

# Content Marketing vs. Inbound Marketing: Inextricably linked but Not the Same

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## **DIGITAL MARKETING SERVICES**

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## Content Marketing vs. Inbound Marketing: Inextricably linked but Not the Same by Chris Tomlinson

"What really decides consumers to buy or not to buy is the content of your advertising, not its form." - David Ogilvy, the "Father of Advertising". The quote above comes from David Ogilvy, widely hailed as the father of advertising. Moreover, it came long before the supposedly modern concept of marketing in a day when direct sales methods were not only expected, but the primary tool available to businesses. It illustrates clearly that content marketing is nothing new. In fact, it's a time-honored means of connecting with your audience and then building brand value and loyalty.

### What Is Content Marketing?

We've discussed content marketing previously, but it's an immensely complex field with many subtle (and some not so subtle) nuances. Here's the thing - content marketing comprises all of your efforts to reach your audience. It's truly as simple as that. Any content you create that will eventually be seen by customers, clients or potential customers falls under the umbrella of content marketing. That applies to:

- Your website
- Blog posts
- Whitepapers
- Ebooks
- Social media posts
- Email
- Newsletters

However, it goes well beyond the sphere of the online world. They didn't have the Internet back in David Ogilvy's day (well, not for the majority of his career, at least), but not only was content marketing an established thing, it was the cornerstone on which rested successful advertising and marketing campaigns. In addition to the now-familiar online content, it also includes:

- Flyers
- Brochures
- Pamphlets
- Coupons
- Newspaper ads
- Magazine ads

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- Radio or TV spots
- Postcards
- Business cards
- Product information packages/papers/pages



## What all does Content Marketing Include

You get the idea. It's everything. Content marketing comprises all the content output of your company. Where does inbound marketing play into this, then? It's pretty simple, really. Inbound marketing is part of content marketing, but it's the part that deals with the creation of leads and sales. Content marketing informs and builds your brand. Inbound marketing creates action and prompts a response from your audience. When it's put that way, it becomes easier to see the difference and how the two work hand in hand, but let's explore things in somewhat greater depth.

### Customer-Centric Marketing

There are plenty of different definitions of content marketing and inbound marketing out there, depending on whom you listen to. However, they're all about one thing - creating customer-centric content. It's all about them, and not at all about you. Words change. The language we use every day evolves, and that

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evolution is happening faster and faster. Eventually, "content marketing" will fall by the wayside as both a catchphrase and as a named marketing activity. However, the principles embodied within the concept will never fade.

These are as follows:

- Content marketing relies on the analysis of needs and preferences of a strategically defined audience (because you can't be all things to all people, you need to identify your core audience and their wants/needs).
- The content used in your marketing efforts must be created to serve the needs and preferences of your core audience, while aligning with the goals of your business or organization.
- The content must be first made available to your audience, and then the results (spread, sharing, effectiveness, etc.) must be measured and integrated into your overall marketing plan.

## **The Importance of Brand Building**

"If people believe they share values with a company, they will stay loyal to the brand." - Howard Shultz, CEO of Starbucks.

Your content marketing efforts inform and build your brand. They help create the image of your company in the minds of your customers or clients. Think of any major brand today, from Nike to Apple, and you likely already have an image in your head in regards to what that company is and does. Nike creates fashionable athletic footwear. Apple creates consumer electronics. However, the actual "brands" of these two companies are so much more than what they do.

**Your brand is about far more than what you do, or what you sell. It's about how your customers see you, how they feel mentally in terms of their connection with your company, its ethics, values and culture.**

Let's take Apple for instance. Here are just a few words that tie in with the brand they've created through both their products and their content marketing efforts:

- Innovative
- Savvy
- Informed
- Forward-thinking
- Dedicated to quality
- Dedicated to outstanding design
- Dedicated to user experience

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### Apple's Brand Identity in a Few Words

Get the picture? Your brand is about far more than what you do, or what you sell. It's about how your customers see you, how they feel mentally in terms of their connection with your company, its ethics, values and culture.

