

THE B2B CONTENT MARKETING WORKBOOK

Thought Leadership for B2B
Lead Generation and Beyond

A Velocity Guide for marketers



velocity

THIS IS THE ESSENCE OF B2B MARKETING

There are a hundred skills and disciplines to master if you're a B2B marketer. But nothing matters more than getting this part right.

Why? Because traditional, 'broadcast-style' marketing is broken. This is about a new kind of B2B marketing...



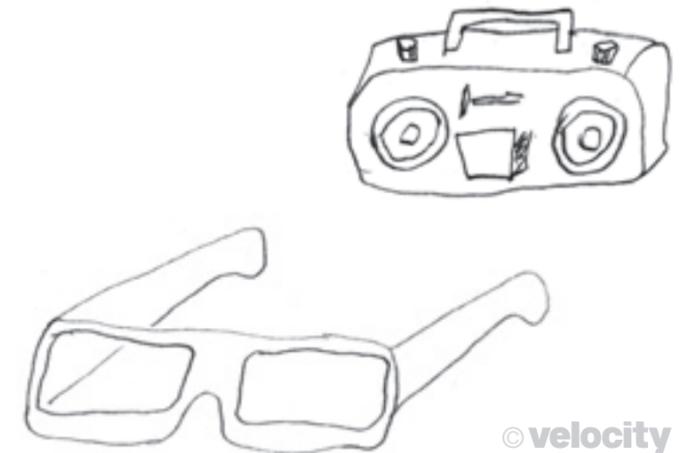
This is Content Marketing. Sometimes called Thought Leadership.

This is without doubt the most important thing you can do this week and next. You can screw up the budgets. You can be ham-fisted with your web analytics. You can be a social media Luddite. But if you get this part right, you will succeed so blatantly that even the most hard-boiled sales cynic will bow down to you in tribute.

The ideas presented here are not new or revolutionary or even particularly surprising. But they are under-valued in almost every B2B company we know.

They're also more important now than ever before. With so much attention being given to the many new ways to get your story out to the world (the cult of Twitter being only the most recent), the primacy of ideas, insights and issues has never been more clear.

Content Marketing is about playing to your strengths and adding value to the sales conversation from the very start. Good content marketers recognise that no company has been gifted the right to sell – we have to earn it.



**“Traditional marketing
talks **at** people.
Content marketing
talks **with** them.”**



A definition:

Thought Leadership is exploiting your unique position in your markets to generate valuable insight and advice on issues your customers and prospects care most about.



Let's explode that statement:

No one has exactly your perspective on the market

Value is in the eye of the buyer

Thought Leadership is exploiting **your unique position** in your markets to generate **valuable insight** and **advice** on **issues** your customers and prospects **care most about.**

Their priorities, not yours

You are the expert

Not products

If the materials you bring to market don't follow this recipe, they're not thought leadership, they're brochures. Brochures are only valuable when the hardest part of marketing is already done. A brochure will never move a market.



Another definition:

Content Marketing is turning your insight and advice into campaigns that change people's minds and incite action.



Let's explode that statement, too:

Action starts between
the ears

Multi-step, planned
and measured activities

Content Marketing is turning your
insight and advice into **campaigns**
that **change people's minds**
and **incite action.**

The only measure of
success that matters

A lot of marketers are good at the thought leadership part but fall down when it comes to proper content marketing. So their wonderful content sits on a virtual shelf gathering... squat.

Others run great campaigns but skimp on the quality or credibility of their insight and advice. That's the fast track to irrelevance.

Content marketing starts with great content but can never end there.



Why you need to do content marketing.

We can think of nine reasons right now, any one of which is enough to justify your next campaign:

Position your company as an expert

a company that understands the important issues

Encourage your audience to consult you

to at least pick your brains

Generate new leads

by asking people to raise their hands and say, "I'm interested in this issue too."

