very few do today.

In demand generation, challenging the status quo isn't just about creating content that converts, it's about reaching the change makers. The majority of marketers immediately isolate and target the C-suite, unfortunately professionals at this level are not the individuals researching solutions, proposing changes, and selecting vendors. Yes, the C-suite signs on the dotted line but they aren't the mobilizers within an organization and they certainly aren't the majority. You risk obtaining deep influence within organizations by only targeting the one percent.

This eBook will completely change the way you think and approach demand generation. I highly recommend sharing the eBook with B2B marketers, executives, and sales teams seeking more won opportunities this year.



Regards,

ROBERT ALVIN

CEO AND FOUNDER, NETLINE CORPORATION

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Disrupt The Status Quo With Real Thought Leadership

70% of thought leadership content is ignored - especially by the C-suite. But why? It's generic, lacks original ideas, and seems untrustworthy. That's why companies partner with us. We gather best practices and insights from top experts to create credible and insightful thought leadership — the kind that drives change.



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DEMAND GEN CONTENT MUST SELL CHANGE



BRENT ADAMSON

Principal Executive Advisor,
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Brent Adamson is a principal executive advisor at CEB (now Gartner) and a sought-after speaker and facilitator. He has more than 20 years of experience as a researcher, teacher, and trainer in sales, marketing, and customer service. He is the co-author of the *The Challenger Sale: Taking Control of the Customer Conversation* and the newly released *The Challenger Customer: Selling to the Hidden Influencer Who Can Multiply Your Results*.



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Many emotional and rational factors contribute to a buyer's decision to buy, but none of them will prevail if the buyer is not ready to make a change. The science of decision making shows that people are more motivated to change to escape a loss than to seek a gain. Compared with the status quo, disruptions associated with a possible gain seem riskier. Successful demand generation content must make the status quo seem riskier than not acting to avoid an imminent loss.

Good salespeople instinctively understand these principles, but content marketers often fail to apply them to demand generation content creation. Brent Adamson describes three fundamental flaws he finds in such content:

Flaw 1: The tendency to talk about oneself. A great deal of the demand generation content produced today focuses on the supplier—its features, its benefits, how much better its solutions will make the lives of those who adopt them. Adamson explains, “We live in a world where it’s hard for companies to differentiate themselves from their competition. Customers say, ‘Yeah, we love your solution, but the other company has a good solution, too, and it’s cheaper.’” Of course, the natural reaction among marketers is to think, “Those people just don’t get us. If they understood our value, they would see that we’re worth the higher price.” Marketers work harder to convince customers how much better their organization’s products are. The result, says Adamson, is “an inexorable gravitational force that pulls you into talking more about yourself.” Based on decision science, content that overstresses value and benefits employs the argument least likely to motivate someone to make a change. >>>



*In business, we're taught that the customer is always right
But, what if the customer is wrong?*



DEMAND GEN CONTENT MUST SELL CHANGE

Flaw 2: Assuming that the customer is right, and then telling the customer what he or she wants to hear. Adamson says, “In the business world, we’re taught that the customer is always right. We ask our customers what they need and what they want, and whatever they need and want should be what we deliver. We create language, messages, stories, and ideas in the customers’ vernacular that tie to their concerns and build from their priorities. But, what if the customer is wrong?” Simply asking customers what they want is not a good starting point for a quality conversation that’s ultimately designed to help them because they may not know what they really need. You have to show that what they really need is the unique thing you have to offer.

Flaw 3: Too much focus on the new idea. Most demand generation messages center on the new idea, the new solution, the new approach. Adamson says, “When you do that well, you actually get your customer to believe that you’re right, that he or she should do it, that it’s better. In fact, the customer totally agrees with you. You see people downloading, clicking, sharing, and you think you’ve won. Then, you wonder why sales can’t close the deal.” At the end of the day, the purpose of demand generation and sales is not to get people to like an idea, it’s to get people to buy a solution. To do that, people must make a change. >>>



If the pain of change outweighs the pain of same, prospects stick with their status quo. You must tip the scale the other way.

DEMAND GEN CONTENT MUST SELL CHANGE

To buy a solution, people must first believe that they need to make a change. Adamson says, "If you think about it, we're all trying to get our customers to change their behavior." So, demand generation content must first demonstrate the need for change, which means talking less about what your customer *could be* doing and more about what your customer *is* doing. "Instead, talk about what your customers are currently doing and how that behavior exposes them to cost or risk or missed opportunities in ways they haven't fully appreciated," Adamson says. "Demand generation content must be a story about what the customer is currently doing, with the goal of opening that customer to change."

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Talk about what your customers are currently doing and how that behavior exposes them to cost or risk or missed opportunities in ways they haven't fully appreciated.
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KEY POINTS

- 1 Often, people perceive making a change for a potential gain as riskier than continuing the status quo. But, continuing with the status quo can be riskier than making a change to avoid a known loss.
- 2 The potential for loss is more likely to convert a sale than the potential for gain.
- 3 To buy a solution, people first must believe that they need to make a change.
- 4 Customers don't always know what they need; starting a conversation by asking what the customer wants may be harmful to driving change.

TEARING DOWN THE STATUS QUO



DAVID ROGELBERG

Publisher,
Mighty Guides

David Rogelberg is the founder of Studio B—the first content marketing agency—which since 1995 has created content programs for technology companies like IBM, Ziff Davis, Microsoft, and Intel and has appeared on the Inc. 500 list twice. David also founded Mighty Guides, the first social publishing company, which publishes sponsored eBooks that generate demand and promote thought leadership. Before founding Studio B and Mighty Guides, David was a publisher at Simon & Schuster, where he produced numerous best sellers on technology topics.



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People generally hate change. Change creates risk and uncertainty, and it usually requires work—the very things people try to avoid. Behavioral economics has a name for this phenomenon; *the status quo bias*. We prefer to stick with things we know, and we fear the risks that change can bring. In fact, people typically prefer the status quo 60 percent of the time, even when the reason for the change is perfectly rational.

To better understand just how strong this bias is, research from Kahneman and Tversky (1979) suggests that people want to avoid pain twice as much as they want the pleasure they'll receive from a reward. In other words, they suggest that a person feels twice as much pain from losing \$100 as he or she would pleasure from gaining \$100.

Most marketers produce content that focuses on the pleasure a customer would gain by using their company's solution and completely avoids talking about the pain of sticking with the status quo, which is a more powerful motivator. According to CEB, a Gartner company that has conducted groundbreaking research in this area, companies should focus 60 percent of their content on why companies should make a change from their status quo. >>>



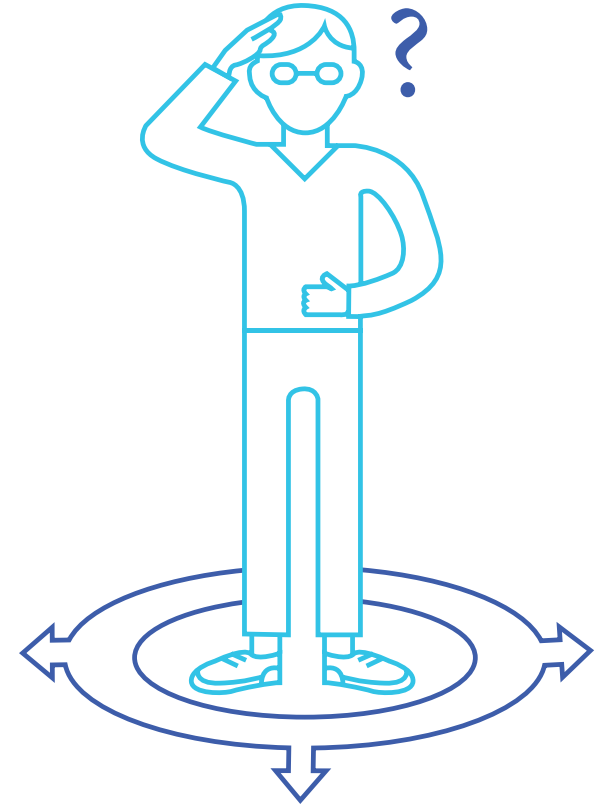
To get people to make a change, you first have to make them realize the unbearable costs and risks associated with doing nothing.