Forbes has greater insight into the brand/branding question. In an article for the magazine, Jerry McLaughlin writes, "Beginning in the later part of the 20th century, marketers began to grasp there was more to the perception of distinctive products and services than their names - something David Ogilvy described as 'the intangible sum of a product's attributes'.

Marketers realized that they could create a specific perception in customers' minds concerning the qualities and attributes of each non-generic product or service. They took to calling this perception 'the brand'. Put simply, your 'brand' is what your prospect thinks of when he or she hears your brand name. It's everything the public thinks it knows about your name brand offering - both factual (e.g. It comes in a robin's-egg blue box), and emotional (e.g. It's romantic). Your brand name exists objectively; people can see it. It's fixed. But your brand exists only in someone's mind."

### Defining Your Tribe

Your brand is about far more than what you do, or what you sell. It's about how your customers see you, how they feel mentally in terms of their connection with your company, its ethics, values and culture.

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There are two primary things you should take away from the previous section. First, your brand is intangible. It exists solely in the minds of your customers - your audience. Second, that intangible, ephemeral thing has significant power. It can build your success, or it can tear you down. Consider the unwanted brand nickname now associated with the American organic grocery store chain Whole Foods. Due to the company's prices, customers have labeled them as "Whole Paycheck". That's damning, but it shows exactly how customer perceptions play into creating a brand (even one that you might want to avoid).

Perhaps the most important aspect of building your brand through content marketing is to define your tribe - your core audience. Just think if Apple had marketed their products to professionals and organizations rather than tech-savvy consumers. They might have been forced to compete with Microsoft (and we saw how well that turned out when Apple had to be bailed out of collapse).

It's really all about your customers, in every conceivable sense of the phrase. Therefore, it follows that your content marketing efforts must be focused on the right audience in order to bear fruit (or at least the fruit you need to see profitability, growth and success).

Again, it's not about you, your company or even your product, really. It's about your audience and the hole they need filled in their life. Al Ries, one of the minds behind the creation of the concept of product positioning, said, "The core idea of positioning is filling a hole in the mind. Chobani filled a hole called 'Greek yogurt'. Activia filled a hole called 'probiotic yogurt'.

Acura tried to fill a hole called 'Japanese luxury car', but made a big mistake by introducing 4-cylinder as well as 6-cylinder cars. Although launched three years later, Lexus concentrated on larger, more expensive cars. The sales records have borne out the fact that Lexus now owns a word in the mind of their audience."

That should give you a few clues about how to position your brand and even how to begin identifying your tribe or audience, but it goes deeper than that. As Inc.com says, "To build a solid foundation for your business, you must first identify your typical customer and tailor your marketing pitch accordingly." So, before positioning comes audience identification.

In *The Complete Guide to Building Your Personal Brand*, Neil Patel and Aaron Agius point out that, "You know that defining a target audience is a business best practice. But defining a target audience is a best practice for anyone that needs others to give them something. It might be a salary, an investment or money in exchange for a product or service. Whenever you need something from someone, you go through at least some of the steps in defining a target audience". Whether you're the head of a multimillion dollar global business, or a sole proprietor just getting your business off the ground, it really comes down to identifying, defining and then refining your audience for the best results (although that's not the end of it).

## Critical Steps

**You can also learn a great deal from your competition. What are they doing? Is it working? Are they seeing more success than you? If so, why?**

If you have an existing business, you're already a leg up on new startups. You have existing customers. This is an invaluable asset, and a tool that you can use to further delve into your branding conundrum. Who are your current customers? What do they want? Why do they buy from you? What need do you answer, or what hole does your product or service fill in their lives? What makes them choose your product or service over the competition? Is it price? Quality? Availability? Locality?

Answer these questions and then you can apply that information to your drive to connect with other potential customers through content marketing (and then see growth thanks to your inbound marketing efforts).

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seeing more success than you? If so, why? Who are your competitors' customers, and could you benefit by pursuing the same group, or should you diversify and seek out a slightly different segment of the population to differentiate your business from others out there?

