Is Your Business a Fit?
7 Questions to Ask Yourself
Content Marketing Self-Assessment
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Consumers are increasingly using online search as the starting point for buying decisions. But they’re not looking for ads, or product sell-sheets with lists of features and benefits. They’re looking for informative, engaging, advice-driven content that can help them make the right purchase decision – no matter what they’re buying.

That’s where content marketing comes in – value-added resources such as videos, whitepapers, blog articles, webinars or infographic that are created with the intent to be found online by interested consumers. Paired with the smart integration of business-specific keywords and tied to CRM efforts, a well-executed content strategy can become a powerful sales engine, automating the process of lead generation and qualification.

Here are 7 questions to consider when determining whether your business can benefit from a content marketing strategy.

1. DOES YOUR BUSINESS HAVE A LONG COMPLEX SALES PROCESS?

A strong content marketing plan allows you to gain insight into the mindset of your users by targeting information and offers appropriate to each stage of the sales process. For example, once a user fills out a form to download a document you’ve published, they become a trackable lead that can be followed through the sales funnel. This ability to monitor your users provides you with a valuable feedback loop, allowing you to understand your customers’ decision-making process and in turn giving you the opportunity to refine your processes and offers.

2. DO YOU SELL INTANGIBLES LIKE BUSINESS SERVICES OR SOFTWARE PRODUCTS?

When you sell an intangible good or service, you are essentially selling a promise. Since trust is so important in this type of sale, providing value-added content is one of the best ways to build credibility and goodwill with your target audience. You can position yourself as an expert and thought-leader, tipping the scales in your favour as your prospects conduct their research.
3. DOES A NEW CUSTOMER REPRESENT A POTENTIALLY HIGH VALUE FOR YOUR COMPANY?

Companies that sell commodities or low value goods tend to compete mostly on price. Companies that sell high-value goods or services, however, must invest much more effort in building trust with a potential client. While initially labour intensive, creating “evergreen” content such as white papers and buying guides can quickly create that trust your business needs. Content development therefore becomes easier to justify when it has the potential to pull high-value clients into your sales funnel.

4. DOES YOUR COMPANY’S DIFFERENTIATION STEM FROM SPECIALIZED EXPERTISE?

If your company’s value proposition involves specialized expertise, a knowledge leadership strategy can be very effective in differentiating you from your competitors. In addition to building credibility with potential buyers, you can create a reservoir of goodwill when you are the source of insight that allows a customer to feel as though they are making a better buying decision.

5. IS YOUR AUDIENCE FAMILIAR WITH HOW TO ASSESS AND BUY THE PRODUCT OR SERVICE YOU SELL?

If your audience is unlikely to have previously purchased the type of product or services you sell, content marketing provides you with a good opportunity to educate them on the buying process and favourably position your company. Whitepapers, checklists and buying guides (such as the one you’re reading) are most likely to appeal to serious buyers and can act as a qualifying tool while moving a lead through your sales funnel.

6. DO YOU SELL TO CONSUMERS OR OTHER BUSINESSES?

While both B2B and B2C companies can benefit from content marketing, businesses that sell to other businesses usually need to win over a greater number of stakeholders in order to complete a sale. Content marketing can pave the way by creating documents that decision-makers can share amongst themselves to ensure they are all on the same page; this process can save you time and effort in qualifying prospects.
7. IS YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE AWARE OF THE PROBLEM YOU SOLVE, OR DO THEY NEED TO BE EDUCATED?

In cases where your target audience is not educated about the problem you solve, you can capture their attention with related topics that are more likely to be searched. For example, many people may not consider the risk of identity theft as a relevant topic to them. But if your business offers identity theft protection services, you can steer prospects toward a greater awareness of the need for your solution by targeting terms like password protection, Credit card applications, and online privacy.

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