

VALUABLE CONTENT STRATEGY WORKBOOK

A step-by-step approach to a
well thought out content strategy.

VC:



A companion workbook to the 10-step approach set out in
chapter 11 of the new Valuable Content Marketing book.

CONTENTS

STEPS 1 TO 10 FOR YOUR CONTENT STRATEGY



Without **Strategy**, Content Is **Just Stuff**, And The World Has **Enough Stuff**.

Arjun Basu

If you want to be more effective at content marketing, take the time to document your strategy and follow it closely.

A content strategy is the means by which you make your website and content work for your business. It forces you to make decisions on all the big questions – why, who, what, when, where and how. It helps you focus all your content activities around a clear goal.

It's a research-based thinking process to ensure your content is valuable to you (delivers on your business objectives) and valuable to your readers (answers their questions): win, win.

An effective content strategy starts with objectives and ends with results – a process and a plan to get you from A to B using the content on your website and beyond.

This workbook helps you to think through all the elements you need to consider. Use it to document the decisions you make as you work through all 10 steps in this book.

Your valuable content strategy will become a living, breathing document that you can evolve and refine over time.

STEP 1 • GET CLEAR ON YOUR GOALS

What is the difference that you want content marketing to make to your business?

Set **SMART** objectives:
SPECIFIC, **M**EASURABLE,
ACHIEVABLE, **R**EALISTIC, **T**IMELY.

Be specific about the areas of your business you want to make the biggest difference to. The clearer your focus, the more targeted your content marketing efforts will be. It will be easier to track and measure your success further down the line.

Questions to answer:

1 What is your ambition? Your business goals for the next 1-3 years?

2 Why valuable content marketing? What's the driver, the pressure for change? What exactly are you trying to achieve with this approach?

3 What happens if you do nothing?

4 How important is this compared to other things you are doing as a business?

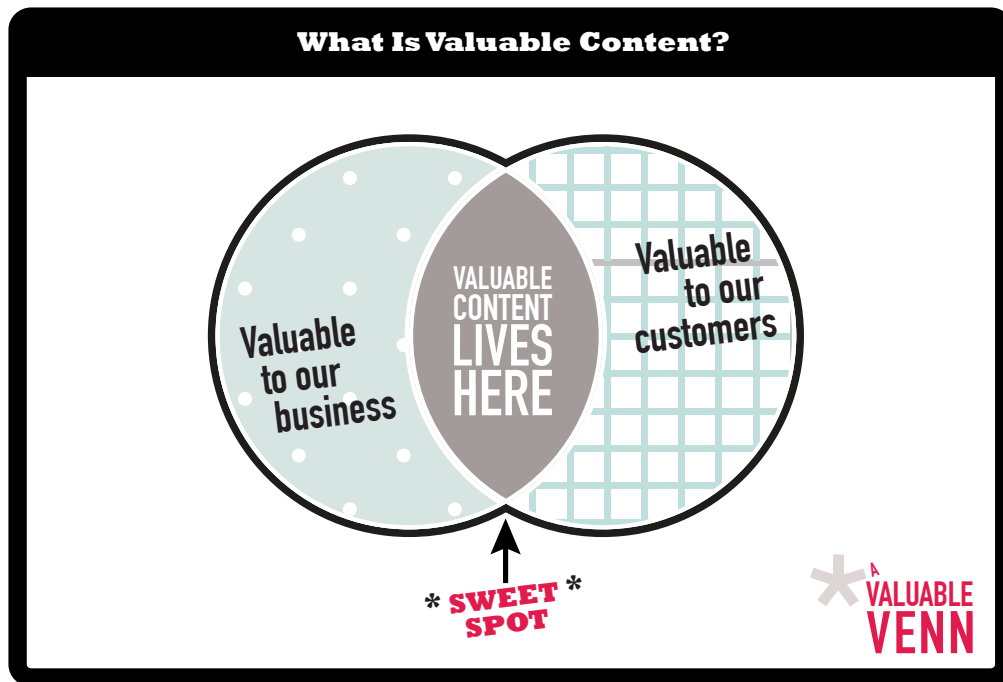
5 What are the goals and objectives you'll set for your content marketing?

VALUABLE TIP

This is where content strategy meets business strategy. If you are not clear on your goals and objectives as a business we recommend addressing this by talking to a good business advisor or coach.

STEP 2 • KNOW YOUR BUSINESS

Valuable content is found at the intersection between your customers' needs and your business expertise. A big part of your strategy is to uncover this content sweet spot.