Progress existing leads

moving them along your marketing funnel until they're sales-ready

Build your database

by asking for a few details – the better your content, the more willing they'll be to share

Raise awareness

getting yourself on the radar screens of the people who matter (including editors, analysts, investors and prospects)

Contribute to communities

making you a good social media citizen instead of a leech

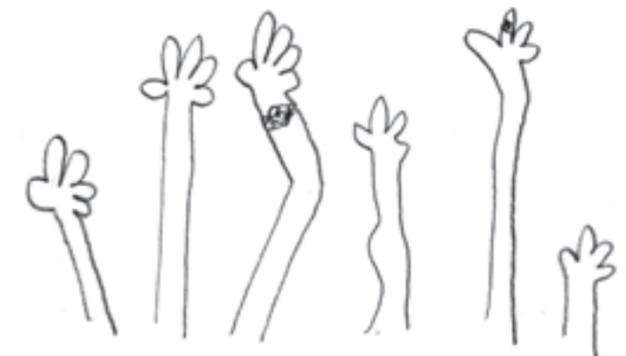
Give your sales team a reason to engage

so they can add value before and after the sales call

Boost your search engine performance

used well, good content does wonders for SEO

There aren't a lot of marketing tactics that can do as much as that...



**“Stop shouting
and make yourself
useful.”**



Why you're in a unique position to help and advise your prospects.

Too many tech companies are intimidated by the expertise of their target audience. But if you think about it, you've got a lot to offer when it comes to advising and sharing insights:

You see more deployments.

Each buyer sees only his or her own situation. You see many different deployments that can shed light on how they can do things better.

You spend all your time on your area of expertise.

Each buyer probably only spends a slice of theirs thinking about the issues you address.

You've seen the whole market landscape, over time.

You know the competitors, solutions and substitutes; the analysts, buzzwords and fads; your audience only follows a bit of this.

The real experts work for you.

In many markets, especially dynamic tech markets, vendors are at the cutting edge. No one knows this stuff better than your best people.

You have a strong point of view.

You feel strongly about this stuff. You're passionate. Time to tap into it.

Your company's knowledge is your most important asset as a B2B marketer. It's a crime to squander it.

Confidence sells

Just standing up and announcing that you have something valuable to say about an issue positions you as a company with confidence in its own expertise.

This confident stance is a critical brand value. If you don't have it, everything you say is undermined. If you do, you will be heard. Just as salespeople have to ask for the order, marketers have to ask for people's attention.

Think of it this way: no prospect can ever have more confidence in your own expertise than you yourself do. You set the ceiling height. Set it high.



**“If you don’t believe
you’re an expert,
no one else will.”**



The principles of content marketing.

Content marketing plays by different rules than traditional, 'broadcast-style' marketing, here are some of the key ones:

It's not about you.

Your critical first step as a content marketer is to put your own agenda aside and put your prospect's agenda at the heart of your marketing.

You may be desperate to talk about your vision, your technology and the benefits they confer. Suppress the urge. Your prospect couldn't care less. They want to talk about their problems, their challenges, their opportunities and the very real things that stand in their way.

Pick a single, high-priority issue.

Content marketing is issues marketing. Pick a topic that matters to your audience and stick to it. One issue at a time is usually best but we have produced some successful pieces that summarise several issues together.

Find some clear water.

You need to find an issue that hasn't been beaten to death already by competitors, analysts and editors. If there's only really one main issue at stake, give it a novel spin; zoom in on a detail; zoom out to put it in context – anything to keep things fresh and make people want to know more.

Aim for an independent tone of voice.

If it's really not about you, you don't have to cram your widget into every paragraph. There will be opportunities to allude to your offer but if you over-exploit them, you undermine the value of the piece. The reader knows you have an agenda but will respect you more if you can set it aside and speak as a neutral advisor.

Support your story with data.