As a note, it's generally a good idea NOT to pursue the exact same audience as your competition, particularly if they're well seated already. Consider the advent of Netflix.

The company didn't go head to head against movie rental chains. They positioned themselves as the place to rent movies online and through mail instead, which is a perfect example of identifying a hole and then filling it.

Additionally, you'll need to consider demographics. What characteristics do your audience members share? Do they earn the same level of income, roughly? Do they live in the same type of home? Do they work in the same type of industry? What education level do they have? Are they single or married? What is their ethnic background? How old is your ideal customer?

Once you've answered those questions, you can further extrapolate by considering other attributes, such as their personality, their attitudes, the values they hold to, and their lifestyles.

Let's use Apple again as a prime example here. The tech company's audience can be summed up as:

- Relatively young
- Tech savvy
- Interested in gadgets, productivity, entertainment and communication
- Have disposable income
- Value user experience more than monetary savings

Your audience should be just as well defined in order to create the content necessary for marketing.

## **Creating Content - Building Your Content Marketing Platform**

Once you've identified your tribe, you can then begin the process of determining what mediums to use in your content marketing efforts, as well as the type of content that will be best suited to the task. This is also the time to start concentrating on inbound marketing, as it's an inseparable part of your content marketing platform.

We'll cover content marketing in general, and then inbound marketing separately because, while they're inextricably linked, they serve different purposes.

## **Content Marketing Tactics and Decisions**

For an excellent real-world look at this in action, consider Rolex. The brand is 110 years old, and it was not until 2014 that the company officially opened its Facebook page. In an interview with Mashable, a Rolex spokesperson said, "Creating buzz is not the intent.

In an article for ClickZ, Lisa Buyer states, "For successful content marketing, focus on authority over SEO". While that might fly in the face of conventional wisdom, it's an important consideration. Authority equates

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to brand building - that's exactly what your content marketing is supposed to do. It builds your brand. It lends authority to your business or organization. It enhances and cements the perception that you are a leader and someone who truly knows what's going on.

On the other hand, SEO lends itself to visibility. It doesn't add value to human readers. Its sole purpose is to make your content more visible in the online world. Because all of the content you create falls under the heading of content marketing, and a great deal of that content won't be located online in the first place, SEO shouldn't be your primary consideration (although you do need to pay attention to it). In addition, authoritative content can actually boost your organic search results all on its own.

Buyer goes on to explain that, "Building authority continues to be critical in search engine results, regardless of the fall of Google's semantic authorship markup. Optimizing your meta data, headlines and being on top of trending keywords helps your news content to rank. No question about that. But quality content conveying expertise, authority and trust plays a key role in gaining positive organic search results." For an excellent real-world look at this in action, consider Rolex. The brand is 110 years old, and it was not until 2014 that the company officially opened its Facebook page. In an interview with Mashable, a Rolex spokesperson said, "Creating buzz is not the intent.

We craft our content thoughtfully, privilege quality over quantity, talk only when we have something to say, and when we feel it's right." That definitely flies in the face of modern convention, where businesses are clawing their way to publishing reams of blog posts, articles, listicles, clickbait and other content in an effort to not just drive traffic, but to somehow be more relevant to the customers they serve. Rolex not only didn't create reams of content immediately, the company actually segmented its entrance to the world of social media, a move that should have doomed them to ignominy according to conventional wisdom. It didn't.

Rolex first rolled out the company's YouTube channel in 2012. Rather than creating product ads and self-promotional content, the firm focused on creating documentaries that explored content that mattered to them, and to their audience. They created authoritative content that provided value to their customers and their wider audience, including people who'd never bought a Rolex watch before, and perhaps had never even considered it.

"Our communication on social media enables a better understanding of the brand, its universe, and its values," the spokesperson added in the Mashable interview. That's a perfect explanation of what businesses must do today if they're hoping to gain real traction and see lasting results, rather than flash in the pan success.

