

How to create good content

A step-by-step guide to creating content your audience will love



BIGiKiDS



Introduction

How to create good content

Considering content marketing costs **62%** less than traditional marketing and generates about 3 times as many leads, content really can make a huge difference. But if you're not an expert, it can be hard to know how to create a good piece.

This e-book was co-created by **14 content professionals** from various backgrounds (journalism, marketing, user experience, influencers...) who gathered on a sunny day in Brussels to discuss how they created content.

Our goal was to create a guide to the current state of content marketing and offers some practical insights on how to get content right.

If good content is part of what you're trying to achieve, this e-book is for you!



Interactive content
platform

BIGiKIDS

Content marketing
agency



Knowledge & innovation
management



What you will find in this e-book...

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Chapter 1

What is content marketing (& why is it so flawed today)?

Chapter 2

How to create good content

Chapter 3

The biggest content marketing trends that will dominate the future

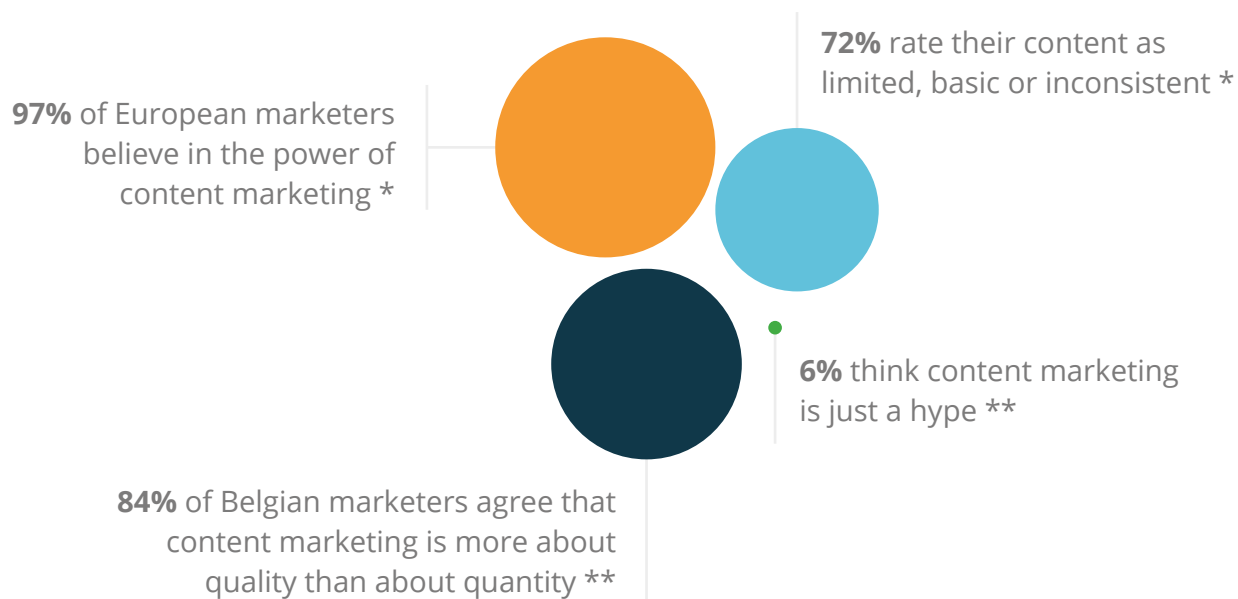
What is content marketing?

Content marketing is an umbrella term, which means that it covers a wide range of concepts and thus has many definitions. The most accurate one we could find is provided by the **Content Marketing Institute**:

“Content marketing is a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience — and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action.”

More specifically, content marketing refers to the act of **sharing knowledge in consumable formats** that may include blog articles, but also videos, podcasts, social media posts, emails, webinars, infographics, cartoons, quizzes, assessments, eBooks, tutorials, FAQs... all in the hope of changing consumer behaviour and pulling them down the sales funnel.

In other words, here's what content marketing is not: **it is not a sales pitch**. Rather, it is useful content: informative, entertaining, educational... It helps your audience solve problems or answer questions. However, while content marketing is not about selling, it still serves marketing goals, from brand awareness to qualified lead generation to engagement or sales team empowerment.



* Source: HubSpot and Smart Insights

** Source: The House of Marketing and UBA

Why content marketing?

There are 4 main reasons content marketing has grown so popular nowadays:



ADS AREN'T CLICKING ANYMORE

The world is louder than ever before, with thousands of marketing messages per day. As a result, people mostly ignore magazine adverts, skip television commercials, and click away from (or block) online banners.



CONTENT HAS A LONGER LIFE CYCLE

Once you stop paying for an ad campaign, it basically disappears, yet great content can live for months or years (at least if you check your content relevance from time to time).



CONTENT MARKETING BUILDS TRUST WITH VISITORS

Consumers may not pay attention to advertising messages, but they actively seek out content as they use the Internet to get information or answers. The more of your content appears across various channels and provides value to your target audience, the more likely you are to be perceived as an expert in your field.



IT FITS TOGETHER WITH SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMISATION (SEO)

Content must be able to attract web traffic and solve a particular issue of your clients. For a piece of content to appear in the first few results of a Google, Yahoo, or DuckDuckGo search, one has to use important keywords, which is one of the key factors for SEO.

So it's true: **content is king**. Today, content marketing has become an industry standard, and it almost seems that marketing is impossible without it. However, only a few companies truly manage to get it right and make an impact...

What's the problem?

#1

There is a lot of content out there

400

hours of video are uploaded
to YouTube **every minute**

95 million

photos are posted
by Instagrammers **daily**

There is so much content out there that if we wanted to read and see everything that's online... well, a lifetime wouldn't be enough. That's a fact.

Furthermore, content marketing has been around for many years, so the volume of content published by companies is exponential. (The more companies create content, the more we're **drowning in it** and the more complicated it gets to stand out.)

#2

Content spamming

So the world clearly doesn't need more content... However, it's not only about the abundance of content. We also have to consider **what's deemed pressing or relevant to an individual at a specific moment**. Unsolicited, unnecessary or intrusive content will often be seen as spammy, especially with the rise of privacy concerns (and even more since the **GDPR** applies).

In this context, it's easy to see why personalised content thrives. Instead of trying to provide everything to everyone, brands are learning to focus on more targeted audience groups and offer high-quality content that is very relevant to them. Audiences want to feel valued as individuals, and companies want to build trust, as well as to be more effective in how they spend their money and resources. In short, content personalisation is kind of a win-win situation!

#3

Consumers don't know who to trust



"Content marketing is flawed because the web allows everybody to publish and barriers to access publication technologies are low."

Manuel Pueyo

Founder @ BigKids



Nowadays, everyone's an expert and a publisher. You can publish on a blog. You can publish on Twitter. You can publish on Wikipedia. Technology has brought everything people need to have content marketing at their fingertips, and it's mostly free!

"Content marketing is flawed because the web allows everybody to publish and barriers to access publication technologies are low", says content marketing specialist Manuel Pueyo.

However, we're still failing to provide quality and reliable content (fake reviews, clickbait, keyword stuffing...).

#4

Too many sales pitches, not enough education

There's nothing worse than someone who only wants to talk about themselves. Content marketing is about providing prospects with valuable resources, not a sales pitch. However, content creators don't always manage to steer clear of this kind of approach. More often than not, they build their content around their needs – not that of their audience!

#5 We love Google (and seek its approval)

Who should we really write for: search engines or humans? It is a long debate!

It's 2019 and search engine algorithms have gotten really advanced and "human-like". They increasingly work like the human brain. **Just like your audience, Google now cares more about quality, rather than quantity.** The content that it values is closer than ever to the one that a human would decide to pick and read.

All in all, it's important to remember that behind the screens are flesh and blood people, with human problems. The more you treat people like humans, the more likely they will be to hear your message. (Besides, Google may very well rank you among its first results, but at the end of the day, it won't pay your salary nor subscribe to your newsletter!)



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What are the ingredients for good content?

1

A WELL-DEFINED AUDIENCE

Before you decide what your message is and how to deliver it, you should **know who you're creating content for**.

Knowing your audience is one of the first vital steps for producing content that will generate **Return on Investment** (ROI). It doesn't make sense to attempt to appeal to everyone. No one can afford it. Instead, focus your time, energy and euros on the right people: those most likely to be interested in your product or service.

