From Creation to Conversion: Promoting Content to the Right Audience

Marketo®

Best Practices to Improve Content Conversion

Today's marketers know that quality content is essential for B2B marketing success. Content needs to educate, excite, and inspire prospects, customers, and partners alike. Unfortunately, today's B2B buyers are bombarded with multiple marketing messages. When your prospect's inbox explodes with offers daily, how do you ensure your content stands out?

What we are really asking is, 'How do we get their attention?' We are working in what has been dubbed the attention economy, and economics dictate that what is most scarce becomes most valuable. Our buyers' attention is now the scarce commodity. What this means is that attention is what B2B marketers must win over.

"The attention economy is not growing, which means we have to grab the attention that someone else has today.

- BRENT LEARY, FOUNDER, CRM ESSENTIALS

Capture With Content:
Rules to Live By

There are **four** ways all marketers must be using content to ensure maximum results:

1 First, you must **create interesting content**. There is no market for content for content's sake. In order to stand a chance in this economy, you must deliver relevant content that exceeds expectations. In other words, you must make your information more valuable (even if just in perception) than that of your competitors.

Through our experience in content marketing, we've defined six rules that, when followed diligently, bring success:

1. *It is not promotional.* Promotional materials will neither excite nor inspire, both critical components of content marketing.
2. *It is relevant.* Generic materials that are not highly relevant to a reader will not result in success. When writing content, you must make sure it will be useful to the reader, regardless of whether it supports your company message.
3. *It closes a gap.* Content should answer a business question or problem. Giving people information about topics where there is no need for information will be a waste of your time – and your audience's.
4. *It is well written.* Poorly written thought leadership not only leads to poor results, it might also hurt your company's reputation. Take time to ensure content is presented in a thoughtful manner and is free of errors.

5. *It is relevant to your company.* If the content you create does not support business objectives in any way, it is a waste of resources to produce. Keep business goals in mind when creating content.
6. *It gives proof.* Since you write to support a business goal, your content may seem biased. Make sure you back up the positioning in your content either through third-party quotes and testimonials or through actual metrics and statistics.

2 Second, you must **vary content mediums**. Delivering your content using one medium only is like fishing using a single lure; you might catch one fish but you can catch so many more by using a variety of lures. Not only do people gravitate to different types of content depending on their consumption preferences, they tend to seek out certain content types depending on where they are in the buying cycle. The key is to present your information via numerous means, including articles, blog posts, eBooks, emails, FAQs, infographics, podcasts, reference guides, video demos, webinars, white papers, and workbooks, to name a few. And to catch the attention of the most people possible, you need to take advantage of many content mediums.

3   Third, you must **ensure that your content can be easily found**. You want prospects to find you when they are conducting their searches; that is, when they are in active research and buying mode. Below are a few of the most successful methods to make that happen.

- **SEO (search engine optimization):** SEO makes ensures that people can find your content. The more effective you are at using the same language a prospect would use when conducting a search, the more likely you are to rank high in the search engine results.

- **PPC (pay per click):** PPC ads are contextual ads you pay to display on search engine results pages. Again, these incorporate the words or phrases being used by your prospects. But with PPC ads, you can essentially guarantee your visibility on the search engines.

- **Social advertising:** Advertising with social networks such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and YouTube allows you to target ads based on profile information that is provided by prospects themselves. This means your ad is guaranteed to be relevant.

- **Content syndication:** You can pay industry or news sites to host your content so that it will be seen by subscribers or visitors that are interested in a specific topic.

- **Remarketing:** This is the process of reinvigorating leads that are already known, i.e., those in your database. By recycling these leads and sending new messages featuring highly personalized and segmented offers, you increase the likelihood of response.

- **Easy-to-navigate resource center:** A resource center aggregates content and links for site visitors. By making this easy to navigate, you can help prospects and customers find the information they need on topics that matter to them.

4   Finally, **promote content using segmentation, personalization, and customization**. It's critical that you make your content relevant to each and every recipient, or your message will reach many but entice few, if any. This is not about changing the content itself; it is about the messages promoting your content. If these promotional messages are not relevant, your potential reader may never dive into your thought leadership.