TEARING DOWN THE STATUS QUO

Here are seven tactics to disrupt prospects' status quo:

1. Reframe the prospects' thinking by giving them relevant business insight that challenges them to view their status quo in a new way.
2. Get prospects to take a virtual test drive of your concept to build their understanding of the loss they will experience by not making a change.
3. Create change stories that focus on situations behind which multiple stakeholders can rally rather than individual stories for each person.
4. Create content that brings prospects directly back to you and you alone.
5. Answer the tough "what change costs" questions openly, honestly, and in an authentic way that your prospects can relate to personally. Skeptics will be your biggest influencer if you can win them over.
6. Your demand generation content must create, empower, and identify Mobilizers.
7. Help Mobilizers and buy-decision stakeholders talk to each other.



60% of qualified deals end up with no decision.

TEARING DOWN THE STATUS QUO

To get people to make a change, you first have to make them realize the unbearable costs and risks associated with doing nothing. You must convince them that the “pain of same” is greater than the “pain of change.” To do this, you must understand your prospects’ perception of what they are currently doing and why to be able to distinguish your solution as less risky. Your content must break down your prospects’ current strategy and compare it with a new strategy that makes your solution look safer.

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KEY POINTS

- 1 People work hard to avoid instability and risk. You must convince them that not all risk is bad, that some change can produce amazing results.
- 2 To increase the likelihood of overturning the status quo, work to facilitate communication among those who push for change and those who will pay for that change.
- 3 Convince your prospects that refusing to change can have the same or even a greater impact than the change they want to avoid.

FIND YOUR DISRUPTIVE STORY



TIM RIESTERER

Chief Strategy and
Marketing Officer,
Corporate Visions

Tim Riesterer is Chief Strategy and Research Officer at Corporate Visions. In that role, he sets the direction and develops products for the company. His books, *Conversations That Win the Complex Sale* and *The Three Value Conversations*, focus on improving market-ready messages, content and skills that marketers and salespeople can use to win more deals.



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For marketers, one of the toughest challenges is breaking the status quo bias that persists at companies everywhere. Overcoming that challenge requires a disruption of the status quo. Demand generation content can play a key role in overcoming this bias, but it often fails to deliver the needed disruption. In fact, marketing messages too often serve only to strengthen status quo bias. “The reasons why people stick with the status quo are well known,” says Tim Riesterer, an expert in helping companies find their stories. “Demand gen messaging must deliberately address the causes of status quo thinking.”

Riesterer lists four reasons why people stick with the status quo:

1. **People prefer to keep their current preferences stable.** To overcome their mindset, you must destabilize their preferences. “You have to introduce uncertainty into their preferences before they’re even open to persuasion,” Riesterer says.
2. **Perceived cost of change.** People believe that their status quo is free because it’s already factored into their budget. They think that change must come with all kinds of costs—in the form of money, resources, and added stress just to get a consensus decision. Riesterer says, “You have to tell a story that shows the high cost of staying the same. People usually skip that and go right to return on investment or total cost of ownership. If you’re selling against something the customer believes is free, though, those benefits mean nothing.” >>>



Demand gen messaging must deliberately address the causes of status quo thinking.



FIND YOUR DISRUPTIVE STORY

- 3. Selection difficulty.** When solution providers are all selling against what people are doing today, their pitches start to sound the same. Making a choice becomes difficult. “Your story must emphasize the contrast between what’s being done today and what you’re offering for tomorrow,” says Riesterer.
- 4. Anticipated regret and blame for a decision.** Buyers are afraid of being blamed for a decision that goes bad or results in unexpected complications and second-guessing. They need to know that somebody else had success before them—somebody like them who started in a similar state and moved to the future state successfully.

To defeat status quo thinking, begin by moving beyond “voice of the customer” research. When everybody is identifying a similar set of needs and concerns among prospects, the result is a similar portfolio of solutions. Riesterer says, “If everybody is answering the same needs with a similar set of solutions, the customer doesn’t see enough contrast. Even though you’ve identified problems, they are problems the customer already knows about because they’ve already told you. You’re simply confirming what they already know. Your message is not disruptive enough to dislodge the status quo.”

To get beyond voice of the customer, introduce unconsidered needs—that is, needs, problems, challenges, and missed opportunities that customers haven’t identified and that you can relate to the unique qualities of your offering. By introducing unconsidered needs, you



Create **UNCERTAINTY** around **UNCONSIDERED** needs. Show the **HIGH COST** of **NOT** addressing those needs.

FIND YOUR DISRUPTIVE STORY

also introduce uncertainty about the status quo and the possibility that they missed something important. “You need both uniqueness and uncertainty in your message,” says Riesterer. “*Uniqueness* means that you’re saying something different from everyone else; *uncertainty* is about unconsidered needs, which are the things that will disrupt what they’re currently doing.”

Unconsidered needs must prove the argument you make about the high cost of not making a change; they must map directly to the valuable capabilities of your solution. So, how do you build those special unconsidered needs into your story? First, you cannot introduce unconsidered needs that your solution doesn’t address. If you introduce risk and uncertainty without a solution to them, you will only make the customer angry. Similarly, you can’t introduce your unique capabilities as value-added features beyond the core features that your product (and everyone else’s) has. Riesterer says, “Customers don’t see value-added features as adding value. They see them as adding cost and complexity.” Of course, these very elements make your offering unique.

You must begin with some reverse-engineering to map your product’s unique features to customer needs. Then, build your story backwards to introduce uncertainty about those unconsidered needs—a story supported by data showing the size, speed, and high cost of these



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Uniqueness means that you're saying something different from everyone else; uncertainty is about unconsidered needs, which are the things that will disrupt what they're currently doing.

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FIND YOUR DISRUPTIVE STORY

problems about which the prospect may be completely unaware and ill-equipped to handle. Then, show how your product addresses that problem in a unique way, how different and improved the prospect's operation will be with your product implemented, and how other, similar businesses have succeeded with your solution.

"You have to lead with disruption," Riesterer explains. "If you lead with things they already know, their brain locks in that certainty, and you'll have a difficult time dislodging it. For the most persuasive impact, first show them the unconsidered thing, the thing they didn't know."

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For the most persuasive impact, first show them the unconsidered thing, the thing they didn't know.

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KEY POINTS

- 1** To defeat status quo thinking, you must move beyond “voice of the customer” research.
- 2** Unconsidered needs must prove the argument you make about the high cost of not making a change; map these needs directly to valuable capabilities of your solution.
- 3** Introduce uncertainty about unconsidered needs—a story that shows the size, speed, and high cost of these problems about which the prospect may be completely unaware and ill-equipped to handle.

FOCUS ON SITUATIONS, NOT PERSONAS



TIM RIESTERER

Chief Strategy and
Marketing Officer,
Corporate Visions

Tim Riesterer is Chief Strategy and Research Officer at Corporate Visions. In that role, he sets the direction and develops products for the company. His books, *Conversations That Win the Complex Sale* and *The Three Value Conversations*, focus on improving market-ready messages, content and skills that marketers and salespeople can use to win more deals.



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Marketers often use persona messaging to tailor stories to the needs of actors in a purchase decision. Unfortunately, this approach misses a key point—namely, that situation more strongly drives change than the personas of individual stakeholders.

Consider this example. If you're trying to sell a new marketing automation solution to an organization, you approach the chief marketing officer (CMO) or chief information officer, the marketing operations leader, and maybe someone with a financial perspective. You create different stories for each role's needs. Will this company change because you're saying different things to different people?

Tim Riesterer says, "There's a theory in behavioral economics called *fundamental attribution error* that says we overestimate people's disposition based on their behavior and underestimate the power of their situation. The reality is that a person's situation more strongly drives his or her decisions than the person's disposition." In the case of the marketing automation solution example, Riesterer says, "You can write a story aimed at the CMO illustrating how your solution can improve the CMO's marketing return on investment (ROI), but that CMO won't change just because you talk about ROI: The CMO changes because his or her current situation prevents the company from getting to that ROI."

In a situation messaging strategy, you reach out to the five or six people in a buying group with two or three situation messages that map to their unconsidered needs and your unique values. Then, people say, "That's our situation!" All six of those people you're



That CMO won't change just because you talk about ROI: The CMO changes because his or her current situation prevents the company from getting to that ROI.