It goes well beyond simply creating content that the company feels valuable. They listen. They mine data. They track comments regarding their brand name. Then, they exercise caution when creating content. For instance, their listening scheme paid off by telling the company that customers were interested in learning why they used Roman numerals on their watch faces rather than conventional numbers. Rolex created a video that highlighted why they did, as well as why they used the "clockmaker's four" (IIII) rather than IV. The post earned the company almost 120,000 likes.

Where does that leave you? Chances are good that you don't have 110 years of reputation and history to back up your sales. Actually, you can (and should) take several cues from Rolex.

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## Content Tailored for Your Ideal Customer

The most important lesson to learn from Rolex's example is that you need to create content tailored to your actual customers. While you might not be able to invest in the data mining the watchmaker used, that doesn't mean that you lack options. If you've done your research, you should know who comprises your target audience. From this information, you can create personas, or fictional representations of your ideal customer.

In fact, you should create several different personas based on metrics like personality, needs, wants, preferences, problems and more. These will give you the means to tailor your content marketing strategy around each individual persona, and help you develop a more successful program that actually offers value to your customers while building your brand's authority.

## Think Beyond the Written Word

Today, content marketing has become synonymous with print (or type, if you're thinking about the online world). However, it goes well beyond the written word. As mentioned in the very beginning of this report, "content marketing" includes all of the material that you use to market your company. That applies to everything from blog posts to postcards and videos. So, think beyond the page. Create unique, authoritative content that positions your brand correctly that doesn't rely on the written word. This might include:

- Audio - Think podcasts, but it goes well beyond this
- Video - YouTube can be a great tool, but there are many other video sites, as well as myriad uses for video that don't rely on social networks
- Visuals - Everything from infographics to compelling pictures can become valuable content in your marketing plan

With that being said, not all businesses will benefit from all types of media. Determine what media formats are best suited to your product or service, as well as your team's production capabilities. Determine if it can be outsourced (hiring a professional recording crew or producer, for instance), and what your budget would be. However, don't forget about your audience.

Their media consumption habits should lead your efforts here. Do they frequent YouTube? Do they listen to podcasts? Do they like infographics? Your customers' preferences always trump other considerations. Sure, your video might be a thing of immense authority and even beauty, but if no one watches it, then it's just money and time flushed down the drain. It does you no good whatsoever.

## Quality Over Quantity

If there's one takeaway from Rolex's story that should outrank any others, it's this - focus on the quality of your content, rather than the quantity. A few excellent pieces of content, whether they be articles, brochures, videos or something else, far outweigh scads of mediocre content. Why is that?

Your readers will remember what you produce. If you create basic content that doesn't actually deliver

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value, they'll remember. They'll also remember if you produce content that offers outstanding value and perhaps enjoyment. And that's what you want - you WANT your audience to remember. That's how you build your brand.

Look at it this way. If your audience doesn't remember your content, then why are you producing it in the first place? If it's solely for the search engines, then you're going about this entire thing the wrong way. Yes, SEO is important, but building your brand and cementing customer loyalty is far more significant. You can't do that with content your audience forgets the second they're done reading it, or, worse yet, they remember but in a negative way. That's the wrong type of branding.

## **Avoiding Oblivion**

Your content marketing plan should include both offline and online content creation, as well. Unlike print, online content can last forever. However, despite the fact that online content has a virtually unlimited shelf life, it can fade into oblivion. One needs look no farther than the millions of ebooks on Amazon that sit there, unnoticed and unread. The same applies to all other forms of online content. It's not as simple as "if you write it, they will come".

You need to ensure that you're creating content that has the best chance of being read continually in order to maximize the ROI offered. How do you do that? Obviously, focusing on quality over quantity is one of the most important steps, but there are others that should be taken. Shareable: Yes, you need to add buttons for sharing to your blog posts, but this goes beyond that. You need to create content that makes readers WANT to share it. How, though?

