



A Guide to Content Marketing for Financial Services

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Introduction

Every post, article, video, or website on content marketing will tell you how critical it is for engaging and growing your audience, developing your brand, generating leads, and driving sales.

Many of these posts come with inherent assumptions that a) it's relatively simple to 'knock-up' compelling, thought-provoking, and valuable content whenever the mood takes you, b) you have the time and energy to regularly produce good content, and c) you have the inclination to do so.

Truth is, consistently creating good content that has a positive impact on your business ain't easy.

So, if you're a financier that understands the importance of content marketing but has far too much on your plate, how do you consistently create great content that's valued by your target audience, positions you as an authority, and helps generate new business?

That's where this guide comes in...

It's been written for time-strapped financiers to use as an aide-memoire to help them consistently create great content, grow their audience, develop their brand, generate leads, and support their sales efforts.

Definition of Content Marketing

So, what exactly are we talking about when we say 'content marketing?'

The Content Marketing Association (CMA) - yes that's a real thing - defines content marketing as:

“The discipline of creating quality branded editorial content across all media channels and platforms to deliver engaging relationships, consumer value, and measurable success for brands”.

It's not about just pitching your products or services, it's about providing valuable, relevant, and useful content to help your target audience solve their issues.

Content marketing is the most important weapon in your marketing arsenal!

Without content marketing, you've got nothing to post on social media. Nothing for your website, blog posts, articles, YouTube videos, podcasts, emails, etc.

Everything starts with content.

The Rise of Content Marketing

An increase in the awareness and importance of content marketing has given rise to an almost exponential increase in the volume of content being produced.

We're now overwhelmed by the sheer volume of content produced...

Most of it mediocre at best.

Depending on whose research you believe, people on average are exposed to between 1,000 and 5,000 advertising and marketing messages per day!

This presents a major challenge to those financiers wishing to create engaging and valuable content for their target audience.

"If you build it they will come" has never been further from the truth as far as content marketing is concerned.

It's not enough to produce great content and hope your audience will see it.

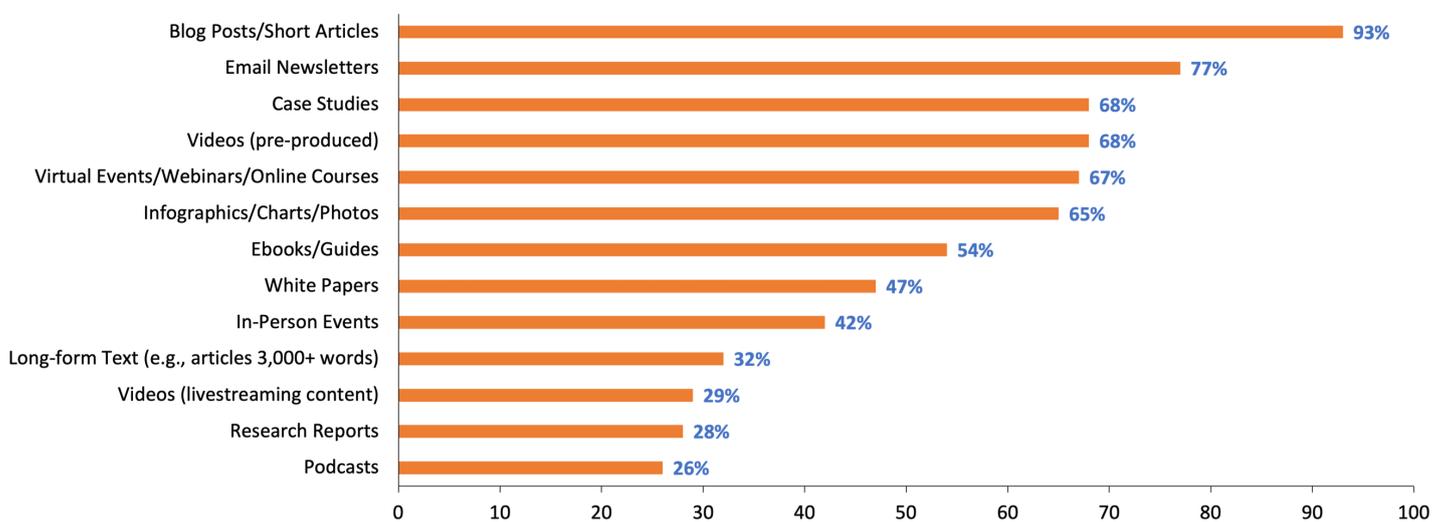
You need to create it, promote it, and get it in front of the right people at the right time.