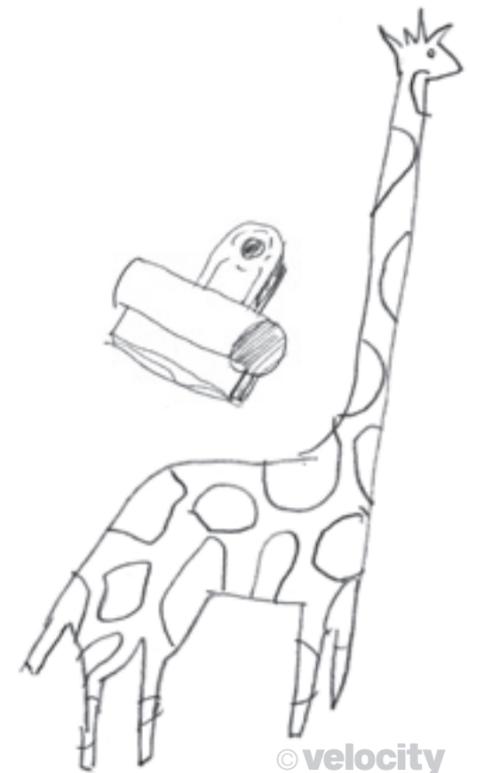
A strong story is compelling. A strong story supported by credible data is irresistible. Do anything you have to do to get that data. Don't argue your case, prove your case.

Use your customers.

Real users of your solutions have more credibility than you do. Harness the enthusiasm of your best customers to tell your story. But it's still your story. You frame the debate and structure the argument. Your users are witnesses.

Consider third party credibility.

Bringing in a recognised analyst or high-profile editor is a good way to add credibility and the appearance of independence. But it's not a magic bullet. People still know whose tune is being played. Don't over-pay for authority.



continued. The principles of content marketing.

Pick a good title.

The best piece of content in the world is useless if it never gets consumed. A good title is essential when asking for someone's time. Forget the dry description (that can be a subtitle); make it punchy and imply the benefits you're offering.

Share some negatives.

There's no better way to increase your credibility as an advisor than to admit some of the downsides of your approach. This is never easy but 'opening your kimono' will surprise your audience, make your positive points more believable and show how confident you are in the overall strength of your offer. It also lets you air (and neutralise) objections that will usually pop up at some point in the sales cycle.

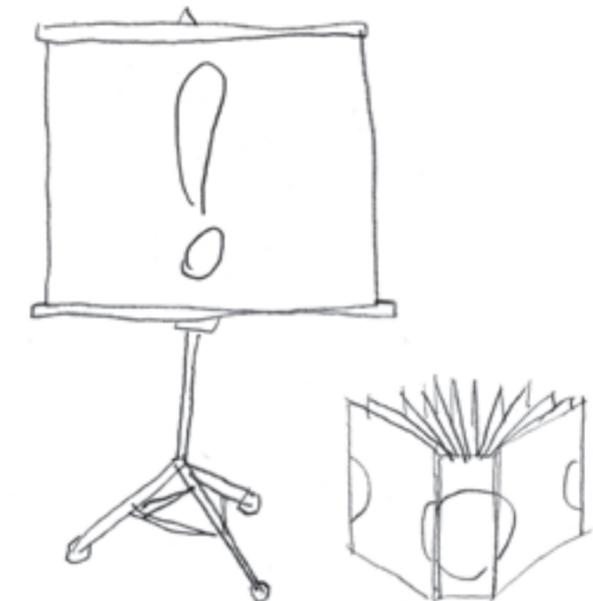
Why should I believe you?

A lot of these principles touch on the issue of credibility – the magic ingredient in content marketing (and the second of the three critical questions in our [Holy Trinity of Tech Marketing](#) paper).

When you embark on a content marketing campaign, you're leaving traditional marketing territory and entering the domain of the consultant, advisor, analyst and journalist. Unfortunately, you're entering this domain with a bad reputation: you're a vendor.

Because you've got something to sell, there's a big, red, neon sign on your head that sizzles, "Caveat Emptor".

Your job is to get people to ignore that sign for long enough to hear you out. You don't do this by pretending you're not a vendor or that you don't see the neon sign on your head. You do it by being open, honest and balanced; by respecting your audience; by supporting each point in your argument; and by keeping your sales sword sheathed (try saying that three times fast).



How do you pick the right issues?

If you know your market, you probably know the issues that will be the most compelling to your target prospects. But if you're entering a new market, or are just running dry, here are some short-cuts:

Use Google Alerts

Get alert emails on key terms to find out who's talking about what out there on the web.