FOCUS ON SITUATIONS, NOT PERSONAS

targeting discover that they live with the same situation. Riesterer says, “Everyone involved in a buying decision shares the indignities of a bad business situation.”

This idea becomes the basis for far more effective demand generation marketing. In persona-based messaging, if you build all the content you need for each persona and all the content you need for every stage of the buying cycle, you have a ton of content. That ton of content generates leads, but a salesperson can only handle so many of those leads. Which leads should the salesperson choose? How does the salesperson know what triggered that lead? You’ve given that salesperson a complex set of leads challenging for him or her to navigate. “Between maintaining all that content and navigating the persona-based leads, you’ve created an unsustainable process,” says Riesterer.

With situation messaging that focuses on a few critical situations that affect everyone in the organization, you reduce the volume of content you must create and maintain. At the same time, situation-based content filters the leads because people respond to the business situations. The salesperson knows that the business situation triggered a person’s interest regardless of his or her job title.



KEY POINTS

- 1 If you build all the content you need for each persona and all the content you need for every stage of the buying cycle, you will create an unstable lead nurturing process.
- 2 Content that focuses on those few critical situations that affect everyone in the organization allows you to reduce the volume of content you need and use that content to filter leads.

DEMAND GEN CONTENT MUST RECOGNIZE THE MANY VOICES IN A BUYING DECISION



BABETTE TEN HAKEN

Founder and President,
Sales Aerobics for Engineers

Babette Ten Haken is a STEM-trained corporate strategist, Voice of the Customer storyteller, speaker, and facilitator. Her focus? How collaboration revolutionizes and humanizes the industrial Internet of Things value chain. She translates as well as bridges the conceptual and conversational gaps between cross-functional stakeholders throughout an organization. The results? Increased customer loyalty, customer success, and customer retention. Babette's playbook of team collaboration hacks, *Do YOU Mean Business?* is available on Amazon.



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Today's business-to-business buying decisions are group activities, and a critical part of the decision process is storytelling. Just as people once gathered around the campfire to share stories about what they had seen and heard, today's decision influencers sit around the table to share their views on matters related to a purchase. "People constantly gain insights from each other," says Babette Ten Haken, a management strategist. "And every company has its own unique anthropology."

Ten Haken finds that the various people in an organization often tell you the same things, but in different ways. If you speak to people long enough, eventually they will tell you their story. In any organization, a continuum of stories exists in the workforce, ready for you to discover.

What does this continuum have to do with demand generation? It goes to the heart of why a decision maker reads your content or listens to what you have to say. For decision makers to listen, they must see or hear stories that mean something to them, that "speak directly" to them and their own stories.

"People do business with people they trust. Decision makers cannot trust you if they do not understand what you're saying," Ten Haken explains. For demand generation content to reach and influence decision makers, it must tell stories relevant to the different interests and perspectives of the people involved in the decision. >>>



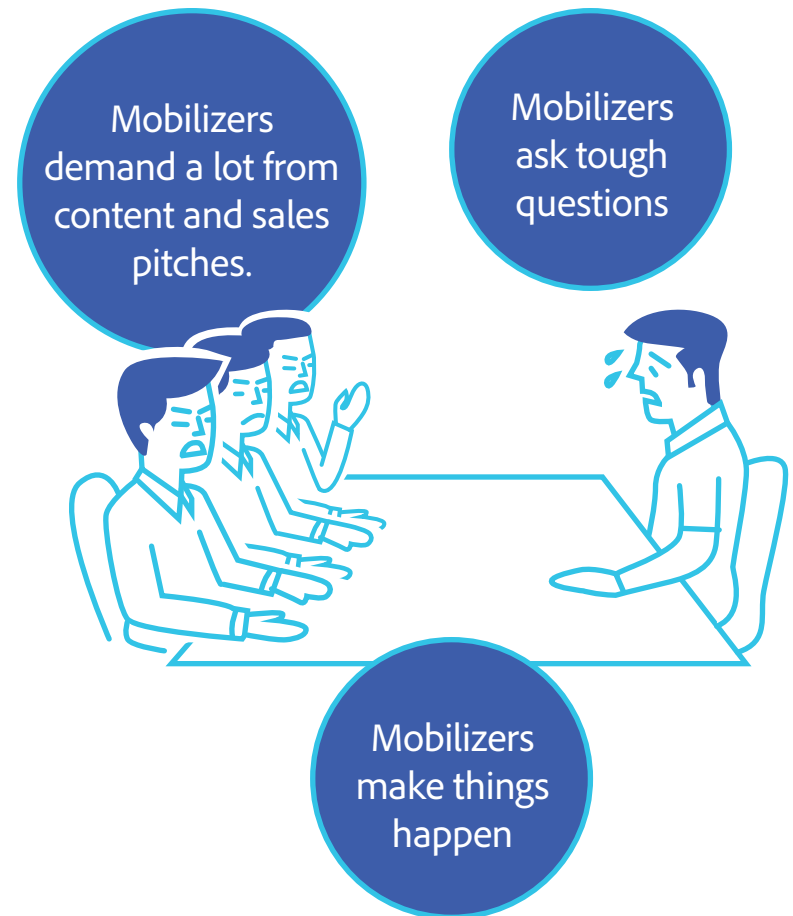
People constantly gain insights from each other . . . and every company has its own anthropology.



DEMAND GEN CONTENT MUST RECOGNIZE THE MANY VOICES IN A BUYING DECISION

Marketers can use three strategies to apply this multivoice approach when creating compelling demand generation content:

1. **Break big, complex messages into smaller pieces.** Ten Haken says, “I recommend building a demand generation strategy based on line-of-business value, broken into bite-sized, actionable chunks.” This strategy not only makes messages and content more digestible but also makes it easier for influencers to find the specific messages most important to them. As a result, decision makers can more easily identify with your products and services. “When you provide many little pieces of information, decision makers unconsciously begin to accept pieces of your argument earlier in the buying cycle,” says Ten Haken.
2. **Answer the tough questions first.** Marketing and salespeople want to avoid impediments to closing a deal, so they marginalize objections and treat them as technical details to resolve after the sale. However, avoiding those issues only serves to fuel objections and skepticism. “When you create demand generation content, ask yourself questions a skeptic would ask,” says Ten Haken. “Decision makers want you to be brutally honest about your story, including the risks and implementation pains they can expect. If you make your pitch sound lovely and easy and everybody’s going to be happy, nobody’s going to believe that.” By addressing difficult questions early, decision makers and influencers become receptive to your broader value messages and walk away with arguments they can use to defuse skeptics in their own organization. >>>



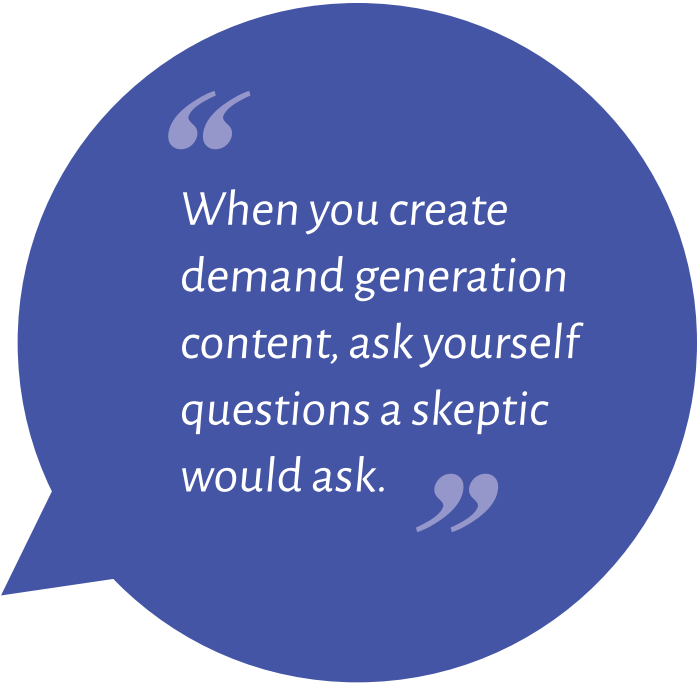
Answer the tough questions honestly, credibly, and in an authentic way customers can relate to personally

DEMAND GEN CONTENT MUST RECOGNIZE THE MANY VOICES IN A BUYING DECISION

3. **Make your demand generation content human.** Ten Haken says, “Expert content creators try to avoid making certain selling points sound obvious. Instead, they leverage content that humanizes those points in ways that connect with end users, including people on the plant floor and loading dock all the way to people in the C-suite. This demand generation strategy allows decision makers and influencers to see themselves in the context of the story being told. That’s when they start to buy into the story.”