Types of Content Marketing

Given that almost anything written, spoken, or visual can be considered content, the list of activities that fall under 'content marketing' is vast.

The list below shows the most popular content types used by business-to business marketers over the last 12 months.

Content Types B2B Marketers Used in Last 12 Months



11th Annual B2B Content Marketing Survey - July 2020

Of all the content types used blog posts/short articles, email newsletters, and case studies remain the most used by B2B marketers, although there has been a noticeable rise in pre-produced video content on the major platforms.

Virtual events/webinars/online courses and blog posts/short articles have produced the best overall content marketing results among organizations surveyed. This is likely due to changing working practices during the pandemic.

Benefits of Content Marketing

So, what are the main benefits of creating good quality content?

Your audience will stay with you longer

Great content not only delivers value but creates positive experiences for potential customers. Encouraging them to spend more time with the content you create and engage with new content you produce.

Quality content helps your business gain traction on social media

Increasing followers on social media is pointless if they're not engaged enough or don't see enough value to be converted into clients when they're looking to buy.

Your audience will trust you

The more quality content your audience sees from you the more likely they are to have positive associations with your company. Consistently delivering value allows your audience to trust your advice and recommendations.

You'll generate more and better leads

The more your audience sees and engages with your content, the more likely they are to purchase from you (rather than a competitor) in the future when they're ready to buy.

The SEO benefits will make you more visible

The more high-quality content you produce consistently the better it'll be for your SEO efforts, helping you rank higher in search results.

Great content can position you as an authority

Establishing your business as a credible resource for high-quality valuable information help position you as an authority in your industry and/or target segments.

It can build your brand

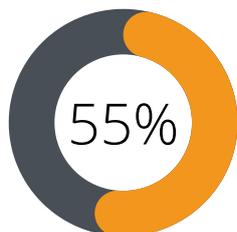
Content marketing allows you a degree of control over the narrative. It allows you to tell people more about who you are, what you do, how you work, and who you like to work with.

It creates loyal fans

Providing value through content creates brand advocates. These are the 'fans' that will return to you time and again because you have something interesting, valuable, and relevant to say. They will also share your content with their networks of like-minded individuals.



Of small B2B companies (1-99 employees) have no dedicated content marketer



Of companies that regularly blog generate 55% more website visitors



6 out of 10 consumers are inspired to check out a product after reading useful and relevant content about it

Developing your Content Marketing Strategy

A content marketing strategy takes your business goals and uses content to help you achieve them.

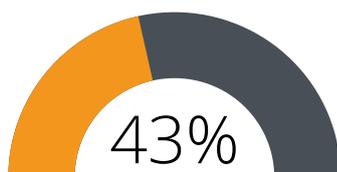
Here are a few questions you should consider when developing your own content marketing strategy;

What's the overall goal of your content? - Is it brand awareness? Generating new leads? For client retention? To nurture your key business introducers? Or a combination of any/all of the above?

Who are you targeting? - What group, sector, type of business, or person do you want to read or see your content?

What problem will you be solving? - People will only engage with your content if they believe it will solve a particular problem they have, answer a question, or help them achieve a goal. If your content isn't doing any of those things, why should they care?

What content formats will you focus on? - As we've seen, there are many different types of content. You can't focus on all of them. You need to focus on those formats your target audience most engages with, be that blog posts, video, social posts, infographics, etc.



