



# 10 EXPERTS ON SCALING CONTENT MARKETING



# INTRODUCTION

As businesses invest more in content marketing, figuring out how to scale their content marketing programs effectively has become an important issue. That's the topic we explore in this book.

With the generous support of Workfront, we asked 10 top content marketing experts the following question:

***What practical advice would you give a fellow content team manager who needs to scale up a team, ramp up content production, demonstrate return on investment, and avoid workflow chaos?***

We asked each expert to focus on one part of the problem—team building, workflow and process management, content promotion, content perfection, or content planning. Most businesses are still learning how to do content marketing well, but top content marketing managers are busy developing brilliant best practices to help them scale their efforts in innovative ways. These essays contain good, practical advice on everything from tooling up to hiring the right people to managing a global real-time strategy.

I'm certain that even highly experienced content managers will find themselves rethinking their approaches to content after reading this book. I trust you will find value in them, as well.



All the best,  
**David Rogelberg**  
Publisher



# FOREWORD

A quick look at online search volume for the term *content marketing* reveals just how popular this type of marketing has become over the past five years. Many companies have hurried to adopt this must-have, digital-age business function with high hopes of quick success only to find that succeeding at content marketing can be more challenging than they expected. Common obstacles that keep companies from successfully scaling their content marketing efforts include chaotic workflows, poor team visibility, and a general lack of strategy.

With your success in mind, Workfront has sponsored this eBook, which is packed with ideas for how you can scale your content marketing efforts. In the pages that follow, you'll find a collection of content marketing best practices from some of the world's most successful content marketing experts. They've learned through trial and error what content marketing success looks like and how to achieve it consistently.

This eBook has an impressive lineup, including Ashley Spurlock and Marcus Varner—two seasoned content marketers from Workfront—plus contributors from companies that helped pioneer content marketing like Marriott International and LinkedIn, and well-known experts like Robert Rose and Jay Baer. I trust that with their advice, you will find actionable ideas for how to take content marketing at your company to the next level.



Regards,  
**Joe Staples**  
CMO, Workfront

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Foreword .....</b>	<b>3</b>
 <b>Scaling Content Marketing</b>	
Understanding the Process of Content Marketing   Robert Rose.....	5
Avoid Failure by Confirming Your Marketing Strategy   Mark Schaefer.....	7
Ramp Up Content Production with Efficient Processes   Ashley Spurlock.....	9
Managing Global Content Marketing in Real Time from a Content Command Center   David Beebe.....	11
Building Out a Content Marketing Team with the Right People and Tools   Jay Baer.....	13
Growing into Solutions for More Effective Content Promotion   Jason Miller.....	15
Automation Is Key to Successful Planning and Scaling   Marcus Varner.....	17
For Content Marketing to Scale Effectively, Document Your Plan   Gerry Moran.....	19
To Scale Up Content Quality, Focus on Process and Communication   Kashem Miah.....	21
Achieving Consistency Through Editorial Process   Bryan Kramer.....	23

# UNDERSTANDING THE PROCESS OF CONTENT MARKETING



## ROBERT ROSE

Chief Strategy Advisor,  
Content Marketing Institute

Robert Rose is chief strategy advisor for the Content Advisory Group of the Content Marketing Institute, where he helps develop content and customer experience strategies for enterprises such as Oracle, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Allstate Insurance, Microsoft, Capital One, AT&T, Petco, and UPS. His specialty is creating powerful customer experiences through digital media. To learn more about Robert, visit [www.robertrose.net](http://www.robertrose.net).

Robert Rose, chief strategy advisor to the Content Marketing Institute, says that when it comes to scaling content marketing and perfecting content, content managers need to take a different approach to how they view their workflow and processes. “We need to stop looking at content marketing as an alternative form of sales collateral material,” says Rose. “That means we first have to understand what we’re building that’s of value. Most businesses don’t start with that: They start with, ‘How do I position myself in my customers’ minds,’ which is classic marketing 101.”

For example, Rose says some organizations send out several newsletters. “No one opens them or even clicks them, but people have been creating these newsletters for years, and there’s a team associated with them. They’re a waste of time, but nobody ever stops to ask if it’s smart or just something that’s always been done. This is the process that has to change.”

A better approach, according to Rose, is to “stop looking at it through the lens of your brand and start looking at it through the lens of your customer. What does your customer find value in, regardless of your product or service?” That requires really connecting to the customer, listening to their pain points. “Then, figure out how to convert that value into content that aligns with your approach to solving the customer’s need.” >>>



*We need to stop looking at content marketing as an alternative form of sales collateral material. That means we first have to understand what we're building that's of value.*



## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1 **Effective content marketing should be focused on adding value to content that focuses on customers' pain points. This is a process separate from the generation of sales collateral.**
- 2 **Evaluate all your activities, and stop those activities that are legacy and have no real value. This will help you get out of triage mode and into a strategic, product development-type operation.**

# UNDERSTANDING THE PROCESS OF CONTENT MARKETING

To improve your process and implement this practice, Rose recommends, “To perfect that story, the content must come from the content person first. Most businesses create marketing collateral based on a requirement for a one-sheet, a catalog, or a brochure, but the idea and the story must flow through the lens of the customer, first. Then you can go out to the organization and say, ‘Here’s the story we’re going to tell.’ After that, you can discuss what format best fits what you’re communicating—a blog, a white paper, or something else. “You can then explore all the ways you can express that content. From a workflow and process standpoint, you can look at who’s going to create that content and who will approve it,” says Rose.