Use Twitter Search tools

Twilert, Twitter Search and search features built into Twitter tools like TweetDeck let you find out what's tweeting.

Follow the top bloggers and news feeds

They know what's up.

Check out the competition

Not to copy them but to better position your content.

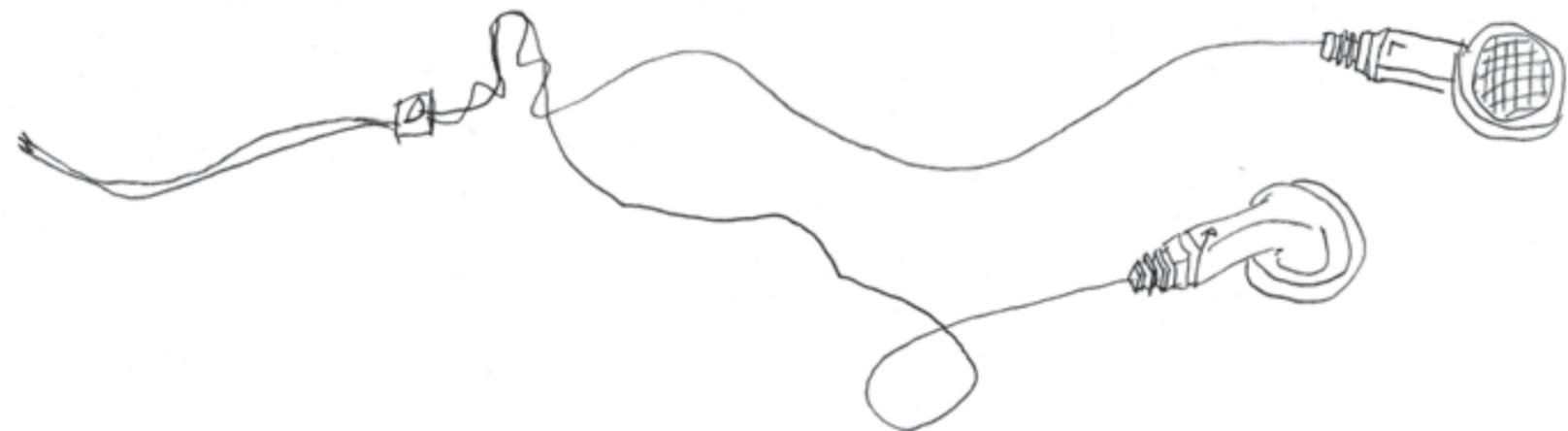
See which of your blog posts get the most comment

A sure sign of a hot issue.

Take a prospect to lunch

There's really no substitute for a direct, face-to-face chat.

We often set up our clients with a dashboard that brings together all of the above sources (except for the lunch one) into one place for quick, up-to-the-minute market tracking.



“Credibility is the magic ingredient of content marketing.”



GENERATING THE CONTENT

So where do you get all this killer content?
Here are a few tried and tested ways...



Interview your best experts.

Do it on video, in print or as a podcast. No need to be fancy about it. Just get them talking, capture it and edit to highlight the best bits. If it helps, give them a whiteboard.

We prefer interviews that edit out the questions (sometimes using title cards to introduce each topic) but you can keep the interviewer onscreen or on the page too.

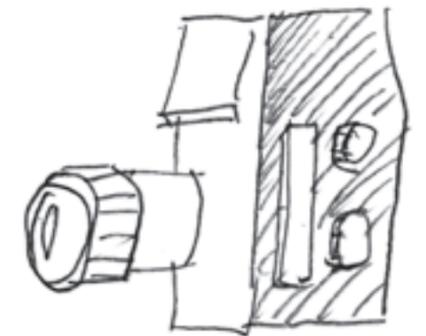


Interview your customers.

Make them the hero. Prospects like to see how ‘people like me’ approach the same challenges they’re facing.

This can be incredibly powerful - or dull as ditch-water if you pick someone who’s unable or unwilling to open up and speak frankly.

