



WHAT'S WORKING IN CONTENT MARKETING?

Marketers Rely On Relevance, Interactivity &
Personalization To Earn Buyers' Attention



INTRODUCTION

We live in the age of instant gratification where we expect everything to come to us instantly, whether it's personal deliveries or work replies. When it comes to content, buyers seek the same thing — convenience — with the added element of entertainment.

"If your content is not interesting, relevant or funny enough, you're out," said Matt Heinz, President and Founder of [Heinz Marketing](#), a B2B sales and marketing firm. "If you're a seller trying to get the attention of a prospect, it's like driving by someone's house at 35 MPH and trying to throw something into their mailbox from the car. You're going to miss most of the time, but when you do get something in there, you need to think about what impression you want to make. You don't need to get them to commit to talking to you for an hour; you need to get them to say, 'Okay, tell me more.'"

With that in mind, it's clear that most marketing teams are focusing on quantity when buyers want quality. According to [Demand Gen Report's "2022 Content Preferences Survey Report,"](#) 49% of respondents said the content must tell a strong story that resonates with their buying committee and 41% said the content should be packed with shareable stats and quick-hitting insights. Furthermore, when asked what made content memorable enough to warrant a sales call, **32%** of respondents pointed to personalized content that is tailored to their needs.

At the [B2B Marketing Exchange](#), Phyllis Davidson, VP Principal Analyst at [Forrester](#), discussed the idea of the “four P’s” to exceed customer expectations when it comes to content:

- **Planning** content for the full customer lifecycle and executing an audit of all existing content, such as figuring out how to fill missing gaps;
- **Producing** content that fulfills customer needs by looking at either existing technology or new technology;
- **Personalizing** content to create a bond between the brand and the customer; and
- Enabling collaboration and role clarity through **preparedness**.

In a market where trends are always evolving, it’s hard to keep up with buyer expectations. What worked in 2021 may not make the same impact in 2022 and beyond. Content has and always will be king, but what aspects of content are currently at the top of the throne?

In this report, we’ll uncover how marketers are re-examining their content marketing strategies to succeed in the digital-first environment. We’ll explore the strategies and tactics B2B companies use to keep buyers interested in a highly competitive marketplace, including:

- The importance of creating relevant content that is worth buyers’ time;
- Why interactive content is table stakes in an oversaturated digital landscape; and
- Why short-form videos are in high demand.

“If your content is not interesting, relevant or funny enough, you’re out.”

MATT HEINZ, HEINZ MARKETING



DELIVER RELEVANT CONTENT TO ATTRACT & MAINTAIN BUYERS' ATTENTION

Last year, the B2B industry saw a 40% increase in marketing messages, according to Jay Baer of [Convince & Convert](#), who emphasized how critical it is to produce “radically relevant” content during his keynote at the [B2B Marketing Exchange](#).

Unfortunately, many content marketers adopted the policy that more marketing is the solution, which ended up overloading people’s inboxes with irrelevant content. Marketers must take a step back to unlearn these tactics and remember that “volume is not a success metric,” according to Baer.

“Every B2B marketer tells themselves the same lie: They’re just too busy,” continued Baer. “They’re too busy to listen to the podcast, to go to the webinar, to watch the video, to read the research report — they’re just too busy. If a prospect, regardless of where they are in the funnel, tells you they’re too busy... what they actually mean is that what you are giving them is not relevant enough. It’s not that they don’t have the time; it’s just not worth their time. There’s a big difference.”

Baer’s concept empowers content marketers on a path toward exponential growth by focusing on generating greater engagement by delivering the right message, using the right messenger, in the right modality:

- **The right message** — Broad is now flawed and specificity makes content special and more memorable because generality no longer works for the buyer;
- **The right messenger** — Information from customers is 50% more credible to B2B buyers than information from brands. It’s crucial to not only make content for customers but to make content *from* customers, which automatically increases relevance, trust, persuasion and funnel velocity; and
- **The right modality** — One of the best ways to increase the efficiency of a company’s content program is to really adopt the principle that everything made can and should be made in a variety of different ways.