One of the biggest workflow and process mistakes of managing content marketing is when the content marketing team becomes a “vending machine for content,” says Rose. “What happens is that sales and demand gen and all the people who need ‘assets’ look to the content marketing team as a repository of that content,” he explains. “So, the content marketing team is constantly working in triage mode, trying to supply the organization with enough assets to fulfill the requests coming in. They are no longer strategic.” Rose says that the solution to this reactive practice is fairly simple. “The process needs to be reversed. The content marketing team needs to say, ‘For us to strategize and do what we agree is a smart thing to do, we all have to agree that we’re going to stop doing certain things. Most of the content is wasted, anyway, it’s just throwing spaghetti on the wall.’ The team has to come together and decide what isn’t working. This will allow them to instead spend time creating content that tells a complete and useful story, which is what will drive more effective content.

Ultimately, Rose says that there is one key to scaling content marketing. “Marketers have to stop looking at content marketing as an alternative form of advertising. Content marketing is not a campaign, it is an operation. If the workflow and process can get out of that campaign mentality and into a product development-type operation, that is the real key to making it a success.”

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*Stop looking at it through the lens of your brand and start looking at it through the lens of your customer.*

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# AVOID FAILURE BY CONFIRMING YOUR MARKETING STRATEGY



**MARK  
SCHAEFER**

Author, Business Consultant,  
{grow}

Mark W. Schaefer is a globally recognized author, speaker, podcaster, and business consultant who blogs at {grow}, one of the top five marketing blogs in the world. He teaches graduate marketing classes at Rutgers University and has written five best-selling books, including *The Tao of Twitter* and *The Content Code*. Mark also wrote the classic first book on influence marketing, *Return on Influence*. His global clients include Pfizer, Cisco, Dell, Adidas, and the U.S. Air Force.

Globally recognized marketing expert, Mark Schaefer, author of *The Content Code* (released March 2015), has what some may consider unconventional guidance about planning content: "This is going to sound like strange advice, but I think it's essential. The first thing I would do is this: Confirm that you actually have a marketing strategy!"

What many believe is a marketing strategy might not actually be. Instead, marketing managers often have disparate, unrelated marketing goals, each designed for a specific project, instead of goals created with a single clear view of the overall content planning strategy and how that strategy integrates with larger company goals. Schaefer says that having a clearly defined marketing strategy "might seem obvious, but it's not." He adds, "Here's the implication: If your management team really doesn't have a clear direction, mission, and message, your content plan is set up for failure because you don't really know what to say or whom to say it to." >>>



*If your management team really doesn't have a clear direction, mission, and message, your content plan is set up for failure.*



## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1 Make sure everyone on the marketing leadership team understands the organizational marketing strategy to prevent incongruent content planning processes.
- 2 Content planning that is aligned with organizational goals results in better conversions, which in turns helps achieve those organizational goals.



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# AVOID FAILURE BY CONFIRMING YOUR MARKETING STRATEGY

"Here is the best way to check this out," he says. "If you suspect that the vision is a little hazy, get the marketing leadership team together and explain that you're doing a content creation exercise. Ask them to get out a piece of paper and write down how they would finish this sentence: 'Only we . . .'" This exercise allows you to get a fast but clear understanding of what each member of the marketing leadership team *thinks* the marketing strategy is.

Schaefer explains, "If you get five different answers from five different people, you have some work to do before you start publishing content. If there's a uniform theme, however, you will be well on your way to producing content that aligns with company goals." With that alignment, content planning processes should be clearer and easier to define and execute.

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# RAMP UP CONTENT PRODUCTION WITH EFFICIENT PROCESSES



## ASHLEY SPURLOCK

Solutions Marketing Manager,  
Scrum Master,  
Workfront

Ashley Spurlock has nearly 10 years of experience writing and managing marketing projects in the tech, education, and fitness industries. In her current role, she oversees an Agile team responsible for content marketing, sales support, and product marketing for agency and marketing prospects and customers at Workfront.



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Ashley Spurlock, solutions marketing manager at Workfront, believes that when ramping up content production, it's wise to invest some time upfront to understand your customers—especially their pain points. “You should understand the personas you're writing or selling to as well as their pain points,” she says. “I'm huge on pain points. I want to know what our customers' struggles are and how my products can solve them. That way, I can deliver a quality piece that will be of value to them.”

Spurlock uses a special visual technique for mapping out customers' pain points so that she can design a content strategy to match. “I like to map the pain points out, keeping the list to no more than five or six items—even fewer if I can,” she says. “Then, I map out the sales cycle and identify where I need content to address those pain points—whether that's blog posts, e-books, or white papers.”

For example, Spurlock asks herself whether she has enough content that deals with each pain point at an early stage in the sales cycle. This is what her team calls “learn stage” content that offers easy-to-use solutions. Next, she looks at whether her team has enough content further down the sales cycle—for example, case studies and more in-depth collateral that a sales rep would use. “I try to make sure I have content for each pain point and each phase throughout the sales cycle,” she says. >>>



*I want to know what our customers' struggles are and how my products can solve them. That way, I can deliver a quality piece that will be of value to them.*



## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1 To create effective content, you must first understand your customers' personas and their unique pain points.
- 2 A visual process for mapping out pain points along the sales cycle helps your team prioritize which content to write first.

# RAMP UP CONTENT PRODUCTION WITH EFFICIENT PROCESSES

Spurlock likes to do this work visually because then she can look at her map and immediately identify which areas are low on content. “I might say, ‘Oh, it looks like Pain Point #3 needs content in this stage, and my writers are going to focus on that,’” she says. “That helps me build a content plan for the year, for the quarter, or even for the next couple of weeks.” This technique can help the team hone in on exactly what content they need and how quickly. “If you’ve got only a few holes, then it’ll be a quick process,” she says. “If you’re starting from scratch, then you can prioritize what you need to do first.”