The brand name of the customer is always important, but a ‘top performer’ can be even better.



Interview your customers' customers.

A very powerful tactic. Skip over your customers' heads and talk directly to their customers. A great way to get prospects to sit up and listen.

This can be the most effective (but least practised) arrow in the content marketing quiver.

The key: get straight insight on the timely issues and get plenty of frank, even brutal, quotes.



Commission original research.

New data that throws light on a hot issue will always get attention. Spend time on the methodology to make sure the results are relevant and, ideally, statistically significant.

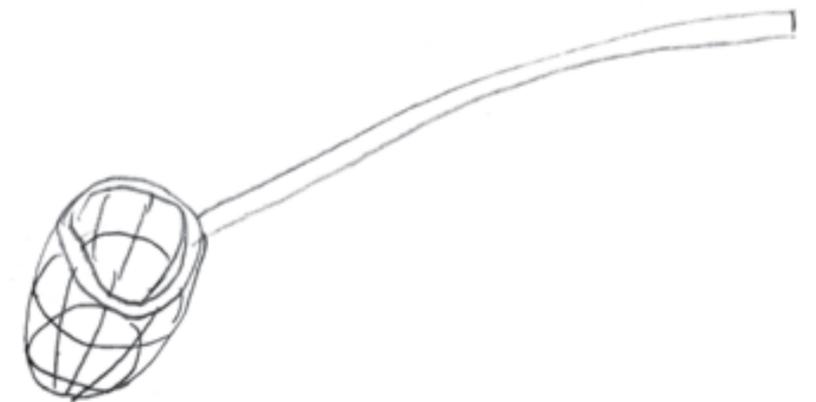
Remember: a few good, qualitative interviews can be as valuable as a big, quantitative survey.



Conduct a web survey.

There are lots of inexpensive (or free) survey tools that make it easy to poll your audience. Turn the results into a blog post, white paper and press release.

Don't 'lead the witness' with questions designed to elicit the right answers -- people see right through that.



Run a round-table discussion.

You're the centre of a community of users. Play the facilitator role and get people together – capturing the proceedings with video, audio or in print (with lots of photos).

Keep the sales people away from this unless they promise to keep their guns holstered. Your top techies are great for this though.

But don't overwhelm your guests -- one or two of your own people and six to eight other participants is a good mix.

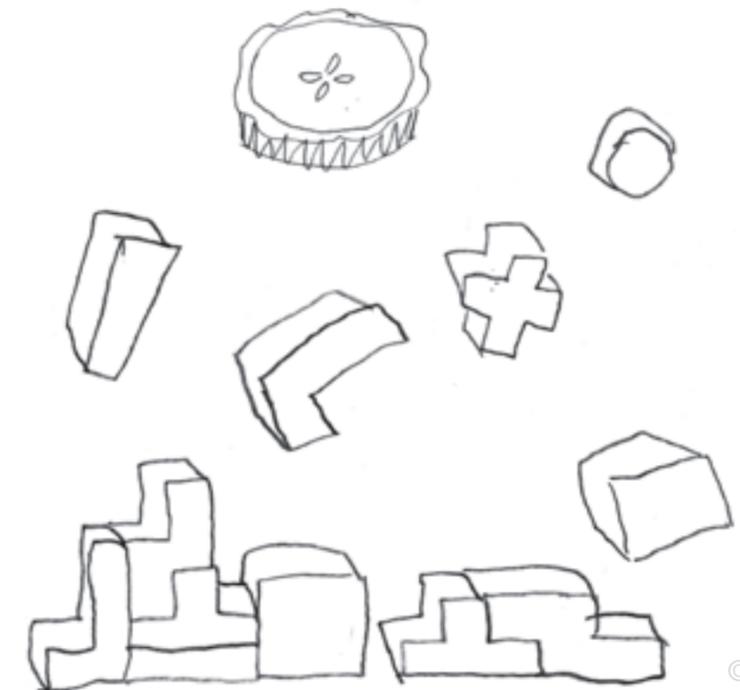


Invent a new metric.