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- Humor - This one can be difficult to pull off well. If you struggle to create humorous content, take it easy. However, if you can do it, it's one of the best ways to encourage your readers to share it far and wide.
- Controversy - Your use of this tactic will depend on your brand, your business and your customers. However, controversy can make your content more shareable. Use it judiciously, though, or you risk your reputation.
- Information - Readers love new information and insights. Just look at how frequently infographics are shared online. You can tap into this in a number of ways and increase how shareable your content is.
- Images - "A picture is worth a thousand words". That's truer today than at any point in history. At heart, we're visual creatures, and adding custom imagery to your content immediately makes it significantly more shareable.

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## The Inbound Marketing Tie-In

Inbound marketing ATTRACTS customers (which is why it's sometimes referred to as attraction marketing). While pure informational content can do that to some extent, it doesn't excel at it. That's why you need to integrate inbound options with your overall marketing plan.

Inbound marketing is part and parcel of content marketing, but it must be treated separately. While all of the content your company produces or publishes falls under the umbrella of content marketing, not all of it is part of your inbound marketing efforts. Inbound marketing is responsible for nurturing leads and creating sales.

However, first you must understand one thing: Inbound marketing is NOT POSSIBLE without content marketing. It's as simple as that. With that being said, content marketing is possible without inbound marketing, just not vice-versa. Inbound marketing can be found in many different examples. For instance, the call to action (CTA) at the end of a blog post or article is a form of inbound marketing.

So, what is it? Really, inbound marketing is nothing more than a collection of techniques, tactics and methods that bring your customers to you. Note that difference here with many forms of content marketing. For example, an article printed in a paper magazine might be part of your content marketing plan, but it's outbound marketing. You're pushing your message out to potential customers or clients. It might build your brand, or prove that you're a thought leader in the industry, but it doesn't "pull" those readers to your website. It doesn't encourage them to pick up the phone and call you. Inbound marketing does. Inbound marketing ATTRACTS customers (which is why it's sometimes referred to as attraction marketing). While pure informational content can do that to some extent, it doesn't excel at it. That's why you need to integrate inbound options with your overall marketing plan. A few examples of this include the following:

- PPC Ads - These incite curiosity, encouraging the viewer to click the link and visit your website.
- Social Media Posts - Social posts can be both inbound and outbound depending on the content of the message/post itself. Use a combination of both, but use inbound messages less frequently than informational posts.
- Social Media Ads - Social media ads are basically PPC ads that appear on social networks and can provide significant inbound traffic when used correctly.
- Meta Information - Each page of your site should have evocative meta information; this appears in organic search results and encourages surfers to click through the link to your site.

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Those examples should highlight some of the differences between content marketing and inbound marketing, as well as how the two are not only aligned, but combined. However, it's not the whole story. Helen Nesterenko has some invaluable insights on the subject.

"One thing inbound marketing is specifically built to address is the idea of SMarketing - sales/marketing alignment," she says. "That's not to say that content marketing isn't a practice designed to support the sales process, because it certainly is. However, a mature inbound marketing program will include lead scoring and lead nurturing, so the sales team is only receiving high-qualified leads. While high-quality content can certainly help in the process, few purist content marketers I've encountered address the idea of sales-marketing alignment regularly.

Also, some could argue very easily that content marketing is only one component of an inbound marketing strategy. An advanced inbound marketing program will include data-based customer models, the application of decision science in order to progressively profile leads, and things like marketing experiments for conversion optimization.

While all of these involve content, they're not really content marketing because they're analytics-based models for the sole purpose of internal program improvement."

So, inbound marketing needs to focus on several key areas. Some of these are served by content marketing as well, but many are not, or are underserved, or it's impossible for pure content to do what needs to be done.

**Lead Creation:** Content can help to create leads. After all, few people will be attracted to your product or service if they don't have at least some information beforehand. However, without inbound marketing, you're still just blasting your message out into the ether.

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**Lead Qualification:** What's the difference between someone who enjoys reading your content, and someone who will eventually buy from your company? Inbound marketing helps you separate the wheat from the chaff, so to speak. It helps you create qualified leads, and then start those leads down your sales funnel. Content marketing just keeps people engaged (which is a vital consideration, certainly).