Spurlock’s content marketing focuses on work management. With a solution like Workfront, it’s important to understand prospect challenges around work. One such pain point, for example, arises when someone is struggling to keep track of several different work requests coming in from different channels. “Somebody might drop a Post-It Note on your desk or send a work request in an email,” Spurlock explains. “To address that pain point, we would create a thought leadership piece in which we’d suggest creating a request queue so that all those requests could go to the same spot using an email address or a traffic manager—whatever works best for the team.”

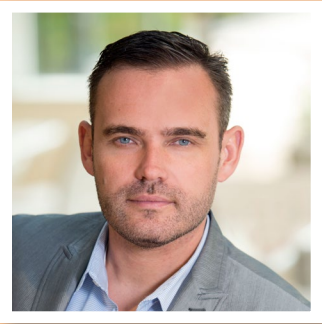
Any content team manager will be able to lead his or her team to success by first making sure that the team fully understands both their customers’ personas and their pain points, then optimizing their content development workflows for maximum efficiency. That way, they will be able to generate high-quality, valuable content consistently that is directly relevant to their customers’ pain points and perfectly tuned to the sales process, as well.

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*I try to make sure I have content for each pain point and each phase throughout the sales cycle.*

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# MANAGING GLOBAL CONTENT MARKETING IN REAL TIME FROM A CONTENT COMMAND CENTER



**DAVID  
BEEBE**

**VP of Global Creative and  
Content Marketing,  
Marriott International**

David Beebe is the VP of Creative and Content Marketing for Marriott International, leading the global creative direction and content marketing strategy. An Emmy Award-winning executive and producer, David has worked on "Lucky Bastard" for PBS and several original series for Yahoo.com. Prior to joining Marriott, David was the founding executive and VP of the Disney-ABC Television Group Digital Studio. David began his career with the U.S. Coast Guard, where he held Top Secret clearance as a telecommunications specialist.

Many companies facing the need to scale their content marketing programs fail to ask a fundamental question: Why are they doing it? It's not enough to scale simply because everyone else is, although that can be a compelling reason. Rather, you must have a clear goal. "I always start with 'why,'" says David Beebe, VP of Global Creative and Content Marketing for Marriott International. Is it brand awareness? Is it brand engagement? Is it changing perception of a brand? Is it building a new audience? "For us, with 19 brands in our global portfolio, it's all those things," says Beebe.

In Marriott's case, it's all about building customer relationships through Marriott's content and brand stories, which requires providing content that entertains and informs the consumer and ultimately builds that relationship. "We make a point of not interrupting what customers are interested in but rather becoming what they're interested in," Beebe says.

Accomplishing this result begins with content creation itself, which happens through Marriott Content Studio. Beebe believes that some companies that have many brands make a mistake when they build content organizations brand by brand, with no connectivity between them. That makes telling cross-brand stories much more difficult. >>>



*We make a point of not interrupting what customers are interested in but rather becoming what they're interested in.*



## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1** Companies with many brands make a mistake when they build content organizations that have no connectivity between them. It's best to have a centralized place to help create and drive cross-brand stories.
- 2** Creation of these brand stories should involve a cross-section of divisions in the company, including the content marketing team, the digital team, customer service, the media agency, public relations and other relevant stakeholders.

# MANAGING GLOBAL CONTENT MARKETING IN REAL TIME FROM A CONTENT COMMAND CENTER

"In our case, all content marketing activities flow through the studio," explains Beebe. "We're either bringing ideas to the brands or the brands are telling us what they want to do and asking us to develop it for them, which could include creative, talent, and the distribution strategy." To maintain the all-brand view, the creative process is centralized in the studio.

The other critical piece in Marriott's content marketing operation is the M Live command center. This is where everything having to do with content marketing, including the editorial and media calendar, roll-outs, social monitoring and engagement, and analytics, are monitored in real time, 24x7, all over the world. Currently, there are five regional M Live facilities around the world. Each looks like a cross between a monitor-filled newsroom and a content studio. "Their main goal is listening to customers," says Beebe. "This is all consumer-facing marketing activity that covers real-time content creation, real-time media buying, adjusting creative on the fly, and directly responding in real time to consumers talking about their experiences at our hotels."

M Live is a centralized place to share information in real time. Some of the technology is built in-house, and some various vendors provide. A typical facility has 20 or 30 monitors and a staff of 20 at any given time. Beebe says, "They continuously monitor feed data coming in, identify opportunities, and develop creative against it." Staffing in an M Live command center is a cross-section of divisions in the company, including members of the content marketing team, the digital team, the Rewards team, Marriott's media agency, public relations, and crisis communications, all working off the same data feeds.

Although the traditional idea of marketing campaigns no longer applies, the Marriott brands still have their own unique brand activities and planned events. "All those elements are still built into the schedule and monitored from M Live," Beebe says. "When something launches—for example, a new hotel—M Live monitors whatever is happening from a marketing perspective and makes adjustments in real time. M Live staff are looking at media buys and how they're performing. They're swapping out creative and doing real time A/B testing."

This combination of Content Studio and M Live command centers makes it possible for Marriott to identify stories trending in social media and quickly become part of the conversation. That's especially important in an industry where the guest is the center of marketing activity.

*"This is all consumer-facing marketing activity that covers real-time content creation, real-time media buying, adjusting creative on the fly, and directly responding in real time to consumers talking about their experiences at our hotels."*



# BUILDING OUT A CONTENT MARKETING TEAM WITH THE RIGHT PEOPLE AND TOOLS



**JAY  
BAER**

President,  
Convince & Convert

Jay Baer, CSP, is the most retweeted person among digital marketers. He's a renowned business strategist, keynote speaker, and *New York Times* best-selling author of *Hug Your Haters*. Jay has advised more than 700 companies since 1994, including Caterpillar, Nike, Allstate, United Nations, and 32 Fortune 500 companies. He founded Convince & Convert, a strategy consulting firm, to help prominent companies gain and retain customers through the smart intersection of technology, social media, and customer service.