To promote content relevant to recipients, you need to know something about each of them; only then can you target effectively. Once you know something about your targets' preferences and interests, demographics, and location, for example, it's much easier to ensure you are delivering the right content.
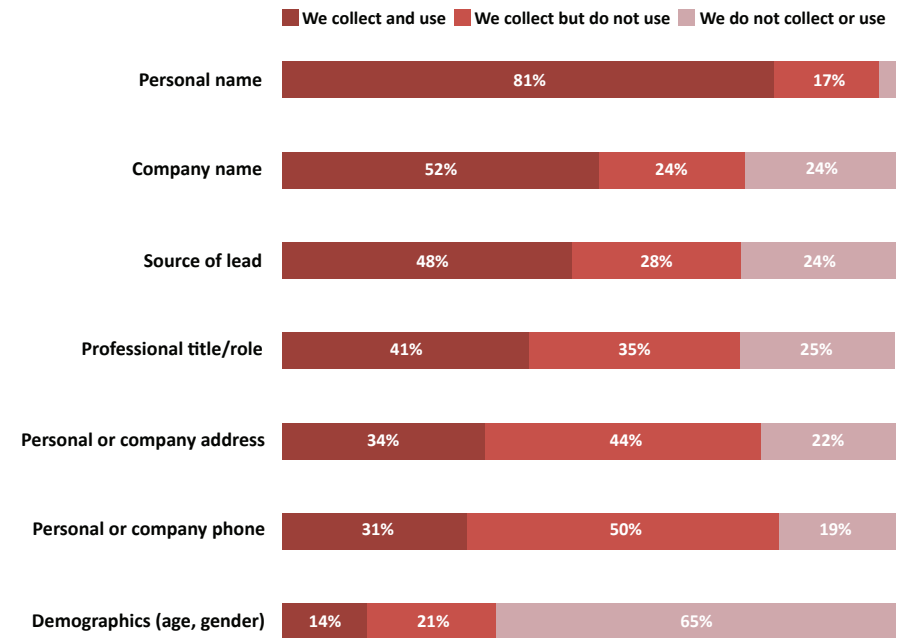
Where are the Holes in Your Marketing Strategy?

For many marketers, the first three of the above four may be obvious – content is successful when it is not promotional, is relevant, and can be easily found. After all, you can find lots of information about how to improve content quality and properly promote content. The one area that needs the most attention (but often gets the least) is how to **segment, personalize, and customize content promotions** so they are most appealing to the target audience. True, you may know this is a best practice, but do you really know how to put this strategy into play with ease? Let's dig in.

First, why are segmentation, personalization and customization important?

Personalized promotions use an individual's name, and perhaps his or her company name, a mention of where you met, or some other attribute that is unique to that person. It's human nature to respond positively when someone takes note of something about us, and with personalized content promotions, you convey that you've taken the time to do this. When we personalize well, we are building a trusted relationship before we even sign our prospect as a new customer. We change the way people respond to and talk about us. Though personalization, is not easy, it is effective when done right.

Chart: Data collected for email personalization goes beyond subscriber name

Legend: We collect and use | We collect but do not use | We do not collect or use

Category	We collect and use	We collect but do not use	We do not collect or use
Personal name	81%	17%	
Company name	52%	24%	24%
Source of lead	48%	28%	24%
Professional title/role	41%	35%	25%
Personal or company address	34%	44%	22%
Personal or company phone	31%	50%	19%
Demographics (age, gender)	14%	21%	65%

Source: MarketingSherpa Email Marketing Benchmark Survey
Methodology: Fielded Sep 2010, N=1,115

http://www.marketingsherpa.com/article.php?ident=31847

However, as shown in the chart below, many don't go far enough when personalizing. In fact, some marketers fail to personalize at all. The result is lower open and click-through rates.