When leveraging a demand generation strategy, marketing and sales must overcome the inertia of status quo decision making, which is simply to make no decision at all. Perhaps your messaging fails to speak to influencers in a way that connects or that they understand personally. Perhaps it fails to address the issues most important to decision makers.

“Sometimes, those influencers’ concerns may seem minor from the perspective of what you want to sell, but in reality, those concerns matter most,” says Ten Haken. Only by speaking to all the influencer voices can a demand generation strategy identify the elements most important to buyers, enabling them to sit around the table and reach their own consensus.



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DEMAND GEN CONTENT MUST RECOGNIZE THE MANY VOICES IN A BUYING DECISION

Ten Haken says, "It's up to good marketers and sellers to discover the issues important to decision makers and address them early and often. Don't be afraid to rock the boat. That's what a compelling and innovative demand generation strategy does."

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When you provide many little pieces of relevant information, decision makers unconsciously begin to accept pieces of your argument earlier in the buying cycle.

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KEY POINTS

- 1** For demand generation content to reach and influence a team of decision makers, it must tell stories relevant to the interests and perspectives of people involved in the decision.
- 2** Answer tough questions often and early. Avoiding those issues only serves to fuel objections and skepticism which can stall or derail a decision.
- 3** Status quo decision making, which is to make no decision at all, often happens when content fails to address issues important to influencers.

THE MAKING OF A CHAMPION



SAMANTHA STONE

Founder and CMO,

The Marketing Advisory Network

Samantha Stone, author of *Unleash Possible: A Marketing Playbook That Drives Sales*, is a revenue catalyst who helps unleash the possible in organizations that have complex selling processes. She's a fast-growth, B2B marketing junkie, researcher, speaker, consultant, and persona coach who has also managed to find time to raise four boys with her husband, David. In 2012, she founded The Marketing Advisory Network to help savvy business leaders unleash the possible within their enterprises.



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Businesses spend a lot of money marketing to the C-Suite. The logic behind this strategy is compelling: It's relatively easy to identify C-level executives, and in most cases, they have the final sign-off. Why bother going down the ladder if you can go straight to the top?

It's a nice idea, but the C-Suite strategy has a flaw, as Samantha Stone details in her book *Unleash Possible: A Marketing Playbook That Drives Sales*—namely, most significant business-to-business buy decisions are collaborative and involve many decision makers and influencers. In most organizations, the primary purchasing role of C-level executives, beyond final sign-off, is to signal, “Yes, I agree with you that that that need exists,” and then step back to allow their teams to evaluate, ask the tough questions, and develop a business justification for the best solution. “When we focus all of our attention on a C-level executive, we’re missing the opportunity to understand how buyers actually use, evaluate, and buy products and services like ours,” Stone explains. “It’s also a complete mismatch for how most C-level executives actually operate.”

Stone believes that an effective demand generation strategy must reach the broader team of decision makers and, more specifically, reveal the champions in that group. The *champions* are the strongest influencers, the people who see the value of making a change and are willing to persuade others that it's the right one. “The champion is not just someone who likes us,” says Stone. “The champion has to be the person who can actually influence the process within his or her own organization.” To accomplish these objectives, a demand generation strategy must: >>>



The champion is not just someone who likes us. . . . The champion has to be the person who can actually influence the process within his or her own organization.



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THE MAKING OF A CHAMPION

- **Target all decision makers and influencers in the buying process.**
Anyone on the decision team can become the champion during the course of a decision cycle.
- **Provide content that enables the champion to rise up, choose you, and make the factual case that persuades others in the group.**
To do that, the content must provide a compelling argument for change. If the solution has users altering the way they work, the content must also show why making that change is a good thing. Stone says, "When buying decisions that don't involve a lot of money become stalled it's often because the solution requires a business or workflow change. Selling that product or service requires helping the champion walk the organization through why we want them to work differently, and they have to believe the benefits far outweigh the effort. Return on investment alone is not always sufficient."

The content that's most valuable to influencers and champions isn't likely to attract a C-level audience. Stone explains, "Most of the time, the C-Suite person is not out there making detailed vendor comparisons. That executive won't fill out a self-assessment quiz or download an RFP template. The C-Suite is more likely to download vision and thought leadership pieces, but such content is of little use to champions and other decision influencers. As marketers, we need to make both types of assets available to the right people, at the right time. Throwing everything out there and hoping buyers will sort out what they need is a formula for inefficiency and failure." >>>

34% report buying groups increased in size year-over-year

Average B2B decision-making group includes **6.8** buyers



Demand gen content needs to help Mobilizers and all buy-decision stakeholders talk to each other.

THE MAKING OF A CHAMPION

By providing insights and stories that help the buying group get on the same page and work towards solving a particular business problem, the champion can unify all of the stakeholders around a particular concept. If you subsequently provide the buying committee with tools to help them work together to make a good decision, your salespeople have a much greater chance of closing the sale.

“

Most of the time, the C-suite person is not out there doing detailed vendor comparisons. They're not going to fill out a self-assessment quiz, or download an RFP template.

”

KEY POINTS

- 1** In most organizations, the primary purchasing role of C-level executives is signaling that a need exists, and then stepping back so that the team can ask tough questions and develop a business justification.
- 2** Champions work to drive change for the benefit of the company. They're not necessarily your champion.
- 3** It's important to recognize that that content most valuable to influencers and champions isn't the content that will attract a C-level audience.

CREATE, IDENTIFY, AND ENABLE MOBILIZERS



PAM BOIROS

Principal and Consultant,
Bridge Marketing Advisors

Pam Boiros is the principal of Bridge Marketing Advisors, a firm that specializes in strategic marketing for software and service providers of corporate learning and human resources technology. Pam started her career with eLearning pioneer Skillsoft in 2001, serving as vice president, Global Corporate Marketing, from 2012 to 2016. This role encompassed company messaging, communications, user conferences and events, demand generation, brand awareness, and analyst relations. Pam has a B.S. in business administration from Northeastern University and an MBA from Babson College.



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The key to consensus selling in a collaborative buying situation is gaining the mind share of a Mobilizer. The Mobilizer is the one person in the group who takes the lead, asking questions, finding answers, and mobilizing the group to make the decision to purchase. But, as Pam Boiros so aptly points out, “Nobody has ‘Mobilizer’ in his or her job title. You can spot Mobilizers easily in meetings, but it can be difficult to identify them through a demand generation content strategy. Sometimes, you must create Mobilizers.”

Create Mobilizers? It happens more often than marketing and sales teams realize. Mobilizers typically self-identify when they take on the role of problem solver or solution finder. Even when it becomes their personal mission, however, Mobilizers often don’t see themselves as Mobilizers. So, to create Mobilizers, marketers must provide these people with the information they need to fulfill that role. Boiros says, “Mobilizers get excited about being the person who drives a learning culture in the organization. They like helping others be the best they can be and bring their best selves to work.”

Mobilizers have other characteristics, as well. “They have the interest and the passion, even if their job title is more junior,” says Boiros. “Many millennials step into that role, especially when companies are purchasing technology.” However, whether you’re looking for Mobilizers or creating them, these people all have one thing in common with each other and with everyone else in the buying group: They all need to arrive at the same decision at the same time. At the end of the day, make sure that all those different stakeholders, led by the Mobilizer, decide that they want your company’s solution. If winning over a Mobilizer is essential to a successful sale, the information you use to gain that person’s support is information that the rest of the decision makers need, as well. So, what kind of information is that? >>>



Nobody has “Mobilizer” in his or her job title.