Only 43% of B2B companies have a content marketing strategy

What channels will you use to publish your content? - Again, there are many channels and platforms on which to publish your content - LinkedIn, YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, Email, etc. You need to find the one or two your target audience is most active on and focus on those.

How often will you publish? - Do you have the capacity and capability to publish daily, bi-weekly, or weekly? Whatever you choose, you need to be able to commit to a consistent publishing routine. It's no good publishing three items one week then nothing for two weeks. At the very least you should aim to be publishing something meaningful at least once per week.

What will you say? - This is where you brainstorm the topics and ideas you'll produce content on. These need to be areas of interest, problems, issues, challenges, or opportunities for your target audience.

How will you manage content creation and publication? - Who will create, edit, and publish your content? What resources will you need? Is this something you can do in-house or will you need to outsource it?

How to create great Content

Creating great content isn't simple but it doesn't have to be difficult either...

If you follow a few rules.

Have a clear goal

Before you put pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard) you must have a clear purpose in mind for the content you're about to produce.

Creating content that provides information is different from content that's designed to generate leads.

If you want to deliver something that's valuable to your target audience it must be squarely focused on the specific issue you're trying to address.

Understand who you're writing for

The very best content targets a specific audience and addresses their particular needs or concerns. So it's important to know who your audience is.

Remember, you're not producing something that makes you feel good, but something that's useful and/or valuable to your target audience.

Make a value or result promise in the headline

People are busy. 80% of them will only ever read the headline or title of your content. They'll decide whether to engage with the rest of your content based on this alone.

So make sure you promise them something of value or a result upfront...

Then obviously deliver on that promise.

Intrigue and clickbait may work...once. But if your content doesn't deliver or is pure subterfuge, they won't be coming back.

Make sure your content reflects your brand

This is especially true if you've engaged someone outside your business to produce content on your behalf.

If your brand is positioned as serious and authoritative, producing comedic content laced with profanities probably isn't going to work for you.

That's not to say you couldn't make that work. Just be mindful that whatever you produce must be congruent with your brand and the values of your business.

Stand out from the crowd

At the risk of contradicting myself, producing content that's the same as everyone else in your sector is not a winning strategy.

Why should your target audience come to you if they can get exactly the same content from your competitor?

You need to stand out from the crowd to get noticed.

Perhaps you can produce better quality content. Or your content is more actionable. Or you have a contrarian viewpoint to others in your field.

Whatever it is, you need to find a legitimate reason for standing out...

But it needs to be for something your target audience cares about. There's no point being different if no one cares!

Back up your arguments with data

It doesn't matter if people disagree with you (that might be a good thing). Just make sure you have data to back up your point of view, then they can say whatever they like!

Write like a human being

If nothing else, please write and speak like you're a normal person having a conversation with another normal person.

Use contractions, common speech, and easy-to-understand jargon-free language. Your audience will thank you for it.

Apart from government institutions, academics, banks, and lawyers, no one says "you are".

Read it aloud before publishing

Particularly if it's written content.

Before hitting 'publish' or 'send', read what you've written out loud...

Or better still get someone else to read it. Preferably someone that doesn't know the subject you've written about.

If it sounds weird, unnatural, or just doesn't make sense when read aloud, chances are it won't make sense to your audience either.

This is especially true in financial services where jargon and TLAs (Three Letter Acronyms) run amok.

Just because a word or phrase is obvious to you or well used in your industry doesn't mean your audience will have a clue what you're talking about.

In fact, avoid jargon and TLAs altogether. Assume your audience won't know what you're talking about and create content in plain easy to understand language.

Be consistent

This is one of the most important elements in developing your brand and building your audience.

Aim to deliver valuable and actionable content regularly.

Decide what regular means to you; daily, weekly, bi-weekly...

But aim for at least one piece of content per week. For social posts, aim for twice a week to start with.