E-Mail Marketing Open and Click Rates* Worldwide, by Level of Personalization, First half 2007

Subject line only personalized

Open	**18.00%**
Click	**5.02%**

Message only personalized

Open	**16.56%**
Click	**3.15%**

Not personalized

Open	**15.86%**
Click	**2.94%**

■ **Open rates**   ■ **Click rates**

*Note: *excludes e-mails containing no links*
Source: MailerMailer LLC, "E-Mail Marketing Metrics Report: January-June (H1) 2007." October 24, 2007

www.eMarketer.com

Customized promotions are different from personalized promotions, though they are often lumped together as one in the same. What we all want to see is content that speaks to our real needs, desires, interests, preferences, and fears. A truly customized promotion addresses specific verticals, lines of business,

previous events attended, or issues of concern in a particular region, for example. By tailoring your communications and offers to the specific needs of that individual and his or her business, you dramatically increase your chance of striking a chord.

Segmented promotions involve dividing the larger market into distinct groups or subsections based on various factors like industry, role, company size, and geography, to name a few. Factors can also be based on previous behavior, like segmenting those who previously watched a demo for a specific offer. By focusing on a smaller subset of unique buyers and the distinct needs of that group, you are able to offer more specific solutions and build greater loyalty. Segmented marketing promotions can prevent your emails from becoming spam. Because you know the unique needs of your reader, you can send only those offers that are relevant to them, increasing the likelihood of response and minimizing the number of messages you need to send and manage.

> According to research by MarketingSherpa and KnowledgeStorm, content is more valuable when customized for industry (82% more effective), role/job function (67%), company size (49%) and geography (29%).

What it Takes to Create Relevant Promotions of Your Content

Now that you understand why personalization, customization and segmentation are important to promoting content, it's time to examine how you can use these tactics in a practical manner.

- **Emails:** You can segment your list to send to those individuals the message that will best resonate with them. Then for the entire group of recipients, you can tailor the subject line, email body, and/or email images as needed.

- **Landing pages:** You can customize what reader's see if you recognize who is on the page. But how would you recognize who is on the page? Well, the reader may have clicked on a link in an email you sent, typed in a link from a direct mail you sent, or filled out a form on your website previously. If site visitors have taken one of these actions, then you can use past information about them to dynamically populate the page with custom content.

> 96% of marketers believe that personalizing email content can improve marketing performance...yet only 19% utilize dynamic messaging
> -Aberdeen study 2010

Customizing your promotions to the interests of every recipient can be a time-consuming (and expensive) task, especially if you do it manually. You need the right tools to help you achieve this; and **dynamic content**, when used correctly, makes it possible to easily create targeted promotions for your email and landing pages. Dynamic content starts with a

standard message and allows you to tailor the content based on what you know about your recipients, to create highly personalized, relevant messages, all from a single email or landing page.

If Sales Rep = Bob

If Sales Rep = Tina

If Sales Rep = John

Options for segmenting dynamic content

You can present dynamic content based on a variety of information, including:

- **Demographics:** Characteristics about the individual, including name, company name, job title, phone, and email address.

- **Firmographics:** Characteristics about an organization, including location, annual revenues, number of employees, and industry.

- **Past behavior:** Responses to emails or actions taken on your website can help inform a person's interests and/or place in the buying cycle.

- **Products or services already purchased:** Using information about past purchases can help you up-sell or cross-sell relevant products or services.

- **Psychographics and preferences:** This takes into consideration a prospect's interests, attitudes, and opinions.

- **Behavior of related contacts:** Understanding the actions, interests, and preferences of others in the recipient's company is critical in a B2B purchase that involves many stakeholders.

Unfortunately, marketers often use only two types of systems to create dynamic content, and neither is great. First, you have the complicated, need-to-know-some-code, easy-to-make-mistakes type of dynamic content. This is typically found in enterprise email or marketing automation systems, and is normally only useable by a full-time power user. The alternative is a simpler, easier-to-populate and often less mistake-prone type of dynamic email content. But here, marketers are often limited by a small set of segments and restrictive email templates. For example, with this simpler version, you often can't segment beyond demographics, and if the segments of your recipients change prior to

email launch, your hands are tied. This is why many companies decide to forgo promotions featuring dynamic content, even though such promotions often yield the best results.