Proof Point

SmartBug Media is a globally recognized Intelligent Inbound marketing agency that assists businesses in growing revenue through content marketing, sales enablement, web development, marketing automation and PR. The company launched a themed campaign for SMASH, a senior living annual conference, designed to engage its senior living persona in the middle of the funnel and move deals further down the pipeline.

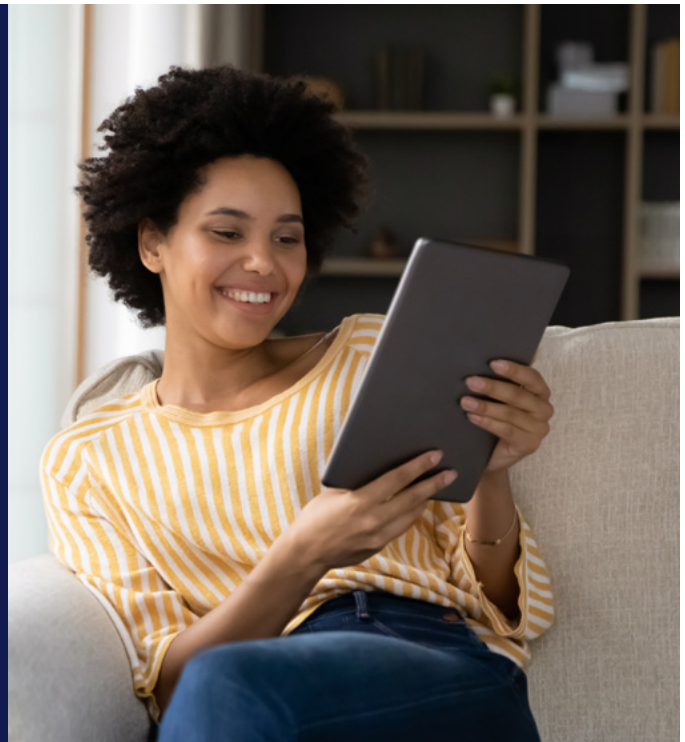
The campaign included a physical “recipe book” that was printed and used as a gift at SmartBug’s booth during the conference. The book was also turned into a digital version that lives on the company’s website as an interactive infographic (ungated) as a lead gen asset. The “recipes” are inbound marketing strategies divided on the attract, engage and delight stages of the inbound marketing funnel.

Since SmartBug’s book launch:

- 15% of new leads from the conference led to booked meetings;
- Approximately 10% of deals created from the conference have the “Recipe Book” download, attributed to a middle-of-the-funnel touchpoint in the deal attribution analysis; and
- 23X ROI from the printed book leading to closed/won revenue.

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JAY BAER, CONVINCE & CONVERT



CREATE INTERACTIVE CONTENT TO BOOST ENGAGEMENT

Static long-form content is becoming a thing of the past as more B2B brands compete to attract audiences. As a result, interactive content has become table stakes, proving to not only generate engagement but also allow marketing teams to get deeper insights from their audience to enhance future content efforts. In fact, DGR's "[2021 Content Preference Survey](#)" showed that 46% of buyers reported engaging with video and interactive content in the early and mid-stages of their purchasing process.

"Our clients who have never used interactive content in the past are doing it now because it's not enough anymore to put out a static piece and count the number of clicks," said Brenda Caine, VP of Content Strategy at [Content4Demand](#), a B2B content strategy and creative agency. "Interactive assessments and quizzes are really hot right now because they specifically tend to the buyer by helping them figure out whatever problem they are in need of solving. Introducing an interactive piece allows the buyer to engage and navigate where they want to go instead of staring at a block of text."

According to Caine, some of the benefits of interactive content include the ability to:

- Increase audience engagement with polls, carousels, embedded videos and more;
- Track the time someone spends with the content and determine which sections generate the most engagement; and
- Build brand loyalty while standing out from the crowd.