So, how do you know who they are?

In order to qualify your core audience, **create a description of who they are**. For instance, you could be looking for homeowners with children, single men aged 35 to 65, mothers on the go in Brussels, dog owners with an annual income of €150,000+... If you're targeting businesses (B2B), your analysis may include factors like one's location, job title and daily tasks, as well as the company size.

"Where does the money come from?"

Before investing too much time and euros in catering for a specific persona, find out who brings in the most money. Let's imagine a company that has developed 2 buyer personas:

	Position	Average monthly spending
JANE DOE	Business Manager	35 euros
JOHN DOE	Student	10 euros

If we look at the average spending of both personas, we might easily conclude that marketing efforts should be focused on business managers.

	Position	Average spending	Market share
JANE DOE	Business Manager	35 euros	23%
JOHN DOE	Student	10 euros	77%

Now, if we take a look at the number of customers they represent, it turns out that students are the most profitable target group.

This is a simple example, but it shows the importance of another type of **quantification**. In order to properly define your priorities, have a look at metrics that are important to your business (e.g. average spending in the example above, but also perhaps the average time spent on your website, the frequency of visit, etc.).

Once you have a better idea of who you are trying to reach, you should aim to understand their pain points and what topics will grab their attention and make them tick. **Don't fall into the trap of creating pieces that you find interesting or that you "think" people in your industry may enjoy.** Instead, slip into your audience's shoes. You should know what their problem is, how it makes them feel, and how they've already tried to solve it. Only then will you truly be able to figure out how to help them achieve their goals and what content and marketing messages to produce. Don't be afraid to dig deep and remember that you can have more than one target group!

PRO TIP

In order to define your target market, start by looking at your current customers and checking out your competition.



2

A TONE OF VOICE THAT CONVEYS YOUR VALUES

Tone of voice is not what you say, but how you say it. It is, in essence, **the personality and values of your brand**. Used at its best, your brand voice would allow your audience to identify that the content comes from you, even if your logo doesn't appear next to it.

One's tone of voice has a lot to do with the language one uses (e.g. is it formal or rather relaxed? do you use humour as a way to differentiate yourself?) and a controlled vocabulary. For instance, you might want to talk about your product as a "service" instead of an "application".



The power of "starting with why"

In September 2009, author Simon Sinek delivered his now famous TED talk called "**How great leaders inspire action**." At the core of Sinek's philosophy is The Golden Circle.



WHAT - YOUR PRODUCTS

This is what you do. Everyone can easily describe the products or services their company sells.

HOW - YOUR PROCESS

This is your "differentiating value proposition"; the specific actions taken to realise your core belief. Some people and companies know how they do what they do.

WHY - YOUR VISION

This is the purpose of the business. Very few people or companies can clearly articulate why they do what they do.

Simon Sinek uses Apple as an example. In his opinion, Apple is technically no different from its competitors. But for years, Apple has been communicating from the “why”. Apple’s “why” is to challenge the status quo and empower the individual to “think different”, which is the reason why people self-identify with the Apple brand. **As it gets harder to stand out, a well-defined tone of voice can also help you position yourself in your industry.**

3

A COMPELLING NARRATIVE

...but not any narrative: your narrative.

If you can identify the “what”, “how” and “why” of your brand, you can remain in control of the narrative you are telling and make sure it remains consistent and convincing.



“Storytelling adds a unique value to the act of selling or purchasing products and services.”

Tanguy Pay

Copywriter & Strategist @ OoyoO



People love and remember stories, and that’s a fact. They want something they can connect and relate to. They want to feel humour, nostalgia, anger, sadness... By essentially translating facts into a narrative form, storytelling has become a powerful component of online content for businesses that want to stand out and engage their audiences in today’s increasingly cluttered times. For this reason, many brands have now gone into a “never ending story” mode.

Telling your brand’s unique narrative helps to:

- Grab your prospects and customers’ attention.
- Gain trust and provide credibility to your brand.
- Be part of the news and its keywords (SEO).
- Encourage interactivity and sharing by engaging with people’s emotions.
- Allow your target audiences to identify with your personas.
- Develop brand loyalty — and eventually ambassadorship.

"The objective of storytelling is to create a win-win relationship with the customer," says Tanguy Pay, copywriter and executive creative director. "It creates a new experience and allows to sell or purchase products and services with a unique added value."

In addition, having a rich brand story to tell also makes it possible to adapt your multiple messages on many channels. *"Single format storytelling has evolved into transmedia storytelling and will keep doing so,"* says **Lee Odden**, CEO and co-founder of TopRank Marketing, a US-based digital marketing agency. Which brings us to our next point...

4

MULTIPLE CONTENT FORMATS & CHANNELS



It seems that new marketing channels and formats pop up almost every day! It puts pressure on marketers, who must constantly choose between "sticking with the strategies that have worked" and "trying out new things".

Needless to say, we're going for the latter. **Using several content options is a safer bet: all prospects have their own preferences!**



"Creating content in multiple formats helps increase your brand visibility online."

Manuel Pueyo

Founder @ BigKids



There are 2 ways you can approach the need for various content formats and channels: you can create content in different formats, or you can repurpose one piece in multiple formats. In that case, the same content can be offered in several formats, while its main objective will intrinsically remain the same. The content can then in turn be adapted to several channels.

These strategies will help you reach a bigger audience. *"The creation of content in different formats helps your value proposition be more visible on the web,"* says Manuel Pueyo.

CALLS TO ACTION YOUR AUDIENCE WON'T RESIST CLICKING

Calls to action are directly responsible for guiding people towards the next step you want them to take, such as downloading your white paper, subscribing to your newsletter, clicking through the next page, or entering your contest. They are thus critical for encouraging your audience to take a step toward your brand and are not to be neglected.

So, how do you create a strong call to action (CTA)?

Although there is no magic formula for writing the “perfect” one, here are 5 rules for making yours as effective as possible:

CHOOSE A GOAL:

always keep in mind that every piece of content should have a goal. Based on what you are trying to achieve, your CTA will have a unique objective. For instance, if your marketing goal is to create leads, your CTA's objective will probably be to get potential customers to leave their contact details.

EMPHASIZE THE VALUE:

In her book **Microcopy: The Complete Guide**, Kinneret Yifrah explains that people are more likely to click on a button if you tell them what the benefit is. For example, “Start a free trial” expresses value more clearly than “Sign up”.

PLACE IT STRATEGICALLY:

a good CTA is useless if no one pays attention to it! User experience (UX) Designers are your best allies when trying to come up with an efficient, ergonomic design.



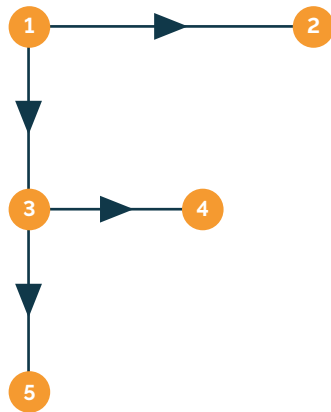
CONSIDER THE CONTEXT:

tailor your CTA to match where your person stands in the customer journey. For instance, a person that comes to your blog for the first time probably isn't ready to buy from you right away. For awareness content, you will probably use text such as “Learn more”, whereas for content aimed at converting people who could be ready to buy, you may want to use “Buy now”.

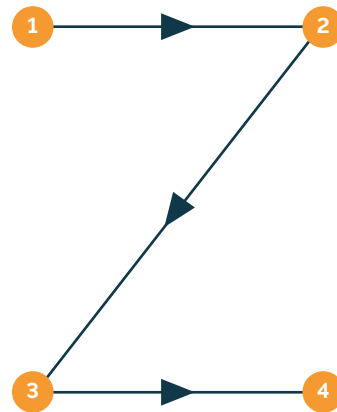
KEEP IT SIMPLE:

Make it short and choose your words wisely. Action words such as “shop” or “discover”, coupled with a sense of urgency induced by words such as “free” or “now”, will make your CTA more successful by encouraging readers to take immediate action.

In their article [Call for Attention. Powerful CTA Button Design](#), digital agency Tubik Studio describes how to choose an efficient placement for CTA buttons based on popular scanning patterns:



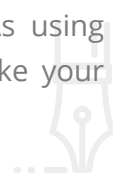
Readers using the “**F-pattern**” will start in the top left, move horizontally to the top right and come back to the left edge before making another, shorter horizontal sweep to the right.