Before we drill down into your customers' needs, make time for a bit of naval gazing and look inside your company. This will help you to position your content firmly in your area of expertise.

If you miss out the 'know your business' step there's a danger that you'll create content that meets your customers' needs (and they will have many) but will never win you any business.

STEP 2 • KNOW YOUR BUSINESS

Questions to answer:

1 What are you selling?

2 To whom? Where's your niche?
Who are your ideal customers?

3 Why do they buy from you?
What sets your business apart for them?

4 What do you want to be famous for?

5 What geography do you serve?

6 What are your competitors up to?
What content are they creating?

VALUABLE TIP



The clearer you are from the start about who you are as a business, what you are selling and what you want to be known for, the better the valuable content you create is going to work for you.

STEP 3 • KNOW YOUR CUSTOMERS

Knowing what to talk about with your content relies on knowing who you are talking to and what they care about and value. You'll know stuff about your customers of course, but to create content that really hits the spot you'll need to go deeper.

Get out of the office and ask your customers directly; call them up; spend some time interviewing them to uncover their real needs. Their answers will always surprise you.

Questions & Actions to consider:

1 Who are your ideal customers?

2 What do they struggle with? Why do they need you? What do they value about your product or service? What do they want to know?

3 What questions do your customers ask at each step of their buying journey?

4 What content can you provide to answer their questions and solve their challenges at each step?

VALUABLE TIP

Create customer personas - a detailed picture of the typical customers you want your content to serve. These help you target your content accurately, and give you and your team a way to quickly reference what has been learned about your customers when writing and creating content in the future.

LOOK DEEPER – CREATE CUSTOMER ‘PERSONAS’

Complete this template for each group of customers you serve. Hold a real person in mind – maybe a customer you’ve really enjoyed working with and would like to work with again.

PERSONA NAME	
Background information and demographics	
Why they are an ideal customer:	
What’s going on in their world?	
Close to their hearts:	
Communications preferences:	
Top 5 questions on their mind (that your produce or service can solve)?	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.
Questions they are asking at each step on their buying journey?	When researching? When evaluating our product/service? When starting work or buying from us?

STEP 4 • FIND THE STORY BEHIND THE CONTENT

People don't buy **what** you do,
they buy **WHY** you do it.

Simon Sinek

The most valuable content of all communicates a strong story – not just a story of what a business does, or how it does it, but WHY the business exists, its purpose in the world – beyond financial targets. Communicating an authentic and inspiring purpose matters. It helps you to build trust and win more of the right kind of business; it sets your company apart and galvanises support – a story for everyone to get behind and share.

Your content is the vehicle that takes the story out there.

Questions to answer:

1 Why does your business exist? What's its purpose in the world?

2 Write down your mission, your story as a business. To help you:

- What's the 6-word strapline that captures this mission?
- What's the hashtag #? e.g. #smarterplanet, #coldwatersurf
- Write your manifesto, starting with the words 'we believe that...*'

- Write it in two paragraphs for the 'About Us' page on your website

A GOOD BUSINESS STORY

- **Why does your business exist? What's its purpose in the world?**
- **Is customer-centric, not company-centric.**
- **Is not a sales pitch.** As Simon Sinek says 'It's about purpose, cause or belief – the reason your organisation exists, beyond financial targets.'
- **Makes you memorable.** It sets you apart from your competitors, and helps the right people choose you.
- **It doesn't aim to attract the whole world.** It sets out to attract the people you really want to work with.
- **It's not about putting on an act; rather it's about being more of what you are.** For people inside the business, the story should feel natural, not forced. Something that's as easy to say to your neighbour as it is to a potential lead. Simple and clear. Your story should give you confidence in your identity.
- **It needs to engage emotionally,** and make the right people grasp the essence of what you're about in a few words. It's about how you make your customers feel.
- **It starts with belief** – think manifesto or crusade.
- **It communicates the happy ever after** – so talk outcomes.
- **It's a promise** – love it enough to live by it.
- **It's brave and bold.**
- **It's an idea that will stretch** – you'll know it when you've found it.

You'll know when it's right when you can communicate it easily, succinctly and with conviction. Here's an exercise to help you hone your story:

Valuable tip: Your story is important, but don't hold up the whole process by trying to nail it. We reckon if you're 65-70% there, then that's fine. Be prepared to come back and refine. Your story can and will evolve.

VALUABLE TIP

Your story is important, but don't hold up the whole process by trying to nail it. We reckon if you're 65-70% there, then that's fine. Be prepared to come back and refine. Your story can and will evolve.