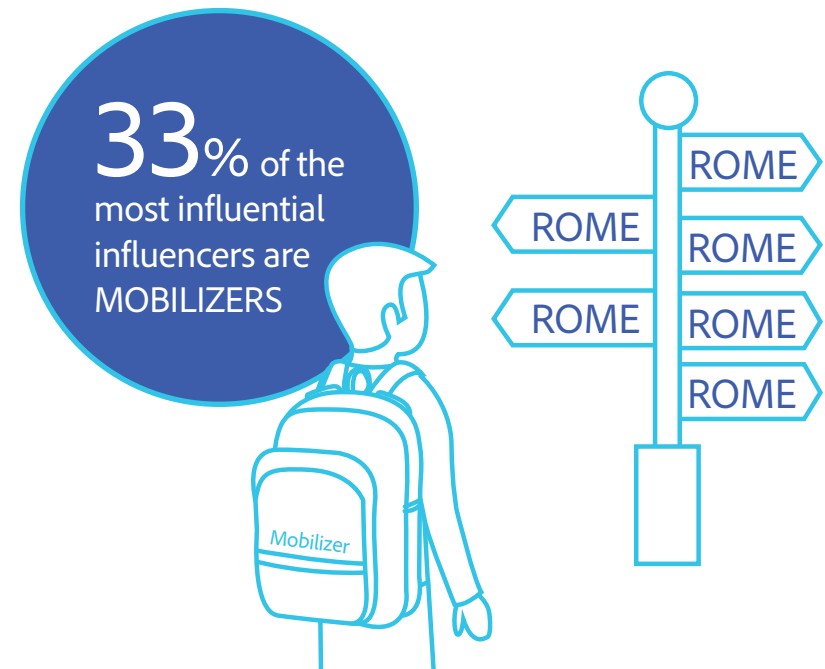
CREATE, IDENTIFY, AND ENABLE MOBILIZERS

First, content that captures the attention of Mobilizers must be engaging and authentic. Boiros explains, “Rather than outlining the features and benefits of your widget, content must illustrate why a customer does what it does. That’s what mobilizes the Mobilizers.” Content must do more than that, though. The buying group is typically dysfunctional in the sense that it consists of people with different interests and perspectives, like management, finance, technical people, and end users. The Mobilizer can’t mobilize without the information all those people need to arrive at a consensus. “If you can equip Mobilizers with your information in a transparent way so that they know what others on their team are thinking and can anticipate their questions, Mobilizers will begin to mobilize others internally,” says Boiros. “The last thing you want is for a Mobilizer to be stumped over a question from the buying team.”

“Mobilizers get excited about being the person who drives a learning culture in the organization. They like helping others be the best they can be and bring their best selves to work.”



Create a focused set of a content that leads customers back to you - and you alone.



Mobilizers Want:

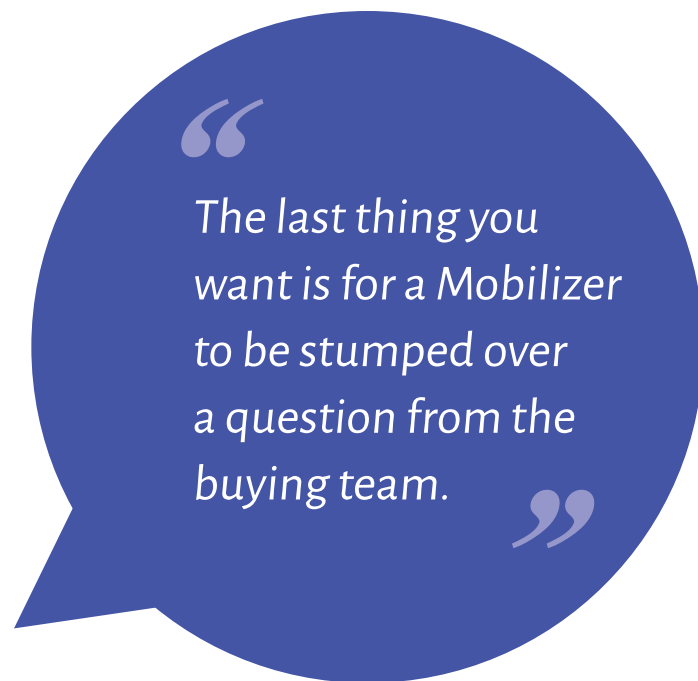
- Commercial insights that challenge the way they do business
- Answers to tough questions

CREATE, IDENTIFY, AND ENABLE MOBILIZERS

People gravitate to content that makes them internal Mobilizers. You need a strategy for creating content that not only draws Mobilizers in but also enables you to identify Mobilizers by the way they engage with your content. To do this, create many small pieces of content that act as a breadcrumb trail of answers leading to the big picture.

Boiros explains the strategy this way: “You don’t need to build 100 different content pieces. Build one big parent asset, like a Mobilizer toolkit, and then generate derivatives by atomizing the heck out of it. Create the derivative pieces in different formats, like blogs and videos and checklists and articles. Always make those smaller pieces point back to the parent asset for the full picture.” In this way, over time you answer more and more questions and build the expectation that you’re showing people something that’s worth their time.

This content array can also help identify Mobilizers. Boiros says, “Mobilizers reveal themselves by the volume of content they look at, the number of times they come back, and whether they engage more intensively, such as joining chat sessions or attending a webinar.”



KEY POINTS

- 1** To create Mobilizers, marketers must give those people the information they need to fulfill the role.
- 2** Winning over a Mobilizer is essential to a successful sale, but the information you use to win that person over is the same information the rest of the decision makers need.
- 3** Content that captures the attention of Mobilizers must be engaging and illustrate why the customer does what it does.

CONTENT TYPES THAT DISRUPT THE STATUS QUO



DAVID ROGELBERG

Publisher,
Mighty Guides

David Rogelberg is the founder of Studio B—the first content marketing agency—which since 1995 has created content programs for technology companies like IBM, Ziff Davis, Microsoft, and Intel and has appeared on the Inc. 500 list twice. David also founded Mighty Guides, the first social publishing company, which publishes sponsored eBooks that generate demand and promote thought leadership. Before founding Studio B and Mighty Guides, David was a publisher at Simon & Schuster, where he produced numerous best sellers on technology topics.



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Breaking the status quo and changing a prospect's mindset requires a different kind of content. It requires disrupter content. Disrupter content focuses on your prospects—their problems, their costs, their lost opportunities—rather than on you and your solutions. More than anything, you must create supplier-agnostic content. Here are four kinds of content that you can use to disrupt prospects' status quo.

Business Insight Story

Business insight isn't the same as *thought leadership*. Thought leadership presents interesting information and teaches new perspectives. It makes *you* look smart, but that's all it does. Business insight stories are designed to challenge a prospect's current mindset, to get that prospect to look at the status quo in a completely new way and see what wasn't obvious before. Ideally, with this new way of thinking, the prospect will take a virtual test drive of your insight in his or her specific situation and discover the unique value you're offering. Most importantly, if you share just the right business insight, you can reframe a prospect's thinking so that you're the only logical choice, even in a crowded market. >>>



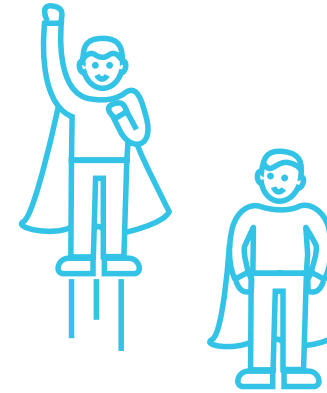
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CONTENT TYPES THAT DISRUPT THE STATUS QUO

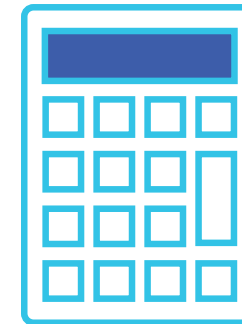
Hero Stories from People Just Like Them

Social proof from like-minded executives who have rethought their status quo based on business insight gives prospects an authentic understanding of why their status quo must change. This proof instills the confidence people need to rally their team and begin the change process. These stories must be authentic and product agnostic.