You've won the budget argument. You've convinced management that an amped-up content marketing strategy will create more business. Now, you need to build out your content marketing team. So, where do you begin?

Jay Baer, president of Convince & Convert, advises starting with your goals. "You really have to map the overall content initiative to some sort of business outcome," says Baer. "That makes team decisions easier because you know what you're trying to achieve." Of course, every business will have its own strategy and goals, but within that context, two areas of the content team will require special attention: the people you bring onto the team and the technology they need to do their work.

When it comes to people and skill sets, Baer says the following key capabilities are required in today's content marketing environment:

- **Editor or producer.** The person who actually knows how to create things
- **Multimedia professionals.** Because content is more visual and dynamic than ever
- **A solid analytics group.** To understand what is and is not working

Baer strongly believes that the analytics people should not be responsible for creating content. "Lots of teams make analytics part of somebody's job, so that person might be creating content while also being responsible for stats," says Baer. Such a dual role can skew the results, Baer believes. "It's not that people are predisposed to falsifying their metrics, but if you're measuring the same things you create, it's human nature to put a positive shine on it." >>>



*At scale, you absolutely have to get beyond the hegemony of Microsoft Excel and Google Docs.*



## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1 You have to map the overall content initiative to business outcomes. This makes team decisions easier.
- 2 You need to streamline activities like content workflow, optimization, and approvals, because the intellectual overhead spent on these activities can become an obstacle to producing great content.



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# BUILDING OUT A CONTENT MARKETING TEAM WITH THE RIGHT PEOPLE AND TOOLS

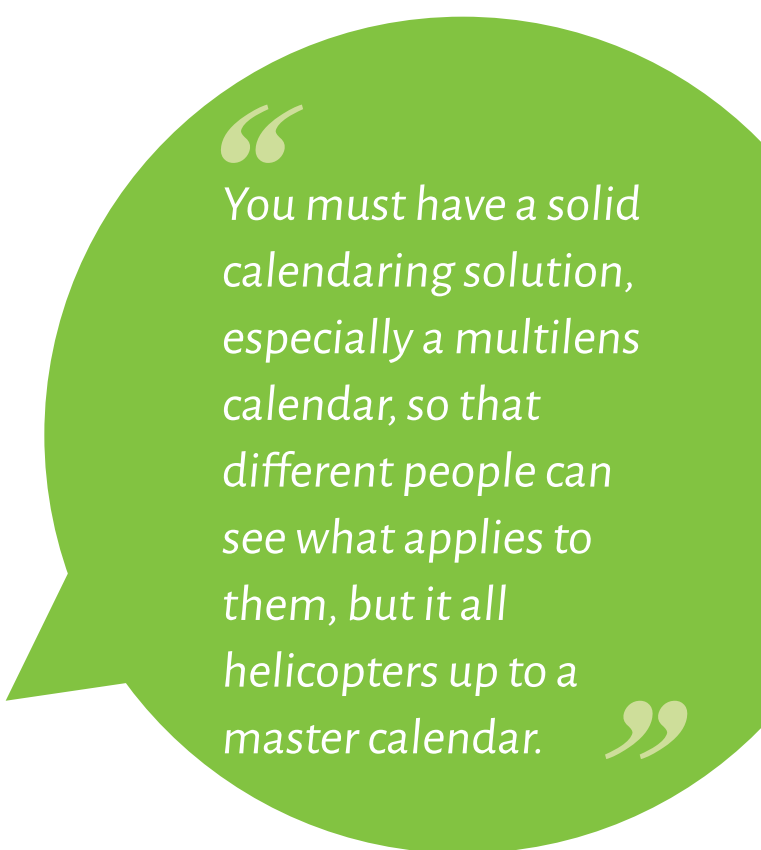
One other skill that has become critical to content marketing is the ability to use social media. Social media is tricky, though, not only because best practices are continually evolving but because social media often serve two functions in the enterprise. “Half of your time in social is marketing, and half is customer service. In larger organizations, those are very different sides of the aisle,” Baer says.

In addition to staffing, another major challenge is selecting the right tools. As a growing content marketing team becomes busier, team members spend more time ‘doing content marketing’ than actually creating content. These other content marketing activities include content amplification, optimization, workflow and approvals (because as more budget goes to content marketing, the money comes with more scrutiny), and more collaboration. Baer says, “All this intellectual overhead becomes an obstacle to actually making great things.”

Streamlining that intellectual overhead can require a lot of tools. “We are not a large enterprise,” says Baer, “but between what we do on the content side and on the social side, we probably have 100 software licenses.” This toolkit can include software for content creation, workflow management, optimization, research, and many other activities.

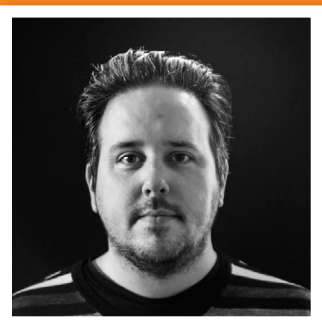
So, what’s most important to a growing content team? “At scale, you absolutely have to get beyond the hegemony of Microsoft Excel and Google Docs,” Baer says. He stresses two technology areas that are important to get right early on. “First you must have a solid calendaring solution, especially a multilens calendar, so that different people can see what applies to them, but it all helicopters up to a master calendar.” The other key piece is a collaboration solution that streamlines workflow and approvals because of content marketing’s increasing number of touchpoints within the enterprise.

