

**“Execute the content strategies in this book  
and watch your business grow.”**

—David Meerman Scott, bestselling author of *The New Rules of Marketing & PR*  
and the new hit book *World Wide Rave*



# **GET CONTENT**

**Turn Prospects into Buyers  
with Content Marketing**

# **GET CUSTOMERS**



**Joe Pulizzi and Newt Barrett**

Foreword by Paul Gillin, author of  
*Secrets of Social Media Marketing* and *The New Influencers*

PRAISE FOR *GET CONTENT GET CUSTOMERS*

*Pulizzi and Barrett have taken Integrated Marketing Communications to the next level with Get Content Get Customers. The book includes how to combine old and new marketing, online and offline, print and electronic in innovative and useful ways. Every marketer, large or small, can use this text to build better ongoing customer relationships.*

—**Don Schultz**

Professor Emeritus in Service, Integrated  
Marketing Communications  
Northwestern University

*Turning prospects into customers used to mean interrupting people with your company's product messages. But it was tough to break through the clutter. The Web allows smart marketers a better way: create compelling content that people actually want to consume. Pulizzi and Barrett show you how to create and deliver content and provide dozens of examples of success to learn from.*

—**David Meerman Scott**

Bestselling author of *The New Rules of Marketing and PR*

*Content marketing may be the most revolutionary obvious idea you'll ever hear . . . that marketing works better when you actually have something to say. For those who are seeking to add a personality to their brand, this essential book will take you beyond white papers and give you a road map to making content a bigger part of all your marketing. Deftly navigating the worlds of PR, advertising, and marketing, Joe and Newt prove that the real secret to great marketing is not a brilliant tagline, but creating compelling and useful content.*

—**Rohit Bhargava**

SVP of Digital Marketing, Ogilvy 360 Digital Influence  
and author of *Personality Not Included*

*Joe Pulizzi and Newt Barrett take one of the core concepts of new marketing—that providing consumers with valuable content trumps bombarding them with irrelevant advertising—and give brands a treasure trove of tips, tricks, best practices, and actionable approaches for using original online and offline content as a weapon in the battle for bottom-line results. Get Content Get Customers provides a play-by-play for any marketer who is serious about breaking away from the pack, upsetting the status quo, and moving beyond interruption marketing by offering compelling content that delivers real value for consumers and real revenue for their companies.*

**—Greg Verdino**

Chief Strategy Officer, Crayon, LLC  
and marketing blogger at [www.gregverdino.com](http://www.gregverdino.com)

*Get Content Get Customers highlights the role content plays in making your customers tick, click, and stick. An eye-opening book that takes you through a step-by-step strategy to enhance your content and to connect to your customers through words, pictures, sound, and video. If creating great content that serves your customer and your customer's customer is important, this book is for you.*

**—Samir Husni, aka “Mr. Magazine”**

Chair of the Journalism Department  
University of Mississippi

*When it comes to online marketing, you've got to reach people with what is desired and valued (content) instead of what is despised and ignored (advertising). Online, great content is effective advertising, and smart marketers are the new media. The trick to content marketing is getting your message across while keeping people engaged, and you're about to discover exactly how to do that with this book.*

**—Brian Clark**

[Copyblogger.com](http://Copyblogger.com)

*As we rapidly enter the Post-Advertising Age, marketers are scrambling to find new ways to engage their brands with customers, amid the growing realization that the old ways are dead. If intrusion is dead and consumers are in control, Get Content Get Customers brilliantly manages the feat of combining the theory of engaging customers through content marketing with alarmingly simple and practical approaches to doing it. All of this is clearly and intelligently illustrated through many different case studies. For marketers who understand that narrative marketing is the only marketing left but are struggling to understand how to do it, Get Content Get Customers finally offers the solution.*

**—Simon Kelly**  
Chief Operating Officer  
Story Worldwide



# GET CONTENT GET CUSTOMERS

Turn Prospects into Buyers  
with Content Marketing

**Joe Pulizzi**  
**Newt Barrett**



New York Chicago San Francisco Lisbon London  
Madrid Mexico City Milan New Delhi San Juan  
Seoul Singapore Sydney Toronto

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*For Pam and Maxine,  
and to what is truly relevant  
and meaningful in life*



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# Foreword

If you're a marketer reading this book, you know that your world is changing. The seeds of those changes were actually planted nearly a decade ago. In 1999, Google arrived on the scene and set in motion a sequence of events that would transform markets and even culture around the world.

By introducing technology that delivered information that its architects considered to be truly useful, Google began to change the language of business. Today, Google provides three-quarters of a billion search results a day and acts as the Internet's universal home page. That's a reality that successful marketers must embrace.