STEP 5 • NAILING YOUR VALUABLE CONTENT SWEET SPOT AND VISION

Now we get to the heart of your valuable content strategy process.

What is your content sweet spot?

What is the conversation you want to own with your content? Think big here. As a business, what are you better equipped than anyone else to help people with? If you've got the bigger story straight then you're in the ballpark. We just want you to go a little further here – the sweet spot is what's going to hit it out of the park.

Questions to answer:

- 1 As a business, what are you better equipped than anyone else to talk about through your content?**
- 2 What do you want your content to be famous for?**
- 3 Where does your valuable content sweet spot lie?**

What are the big topics?

Identify your sweet spot and write down the main topics of conversation that you will host throughout the year.

OUR CONTENT SWEET SPOT	
TOPIC 1	
TOPIC 2	
TOPIC 3	
TOPIC 4	
TOPIC 5	

Once you have selected your themes, think SEO. Use Keyword research to look at the terms people search for online. Refine the titles of your categories on your website accordingly.

VALUABLE TIP

CONTENT STRATEGY ON A PAGE

- **We will become the go-to resource for...**
(describe your ideal customers)

- **Who want to...**
(set out the ultimate outcome or value that you can help them achieve)

- **By learning about...**
(your content marketing sweet spot)

- **What sets our content apart is...**
(what attributes make your content particularly valuable?)

- **This will help our business to...**
(the goals you've defined in step 1)



A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing, corresponding to the five bullet points on the left.

THE VALUABLE MARKETING MANIFESTO

WE WILL FOCUS OUR MARKETING ON CREATING
REALLY VALUABLE CONTENT
FOR OUR CUSTOMERS: * * * * *

- We will put our **customers'** needs **first**
- We will **help**, not sell
- We will **give** ideas away generously
- We will always **know why**
- We will **focus** on a niche
- We will tell a **bigger story**

- We will commit to **quality**
- We will **write from the heart**

FOR FREE

STEP 6 • YOUR CONTENT COMMITMENT AND PLAN

Your aim is to work towards a bank of high quality, valuable content that you can distribute effectively throughout the year. Now you have your sweet spot nailed and your vision clear it's time to work out how to make it happen.

Remember: **consistency** and **quality** are always more important than volume. Aim for an achievable pattern – something you can stick to as a business.

Questions to answer:

- **What's your schedule? What commitment will you make to valuable content over the next 12 months?**

Every day we will:	
Every week we will:	
Every month we will:	
Every quarter we will:	
Every year we will:	

- **What's your publishing plan *** – plan your content calendar for the year. What content are you going to publish when, how, and where?



You can vary this as events arise – hot industry news, for example, that demands a fast response. The plan can flex but it really does help to start with a plan.

STEP 7 • PREPARE YOUR PLATFORM AND PICK YOUR

You have defined the vision for your content marketing. What kind of platform will you need to support you in making that work?

How will you create it and how will you get it out there? What content creation and distribution tools will you add to the mix to support your strategy?

Questions to answer:

- **What types of content will you choose to create?**

(Remember, you'll need a mix of stock and flow content through the year)

- **What content creation tools will you need to support this?**

- **How will you distribute your content? What distribution tools will you require?**

- **What functionality does your content strategy demand from your website?**

- **Other marketing tools to support your strategy.**

- **Do you need a fully integrated marketing automation system to support you?**

STEP 8 • ORGANIZING TO MAKE IT WORK

To make your content strategy work you'll need a team, a budget and an efficient process. But who will be involved? What roles do you need in place to make the process work? How will you organise, work together and manage and control what you do?

Questions to answer:

- **Who will have overall responsibility for your content?**
.....
.....
- **Who are the best people to create it?**
- **Who and how will you distribute and promote it?**
.....
.....
- **What other skills do you need on your team?**
.....
- **Do you have these in house? Need for outsourced support or additional skills?**
.....
- **Training needs for your team?**
.....
.....
- **How will you manage and control the process to make it work?**
.....
.....
.....

VALUABLE TIP

In a small business – one person will probably wear many content hats, with an outsourced team at their beck and call where necessary. In a larger organisation, you will be able to spread the load more evenly. **Whatever size of business you're in, the key is to make sure people are clear on their roles, and have all the support they need to do a great job. Sort that, and you'll be away.**

STEP 9 • MEASURING FOR SUCCESS

You've done your research, crafted the story and made your content plan. You're nearly ready to start creating all that content, but before you press go work out **how you will assess whether your new strategy is working.**

You've done the thinking about your objectives and goals in Step 1 so refer back to the decisions you made here. Create a set of meaningful measures that are aligned to your ambitions as a business.