With the “**Z-pattern**”, the eyes will start in the top left, move horizontally to the top right and then diagonally to the bottom left before finishing with another horizontal movement to the bottom right.

NOTE

The point here is not to trick people into clicking on your CTAs using manipulative design or content (a.k.a. ‘Dark patterns’) but to make your CTAs visible, clear, and inviting.



CONTENT FOR EACH STAGE OF THE MARKETING FUNNEL

It is important to **produce content for each level of your marketing and sales funnel**, not only to build awareness (top of the funnel). You should be able to clearly match each piece of content to a customer buying stage. One way to do this is to include a space dedicated to the funnel stage in your editorial calendar. This will get you into the habit of thinking about the objective of each piece of content: this blog post is for customer acquisition, that video is for increasing referrals, etc.

Put it this way: every visitor who comes to your website is at a different stage of the buying cycle. One of the biggest mistakes is to try to please everyone. Good content may have the ability to attract, convert, close, or delight customers. However, one piece of content cannot do it all at the same time!

PRO TIP

Keep in mind that the performance of your content on each of these stages should be assessed by specific Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).



What kinds of content and formats can you focus on for each stage of the buying process?

The illustration below will show you what formats and forms of content you could implement at each stage of the funnel and examples of KPIs to make your campaigns measurable and successful.

OBJECTIVE ↓	KINDS OF CONTENT ↓	EXAMPLES OF KPIs ↓
AWARENESS		
Increase the notoriety and reputation of your brand, products or services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Blog posts• Webinars• Videos• Press releases• Social media• ...	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Website traffic (new visitors, time spent, page views...)• Social reach• Mentions
ACQUISITION		
Increase the number of new leads and convert them into customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Case studies• Demo videos• Testimonials• Reviews• ...	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cost-per-click• Cost of customer acquisition• Cost-per-lead and lead volume• Lead quality scores
LOYALTY & UPSELL		
Help your customers get the most out of your product/service in order to retain them in the long run and make them buy more and more often	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Customer support• Help docs• Special offers• How-tos & tutorials• ...	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lifetime value• ROI• Customer retention rate & churn• Recurring revenue

What are the ingredients for good content?

A summary



How to build and manage a killer content marketing strategy

1

BUILD YOUR CONTENT TEAM

Building the ideal content team starts with picking team members who are both complementary and interdisciplinary.

But how do you define the right structure for that team?

"A good way to ensure balance is to have personas for your team members," says Thomas Paris, Head of Growth at Mad Kings, a marketing agency based in Brussels. "Plus, it will also facilitate new hires!"

Of course, there are many different ways to build your team. For instance, each team member could be assigned with a customer experience stage.



Other possible team structures include assigning each team member with one of your products, with specific topics or content formats. If you're looking to improve collaboration between departments, you could also have one team member assigned to each department you need to collaborate with.

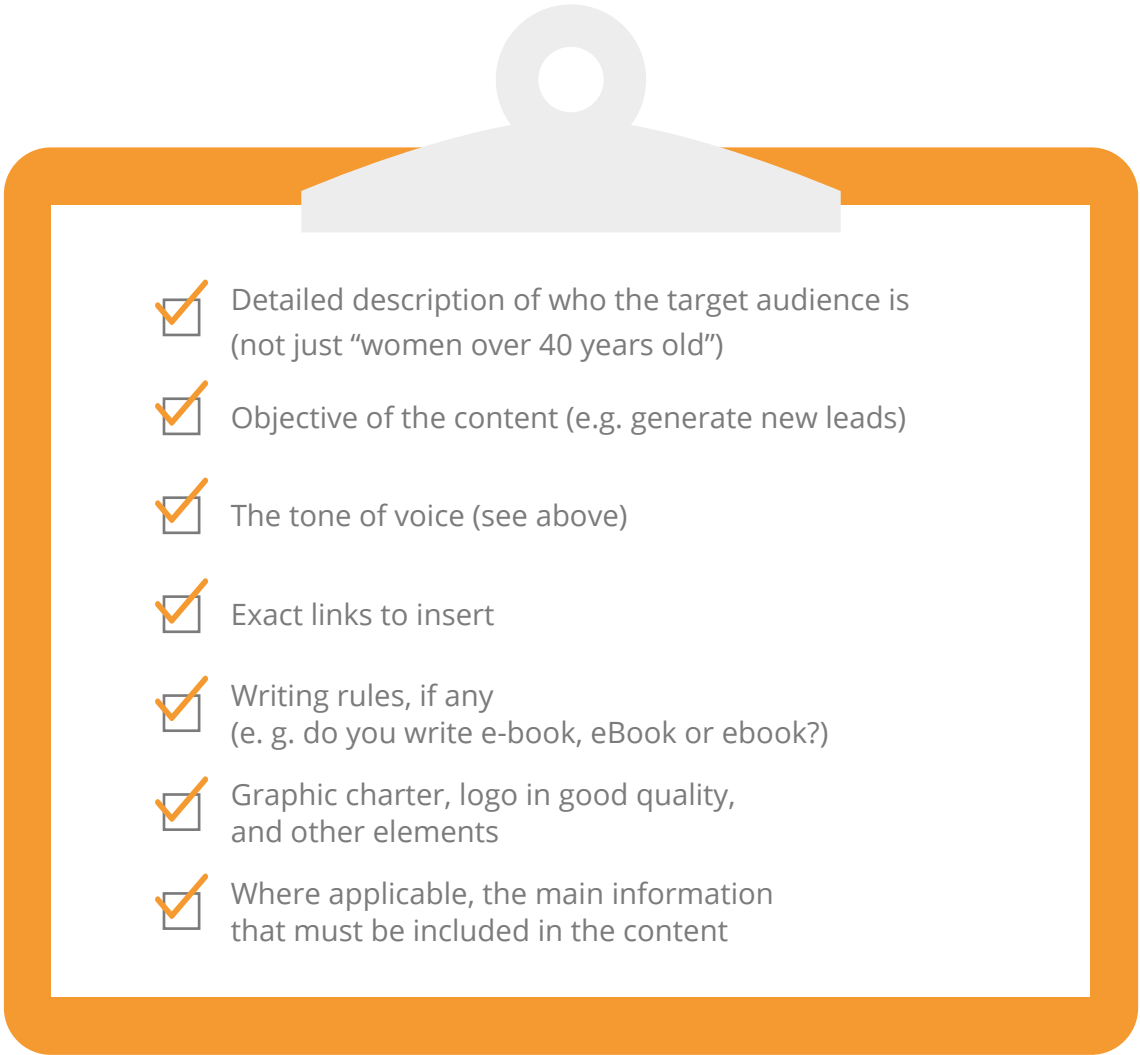
"Decide what it is that makes an efficient and qualitative content production. For me, whatever you do, it will always come down to a 3-step workflow: get the raw facts, turn it into a great story, then decline it into different formats," says Laurent Bouty, strategic marketing consultant. "You should have a dedicated person within your team for each of these steps, as they do not require the same skills at all."

2

ORGANISE A CONTENT PROCESS FOR YOUR TEAM

Create solid content briefs

This may seem trivial, but it is worth noting because many people do not realise how essential briefing is to the production of good content. For instance, imagine the following brief: "Write an article on sport". There is no context: who is the target? What is the right tone to adopt? What purpose does this content serve? etc. While a good brief does not ensure good content, a bad brief will more often than not lead to inconsistent content. *"In order to avoid this pitfall, I always ask my clients to provide me with a toolkit,"* says Eloise Dohmen, freelance copywriter and community manager. A toolkit might include the following main elements:

- 
- ☒ Detailed description of who the target audience is (not just "women over 40 years old")
 - ☒ Objective of the content (e.g. generate new leads)
 - ☒ The tone of voice (see above)
 - ☒ Exact links to insert
 - ☒ Writing rules, if any (e. g. do you write e-book, eBook or ebook?)
 - ☒ Graphic charter, logo in good quality, and other elements
 - ☒ Where applicable, the main information that must be included in the content

Include other departments

Especially those who are closer to your customers. Your sales team or account managers are likely to know the ins-and-outs of your prospects pain points better than anyone else. But although they might know what clients need, they are not necessarily aware of the value this knowledge represents in terms of content!

Define clear validation processes and deadlines



"Asking for feedback is not as simple as it sounds. We must learn how to ask the right questions."