Marketing is moving online at a breakneck pace. Several research firms now forecast that the Internet will become the world's dominant advertising medium by 2012, or a mere 18 years after Yahoo! was founded. And if you believe that today's business users are online-savvy, you ain't seen nothing yet. The next generation of consumers and business professionals, now percolating in colleges and high schools, spends 60 percent less time than their parents watching TV and 600 percent more time online, according to the Arthur W. Page Society.

At the same time, people are tuning out conventional marketing at a dizzying pace. Today, your carefully crafted messages bounce off a wall of digital video recorders, pop-up blockers, spam filters, and digital music players.

In the new reality, customers choose which messages to listen to and which marketers to let in the door. The days of what Seth Godin calls “interruption marketing” are over. The future is in “invitation marketing.”

Customers have powerful new ways to reach out to one another. The population of the blogosphere skyrocketed from 1 million to 60 million between January 2004 and December 2005. Then social networks exploded onto the scene, giving people the means to form groups easily. In these groups, they could share experiences and rate the organizations they did business with. Emory University surveyed its incoming freshmen in 2007 and found that 97 percent of them had Facebook accounts. For the first time in history, people are engaging in a global discussion with others just like them—people they trust.

No longer can weak product be covered up by expensive advertising. Today, 7 out of 10 customers consult online peer reviews before making a major purchase. Buyers are engaging in discussions among themselves, and marketers are rarely invited. Years of showing messages down the throats of customers who were helpless to talk back have denied them a seat at the table. They have to find a new way to get invited to the party.

That way is through content marketing, a concept that some people regard as New Age, but that is really as old as the village bazaar. Content marketing is about relationships and trust. It’s about suppliers and customers forming bonds that spring from mutual dependencies and shared interests. It’s about businesses really listening to their customers and endeavoring to deliver the goods and services that those customers need. It’s about customers returning the favor by offering advice.

Many marketers are paralyzed by these developments. Business school taught them to analyze CPMs and response rates, not to engage in discussion. They learned marketing-by-Excel, not marketing-by-excellence. Some hope that content marketing is a fad, that we’ll soon return to the good old days when conversations consisted of only one person talking. These people will soon be unemployed.

## It's a Good Thing

Content marketing is actually the best thing to happen to the marketing profession in decades. That's because the barriers that for years have made marketers subservient to the media have fallen. No longer is it necessary to buy ads or to grovel before editors to get your message out. Today, marketers can *be* the media.

Search engines don't discriminate by source; they care only about the relevance of the content. To Google, you are every bit as credible a source as the *New York Times* when your content is crafted appropriately. You just need to think differently about what you do.

This book is about marketing with content, which makes it an essential strategy manual for any company that hopes to compete in the new online world. Content marketing isn't about marketing in the old way. It isn't about intercepting and bothering prospective customers while they're doing something else. It isn't about intrusion at all. Content marketing is about getting customers to invite you to interact with them. It's about creating relationships that transcend transactions.

The few companies that are doing this right have seen remarkable dividends. Go to [Willitblend.com](http://Willitblend.com) for an example of a company that has used offbeat and entertaining viral video to convince customers of its products' superiority and drive sales up 400 percent in one year. Check out [ClutterControlFreak.com](http://ClutterControlFreak.com) or [RoadWarriorTips.com](http://RoadWarriorTips.com) to see how businesses can engage with customers by offering helpful free advice. These companies have a clue. And you know what? They're having fun, too.

You don't need expensive campaigns or custom-built Web sites to reach customers. The secret of content marketing is to put yourself in the customer's shoes and look for opportunities to simplify and improve her life. It's about using the same words in your marketing materials that customers use in their search queries. The more in tune you are with the customer, the easier this process becomes.

Most of all, content marketing is about engagement. That's the dynamic by which companies find shared ground with their customers

to solve problems. When you come right down to it, that's what successful companies do.

This book is your guide to content marketing. The authors have years of experience helping companies establish and grow conversations with their customers. The case histories they present should inspire you. The arguments they present should challenge your thinking. The guidelines they propose should change the way you work.

We live in a world in which the old standards of competitive advantage no longer apply. Today, your best ideas are knocked off by your competitors and manufactured offshore at half the cost within six months. In this global and rapidly changing business environment, the only sources of competitive advantage are continuous innovation and outstanding customer service. The world's most admired companies—Southwest Airlines, Dell Computer, Nordstrom, Progressive Insurance, Disney, Starbucks and, yes, Google—build multiple two-way channels between themselves and their constituents. They listen till it hurts. They see their success as being wholly dependent on the success of their entire ecosystem of partners, suppliers, and customers. To these companies, conversations aren't artificial or unnatural. They're just good business.