Questions to answer:

- What meaningful metrics align with the goals and objectives you defined in step 1?

- What measures enable you to track progress towards your goals?

- Who will collect the data each month and ensure you take action to improve over time?

VALUABLE TIP

Create a bespoke measurement report for your content marketing – your own set of measures to track progress. Complete and share this at your monthly content planning meeting to track your progress towards your goals. You'll find an example measurement report structure in the

STEP 10 • WORK OUT WHERE YOU ARE NOW AND PLAN

If you follow the 10 steps and document the results you have your valuable content strategy straight.

It's time to work out **how** to bring it to *life*.

The power of any good strategy is in its implementation. What do the decisions you've made here mean for your website, how you're organised, your current content, your business? What changes must be put in place to make the new strategy fly?

The first thing to do is understand what content, tools and resources you already have at your disposal. Conduct a content audit and gap analysis. The place to begin is a detailed look at your current content. What do you have, and is it any good? Does it meet the needs of your content strategy?

Questions to answer:

- **What content do you have now?**

- **What tools and resources do you have now?**

- **Is your website up to the job?**

- **Where are the gaps? What needs to change?**

- **Make a plan to make that change happen**

You've completed all
the **groundwork**.

Write up and communicate
your new **content strategy** *widely*.

Take action and be patient.

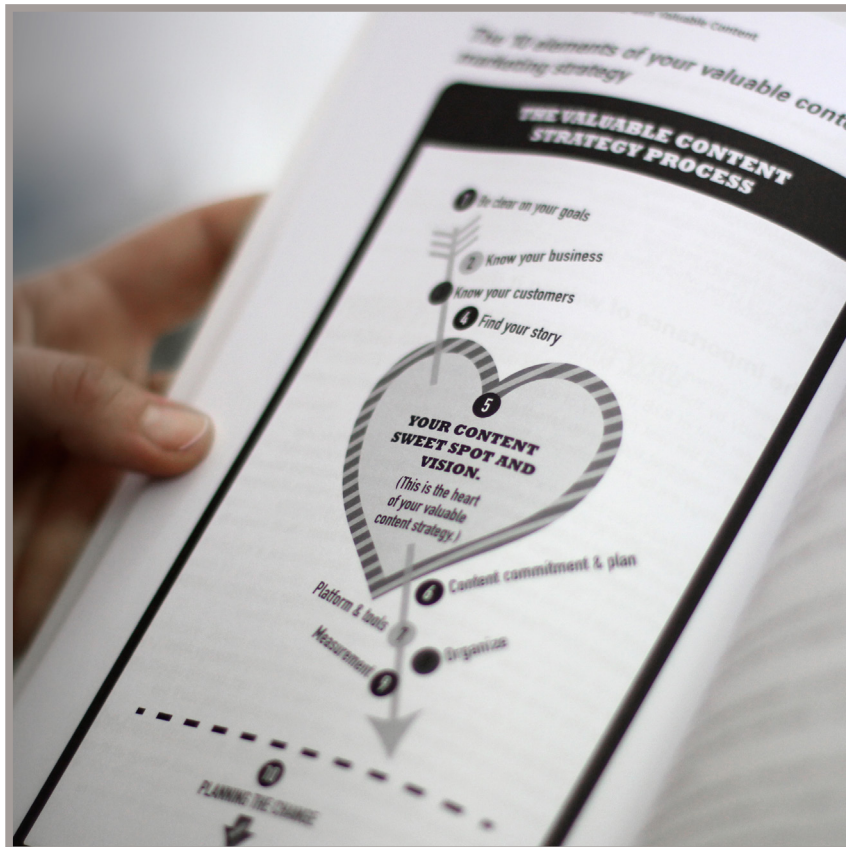
Content marketing is a slow burn not a quick fix.

Be prepared to learn and adapt your strategy to your audience's needs as your understanding grows.

Measure what works and adjust for even more of it.

**CREATE VALUABLE CONTENT
AND KEEP GOING.**

GOOD LUCK WITH YOUR CONTENT



We're here to help if you need us.

SONJA AND SHARON

www.valuablecontent.co.uk
INFO@VALUABLECONTENT.CO.UK
[@VALUABLECONTENT](https://www.instagram.com/VALUABLECONTENT)

Design and Illustration by Lizzie Everard | lizzieeverard.com