Marie Laenen

Founder @ Lean Avenue



Whenever you ask for intakes or reviews from other people or departments, you may end up having a hard time getting their validation and it will slow you down. There are ways to counter this problem: Marie Laenen, founder of Lean Avenue, an agency that provides content marketing services for startups, uses the "ready for printing" method by adding a deadline after which all suggestions will be considered for a second version.

She also emphasises the importance of asking for feedback the right way: *"Asking for feedback is not as simple as it sounds,"* she says. *"Most of the time, we ask people what they think, but it's a very broad question. What did they like? What didn't they like? A friend once advised me to focus my feedback requests around 3 questions: what should I absolutely keep? what is too much? and what is not enough? That's one of the best advice I've ever received!"*

Proofread and edit!

While we all make typos (we're only human), you want to make sure you make spelling and grammar a priority. Little mistakes tend to drive readers away and undermine your business' credibility. Better safe than sorry ;)

Make your team meetings efficient

There are enough studies that show how bad meetings can kill one's productivity. Consequently, it might be recommended to plan separate meetings when different moods and energies are required. Marie Laenen highlights the **ParticipAgile method she learned from Convidencia**, a company that supports businesses with effective management and progressive organisation methods. *"A project can most often be divided into 3 stages: the brainstorming, the decision-making and the monitoring (what are the results of the actions taken?)," she summarises. "Each stage requires a different energy and different stakeholders. It may therefore be useful to organise them over several days in order to clearly separate these moments and let ideas sink in."*

Finally, know that even when you think you've defined the perfect process, you are going to come across difficulties. Face those challenges as soon as possible! Remember that the further in the process you wait for validation and feedbacks, the more expensive it is to make edits.

Reflecting on processes: the example of Agile retrospective meetings

Product development teams made retrospective meetings popular, but they're good for all teams. At their core, they can be thought of as regular "lessons learned" meetings. During such a meeting, the team basically looks back at what happened and defines actions for improvement in the future. If you're struggling with processes, it might help you and your team discover what works well (and what doesn't!) so you can improve.

How to? There are no rules. If you're looking to make a process or workflow more effective, simply ask your team what worked well for them and what they think needs improvement. Discuss. And don't forget to leave the meeting with concrete next steps to do better!

Alternatively, you can have a look at other methods, such as the "project post-mortem" meeting, which allows you to check in with your team after a project to find out what went right and wrong with it.

3

FIND THE TOOLS THAT WORK FOR YOU

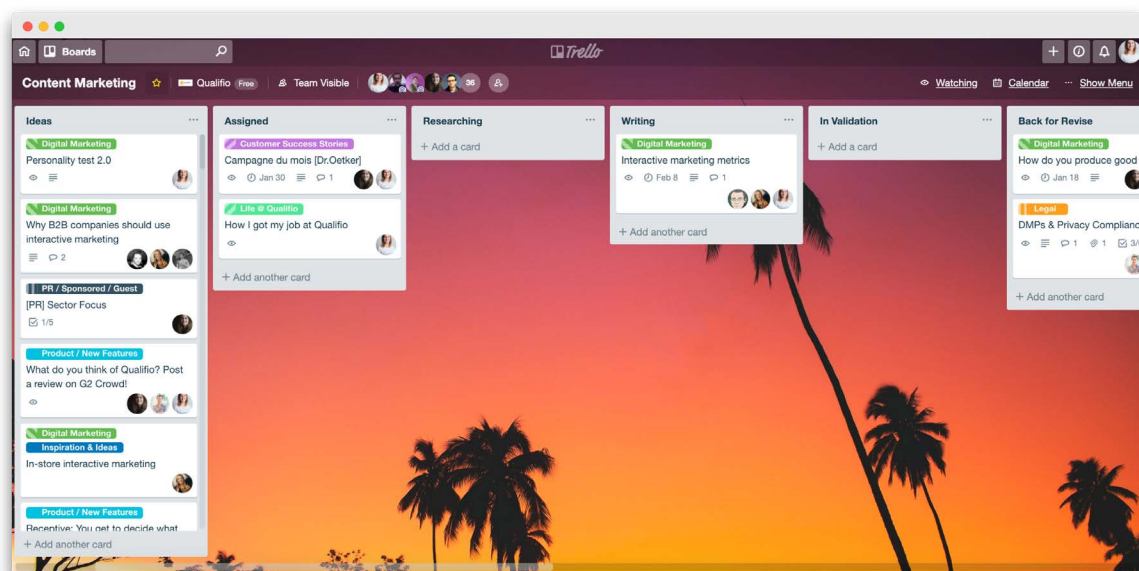
There are countless tools at our disposal to make things easier and more successful. Here's a selection of content marketing tools we can't live without.

Trello



by **Tabata Vossen**, Content Marketer at Qualifio

Trello is an incredibly flexible tool for project management. It uses a system of boards, lists and cards. Tabata Vossen, Content Marketer at Qualifio, shares how she uses Trello to track her team's content operations: *"Lists represent different phases in our content management workflow. We work with 12 lists, from "ideas" (where we write down ideas for later) to "published" (when all is done). We also have a "freezer" list for projects that get put on pause when something keeps us from making progress."*



"Cards generally represent a project, with individual tasks included inside each card. This organisation provides a good visualisation for the team: at a glance, they can tell where we are in the process."

Qualifio



with **Youva Bouzidi**, Head of Digital Products at Euronews

According to **Zazzle Media**, more than half of marketers don't know how to create engaging content, and that's the challenge **Qualifio** is helping them to solve. "One of the challenges today is to come up with formats that respond to changes in audiences' behaviours and how they consume content," says Youva Bouzidi, Head of Digital Products at Euronews. "Qualifio helps to offer digital content that visitors can interact with, such as surveys for instance."



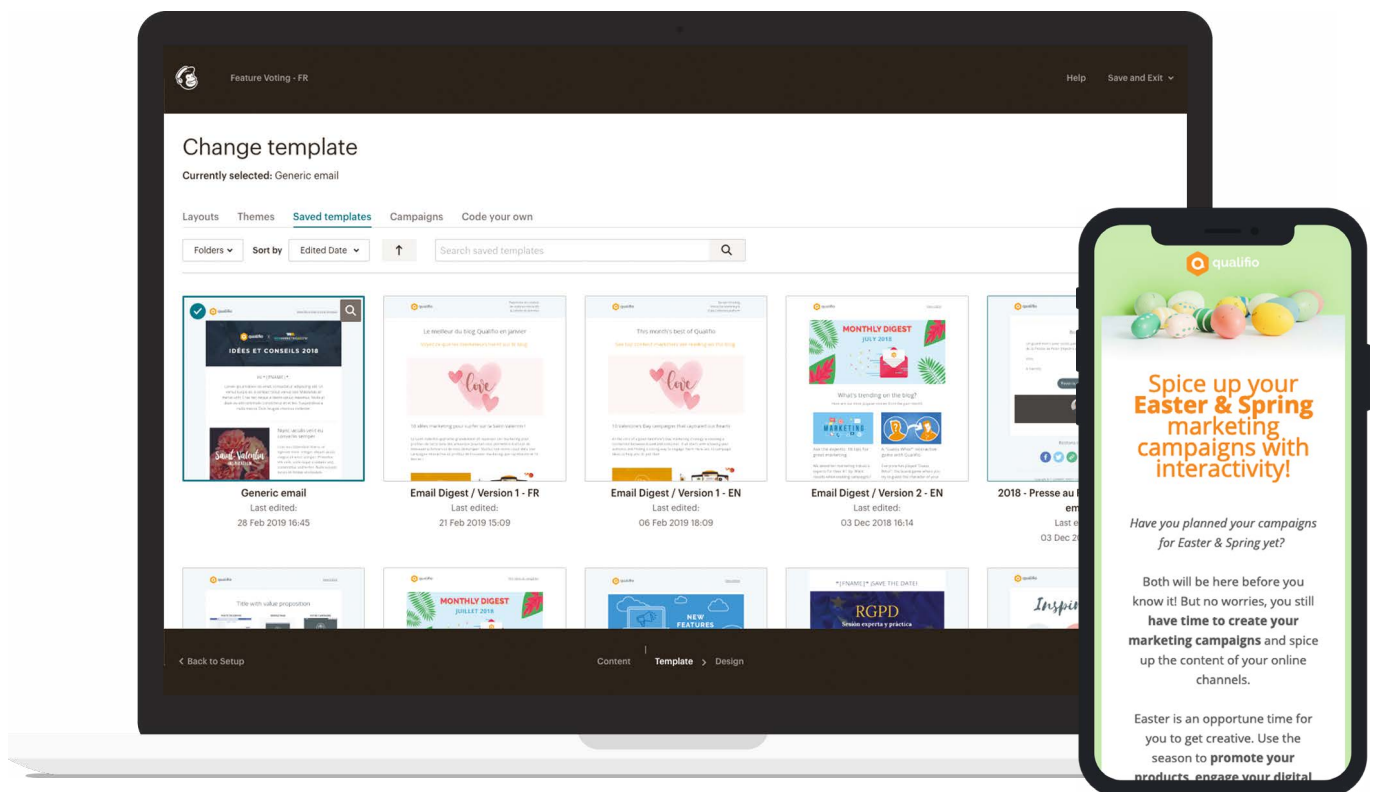
The platform allows marketers and content publishers to create relevant and unique online experiences that keep audiences' attention for longer. Qualifio's interactive content formats also allow to gather information and deliver the right message to the right person based on what you know about their profile.