Baer also points out that today’s content marketing teams need to build for agility and change. “The team you have today is probably not going to be the team you have 18 months from now,” he says. Content marketing teams should be built with a staffing philosophy and technology foundation that’s flexible and adaptable to changing business goals.



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# GROWING INTO SOLUTIONS FOR MORE EFFECTIVE CONTENT PROMOTION



**JASON  
MILLER**

**Group Manager, Global Content  
& Social Media Marketing,  
LinkedIn**

Jason Miller leads global content and social media marketing initiatives for LinkedIn Marketing Solutions, helping marketers understand how to take advantage of digital advertising and content marketing tactics on LinkedIn and beyond, to achieve their marketing goals and deliver real return on investment. He is the author of the best-selling business-to-business marketing book *Welcome to the Funnel: Proven Tactics to Turn Your Social Media and Content Marketing Up to 11*.

Scaling a content marketing program involves more than just building a team and cranking out more content. Jason Miller, a global content marketing leader at LinkedIn, points out that companies are spending more on content marketing and creating greater quantities of content, but few believe that they're effective at content marketing. (Check out the 2016 B2B Content Marketing trends report from the Content Marketing Institute.) Why is this happening? Miller says, "Companies are still trying to figure out content marketing and how to make it drive business results."

Miller believes that there are three essential ingredients for successfully scaling content marketing activities while improving the overall effectiveness of your strategy:

- **Have the budget to pay for content promotion.** Miller says, "People always ask me, 'What's next in content marketing?' What's next is the age of personalization and amplification." It's no longer necessary to wait for the market to begin talking about your brand. In today's market, you talk about your own brand. *Amplification* implies some level of outbound marketing, and that's exactly right. Miller says that even marketers who rely on inbound marketing are doing paid outbound marketing, as well. "To talk about your brand, you create remarkable content throughout the funnel, and you target it through native advertising, through social advertising, pay per click, and your own channels. Paying to promote your own good content is important," says Miller. >>>



*If you can surface the questions, you can surface the conversation, and then you can choose which conversations to own.*



## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1 It's no longer necessary to wait for the market to begin talking about your brand. In today's market, you need to drive and amplify the conversation around your own brand.
- 2 Rather than creating complex personas, conduct keyword research to find the conversations that your prospects are having. Then, use that research to drive your content creation.

# GROWING INTO SOLUTIONS FOR MORE EFFECTIVE CONTENT PROMOTION

- **Create remarkable content.** This is a huge topic, but Miller points to one essential quality of great content: relevance. Hitting the right target isn't enough if the content isn't relevant. How do you make your content relevant? Many marketers use elaborately developed personas, but Miller says, "I'm not a big fan of personas. I think people overcomplicate personas, especially in the early stages of a strategy." Miller believes that the quickest path to relevance is through keyword research. "With keyword research, you're finding the conversations that are actually happening out there." To make this work, Miller says you need to empathize with your prospects, think about the number one question they're going to type in the search engine. "If you can surface the questions," Miller says, "you can surface the conversation, and then you can choose which conversations to own." Good commercial tools are available to help with this, but you can also do it for free using Google Keyword Planner. The point is, the data are all out there. Miller says, "The job of Google Keyword Planner is to deliver the most relevant response. Your job as a content marketer is to be that most relevant result and answer that question better than your competition."
- **Get the right tools to manage, track, and test your content.** This is also a big and rapidly evolving topic. Miller points out the importance of tools built into platforms like Facebook, LinkedIn, Google, and Twitter. "The analytics and tools built in to the different advertising platforms are very capable of providing the data you need to measure, improve and scale, and beyond those capabilities are great partners who take it even further," says Miller. As you scale further, you will need to consider solutions that help promote your content through multiple channels, marketing automation platforms that support high-volume personalization strategies and tie back to your customer relationship management solution, platforms that enable automated content optimization, and tools to manage workflow and your content repository, especially if you have a global content marketing strategy. The important thing, though, is that you don't need to acquire all this technology right away. "As you scale, you grow into the problems—and into their solutions," Miller says.

Finally, Miller says that as you scale, you need to tie everything together. "When you're building your team, you need a hybrid marketer who understands the different disciplines that make up the team's core activities."

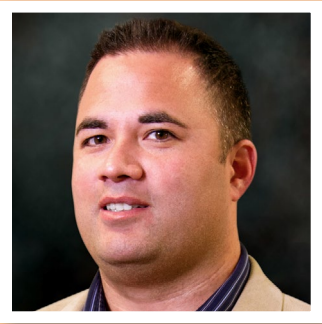
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*As you scale, you grow into the problems—and into their solutions.*

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# AUTOMATION IS KEY TO SUCCESSFUL PLANNING AND SCALING



**MARCUS  
VARNER**

Senior Content Marketing  
Manager,  
Workfront

Over the past nine years, Marcus Varner has worked on every type of content, from writing to video production to design. He is currently a senior content marketing manager at Workfront, where his focus is on breaking through the clutter while engaging audiences with brands' most foundational messaging. He currently oversees all corporate- and awareness-level content at Workfront.

Scaling content becomes chaotic when no one realizes or can communicate how long it takes to create a specific type of content. Marcus Varner, a senior content marketing manager at Workfront, says, "We tend to do a good job of measuring the efficacy of our content. We have tools that tell us how many page views and how many leads a piece of content generated. We're really good at that but not very good at measuring the process of creating the asset."

That discrepancy, according to Varner, can create chaos. "We might sort of know instinctively in a roundabout way that e-books take us about a month to create, but we don't have the data to back that estimate up." Instinct isn't usually enough to convince the chief marketing officer or demand generation manager that you can't squeeze his or her last-minute project into your schedule, however. The response is much better, according to Varner, if you can collect data about the time it takes to create an asset, and then present an explanation of that timeline. >>>



*In content marketing, it's easy to get into a communication silo because you're always in production mode.*



## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1 Automating the communication and content review process can streamline content production when scaling is essential.
- 2 Content automation tools can help reduce the barriers to scaling content and improve the planning process.