Proof Point

[Flexential](#) is an IT infrastructure provider that specializes in data centers and hybrid cloud IT solutions. To improve engagement metrics, [Flexential collaborated with Content4Demand](#) to help transform its content marketing plan. This led to experimenting with interactive content and learning how user participation boosts engagement, such as the development of two E-books and two infographics created in the Ceros platform as part of Flexential's "American Football Cities" campaign, which featured a football theme to provide readers with insight on the importance of location when selecting an edge co-location data center.

The interactivity and imagery brought an element of fun to the initiative and the stats recorded 4X more engagement with the interactive content versus the static content. On top of that, users were also staying on the website long after they viewed the original content.



SHORT-FORM VIDEOS FUEL HIGH DEMAND

Results from the “**2022 Content Preferences Survey**” reveal that shorter attention spans are shaping buyer expectations, as 39% said they want shorter-form content.

“We’re seeing videos, especially shorter videos, being used more,” said Heinz Marketing’s Heinz. “Marketers are taking what used to be a 20-minute video and producing four- to five-minute videos that are easier to access.”

Videos have the ability of showing an audience the value a brand or product can provide instead of simply telling them. From an engagement standpoint, marketers can track how many individuals accessed the video, how much of the video they watched, how many times they watched it, if they passed it on to someone else and more.

When asked how content consumption preferences have changed over the past year, **40% of buyers** said they prefer content that can be easily accessed on a mobile or tablet device. Short-form videos deliver content that is concise, credible and accessible on the go.

“How do you make your videos engaging?” said Heinz. “Honestly, the more human it is the better. Make it short, snappy and relevant. Use your content intelligence as a tool to understand more about the intent of the viewer, so you can follow up with the right message. Sometimes three steps are faster than one to get to where you really want to go with a prospect, and short snippets are the way to do it.”

Proof Point

Toshiba Global Commerce Solutions is the global market share leader in retail store technology. In 2021, the company launched an innovative “Wow Video Series” to highlight its product’s capabilities. With the help of Three Post, a home improvement store, Toshiba products were put to the ultimate test to showcase their durability and strength.

The company released five YouTube videos where Toshiba products survived many dangerous conditions.

Since its launch in December 2021, the campaign saw:

- More than 2,250 views in the first two weeks of submission;
- Average CTR of about 11%;
- 15% global demographic views via subtitle translations, capturing a worldwide audience; and
- An increase in video shares and impressions from employees, partners and buyers from all over the globe.

“Use your content intelligence as a tool to understand more about the intent of the viewer.”

MATT HEINZ, HEINZ MARKETING





CONCLUSION: THE ONLY THING HARDER THAN GAINING BUYER'S ATTENTION IS KEEPING IT

To gain buyers' trust, businesses must fundamentally change the way they target and engage buyers. Putting a Band-Aid over the problem is only going to prolong reaching a solution. Modern marketers must maximize their opportunities by zeroing in on their target audience and sharpening messaging with relevancy. The only way to cut through all the noise is to capture an audience's attention by compelling them to take action.

"The better you understand your audience, the better you understand not just where they work and what their job is, but also what is keeping them up at night," said Heinz. "What is their status quo? I believe if you could speak their language, you will earn their ongoing attention."

According to the "[2022 Content Preferences Survey Report](#)," 55% of buyers said they now rely more on content to research and make purchasing decisions than they did a year ago. Digital channels are growing more crowded each day and breaking through the clutter requires an adept content strategy carefully crafted with buyer needs and preferences in mind.

"The wizard is what's powerful, not the wand," said Convince & Convert's Baer. "What we're seeing right now is that your customers are literally or at least figuratively, digging a moat, to protect their attention. It's all too much and they're frustrated, they're tired, they're besieged by marketing. Our buyers feel like they are under attack by us, we're the army, so they're digging a moat. Instead of trying to force your way into the castle, try earning the attention of your buyer to actually get invited inside."



Demand Gen Report is a targeted online publication that uncovers the strategies and solutions that help companies better align their sales and marketing organizations, and ultimately, drive growth. A key component of the publication's editorial coverage focuses on the sales and marketing automation tools that enable companies to better measure and manage their multichannel demand generation efforts.

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