Mailchimp



by **Anastasia Babatzikis**, Digital Marketer at Qualifio

More than 16 million people use **Mailchimp** to design, send, and track email marketing campaigns. *"Mailchimp offers several templates to choose from. We can also take it to the next level by customising our own templates and save them for later,"* explains Anastasia Babatzikis, Marketing Officer at Qualifio. *"For us, it's really more than just emails."*

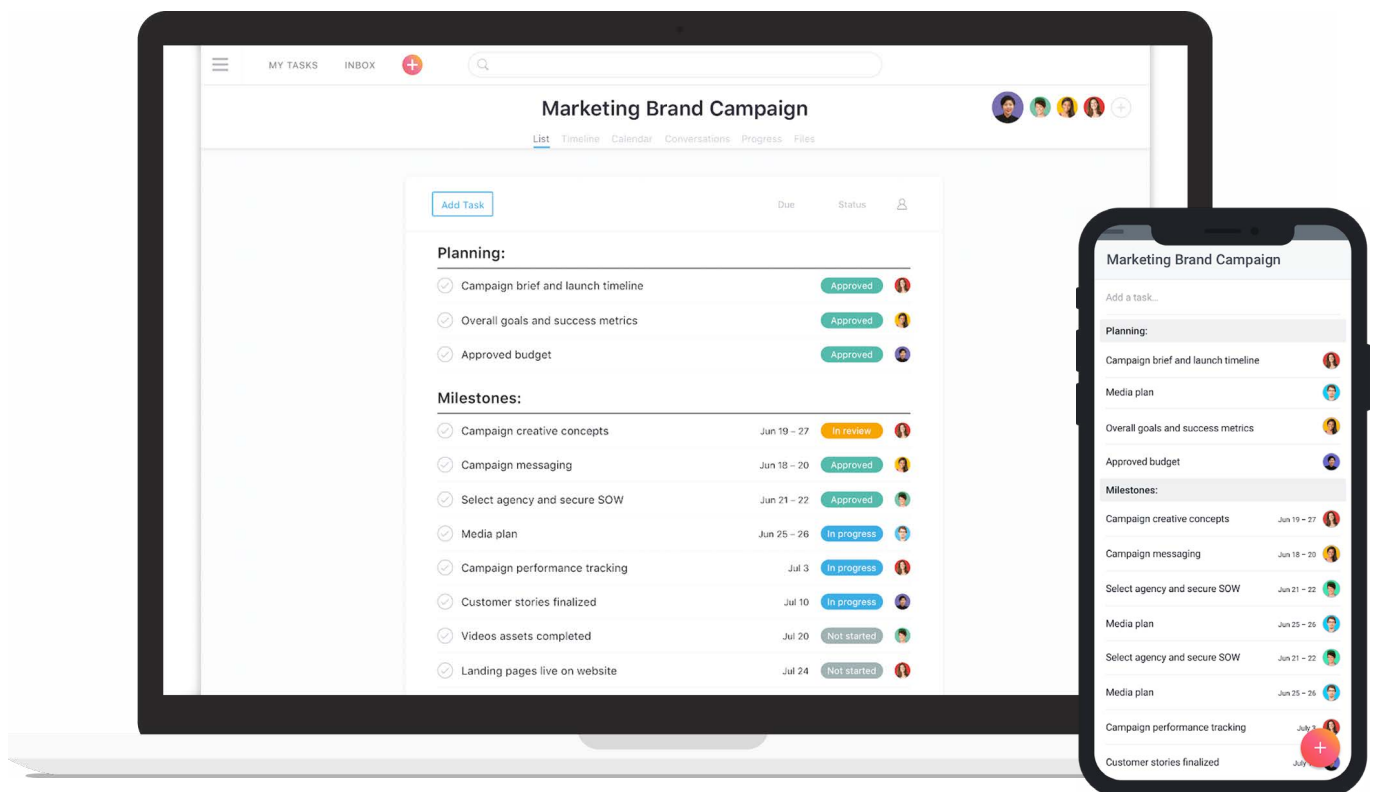


Asana



by **Marie Laenen**, Founder of Lean Avenue

Asana is a web and mobile app designed to help teams organise, track, and manage their work. *"Asana is my go-to platform for everyday, along with my emails and calendar,"* says Marie Laenen. *"I use it within **Station** (another one of my favourites!) together with **Slack**, **Evernote** and all my other apps, which is much more handy than a Chrome window with dozens of tabs!"*

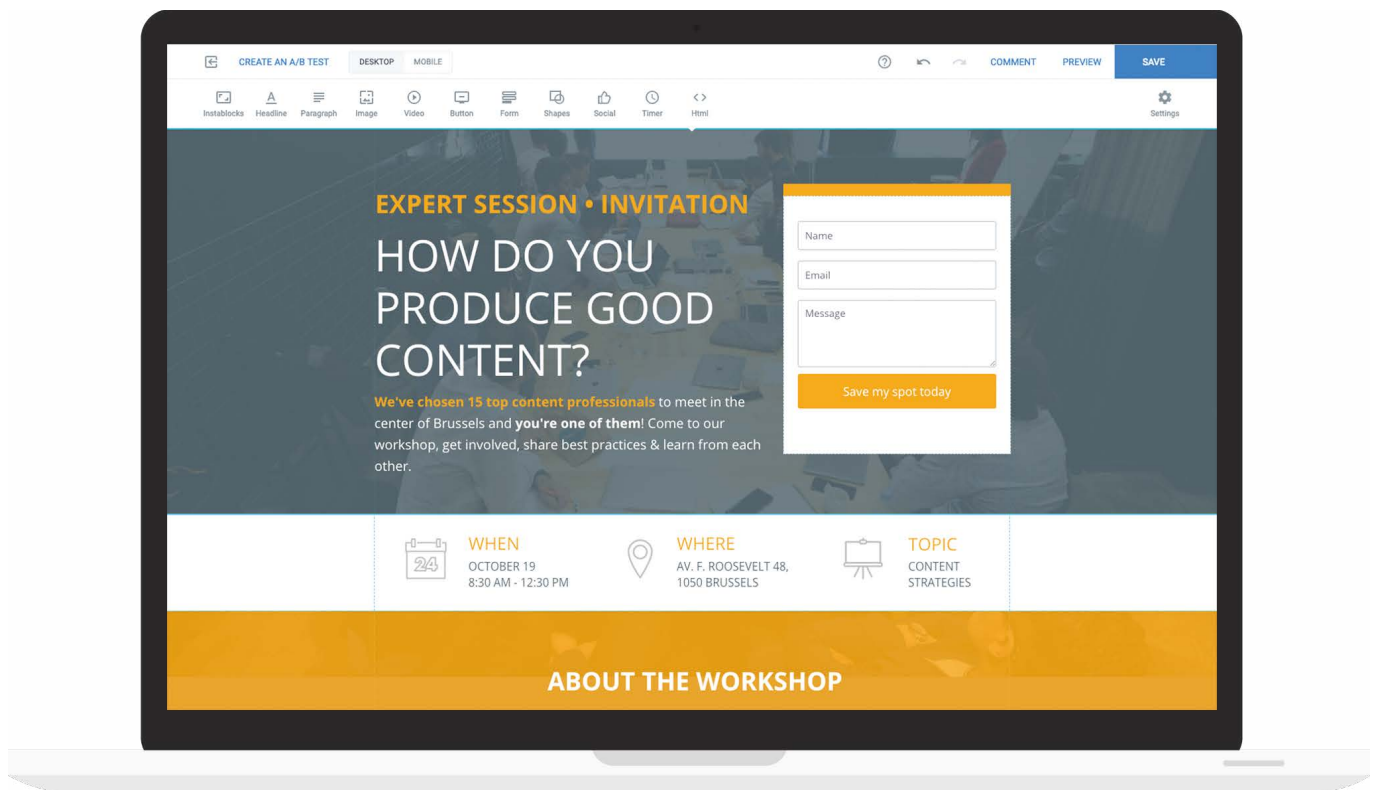


Instapage



by **Valentine Bissiere**, Lead Acquisition Specialist at Qualifio

Instapage makes it easy to build high-performing landing pages. *"The A/B testing feature is really nice,"* says Valentine Bissiere, Lead Acquisition Specialist at Qualifio. *"It allows us to easily compare multiple variants of a page against each other and find out which one performs best."*