Common barriers to successfully using dynamic content:

- Tough to set up – Requires SQL-like statements
- Version control – Low confidence in the accuracy of the different versions, or potentially the inability to check the different variations before sending
- Effectiveness concerns – Challenging to determine which messaging is driving lead conversions
- Content explosion – Because segmentation logic and content are coupled, dynamic content is only reusable in a limited set of scenarios and content cannot be used across campaigns

X Bad Dynamic Content	✔ Good Dynamic Content
Embed SQL like rule logic within the content	Easily define rules via drag and drop interface
Duplicate rules for landing pages and email	Apply dynamic content across and landing pages
Inability to validate unique versions	Preview dynamic content by segment with one click
Exponential increase in content	Segment rule logic defined separately from design for reusability
Limited or no visibility into message performance	Built in reports to easily track conversion for each version

How to Take Full Advantage of Dynamic Content

Dynamic content is not hard with a little planning and the right solution. When selecting an email marketing or marketing automation solution, use the following checklist to make sure you are getting the system you need:

• The solution includes reporting that shows which messages are resonating and which aren't, allowing you to optimize campaigns quickly.

• The solution allows you to use multiple segments in a campaign, ensuring the message is as precise as needed to drive results.

• You can preview each version of the content to be syndicated before launch, ensuring no mistakes are made in distribution.

• Dynamic content can be used in both emails and landing pages for maximum targeting precision and optimal results.

• The solution allows for segmentation **separate** from design, providing the ability to control who can define the segments, so users creating the content can only select from approved segments.

• You can use and reuse segments for multiple campaigns, significantly reducing the amount of work that goes into defining target segments.

• The solution can update segments as new leads are added to the database or as leads are updated – saving your company time from resegmenting each time you send an email, and ensuring that no one is left out of a campaign.

• The solution makes it possible to generate relevant content for unknown leads based on targeted messages that are being driven through channels such as PPC, social media or online advertising.

Build a Plan for Success

Now that you have a solution that meets your needs, put a plan in place that addresses these three essential issues:

1. Identify segments that will benefit the most from individualized content.
    - Segment rules can be based on demographic data such as job function, industry classification, geographic region for example, or on behaviors such as pages visited, links clicked etc.
    - Use lead scoring to separate prospects from customers or create segments based on behavioral patterns from past emails and Web analytics (campaign attributes).
2. Associate segments with email or landing page sections where you want to dynamically insert content.
    - Create default content that applies to your entire list and is appropriate if a contact cannot be segmented. Then create specific content that is most relevant to each segment.
    - Reuse and repurpose dynamic content to maximize efficiency
3. Validate dynamic variations by segment to ensure message quality.
    - Preview each unique version of your content in a single screen.

1. Segment
Your Audience

2. Target
Your Content

3. Preview
Unique Versions

Keep Your Eye on the Prize: Content First

Attracting and engaging prospects and customers by promoting relevant content is what will help to differentiate you from your competition. The more relevant you can make your content promotions, the greater your likelihood of connecting with prospective buyers. In addition to personalization, you can tap into the power of customization and segmentation to create a one-to-one conversation with your audience. But it's clearly no small task to tailor content based on numerous attributes about a person and their organization without the assistance of automation. By taking advantage of email marketing or a marketing automation system, you can put the theory of dynamic content into practice and greatly boost the results of your marketing efforts.

About Marketo

Marketo is the fastest growing provider in Revenue Performance Management. Marketo's powerful yet easy-to-use marketing automation and sales effectiveness solutions transform how marketing and sales teams of all sizes work — and work together — to drive dramatically increased revenue performance and fuel business growth. The company's proven technology, comprehensive services and expert guidance are helping more than 1,700* enterprise and mid-market companies around the world to turn marketing from a cost center to a business-building revenue driver. Marketo also offers Spark by Marketo™, a new brand of marketing automation tailored specifically for small businesses – the fastest-growing and largest segment of today's economy.

Marketo was recently named one of *"America's Most Promising Companies"* by Forbes Magazine, *the fastest-growing private company of 2011* by the Silicon Valley Business Journal, and the *"2011 CRM Market Leaders Awards Winner for Marketing Solutions"* by CRM Magazine.

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