Calculators

An online tool that analyzes the real costs of the status quo relative to the framework you are presenting helps people see in concrete terms the actual cost of not doing anything about their problem. Using such calculators, prospects can enter a few parameters from their operation and receive immediate cost or other information. Not only do calculators provide an excellent vehicle for delivering information that disrupts status quo bias, but the way people engage with them can be an indicator of their quality as a prospect.



Mobilizer Toolkits

Large purchases are rarely made by one person. Multiple stakeholders have to rally around the concept of making a change, which means that the group must be able to talk to each other about the problem in a context that makes sense for all participants. First, a Mobilizer (or Mobilizers) must emerge—the person who wants to drive change and will work to bring all the parties together to talk it through. The problem is that Mobilizers don't always know what the other



CONTENT TYPES THAT DISRUPT THE STATUS QUO

stakeholders care about. So, although the other stakeholders may be interested in solving a particular problem, the Mobilizer needs to be able to speak to the other stakeholders in their own language. A Mobilizer toolkit provides information the Mobilizer needs to speak to finance in terms finance will understand as well as to other functional groups involved in the buying committee (e.g., marketing, sales, customer service, IT). Mobilizer toolkits facilitate discussion among members of the buying group and ultimately improve decision making.

Disrupter content drives revenue, shortens sales cycles, and makes your sales reps far more effective. From a lead nurturing perspective, when a prospect engages with this kind of content, your confidence level in this prospect's sales readiness will soar. By focusing your marketing efforts on helping prospects abandon the status quo and providing sales with truly qualified leads rather than suspects, all your metrics will improve.

“By focusing your marketing efforts on helping prospects abandon the status quo and providing sales with truly qualified leads rather than suspects, all your metrics will improve.”

KEY POINTS

- 1** Business insight stories are designed to challenge a prospect's current mindset, to get that prospect to look at the status quo in a completely new way and see what wasn't obvious before.
- 2** Proof from like-minded people who have rethought their status quo based on business insight provides prospects with an authentic understanding of why their status quo needs to change.
- 3** Mobilizers need tools that help them speak to all the functional groups involved in a buying committee, such as finance, marketing, sales, customer service, and IT.

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MARKETING BEYOND THE C-SUITE



DAVID FORTINO

SVP Audience and Product,
NetLine Corporation

David Fortino is the SVP of Audience and Product for NetLine Corporation. David is responsible for the strategic direction and management of NetLine's audience, publisher, and client facing technologies, platform, and product development roadmap. Prior to NetLine, David served as Director of Audience and Business Development for VerticalNet.



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Many marketers consider the C-Suite the holy grail of business-to-business (B2B) marketing. If they can just unlock the doors to the C-Suite and capture the attention of those top execs, the sale will be easy. After all, the C-Suite is where all the decisions are made, right?

Wrong.

Data shows that today's buying decisions are mostly collaborative, consensus-driven activities that involve groups of people with different roles in the organization, and the size of those buying groups is growing. In most cases, the major contribution of the C-Suite executive is to accept the judgement of his or her buying group before signing a contract. Yet, corporate marketing strategies persist in focusing content marketing and lead generation activities on the C-Suite. David Fortino, who has conducted a series of research and found that a much broader audience consumes the majority of lead gen content, frequently talks to his clients about the importance of addressing that larger audience. Many marketers agree that such an approach makes sense, but then they continue their C-Suite and senior executive strategy. "It's funny and sad that we're still having this discussion with our clients," Fortino says. "But, the industry as a whole has yet to conclude that this broader strategy is something they need to consider."

Fortino cites data from a recent NetLine study that focused on the information technology (IT) market segment. All of NetLine's studies are based on its own data, collected from the 



To me, it's almost criminal. To focus exclusively on the C-Suite is a big disconnect from reality.



MARKETING BEYOND THE C-SUITE

world's largest B2B content syndication lead generation network. This study of more than 8 million leads generated in 2016 revealed the following points:

- Mid-level IT professionals, including directors, managers, and individual contributors, drove the majority of IT-specific content consumption.
- C-level audiences accounted for just 5 percent of the content consumed.
- 94 percent of campaigns targeted the C-level audience.
- Consultants represent the fastest-growing audience segment, with 40 percent growth YoY, yet only 1 percent of campaigns targeted consultants.

NetLine's data shows similar patterns in other market segments. A review of content consumption by professionals residing in the United States across all industries shows that more than half of campaigns targeted less than one-third of active content consumers.

Despite increased reliance on content marketing for lead generation and knowing that companies typically do 80 percent to 90 percent of their research before contacting their vendors of choice, marketers still focus on the C-Suite. Why is that? Fortino says, "So many times I hear a marketing director or vice president say, 'That's what the chief marketing or chief executive officer has



decided.' To me, it's almost criminal. The value marketers bring to their company is the research they do and their understanding of who the real customers are. Clearly, the C-Suite executive is not your primary customer. To focus exclusively on the C-Suite is a big disconnect from reality. More often than not, your target 'decision maker' is realistically an aggregate of a number of influencers who help foster the final recommendation within the organization."

Few companies actively pursue a well-thought-out lead gen strategy beyond the C-Suite. Fortino describes one client that does. The client runs a quarterly lead gen "scrum" that begins with top-of-funnel content early in the quarter. Mid-way through, the client cycles that content out of the campaign and cycles in more mid-funnel content. Later in the quarter, the company cycles off mid-funnel content and brings in late-stage content. Then, it repeats the cycle in the next quarter. Fortino says, "They ratchet up the filters knowing that their lead *volume* will be lower but the lead *quality* will be exceptional."

“

More often than not, your target 'decision maker' is realistically an aggregate of a number of influencers who help foster the final recommendation within the organization.

”

KEY POINTS

- 1** C-level audiences accounted for just 5 percent of content consumed, yet 94 percent of lead gen campaigns targeted a C-level audience.
- 2** A review of US content consumption shows that more than half of content syndication campaigns targeted less than one-third of the active content consumers.
- 3** A well-thought-out strategy looks like: begin with top-of-funnel content early in the quarter, cycle to mid-funnel content, then later in the quarter cycle to late-stage content.

FIND AND QUALIFY MOBILIZER LEADS



BRENT ADAMSON

Principal Executive Advisor,
CEB (now Gartner)

Brent Adamson is a principal executive advisor at CEB (now Gartner) and a sought-after speaker and facilitator. He has more than 20 years of experience as a researcher, teacher, and trainer in sales, marketing, and customer service. He is the co-author of the *The Challenger Sale: Taking Control of the Customer Conversation* and the newly released *The Challenger Customer: Selling to the Hidden Influencer Who Can Multiply Your Results*.




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To succeed in a world where buying decisions are made by consensus, you must get decision makers simultaneously to embrace the idea that what they're doing right now is not good enough—that they must change what they are doing. As Brent Adamson points out, however, “Just because someone has ‘VP’ in his or her title doesn’t mean that that person is more or less open to change. Job title has nothing to do with it.” Adamson says that the people you really want to connect with and build conversations and relationships with are the people who are open to change, the people willing and able to drive a consensus on change across their organization.

“The problem is that the lead-generation and acquisition process doesn’t rest on an infrastructure of change,” says Adamson. “Rather, it’s based on title and role.” With systems built around job titles and roles, how do you find, what CEB (now Gartner) calls, true Mobilizers? The search requires a different approach to lead qualification. No simple formula scales easily to include additional filtering to qualify the leads that traditional methods generate, but some companies are taking innovative approaches.

For example, Adamson works with one company that offers a successful collaboration product. That company found that when it sells its collaboration tools in a business-to-business setting, certain people, regardless of title, role, or level, get excited about the 



Just because someone has ‘VP’ in his or her title doesn’t mean that that person is more or less open to change. Job title has nothing to do with it.