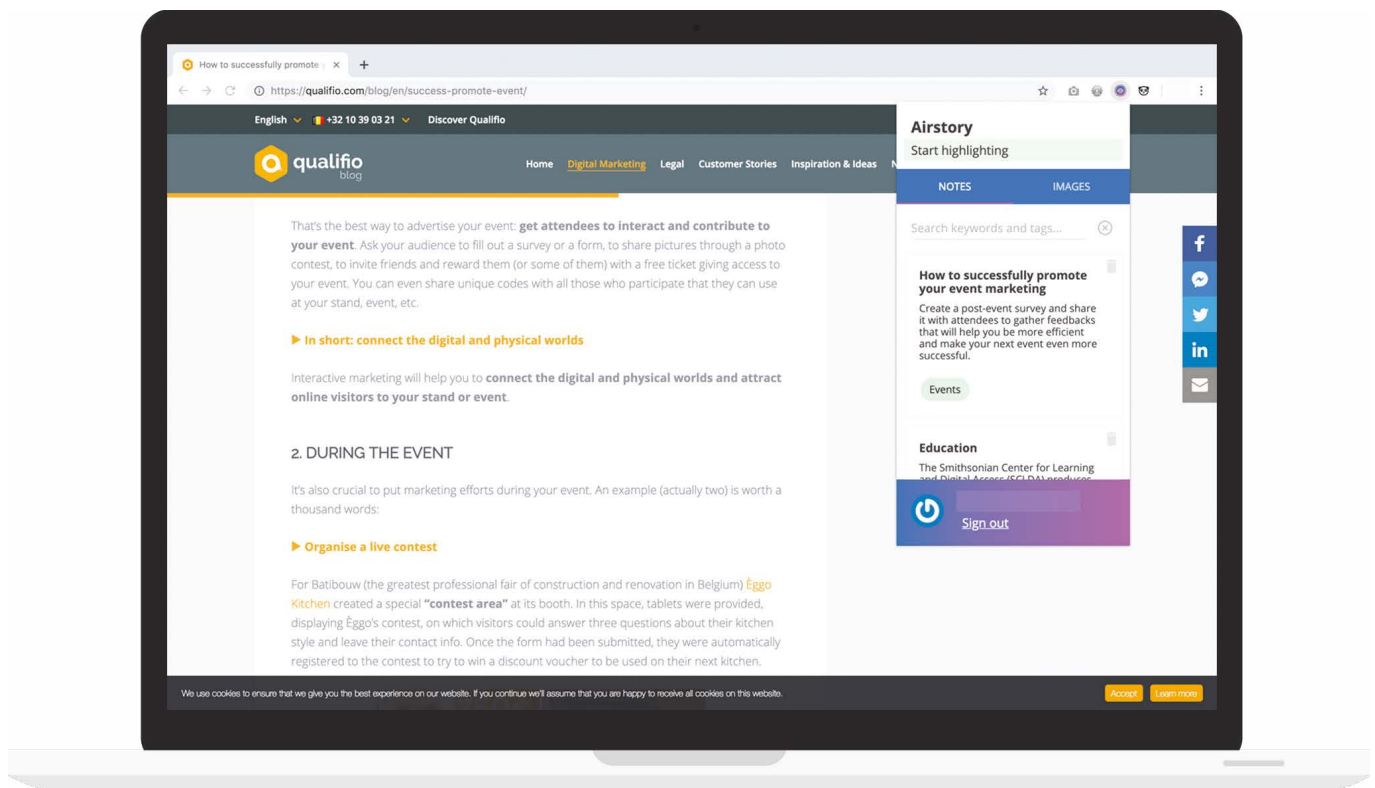


Airstory

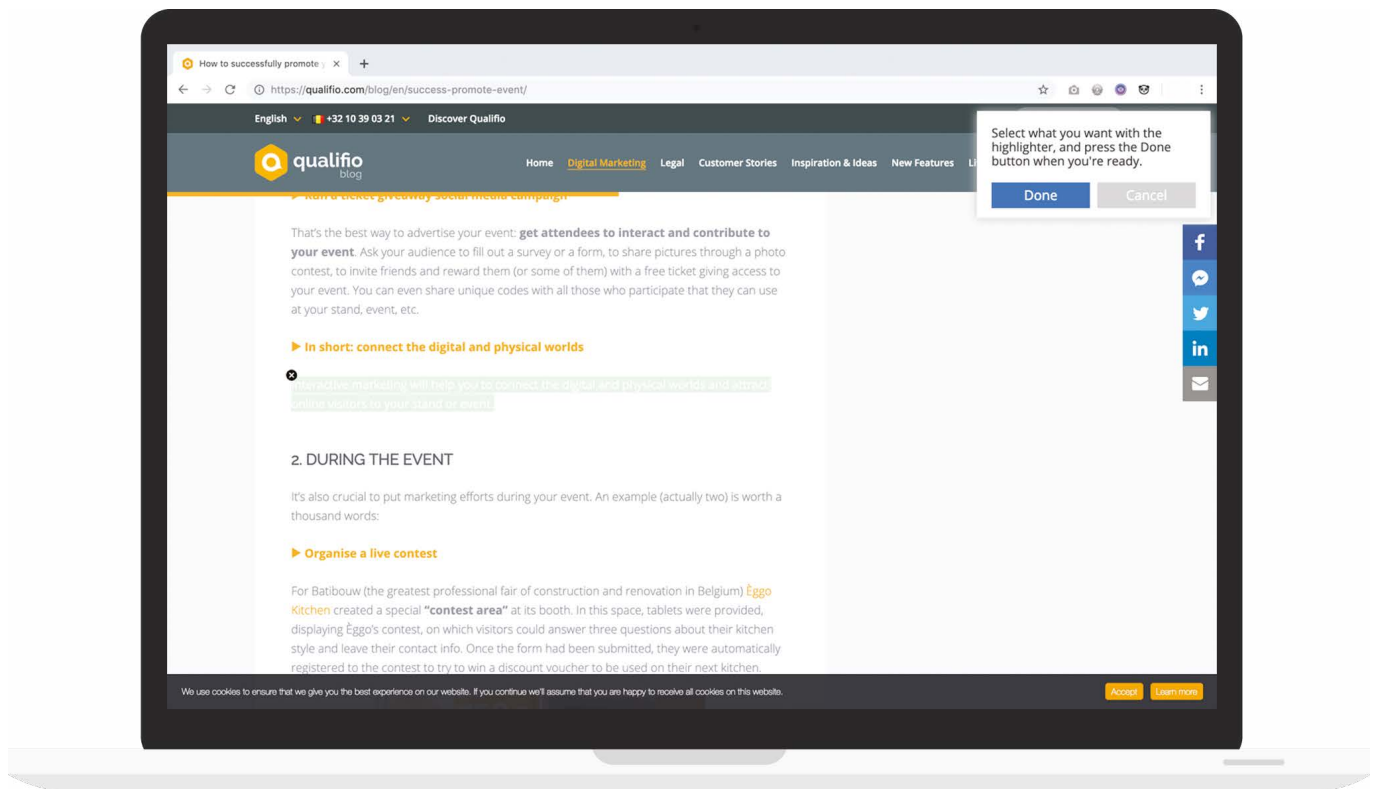


by **Marie van Boxel**, Freelance UX Writer

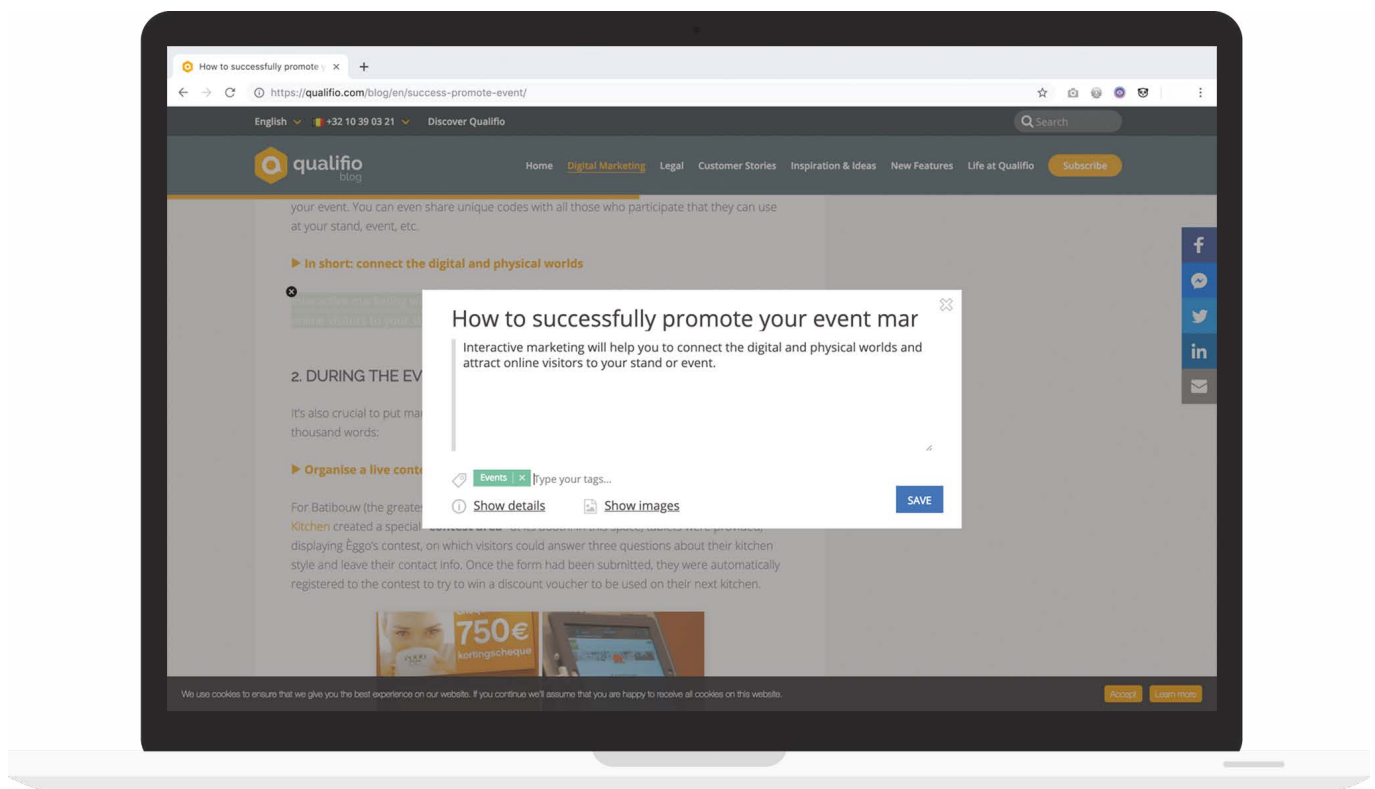
Airstory is a **Chrome** and **Firefox** add-on. It can help you save content from other sites on the fly. Then, you can just drag the cards into the text editor and create citations or expand your thoughts from there. *"It's a game-changer for any content creator,"* says freelance UX writer Marie van Boxel. *"It's very simple, but it really makes the difference when it comes to research. It is by far the most innovative content tool I use."*



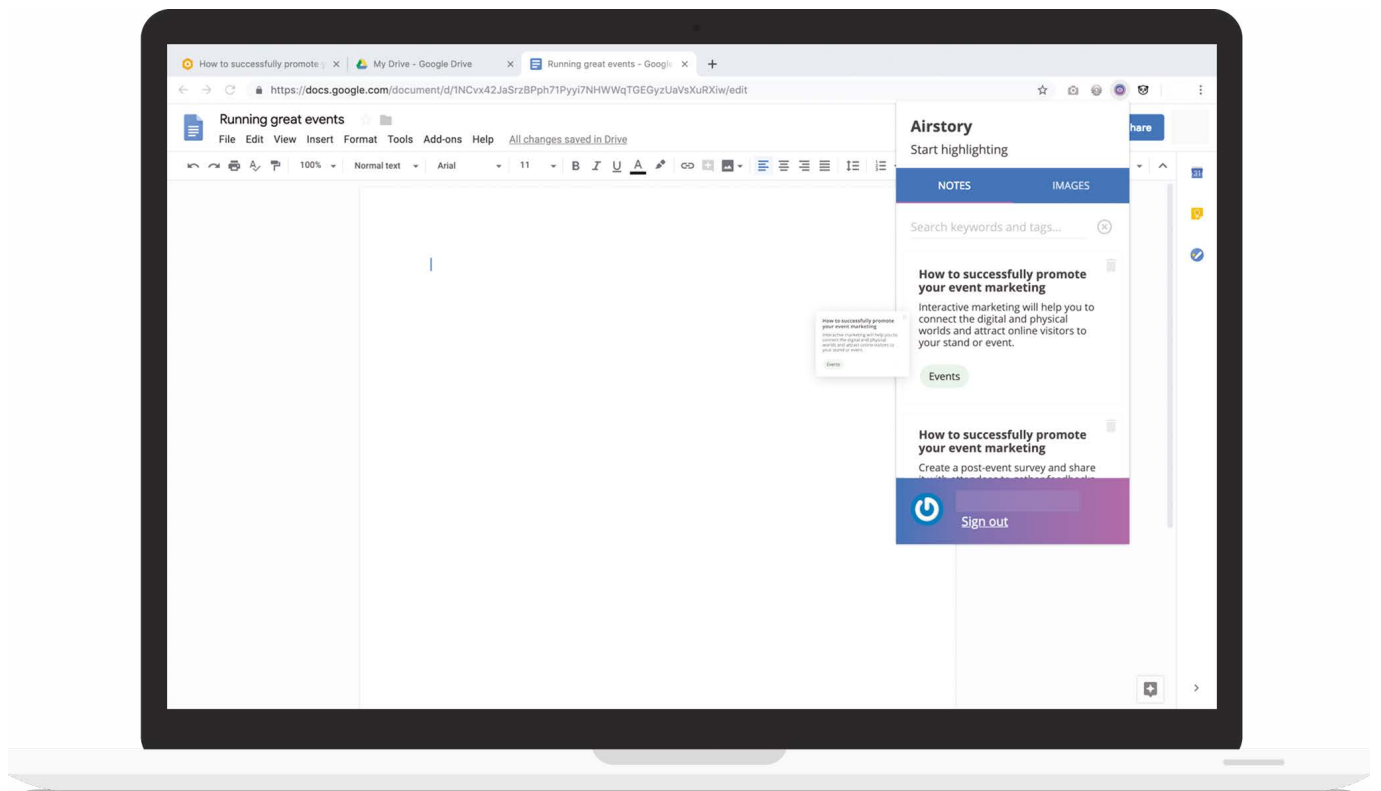
Click the Airstory icon in your Chrome browser and open Airstory wherever you are online.



Highlight and clip text snippets as you scroll down a page.



Save your favorite online content as a note and add tags for easy future use.



Then, drag that note into any space you write online. Your note automatically merges with the source URL included, so you can cite in a snap.

Other tools to help you in your content marketing efforts



Story Chief



GraphyStories
SMART DATA FOR MEDIA



GitBook



Abstract



Notion



GatherContent



grammarly

Hemingway
Editor



slack



4

GET UX ON BOARD



“User experience is all about making people feel comfortable when spending time with your company or product.”