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# AUTOMATION IS KEY TO SUCCESSFUL PLANNING AND SCALING

To capture those data, some companies try to use spreadsheets. That may work for smaller organizations, Varner says, but “if you’re managing a large volume of content, keeping track of the hours spent on each phase becomes unwieldy. That’s where tools come in handy: The tools end up automating a lot of the communication.”

In fact, Varner recommends tools for another area in which chaos is common when planning and scaling content: communication. “In content marketing, it’s easy to get into a communication silo because you’re always in production mode, but when it comes down to it, the communication that happens between you and the other people in your organization around the planning or vetting of a certain content concept is worth its weight in gold.”

To ensure that communication flows in all aspects of content creation, Varner suggests, “You need to start taking steps to streamline, mostly because your velocity as a content manager becomes such a precious thing that you just can’t invite extra people to the party.” That means creating an atmosphere of understanding that extra communications can be time-consuming and counterproductive. Then, says Varner, “find a tool that allows you to automate as much of your communication as possible.” He also recommends choosing a tool that will keep all the communications about a project together in a single place because, “That lets you get down to responding to feedback, all in one place. That’s one critical strategy.”

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*Your velocity as a content manager becomes such a precious thing, that you just can't invite extra people to the party.*

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# FOR CONTENT MARKETING TO SCALE EFFECTIVELY, DOCUMENT YOUR PLAN



## GERRY MORAN

Associate Vice President,  
Global Head of Social Media,  
Cognizant

Gerry Moran is passionate about providing the right message on the right channel at the right time so that his audience learns something new and valuable. He's had the honor of working for many iconic brands over 30 years, having built teams and amazing brand experiences for Kodak, Purina, HBO, IKEA, Temple University, St. Joseph's University, SAP, several digital agencies, and—most recently—Cognizant.

In his popular coaching blog for content marketers at MarketingThink.com, Gerry Moran uses a conversational approach to explain complex challenges and presents easy-to-use ideas to help businesses engage readers and amplify their message. His writing style may seem easygoing, but Moran is a strong advocate of a disciplined supply-chain approach to content marketing. Every step in the process has to be considered as part of a larger plan, he insists, and only with a well-documented process can every handler in that process add value and extend the life and effectiveness of the company's messaging.

"When you're building a content strategy you need to think of it like a content marketing supply chain. If you don't write it all down, then that's pretty scary," Moran says. No matter what content management and production system you use, only with proper up-front planning (and effective measurement) can you avoid inefficiency, extra work, and missed marketing opportunities. To use a baking analogy, Moran suggests that when you bake a cake, it saves time to know in advance that you'll need extra batter to make cupcakes later.

"You really have to think through the whole process of what you need at each step so that you're truly developing for a 'big content' plan that takes everything into consideration," says Moran. At the same time, for the sake of efficiency, don't use a bulldozer when a shovel will do: Every piece of content is unique, and some have a bigger scope than others. All content, says Moran, will be more valuable, create more engagement, and extend beyond its initial use if you carefully think it through, properly document it, and clearly communicate the business goals to the team. >>>



*You really have to think through the whole process of what you need at each step so that you're truly developing for a 'big content' plan that takes everything into consideration.*



## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1 The personality of your team should drive tool selection.
- 2 All content will be more valuable, create more engagement, and go beyond its initial use if you think it through carefully, properly document it, and clearly communicate the business goals to the team.

# FOR CONTENT MARKETING TO SCALE EFFECTIVELY, DOCUMENT YOUR PLAN

Another result that comes from proper content planning and documentation is better and more efficient use of talent, from writers to videographers to bloggers and podcast hosts. Everyone, Moran says, prefers to have their work seen and actually used, so not only does good up-front planning and efficient real-time tracking make for better customer engagement, but it also motivates writers, artists, and other content creators to do a better job.

Moran admits that many good and comprehensive tools are available to help content managers and producers build efficient project-specific workflows, and then measure the results. That said, Moran likes to quote the phrase, “a fool with a tool is still a fool,” and suggests that you can’t really select and use an effective set of tools (or single comprehensive tool) if you haven’t clearly defined and documented your goals and “big picture” strategy.

“Most content teams are a mix of agencies and contractors, along with in-house crews,” says Moran, “and so diverse tools are in play, from social collaboration to having 15-minute standup scrums every day. The personality and skill level of your team should drive tool selection, Moran suggests. “Articulating your mission first and being clear about roles and responsibilities,” he says, “enables people to get work done on their own.”

“I like to look at my team as a set of superheroes, with everyone bringing a content superpower to the team,” he says. “Picking the right team member with the right superpower for each project is essential but nearly impossible without proper planning and documentation.” Without that discipline, Moran speculates, the handoff of content through its lifespan can be inefficient and create unnecessary obstacles.

“As a content leader, you need to offer specific value propositions to your content creators so that everyone shares in the responsibility,” says Moran. In that regard, he suggests preparing briefs before creating content, especially with more complex (and expensive) projects such as videos. He also recommends keeping the process focused. One perspective he suggests is “draw four lines and create a box, and then work within that box to be very efficient and very specific.” Only then will you truly be able to take advantage of the many content management tools available.