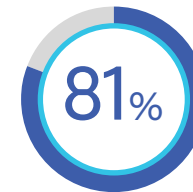
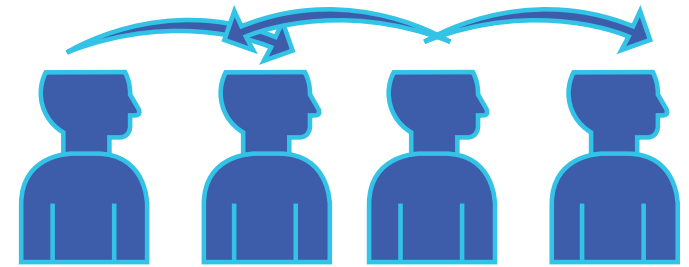


FIND AND QUALIFY MOBILIZER LEADS

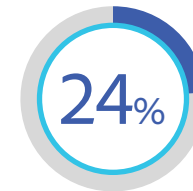
idea and value of collaboration across the organization. “When this company’s salespeople find one of those individuals, whom they call *collaboration champions*, the likelihood and the ease of a sale go up dramatically,” says Adamson.

To learn more about collaboration champions, the company’s leaders tried an experiment. They invited five or six people whom they considered the best examples of collaboration champions to the company’s headquarters. These people were totally unlike each other—they had different roles and titles, they came from different industries—but they had their willingness to collaborate in common. By putting these people in the same room together, this company was able to generate essential questions that, depending on how people answered, would be good indicators of whether a person were a collaboration champion or not.

The criteria the company used to identify such Mobilizers differed by market, but Adamson believes that companies can use this same approach to learn a lot about those people who could be their most valuable leads, such as what they’re looking for and how they find it. They can determine common characteristics about these leads, such as how they find information and the most important part of their decision-



81% of non-C-suite employees influence buying decisions.



24% of non-C-suite employees have final purchasing authority.

FIND AND QUALIFY MOBILIZER LEADS

making process. They can find out where these Mobilizers go to learn about things and determine whether the company's demand generation content is the source of that learning. "It's extra work," Adamson says. "You need to ask yourself, 'What is that person looking for? Which criteria most accurately predict whether someone's open to change?' Then, you must work back to the story most likely to get that person to embrace the change you're offering."

The lead-generation and acquisition process doesn't rest on an infrastructure of change. Rather, it's based on title and role.

”

KEY POINTS

- 1 No simple formula scales easily to include additional filtering to qualify the leads that traditional methods based on job titles and roles generate.
- 2 Knowing where Mobilizers go to learn about things helps you determine whether your demand generation content is the source of that learning.

LEAD SCORING: FOCUS ON INTENT RATHER THAN ENGAGEMENT



SAMANTHA STONE

Founder and CMO,

The Marketing Advisory Network

Samantha Stone, author of *Unleash Possible: A Marketing Playbook That Drives Sales*, is a revenue catalyst who helps unleash the possible in organizations that have complex selling processes. She's a fast-growth, B2B marketing junkie, researcher, speaker, consultant, and persona coach who has also managed to find time to raise four boys with her husband, David. In 2012, she founded The Marketing Advisory Network to help savvy business leaders unleash the possible within their enterprises.



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Imagine two leads. The first lead visited your site six times, read eight blog posts, and signed up for your newsletter. The first lead is from a company that matches your ideal company profile and the person has the right title. The second lead downloaded a purchase justification template but didn't sign up for the newsletter and hasn't visited your site a second time. The second lead is from a company that matches a few of your ideal profile criteria, and it's not clear that the lead holds a senior position.

Which lead is more valuable? If you set your lead scoring algorithm to count the number of actions a person takes, then the first lead would have nine engagements and the second lead only one engagement. Your system would flag the first lead as more valuable than the second. This might not be the case, however, because the content with which the leads are interacting are different.

To understand the real value of the lead, you must properly score the lead's underlying intent. The first lead seems to be a "tire kicker"—someone researching the topic. The second lead downloaded a significant piece of content, the intent of which is to mobilize a sale. The second lead actually seems to be driving change, and that's more valuable to your sales team. While both leads have value to the business, the actions you take to nurture them will be very different.

With the right mix of enabling content, you can not only influence the decision process but identify likely champions among the leads. Some kinds of content inform the reader >>>



If somebody visiting my website downloads an RFP template, that is a much higher purchase signal than downloading an eBook about the latest trends in my industry.

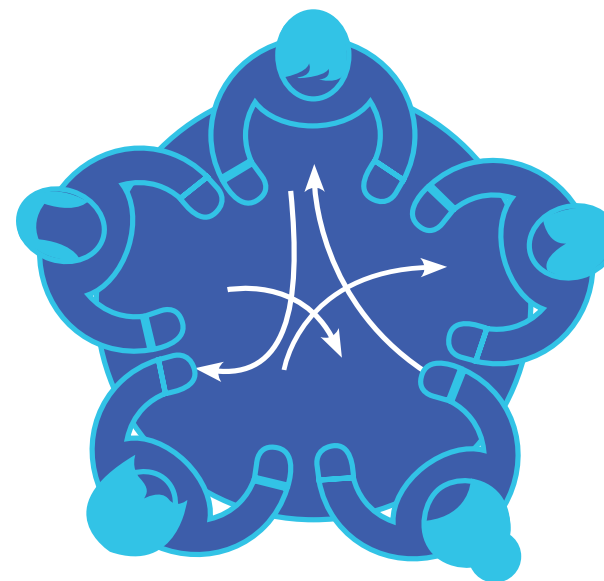


LEAD SCORING: FOCUS ON INTENT RATHER THAN ENGAGEMENT

and signal the level of buyer intent. For example, quiz-type content that might help a reader evaluate his or her readiness to implement a certain kind of solution signals that that organization could be ready for a change. Content such as business case or business justification templates, return on investment (ROI) calculators, and request for proposal (RFP) templates signal a person who is likely leading, coordinating, or facilitating a purchase research effort. Samantha Stone says, "This kind of content appeals to people who have either been assigned to find a solution to a problem or think they have an opportunity and are trying to build a case to convince their management team to address it."

This content can also signal a more advanced stage in the decision process. In fact, interactive, business case, and value content provides the best leads, indicating a strong intent to purchase. "If somebody visiting my website downloads an RFP template, that is a much higher purchase signal than downloading an eBook about the latest trends in my industry," says Stone. "This late stage content is hugely valuable to support the buying process, but it also provides strong signals that I've got a good-quality lead for the sales team to pursue."

By looking at the underlying intent rather than typical engagement metrics to score leads, you can find the leads that



C-suite only content costs
10X to 20X
more to create.

C-suite only content fails
to deliver information
influencers need.

LEAD SCORING: FOCUS ON INTENT RATHER THAN ENGAGEMENT

sales will appreciate. Giving champions the content they need to rally the other members of the buying committee, will help you put a change agent in place who will drive the account towards a sale. And if your content speaks to the real issues of the members of the buying committee in their own language, you'll provide sales with a significant head start.

“Late stage content is hugely valuable to support the buying process, but it also provides strong signals that I've got a high-quality lead for the sales team to pursue.”

KEY POINTS

- 1** The real value of a lead stems from understanding intent rather than pure volume engagement metrics.
- 2** With the right mix of enabling content, it's possible to not only influence the decision process, but identify likely champions among the leads.
- 3** Content such as business case or business justification templates, ROI calculators, and RFP templates signal a person who is likely leading, coordinating or facilitating a product research effort.

GET THE MOST OUT OF CONTENT DISTRIBUTION



DAVID FORTINO

SVP Audience and Product,
NetLine Corporation


David Fortino is the SVP of Audience and Product for NetLine Corporation. David is responsible for the strategic direction and management of NetLine's audience, publisher, and client facing technologies, platform, and product development roadmap. Prior to NetLine, David served as Director of Audience and Business Development for VerticalNet.



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When it comes to lead generation, the right content is critical. But, equally important is putting that content in front of a rich target audience. To get the best lead gen performance from your campaign, David Fortino says you must understand how the lead gen network functions and where the leads come from. "Many marketers fail to connect those dots," Fortino says. "They're looking for a content-based lead gen solution. Someone tells them a good story, and it's enough to book some business." Unfortunately, marketers often end up with low-quality leads and no idea why. By asking vendors more in-depth questions before signing up, marketers can avoid running failed campaigns.

What should marketers look for in a content distribution vendor and what kinds of questions should they ask? "You have to begin with the business model," says Fortino. He describes two basic models of content-driven lead generation:

- **Publisher model.** Branded publishers, like TechTarget, have a full staff of outstanding writers who create excellent content. They use their content to build a loyal following that then becomes the basis for the leads they generate. 