Marie Van Boxel
Freelance UX Writer



When specifically applied to content, user experience (UX) focuses on improving the way a company or product communicates with its stakeholders. It therefore helps your brand's credibility, image, etc.

What does UX bring to the content table?

UX gives you a systematised way to understand and keep up with your audience (referred to as “users”). It gives you the tools you need to test your content and make sure that what you publish is easy to understand and matches what people are looking for.

As Allison Rung (Product Content Strategy Lead at Airbnb and former Senior UX Writer at Google) explains in her talk “**How words can make your product stand out**”, there are 3 main principles that should guide every UX-friendly content creator: usefulness, clarity, and conciseness. You can stick to all 3 of Rung's principles by continuously doing research about your users' needs.

Get to know your users inside and out

To identify people's needs, it is very important to understand how they behave. There are several ways you can find more about what your users want and need by gathering data.

- **Qualitative research** is research that yields non-numerical data. It is mainly used to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations behind people's actions. Qualitative data collection methods include focus groups and individual interviews. The sample size is typically small.

- **Quantitative research** is research that produces numerical data (or data that can be transformed into statistics). It is mainly used to quantify attitudes or behaviours, and generalise results from a larger sample population. Quantitative data collection methods include surveys and polls.

Even though there's nothing wrong with the methods above, it is important to keep in mind that there is a gap between what people say and what they do. Users lie, although their lies are most often due to a concern for politeness. It's just like guests who say "thanks for the great party" and then complain on the way home. Also, sometimes people simply can't remember, or aren't aware of their actual behaviour.

"This is one of the reasons why some companies have decided to hire User Researchers to collect lots of high-quality data over time," says Marie Van Boxel. "The more data they collect, the more they mitigate the white lies or distorted truths that some users will let slip."

Additionally, more and more companies are now using machine learning to find patterns in users' behaviours and tracking what users do, all with the aim of obtaining insights. That's the solution: to combine research (by asking users how they feel about this or that) with observation ("spying" on their behaviour on your site, blog, tool, etc.). It can be as simple as implementing the almighty Google Analytics, to begin with. Companies that are not able to capture those data might end in a difficult position.

Make UX your (in)visible advantage

Once you've gathered your data, create a "prototype" of your content: a disposable draft that you'll be able to tweak and edit quickly. Then, test your work with real users.

- For headlines and titles, define an improvement you would like to make, then A/B test.
- For slightly more technical or crucial content such as help articles/videos or labels and tooltips in a software, there are several types of content tests you can use.
 - **The highlighter test** (for written content): ask users to read your prototype and highlight parts of the text that make them feel confident, and, in another color, those that they find less reassuring. Once they're done, ask them to explain.

- **The cloze test** (for written content): show users a piece of content with holes in it, and ask them to fill in the blanks. This will help you use natural language and avoid jargon. For example, if you asked people to finish this sentence: “A well-designed website doesn’t confuse _____”, they might say “visitors”, “people”, or “users”. You’d then pick the word that most people suggest.



“Cloze tests are great for figuring out if your intended audience actually understands what you’ve written.”

Annie Adams

UX Writer at Uber



- **The comprehension survey**: get users to go through your prototype and then ask them to answer questions to test its clarity. If they watched the first draft of your explainer video and can’t explain what you do, it’s not clear enough.
- **The moderated usability test** (for products or services): this is a traditional UX test. Give users your prototype and ask them to accomplish certain tasks while thinking out loud. If you’re designing an online shop, you might ask them to “buy” a product, for example. If anything in that process are unclear, your user will probably notice. Sometimes, we forget that there is written and visual content (e.g. instructions, calls to action, error messages, illustrations, icons) in every product or service we provide. If those bits of content aren’t clear, customers will get frustrated and may stop buying from us.

Based on your test results, improve your content. Then, test again and again until it’s clear, concise, and useful.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

#1

Find out what your customers want to read

Before you begin to produce content, you should have a clear understanding of your target audience. From here, ensure that you pick topics that not only resonate with your audience, but also provide value to and help your readers.

#2

Treat content as branding, not sales

Here's a sad but vital piece of information: nobody cares about your product. *"When communicating, there is a tendency to start with "what". But what really interests our audience is "why" we do what we do. That is why we must talk about the story behind a product or service and about its added value,"* says Marie Laenen.

#3

Be authentic & humanise your brand

Consumers not only want to see and hear the "why" behind what your brand is doing, but they also want to get to know your brand and the **real people** behind it. It's simple: humans trust other humans. Whether your objective is to gain traffic, sell a product, or offer a service, you first need to connect with your audience. If you want people to register for your webinar or trust your insurance tips, you need to give them a reason to choose you over competition.

#4

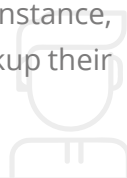
Not more content. Smarter content.

A smart content strategy implies that each piece of content you produce should meet a need or answer a specific question, preferably one that has not already been widely covered by other content providers.

To find out which questions are the most popular, use Google's **Keyword Planner** or simply type part of a sentence between quotes and filter geographically to get a rough idea of the most asked questions around a topic. **Google Trends** can also be interesting to find out which words are Googled most in which countries.

PRO TIP

To help you focus every piece of content you create, you can also use tools like "**user stories**". Sometimes also called "scenarios", user stories have the advantage of being customer-centric. They generally include a written sentence or two that express a very specific, "raw" user need. For instance, one might want to replace all occurrences of a word in a text or backup their entire hard drive. How are you going to help them answer that?



#5

Use multiple content formats

The thing is, no single type of content will appeal to every visitor. That's why it makes sense to vary your content formats. Besides, how can you know with what particular format(s) your audience would engage if you're sticking to blog posts and videos? From infographics to case studies to white papers and presentations, there are so many different content formats to try!

#6 Build a personalisation strategy

Sending the right message to the right person at the right time would have been impossible a couple of years ago. However, with the rise of big data, content, ads or product offerings can be delivered to a specific audience at a time that meets their expectations. Consumers want more relevancy, so use the data you collect from visitors to provide customised content for them!

#7 Test, measure, improve, retest and re-evaluate

If you're looking for ways to improve your content marketing strategy, it's important to always keep in mind the principle of iteration: constantly test your marketing campaigns to see what's working and what is not effective, then improve what you've got. Remember to test the waters with your investments... and give it time.

Chapter 1

What is content marketing
(& why is it so flawed today)?

Chapter 2

How to create good content

Chapter 3

**The biggest content marketing
trends that will dominate the future**

NEAR FUTURE

Transmedia storytelling: telling stories across multiple platforms and formats

AR, VR & immersive content: let users interact with a virtual environment

Influencers as content-driven marketing campaigners

Content design: know your users' needs and design your content around them

Voice assistants & AI: technology-based assistants to make our lives easier

MEDIUM TERM

Voice content: optimise content for a voice-first world

Storydoing: combine stories and actions to engage customers

Back to traditions (e.g. paper as a luxury item)

More interactivities: relying on customers expressing their preferences so as to be able to produce more relevant marketing messages (e.g. chatbots)

LONGER RUN

AI-created content: algorithms will create your content based on a given topic and length

Automated content and live translations

AND THEN...

No more content?

No more audience?

Machines talking to machines?

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@ MAD Kings



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Meet Qualifio, BigKids and FastTrack



Qualifio is the leading data collection and interactive content marketing platform.

With no technical skills needed, Qualifio's SaaS allows brands and media to easily create and publish interactive content (such as quizzes, personality tests, polls, and 50+ other formats) on their digital channels, in order to collect first-party data and qualify their audiences. Thanks to an extended set of integrations, this data is pushed in real-time to their CRM, Data Management Platform, Analytics and Marketing tools.

BIGiKiDS

BigKids helps organizations to embrace user centricity in their content marketing efforts.

BigKids is a content marketing agency that specialises in content strategies, learning experiences, and digital transformation. They help teams not only to spot opportunities to generate value for their readers, but also to put in place well oiled content production machines including workflow, approval processes, always advocating for a web writing style that is clear, concise and results-oriented.



FastTrack is a management consultancy that facilitates the people side of knowledge and innovation management: they focus on change, collaboration, culture, and how these are key ingredients in lasting organizational transformation. In their view, Organizational Transformation involves changes in terms of Business, Technology, Process, Organization and People.

FastTrack works with local and international clients through a trusted network of consulting and technology partners. With these partners, FastTrack offers its services through a combination of training, coaching, workshop facilitation and project support.