—Paul Gillin

Author, *Secrets of Social Media Marketing:  
How to Use Online Conversations and  
Customer Communities to Turbo-Charge Your Business*  
and *The New Influencers: A Marketer's Guide  
to the New Social Media*

# Introduction

**Y**our job as a marketing professional is to get more customers to buy from you. It's that simple. This was true 50 years ago, and it is still true today.

But you cannot get more customers to buy from you by relying on the traditional marketing approaches that worked 50 or even 10 years ago. Why? The Internet has transformed buyer behavior. Customers have access to vast amounts of online information from a broad range of sources. They can find almost anything they want or need in order to make an intelligent buying decision. They want plenty of information from you as well, but they want it on their terms. They expect to gather the information they need without being interrupted by unwanted marketing messages.

Because this behavioral transformation is so new and so dramatic, most marketers are finding it challenging to adapt. Yet there is a way to shape this transformation to your advantage. That's what content marketing is all about, and that's why the content marketing revolution is on its way.

*Content marketing is the art of understanding exactly what your customers need to know and delivering it to them in a relevant and compelling way.*

This new way to connect with your customers extends way beyond the offering of product information and into the realm of best practices, case studies, success stories, thought leadership, and

more. Once you have delivered relevant content, you become a trusted resource. Content marketing enables companies to build a level of trust among their customers that makes it easy for those customers to buy. This is easy to say but hard to do, because it almost certainly means changing the way you think and act about marketing.

## **How Did We Get Here and Where Are We Going?**

Ten years ago, the Internet was well into its commercial phase, with companies of every size establishing some kind of Internet presence. Even so, the Internet was more of a marketing footnote than a marketing mainstay. Most buying decisions were still made the way they had been made since the 1950s. Print, radio, billboards, TV, and direct mail were the primary marketing vehicles chosen. They were chosen because they worked. Publishing and media companies provided most of the content. Because consumer and trade media owned the toll roads, brands were forced to use these outlets as middlemen in order to communicate with their customers and prospects. Publishing and media companies were healthy and profitable, and all seemed right with the world.

That is, until the Internet loomed large on the business horizon. Today, buyers and sellers can communicate with one another directly, without the assistance of traditional media outlets. Mass marketing is dying, and personal communication with customers is here to stay.

A perfect scenario, right? Well, not really, at least not yet. While media companies are suffering financially and even cutting back on their long-standing tradition of content creation, most businesses are still unsure of how to communicate with their customers now that the giant walls have come crashing down.

## **The Start of Something Great**

While many organizations and some of the largest and most popular brands in the world are continuing to bang their heads against

the wall of mass marketing, smart organizations have begun to do things quite differently.

These smart companies know that they need to be something more than just vendors, so they've learned how to become significant content providers for their current and future customers. They've realized that they can be publishers and can fill the void left by the faltering media. They've taught themselves to answer the call of this "new" Internet-age buyer. Slowly but surely, more companies are picking up on this idea that they can not only create products and services for their customers, but also provide the information that will help their customers prosper and succeed.

Today, we're in the middle of marketing warfare. What began as a minor revolt against traditional marketing strategies has now become a full-fledged content marketing revolution. An irreversible shift has begun—away from media company-driven content and toward content created specifically for customers.

Marketing organizations are now realizing that they can create content whose quality is equal to or better than what many media companies are producing. Moreover, they are seeing that they can deliver tangible benefits to prospects and customers by offering relevant content that helps provide solutions to some of the toughest problems their prospective buyers are facing. This type of content marketing benefits the customers, of course. Customers love it. Who wouldn't? But what we are also finding is that content marketing drives revenues and may ultimately be the most important and effective marketing strategy available to successful marketing professionals.

## Why Is This So Important?

All the rules have changed. You need to relearn the marketing game with a brand-new marketing mindset. Those who can adapt will flourish. Those who don't . . . well, think of dinosaurs.

*Old-fashioned marketing is less and less effective with the new breed of buyer.*

Unfortunately, most marketers have been trained to approach prospects with bold headlines, flashy graphics, and minimal text. We think of that as *billboard-style* marketing, or, in the more popular term coined by marketing guru Seth Godin, *interruption* marketing. Interruption marketing is still very prevalent in TV, radio, and print platforms.