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*Picking the right team member with the right superpower for each project is essential but nearly impossible without proper planning and documentation.*

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# TO SCALE UP CONTENT QUALITY, FOCUS ON PROCESS AND COMMUNICATION



**KASHEM  
MIAH**

**Global Director, Social Media  
& Content Marketing,  
Shutterstock**

Kashem Miah is the global director of Social Media & Content Marketing at Shutterstock, where he leads a team focused on positioning Shutterstock as the go-to resource for campaign ideas; creative projects; and image, video, and music resources for marketers and creative professionals. Prior to joining Shutterstock, Kashem worked at Fiverr.com as the director of Social Media, Community & Content Marketing. As a native New Yorker, Kashem enjoys exploring new neighborhoods and is an avid collector of sneakers.



Twitter | Website

At technology company Shutterstock, a massive collection of high-quality, creative content—most of which a relatively small team bent on constant process and editorial improvement produce in house—supports the marketing of more than 100 million royalty-free images. Kashem Miah, global director, Social Media & Content Marketing, orchestrates the highly disciplined content planning, creation, and publishing process at the company, which has tasked him with continuously improving quality and effectiveness. Achieving that task, he says, requires mastering processes but also having clearly defined editorial standards and thorough knowledge of business goals and customer behavior.

Miah's experience and current practices for scaling content appropriately are applicable and adaptable to many organizations.

## **Focus on the Editorial Calendar**

At Shutterstock, Miah deploys a comprehensive content calendar, which serves as a central location in which the entire organization can see what's coming up and what's current; it also aids his team in setting priorities and juggling requests for content. "We have a massive content calendar that incorporates all the specific things we want to touch on for the next eight weeks," says Miah, "and that incorporates the various target customer segments we want to touch on, the themes that we think will make sense for the next two months, and things we'd like to experiment with." He shares this calendar throughout the company so that departments can conduct brainstorming sessions to figure out which type of content fits each theme or target. From there, teams can create "miniature versions" of content calendars that include specifics like social media logs and multichannel deployment details. >>>



*Make sure that standards and quality issues are clear and shared throughout the organization.*



## **KEY TAKEAWAYS**

- 1** Employ a shared content calendar as the backbone and central gathering place for all content-related information.
- 2** Try to keep a parallel content "experimentation" process going whereby people can try and measure new types of content independently, then implement that content into the regular content process after appropriate updates.

# TO SCALE UP CONTENT QUALITY, FOCUS ON PROCESS AND COMMUNICATION

## **Avoid Bottlenecks in the Review Process**

Thanks to an emphasis on editorial quality, Shutterstock has a full-time content editor/publisher who reviews material to determine whether it's ready to post. To avoid significant backups, however, several basic review steps take place before the editor does a final read. "We try to make it easier for the content editor," says Miah, "by making sure that by the time content gets to the editor, several prior editing layers have gotten rid of the little stuff, like spelling and grammar errors (and departmental review as necessary). The editor can rather spend his or her time making sure the content is on brand, on message, and fits the needs of the brief we created at the beginning of the process."

## **Clearly Define Success and Quality Standards in Advance**

"We've done a few things to make sure that standards and quality issues are clear and shared throughout the organization," says Miah. "We send emails to each department that document what we have discovered about the results from high-quality content versus low-quality content, and we always back this information up with metrics." In weekly meetings, team leads discuss real-time and other results, and Miah and his team are developing an internal library of best practices the company has developed over the past few months.

## **Implement Short Term and Long Term Planning Cycles**

Although he admits that it can be tough to focus on longer-term goals when short-term deadlines keep everyone busy, Miah strongly suggests a two- to three-month planning cycle for larger content pieces and would ideally like to see his team making some plans six or more months in advance. He tries to keep a parallel content "experimentation" process going whereby people can try and measure new types of content independently, then implement that content into the regular content process after appropriate updates.

Sometimes, testing against the most basic assumptions can be rewarding. Shutterstock discovered, for example, that fewer but longer pieces of content were more effective, at least for its customers. This finding proved contrary to many people's belief that shorter content was preferable.

## **Continually Improve the Process**

One of the things Miah would love to do is design a better process whereby his team can produce content for even more departmental needs and free up time for better long-term planning (six months to a year). "I'd love to get to a point where the flow is so simple," he says, "that individuals or departments can fill out a request with all the information, and then the tool automatically prioritizes it before getting it to our team."

*"We send emails to each department that document what we have discovered about the results from high-quality content versus low-quality content, and we always back this information up with metrics."*

# ACHIEVING CONSISTENCY THROUGH EDITORIAL PROCESS



**BRYAN  
KRAMER**

CEO, TED Speaker,  
Best-Selling Author,  
PureMatter

Author of *There Is No More B2B or B2C: It's Human to Human* #H2H, Bryan Kramer is a social business strategist and CEO of PureMatter, where he has led his agency to consistent growth over the past 13 years. He has been listed as the 43rd most talked-about marketer in a study by LeadTail, one of the Top 50 Social CEOs on Twitter by the *Huffington Post*, and a Top 25 Influencer to follow by *Forbes*.



Twitter



Website



LinkedIn

Bryan Kramer, chief executive officer of PureMatter, says that scaling content marketing requires the right balance of tools and people, but it's important to remember that "the tools and the technology are accountable; the people are not." You can set your tools and technologies to perform specific processes, but people are a variable: You must anticipate that people won't always behave as you expect.

"People are the most challenging part of the equation," says Kramer. "If the editorial calendar is pulling in external, paid resources to build your content marketing funnel, then I doubt you'll have as many deadline problems. If your editorial calendar consists only of internal resources, you're probably going to have deadline issues because these people have a job and editorial isn't their main job."

Kramer recommends that you structure your editorial calendar as a mix of external, paid resources and internal resources. The paid content will be the mainstay of your editorial calendar, while the free content, which you typically pull from within your organization, can be worked into the calendar when it's available. He also suggests that you dedicate a staff member to walk content creators through each component and set reminders and deadlines. >>>



People expect consistency, but consistency is the hardest thing to achieve.



## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1 Scaling content requires building processes that take into account editorial strategy and workflow to achieve consistency, plan for contingencies, and optimize for speed.
- 2 Establish an editorial governance plan so that the editor can be free to approve content within parameters you set.

# ACHIEVING CONSISTENCY THROUGH EDITORIAL PROCESS

Content marketing hasn't yet evolved to the point where companies have a dedicated content or publishing arm. "Typically, it's just a few people—possibly just one person depending on the size of the company—trying to pull content from various resources," says Kramer. Given that fragmented scenario, "The thing you want most is to stay consistent with your content. That's the toughest challenge. People expect consistency, but consistency is the hardest thing to achieve." For example, Kramer says, if you set out with a plan to publish something every Thursday on a specific topic, after you've done so five or six times, people are going to expect that post on Thursdays. Therefore, Kramer suggests assigning the task of ensuring consistency across your editorial calendar to a specific staff member and making it a core part of that person's responsibilities.

Another suggestion Kramer has for scaling content is to "put a governance plan in place that you work out long before the content development begins." He says that this is a technique that newspapers use: A chief editor has oversight over what goes into the following day's publication. The editor is aware of the parameters, what he or she can publish without further approval, and what type of content he or she must escalate for approval. Kramer suggests tasking the content editor with this type of governance, telling him or her: "You can live within this area, and I don't care what you do as long as it meets these standards, but if we're going to write a special piece that has to do with anything outside that remit, you'll need the chief marketing officer or the content director to sign off on it." With these guidelines in place, you've established a process that allows your team to scale content as quickly as possible. If you have a piece now and then that needs to be escalated for approval, it won't interfere with the established flow of content.

"Every single aspect of content is process driven," says Kramer, "and the more effectively you establish the rules up front, the faster content development will be at the end."

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*The more effectively you establish the rules up front, the faster content development will be at the end.*

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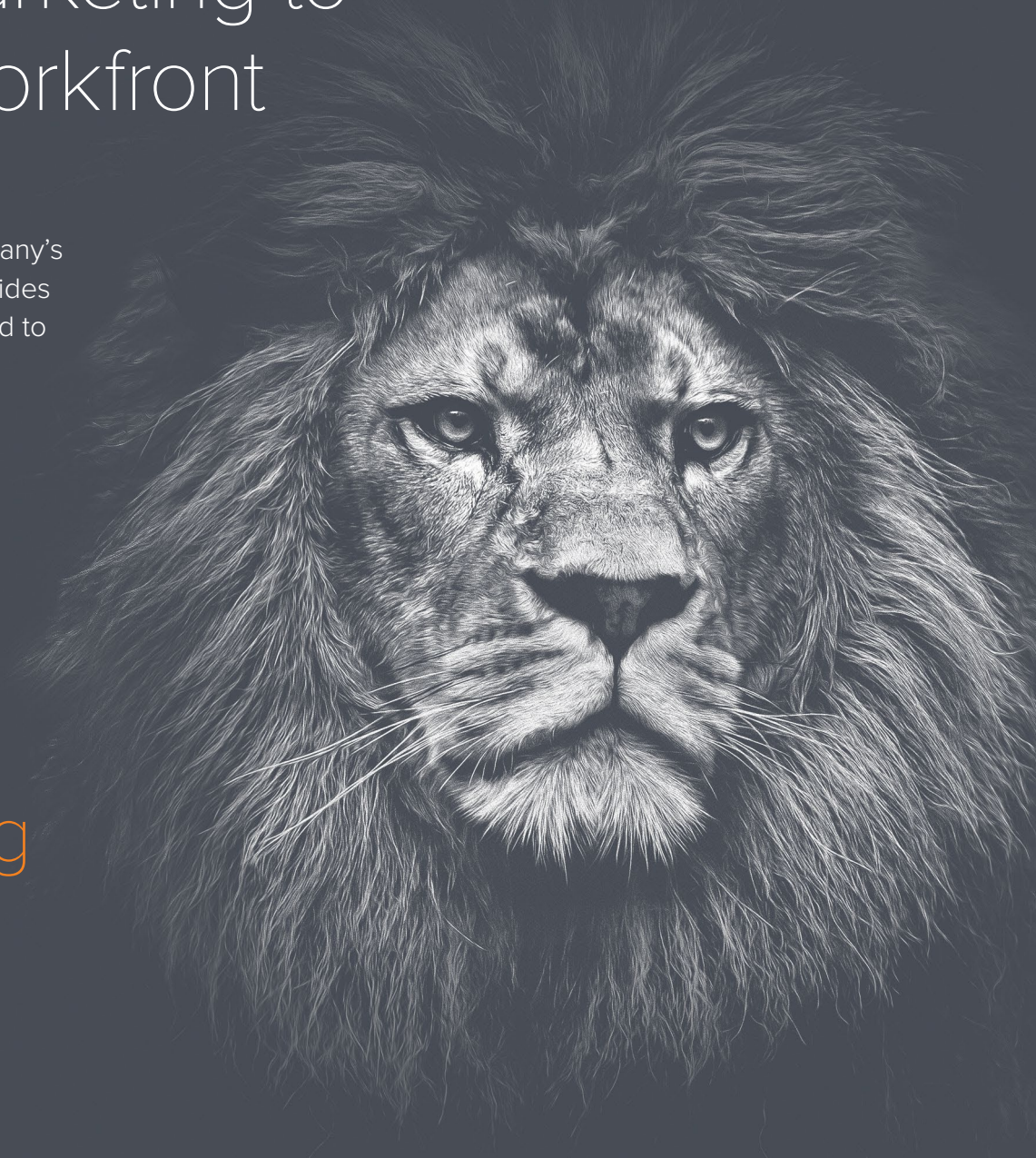


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