

Showing what you know

CONTENT MARKETING MAY not be a phrase you've heard — or maybe you've heard it and wondered, "What does that mean?"

Wonder no more! Content marketing, simply put, is a way of marketing your own products and services not by directly promoting them, but by offering your knowledge and expertise to the public and letting it lead people to you.

There are two main methods of content marketing:

1. Content marketing on your own website.

Many companies turn their blogs into hubs for content marketing. For instance, a company's blog will feature an article about "Three ways to make meetings exciting," "The five essential ingredients of a good night's sleep," or "The seven most exciting plant varieties this season." (Hopefully that last example gets you thinking, "I could do this!")

These companies count on people searching online for their topics. Google alone processes around 3.5 billion searches every day. If you write an article that catches the attention of some of those 3.5 billion daily searches, people will click on your article to learn about the topic they are interested in — your content, in other words.

At that point, they have landed on your website and you can market yourself to them more directly. For example, you might write an article about "Five ways to grow plants successfully in Springfield." People who search for "gardening in Springfield" will find your article, see how intelligent you are, and want to do business with you.

2. Showing your knowledge in someone else's medium.

This second type of content marketing is like the first — you are showing off your expertise and giving content away. In this second type, though, you seek out opportunities to share your knowledge in

someone else's space.

For example, you might be a nursery owner writing an article about running a small business for your local chamber of commerce's website. You might write a piece about how to avoid common plant diseases for an environmental group's newsletter. You might even be a marketing professional who writes articles for a nursery industry magazine (oh, hello!).

This second method of content marketing also helps strengthen relationships with the people for whom you are writing. In other words, which nursery will the



chamber of commerce call first when they need their gardens redone? The one that wrote the article for their website!

In both cases, content marketing is about sharing your expertise, letting people find that information and use it, and counting on them to want more from you. Some content marketers (using the first method) require something like an email address or a phone number before website visitors can access the content — you can decide whether your content is good enough for people to cross that barrier. Other content marketers offer a free article with a short overview of a



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topic, and visitors must give their contact information before they can access the full article or paper.

Sound intriguing? You're not alone: a recent study showed that 75 percent of marketers (both business-to-consumer and business-to-business) are increasing their investment in content marketing this year, with more than 60 percent saying they are "extremely or very committed" to content marketing.¹ If you are thinking of taking the leap, here's where to start:

Think about what you do best. Content marketing begins by considering which areas of interest — either to the public or to your specific target audience — you can demonstrate knowledge.

Be prepared to write. Content marketing usually entails writing articles, blog posts and so on, so you should be ready for a lot of writing. If writing is not your strong suit, you may need to find someone who can write on your behalf.

Learn the basics. Do a web search for "content marketing" for oodles of information. Hubspot is one of the champions of content marketing, and a great place to learn more.

When it's done well, content marketing is a valuable tool in the marketing toolbox. You've spent years gaining your knowledge — now it's time to share it, impress others and earn more business. ☺

¹Impact Branding & Design. (2017, March 25). The State of Content Marketing in 2017: Stats and Figures. Retrieved from <https://www.impactbnd.com/blog/state-of-content-marketing-2017-infographic>.