In the days of mass marketing, interruption marketing worked very well. Your job was to hype your product while your prospect was engaging with a piece of wanted content or information. In an era where three TV networks, top-40 radio, and authoritative trade magazines were monopoly information providers, interruption marketing worked more often than not. Today, things are completely different. In a world of infinite informational choices, buyers will stop only for what's truly relevant and ignore the rest.

We live in a world in which both consumers and business buyers want to make up their own minds about what they need. They search out and find the information they need to do their jobs better or make their lives easier.

By the time customers are ready to talk to you—the seller—they are armed with information about your company, people, and products. This is true whether they are planning to buy a Mazda or machine tools. It may not sound like it, but this presents a substantial opportunity for you and your company—an opportunity to educate potential buyers about your industry, possible solution choices, best practices, and the right questions to ask. Do this before the potential buyers even call you or walk through your front door.

By doing this, you have already begun a relationship that will make it easier for people to buy. That's what content marketing is all about. In essence, the customer has initiated a conversation with you before you even know he is interested in your products and services. Simply amazing!

By delivering content that is vital and relevant to your target market, you will begin to take on an important role in your customers' lives. This applies to your online, print, and in-person communica-

tions. And this is the same role that newspapers, magazines, TV, radio, conferences, workshops, and Web sites have played in the past. Now it's time for your organization to play that role.

This may sound like a pretty tall order. But we've gathered the essential knowledge, examples, processes, and how-tos that you'll need in order to go from traditional marketing to content marketing, from interrupting to relevance. We've combined our decades of experience with that of the smartest content marketing practitioners on the planet to help you make this happen.

## **How to Put This Book to Work**

We've written this book to simplify the process of developing and deploying a successful content marketing strategy. This is not a book about arcane marketing theories. It's a practical book about how to cope with the new buyer realities. We provide you with an understanding of why content marketing is the optimum approach to coping with the fundamental changes in the way your customers are buying. Perhaps most importantly, we show you exactly how to make the necessary changes with plenty of best practice success stories.

Here's what you'll learn:

- Why fundamental changes in the marketing universe demand that we become content marketing practitioners
- How to cope with the fundamental changes in buyer behavior by engaging in a dialogue with your prospects and customers that will make them want to buy from you
- How content marketing, executed properly, can accelerate the growth of your customer base, grow your revenues, and improve your bottom line
- How to really understand your customers, their concerns, and the best way to communicate with them by asking the right questions
- How and when to use the most important types of content to connect with your customers in print and online

- Best practices from organizations that are executing content marketing successfully
- How to develop a set of processes that will enable you to create, de ploy, and replicate effective content marketing strategies throughout your organization
- How to take advantage of a rich set of resources, including checklists, online links, and a list of experts in various elements of content marketing

You don't have to read this book from cover to cover. You may already understand the importance of content marketing and just want information on how to make it work. Feel free to dive into sections that are particularly relevant to your company.

You are in the middle of a content revolution, a revolution like none we've ever seen before. It is simply the greatest opportunity businesses have ever had to communicate directly with their customers. So, by all means, mark up the book, turn down pages, and write notes everywhere. Do whatever you have to do to put this book to work right now.

PART ONE

# Coping with the Content *Marketing* Revolution



# The Shift to Content Marketing

*We're not in the business of keeping the media companies alive . . .  
we're in the business of connecting with consumers.*

—TREVOR EDWARDS  
CORPORATE VICE PRESIDENT FOR GLOBAL BRAND  
AND CATEGORY MANAGEMENT, NIKE, INC.<sup>1</sup>

Nike and other huge companies such as Procter & Gamble, Johnson & Johnson, and General Motors are all moving away from the basic advertising and sponsorship strategies that helped make their brands as well known as they are today.

That's a frightening proposition for both major media organizations and established brands. It's hard to fathom that the once-coveted marketing strategies that vaulted the best of brands to the top are becoming obsolete. Once you get over the initial shock that the world we live in has changed, you realize that this is perhaps the greatest marketing opportunity we have ever seen for brands in both the business-to-business and the business-to-consumer markets.

We are seeing nothing less than a marketing tsunami that is affecting businesses of every size, regardless of what they're selling. Prospects are simply not responding to the kinds of marketing that have worked for decades. So most marketing organizations are asking, "What now?"

## Beginning to Tell the Story

“We want to find a way to enhance the experience and services, rather than look for a way to interrupt people from getting to where they want to go,” says Stefan Olander, global director for brand connections at Nike. “How can we provide a service where the customer says, ‘Wow, you really made this easier for me!’?”

Olander’s comment reflects buyers’ increasing dislike of interruption marketing—those incessant advertising messages that stream and scream at people in print, on the radio, on TV, and even on the Internet—or, essentially, anything that tries to take their attention away from the content they really want to engage with.