Many marketers fail to connect those dots. They're looking for a lead gen solution. Someone tells them a good story, and it's enough to book some business.



GET THE MOST OUT OF CONTENT DISTRIBUTION

- **Content syndication model.** This model, which is the approach NetLine takes, is portfolio based. Clients provide the content that is syndicated across many channels and web properties. In NetLine's case, it has a growing library with more than 7,000 pieces of content and partnerships with thousands of publishers. Fortino says, "We are the conduit that provides targeted and efficient distribution of a brand's content across the Web in a way that scales easily. This model depends on our publisher ecosystem."

An important difference between these two approaches is that the publisher model is a closed ecosystem, whereas the content syndication model is an open ecosystem consisting of both content and audience. In the publisher model, the publisher has an existing audience base to distribute content and generate leads. If a content campaign falls short, the vendor may need to buy leads from a third party to fill the gap. In the content syndication model, the audience base is limited only by the reach of partner publishers. If the portfolio includes thousands of partner publishers, that audience is essentially unlimited. If a campaign needs to generate more leads, it's a comparatively easy matter of scaling content distribution through the publisher network.

Beyond the model itself, there are many questions marketers should ask and lead generation vendors should be able to answer convincingly. For instance, say a lead gen vendor tells you that it has a database of 40 million names. That's a big number. Fortino says that that vendor should be able to tell you how it acquired those >>>

“If they don't have answers to those questions, start asking more questions.”

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names. “Where are those people coming from? What site are they visiting and how do they get on the list?”

Some vendors claim that they do content syndication, but then you look at their website and see no indication of such syndication. “Marketers need to ask how it happens,” says Fortino. “They need to ask, ‘Who are your syndication partners? Where will my content be shown? Do I have control and how can I protect my brand? How do you report data on the syndicated content campaigns?’ Marketers need to know how all that works.”

In addition, marketers should be able to gain vision into the recent content consumption patterns of prospects matching their campaign needs. Many vendors will simply run a database query and tell you how many matching leads they have. Fortino notes, “They’ll say, ‘We’ve got 4,000 leads that match those criteria.’ But, are those really “leads”? When did the vendor add the names to the file? How did the vendor add the names?” Fortino likes to be more specific: “I can quantify the market of active prospects by looking at recent activity of professionals consuming content and in turn instantly validate campaign viability. Telling someone we have X contacts matching their needs really isn’t lead generation. That’s selling data—a business we’re not in. Quantifying that Y professionals meeting their needs have requested 46,000 assets (white papers, eBooks, webinars) from their competitors or peers immediately validates the real market opportunity. I prefer to work with real numbers to define value. That’s the information marketers need.”

Fortino recommends asking a lot of questions. Understand how vendors are marketing to users and whether they have a partner ecosystem. Ask for access to that ecosystem. See what partners are seeing. See the tools, and look for live examples. “If they don’t have answers to those questions, start asking more questions. To me, the smell test really works. Some marketers are better at this than others, but it’s an important part of getting the most out of your lead gen campaigns.”



GET THE MOST OUT OF CONTENT DISTRIBUTION

Keep in mind that it's never too late to start asking questions. "A tell-tale sign you are buying contacts rather than leads that have engaged with your content is pristine data. If the data you're receiving from your vendor are perfectly structured, always capitalized, never misspelled, then I have a bridge to sell you." By their very nature, humans are flawed creatures. When given the opportunity to take a shortcut, most humans do. Consequently, data captured by humans filling out forms attached to your content are never perfect. NEVER.

"A tell-tale sign you are buying contacts rather than leads that have engaged with your content is pristine data."

KEY POINTS

- 1 By asking questions before signing up with a vendor, marketers can improve the quality of the leads they're buying.
- 2 Begin by understanding whether the vendor uses a publisher model, which is a closed ecosystem, or a content syndication model, which is an open ecosystem.
- 3 If a lead gen vendor says that it has 4,000 names that match your criteria, ask whether all those names were in their database, where they come from, how they got there, when the vendor added them, and whether they simply plan on selling you those leads (contacts) or are they going to promote your content to said prospects in the hope that the engage with your content. As you know; a "Contact" doesn't equal a "Lead."

HOW ONE COMPANY GENERATES LEADS WITH A DISRUPTIVE MESSAGE INSIDE EDUCATIONAL CONTENT



HEATHER VAUGHAN

Manager, Global
Demand Generation,
Infoblox

Heather Vaughan has more than 20 years of experience in marketing, advertising, direct marketing, and campaign management. She is a detail-oriented, data-driven person who understands that the success of a program is measured on the initial goals set and so goes above and beyond the set goal to over-deliver on every campaign and program she manages. Heather thrives on lead gen programs and seeing the fruit of her labor when sales succeeds.



Website | LinkedIn

Heather Vaughan, manager of Global Demand Generation at Infoblox, faces a familiar marketing challenge. Her company has a great product, but it does not have the brand recognition some of its competitors do. That means that she needs to attract the attention of decision influencers who look past the brand and deeper into the solution. “Our messaging is different than it would be if we were talking to people in the C-Suite, who look at their company’s entire infrastructure,” Vaughan says. “I target the security buyer and the network buyer—people who actually use the product. I assess their pains and show them how our product can help ease their daily struggles.”

With this narrow audience in mind, Vaughan’s company pursues a strategy that appeals to those in-the-trenches influencers while at the same time establishing the Infoblox brand as synonymous with expertise in the market. “To find new leads, my group partners with the organizations our audience goes to for education. We provide that education through webinars and other educational content.” In other words, Vaughn goes to the places where her customers are most likely to be found.

Still, many companies provide a lot of information about network management and security. So, to stand out, Vaughan has published an eBook about an often-overlooked aspect of network security: Domain Name System (DNS) servers. Many companies focus



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their security efforts on protecting their network perimeter and ensuring regulatory compliance, shortchanging security at their DNS servers. Vaughn points out the very real fact that one of the most common vectors for security breaches is a DNS attack; as it happens, securing DNS servers is Infoblox's greatest strength. "For us, it's about DNS security and understanding why that security is important," Vaughn explains. "The eBook shows that DNS is the core of a company's security. We position our content on the fact that companies must turn more of their attention on their DNS servers."

The eBook works as a demand generation tool by revealing the pain of securing DNS servers. It disrupts the status quo idea that other aspects of network security are more important than DNS and that a company's current solution is probably good enough. The eBook forces potential customers to rethink this aspect of their network security and provides information that helps them better secure their network.

Vaughn points out that to get the most out of this content strategy, you must utilize many promotional channels. "You need a bit of everything. I don't think you can focus on just one channel and think you'll succeed," she says. "We partner with many organizations, including content



89% of B2B researchers use the internet during their research process.

71% start with a generic search.



HOW ONE COMPANY GENERATES LEADS WITH A DISRUPTIVE MESSAGE INSIDE EDUCATIONAL CONTENT

distribution networks such as NetLine, to get our educational content in front of the audiences that matter to us, but we also use social media—Facebook and LinkedIn—and search is important, too. We are even promoting the eBook through online newspaper advertisements. You have to put yourself in front of the customer,” says Vaughan.

It’s also important to be able to handle and nurture the good leads your demand gen activities generate. “Nurturing is important because people consider many angles before they make a decision,” Vaughn says. “We’re working on email nurture campaigns for both the security buyer and the network buyer. When those leads come to our website, they’re coming to look for information, and we want to give them exactly what they’re looking for.”

“To find new leads, my group partners with the organizations our audience goes to for education. We provide that education through webinars and other educational content.”

KEY POINTS

- 1 Going beyond the C-Suite means attracting the attention of decision influencers who look past the brand and deeper into the solution.
- 2 A disruptive eBook forces readers to rethink their current solution; it provides educational information that will help them improve.
- 3 To get the most out of your demand gen strategy, you must function in many channels.

Turn prospects into customers — sponsor your own Mighty Guide.



Disrupt The Status Quo With Real Thought Leadership

70% of thought leadership content is ignored - especially by the C-suite. But why? It's generic, lacks original ideas, and seems untrustworthy. That's why companies partner with us. We gather best practices and insights from top experts to create credible and insightful thought leadership -- the kind that drives change.