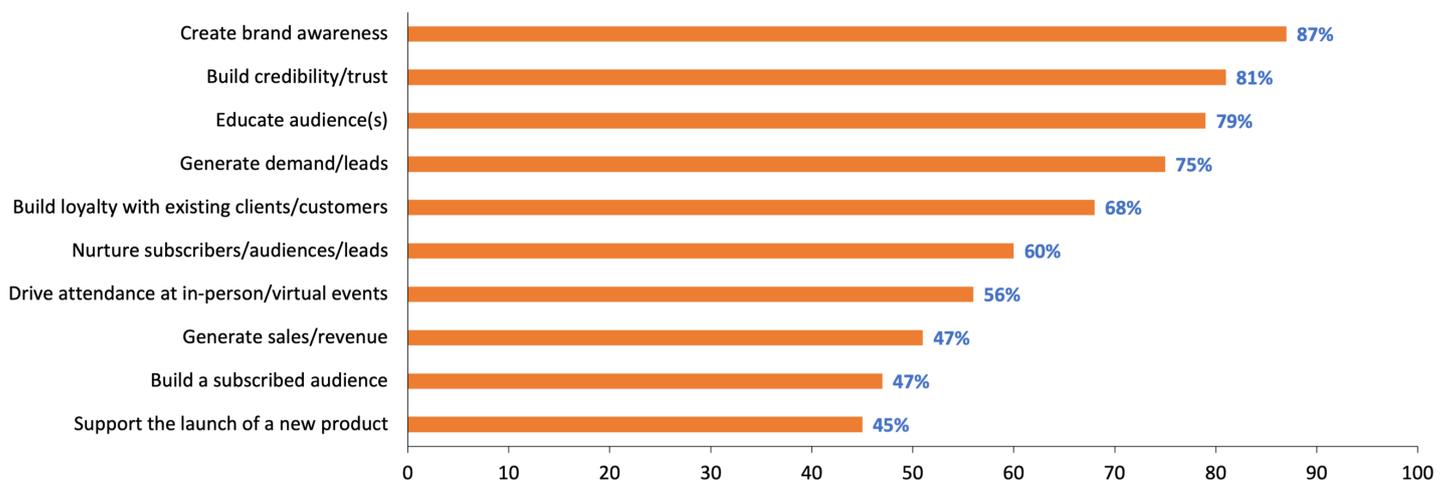
Tell your audience what to do next

Whether reader or viewer, you must tell your audience what to do once they've engaged with your content.

Do you want them to contact you? How? Or is there an action you'd like them to take to get the most out of your content?

Whatever it is you want them to do make it clear by telling them what they should do next.

Goals B2B marketers have achieved by using content marketing successfully in last 12 months



Getting the Most Out of Your Content

Writing a kick-ass blog post or article that provides real value to your target audience is less than useless if it just sits in a dusty corner of your website where no one can see it.

Here are a few things you could do to get the most out of the content you create.

Send it to your email list

There's no guarantee that because you're connected on social media your audience will see your content.

The mysteries of the social media algorithms mean that not everyone who's a connection will be shown what you post.

Even if they are, it's good practice to send a copy directly to those contacts in your database. Preferably with a personalised "I created this and thought you might find it useful..." type message.

Post about it in a scheduled post

If you post at regular times/days on social media, add a notification of your new content to one of these posts.

Think of it as a trailer to your main feature, a news item, or an update of company activity that your audience needs to know about.

Email anyone you directly mentioned in your article

This is just good manners. But is also an opportunity to extend the reach of your content.

If you mention specific people, others' work you've used, or links to their work, send your content to them with a personalized message. There's a good chance they will respond with a comment, and they may even share it with their own network.

Syndicate content with entities like Medium and LinkedIn

All publishers favour content created using their tools and platforms.

However, for best practice, don't just copy and paste content created for platform X onto platform Y. Instead, create slightly different versions for each platform.

For example, a blog post for your website may become a 'How To' post on LinkedIn.

Using content in this way gets you more bang for your buck for each piece of content you produce.

Create shareable graphics & video

Infographics are a great way to visually condense and share longer-form written content.