Big brands from around the world have realized that they need to market to their customers in a different way. The proof is in the dollars. The *New York Times* notes, “The 25 companies that spent the most on advertising over the last five years cut their spending last year in traditional media by about \$767 million, according to *Advertising Age* and *TNS Media Intelligence*.” During the first six months of 2007, those same companies decreased their media spending an additional 3 percent, or \$446 million, to \$14.53 billion, according to *TNS Media Intelligence*.

But those marketing dollars haven’t disappeared. They are moving in different directions, many of which are content marketing initiatives, in which money is being spent on custom magazines, newsletters, Webcasts, content for Web sites, blogging, social content efforts, and other such activities. In fact, *ContentWise* (formerly *Publications Management*), a research-based newsletter covering the content marketing industry, found that more than 25 percent of corporate marketing budgets is now being dedicated to some type of content marketing activity. And this number is growing. A recent IBM Global Solutions survey found that advertising executives plan to shift approximately 20 percent of marketing funds from impression-based advertising to impact-based advertising over the next three years.

Blendtec, a manufacturer of (you guessed it) blenders, has had tens of millions view its “Will It Blend?” video series over the last

few years. The thirty-second to two-minute videos show Blendtec founder Tom Dickson attempting to “blend” various items, including golf balls, a toilet plunger, and even an iPhone. According to Blendtec executive George Wright, retail sales have increased by more than 500 percent, which he attributes almost solely to the video series. Talk about return on investment! With less than \$1,000 and a YouTube account, Blendtec is now perceived as the undisputable blending king. Smart marketers like Nike and Blendtec are beginning to understand that they need to be telling their own story. They are learning to create their own valuable and relevant content to enable their customers to join the conversation. They are also learning that it’s hard to create meaningful relationships with customers through 30-second TV ads or radio jingles.

Nike’s global sales have climbed from \$10 billion to more than \$16 billion in the last four years. And executives say that the company’s new focus on telling a relevant content story is a major contributor to that trend. In other words, content marketing has had a lot to do with growing global sales by 60 percent in a four-year period. Nike, through microsites such as its customer experience site Nike+, is not just talking at buyers anymore, but rather conversing with them.

You don’t have to have Nike’s powerful brand, huge budget, and global reach, or even Blendtec’s creativity, to embrace a content marketing strategy that will grow your customer base and drive increased revenues. In fact, start-ups, small and medium-size companies, associations, and nonprofit groups are all benefiting from rethinking how they market their products and services. Just as Nike and Blendtec have experienced significant growth in tandem with the development of a content marketing strategy, so, too, can you deliver top-line and bottom-line results for your company.

## **How Many Names Can One Industry Have?**

As you become a content marketer, it’s important for you to realize where this industry came from. Many marketing professionals

and publishers recognize the term *custom publishing*, which in the last few years has become the most popular term for the industry. John Deere is often credited with producing the first actual custom publication/content marketing device when it launched its newsletter, *The Furrow*, in the late 1800s. Yet, even though this industry is more than a century old, most marketers recognize it as young. While we will adapt to any term that promotes business content initiatives, our research indicates that *custom publishing* is an often misunderstood term. Most marketers and publishers perceive custom publishing as referring mostly to custom magazines, newsletters, and other customized print initiatives, thus downplaying the huge increase in online branded content. Actually, in a small research project we conducted with approximately 100 marketers and publishers in May 2007, most respondents chose to use the terms *content marketing* and *custom media* for the delivery of valuable, targeted business content.

Who knows which phrase will stick with people? Frankly, it doesn't matter. We chose *content marketing* because it seems to be the term that's most understandable to marketing professionals. It's the blend of both content and the marketing of that content that enables customer behavior. But just in case, we've provided a list of relevant terms that are often interchanged with content marketing. You probably know a few more:

- Content marketing
- Custom publishing
- Custom media
- Corporate content
- Corporate media
- Custom content
- Branded content
- Branded editorial
- Branded editorial content
- Branded storytelling
- Information marketing
- Advertorial
- Private media
- Customer publishing
- Customer media
- Contract publishing
- Corporate publishing
- Corporate journalism
- Member media
- Info-content

Regardless of which name you associate with it, content marketing is here to stay and may very well be the biggest opportunity your organization has to communicate with your customers as never before. That means that you need to take very specific and strategic steps, not only within your marketing, but within your culture, to take advantage of this opportunity.

We hope you enjoyed this brief excerpt from  
Get Content Get Customers.

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