**Lead Nurturing:** Yes, content can and does nurture leads. However, without at least some form of inbound marketing integrated, you're not attracting prospects. You're still sending out your message. Even a simple CTA included in an email, newsletter or "blast" can turn the tide, though.

**Sales Creation:** Content doesn't create sales. It informs. It educates. It brands. It positions. Only inbound marketing methods can create sales, taking interested, qualified leads and transforming them into paying customers. Or to put it another way, turning contacts into friends and then into customers. So, while content and inbound marketing are inextricably linked to one another, there are key differences. Inbound marketing has many aspects that go beyond the abilities of content marketing, and must be harnessed in order to gain the traction necessary for growth, profitability and success.

## When Everything's Said and Done

**This must be combined with analytics and data-based modeling to underpin your inbound marketing efforts. By tracking, analyzing and monitoring your content marketing results, you're able to determine the what, where, when, why and who of the inbound component.**

In summation - content marketing and inbound marketing are closely related. They're woven together tightly in most instances. However, they're not the same. Some marketers view content marketing as a subset of inbound, while others view inbound as a part of content marketing. In a way, both are correct. However, inbound marketing cannot exist without content marketing. On the other side of the coin, content marketing is incapable of delivering the returns that inbound marketing does, simply because it cannot accomplish the same goals. Content marketing is all about building your brand and delivering value to your customers and potential customers outside of your products or services. It's designed to enhance your reputation and position your company as a leader in its respective industry. Inbound marketing capitalizes on the value delivered by content marketing (which is one reason we at Peppersack believe inbound is a subset of content marketing, as it wouldn't be possible without a full-scale content marketing campaign in place). With inbound initiatives, you're able to build on the goodwill and branding created through informative, valuable, insightful content and attract customers and potential customers to your website (or another online hub).

With that being said, it's imperative that you have a well-planned, fully thought out plan that includes both the creation and distribution of original content, and the means to capitalize on those efforts through inbound marketing. You must have an online hub (your website, or even your blog can serve this function), and your hub must be not only branded, but optimized for traffic as well. Combine that with content marketing platforms like Facebook, Pinterest, G+, LinkedIn, as well as publishing platforms like Medium, and you have the very beginnings of a content marketing platform.

You also need to ensure that you've done your due diligence in determining what other content

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distribution options are viable for your company, your audience and your product or service. For instance, video creation and distribution through YouTube and Vimeo (or any of the other countless video sites out there) might be worth your time. As mentioned, podcasting also offers a low-cost content marketing method that can yield a significant return when utilized properly. Other methods include email marketing, newsletter marketing, guest blogging, and more - you'll find a plethora of different options available, all of which can offer benefits, reach and engagement.

This must be combined with analytics and data-based modeling to underpin your inbound marketing efforts. By tracking, analyzing and monitoring your content marketing results, you're able to determine the what, where, when, why and who of the inbound component. Of course, chances are good that you're not entirely sure where to go from this point. What are the inbound marketing methods you should be harnessing? What role does SEO play in this area? How do you ensure that you're using the right tools, with the right message, for your specific audience?

At Peppersack, we offer a broad range of solutions for today's businesses and organizations. From SEO to data science, we're positioned as one of the leading providers ensuring that our clients have the solutions, advice and guidance necessary to not only reach their target audience, but to attract them, as well. Whether you're a sole proprietor or helm a Fortune 500 company, Peppersack can help you make sense of content marketing and inbound marketing, and how the two work to complement one another in order to return the best possible ROI. Contact us today to learn more.

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## About Peppersack

Peppersack is a leading digital marketing agency providing SEO and content marketing services that deliver results. Our search engine optimisation services will help to raise your page rank. We deliver proven results in the form of traffic to websites and sales inquiries through integrated inbound marketing campaigns. We make it easy for your potential clients to find you. These services are based on a disciplined approach to research, analysis, business planning and reporting. Support services include content development, social media management and creative design and development.

## Contact Peppersack

Please contact us for help and advice with your digital marketing and communications

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