It's a good way to stand out from the crowd, and most platforms are now favouring visual or moving/video content over static text.

If you have the tools and confidence, you could also record your blog post as a video for YouTube. Your blog effectively becomes the script for the video, or visa-versa.

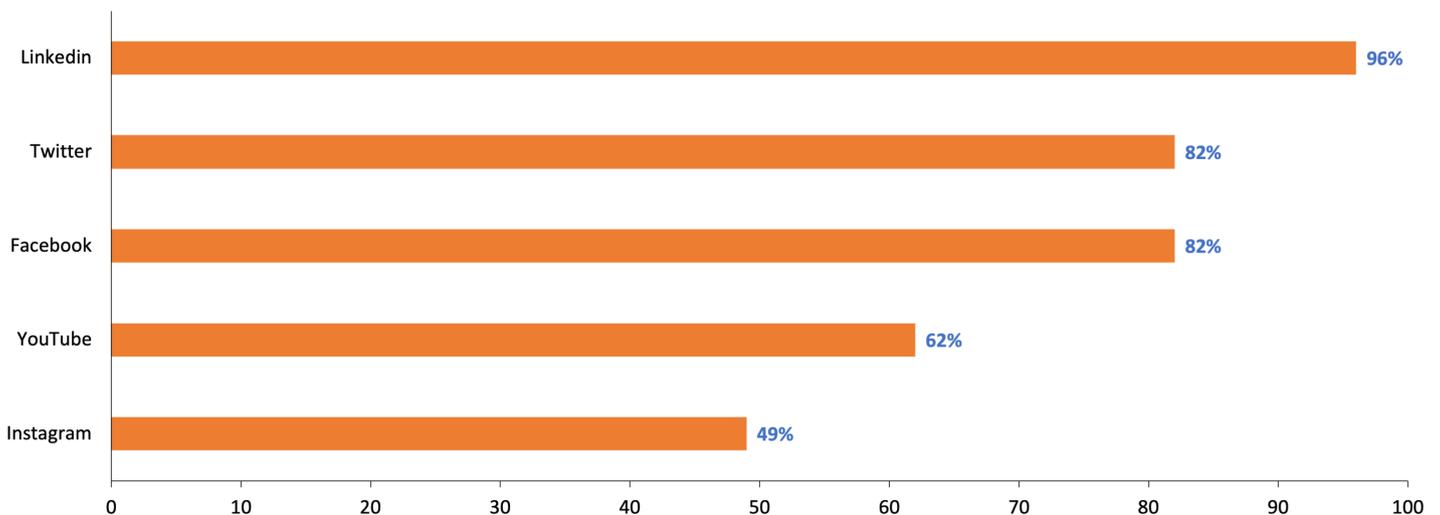
Create a list of the key takeaways

People are busy. So a list of the 8-12 key points to take away from your content may be a better option for some of your audience.

They may not have time to read your 2,000-word masterpiece, but they can quickly scan a 'Top 10 list'...

Which can link back to the longer post/article that they can access later when they have time.

Organic social media platforms B2B content marketers used in last 12 months



Conclusion

Content marketing is one of the most effective methods for growing and engaging with your audience, developing your brand, and driving sales.

As such, it's a mission-critical method for any financial services business that is serious about growing, making an impact, and delivering value to its target audience.

This guide provides an overview only of information, which if implemented correctly will enable any financial services company to increase their brand awareness, generate more and better leads, and be seen as an authority in their industry.

About the Author

My name is Richard Miller.

I've spent over 20 years in marketing, helping commercial finance companies engage with and convert more of those businesses they really want to work with.



Content marketing has been the core element of my marketing process throughout.

I use content marketing to position financial services brands as authorities in their industry, generate new business, engage and retain existing customers.

If you'd like to learn more about the processes outlined in this guide or the other work I do, please feel free to contact me directly.

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CONTENT MARKETING
IS A COMMITMENT,
NOT A CAMPAIGN.

JON BUSCALL - CHIEF OWNER - JONTUSMEDIA