New ideas usually need new metrics to track them. Invent a new metric, show people how it works and why it adds value to their business.

You might just be combining existing metrics into a new ratio, but if it helps people focus on an important dimension, it just might catch on.

A new metric says, “These guys know what they’re doing.”



Create a guide or workbook.

Kind of like this one... Help your audience do their jobs.

Don't worry about giving away trade secrets -- there's plenty you can share that's not commercially sensitive.



HERE'S ONE ^{OR TWO}
WE PREPARED
EARLIER

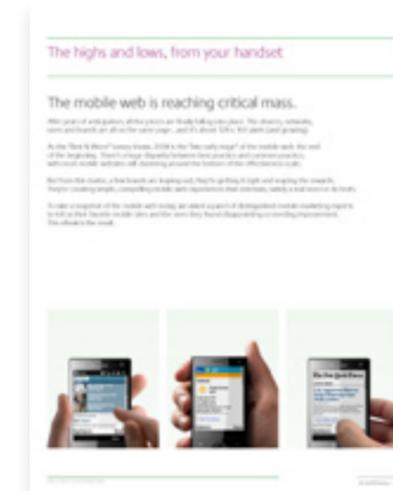
A few examples from the Velocity Content
Marketing Cupboard...



White Papers

This used to be the only kind of content marketing. Now it's getting a bit stale.

We still produce lots of white papers but we try to make them a bit more approachable.



Printed books

With everything going virtual these days, it can be nice to drop a proper book on someone's desk.

This 52-page Guide to Shrink (employee theft) for IntelliQ helped attract new business from some major new retailers.



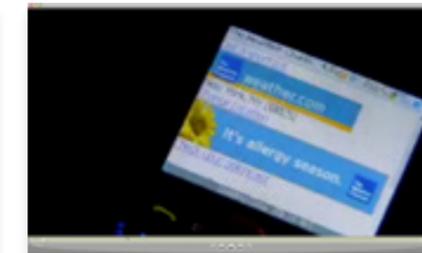
Video

Let's face it, your audience has broadband now. Why are you still presenting only flat HTML content? This is the YouTube era. You don't need Hollywood production values. Get an HD camcorder, a good microphone and (only if you're nervous) an agency that has done this kind of thing before.



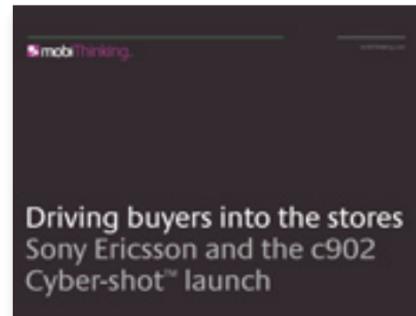
We went to Deorhi, a rural village in India to make this [film for VNL](#), showing how mobile phones can change the lives of millions of people.

Here's a simple [tour of the Weather.mobi mobile website](#) for our dotMobi client. A great way to show marketers how the mobile web is different from the desktop web.



eBooks

An eBook is a white paper turned on its side and made more visually interesting, with fewer words on each page. It's designed to be read on-screen but can be printed out, too.



These eBooks for mobiThinking.com generated a lot of traffic and downloads.



This eBook for ShipServ helps bring suppliers in the maritime industry into the world of ecommerce and online marketing.



Microsites

Creating a whole website on a specific topic can be a powerful thought leadership tool.

mobiThinking is dotMobi's online resource for mobile marketers. It's packed with videos, best practice papers, guides, a popular blog and a showcase of mobile websites.



Webinars

A great way to present a live event for an audience that may not be able to travel.

We like short, sharp, content-rich webinars.



B2B marketing hasn't responded to the new buyer

Broadcast model
Interruption-based
Traditionally organised



 © velocity

We turned the eBook you're reading into a webinar, first presented with B2B Marketing Magazine in the UK (130 people showed up). Get in touch to [view the archived presentation](#) -- though you may find it a bit familiar...



 © velocity

The Handbook

For techies, a practical workbook that doesn't scream 'marketing' can open doors – especially if it really helps them do their jobs.

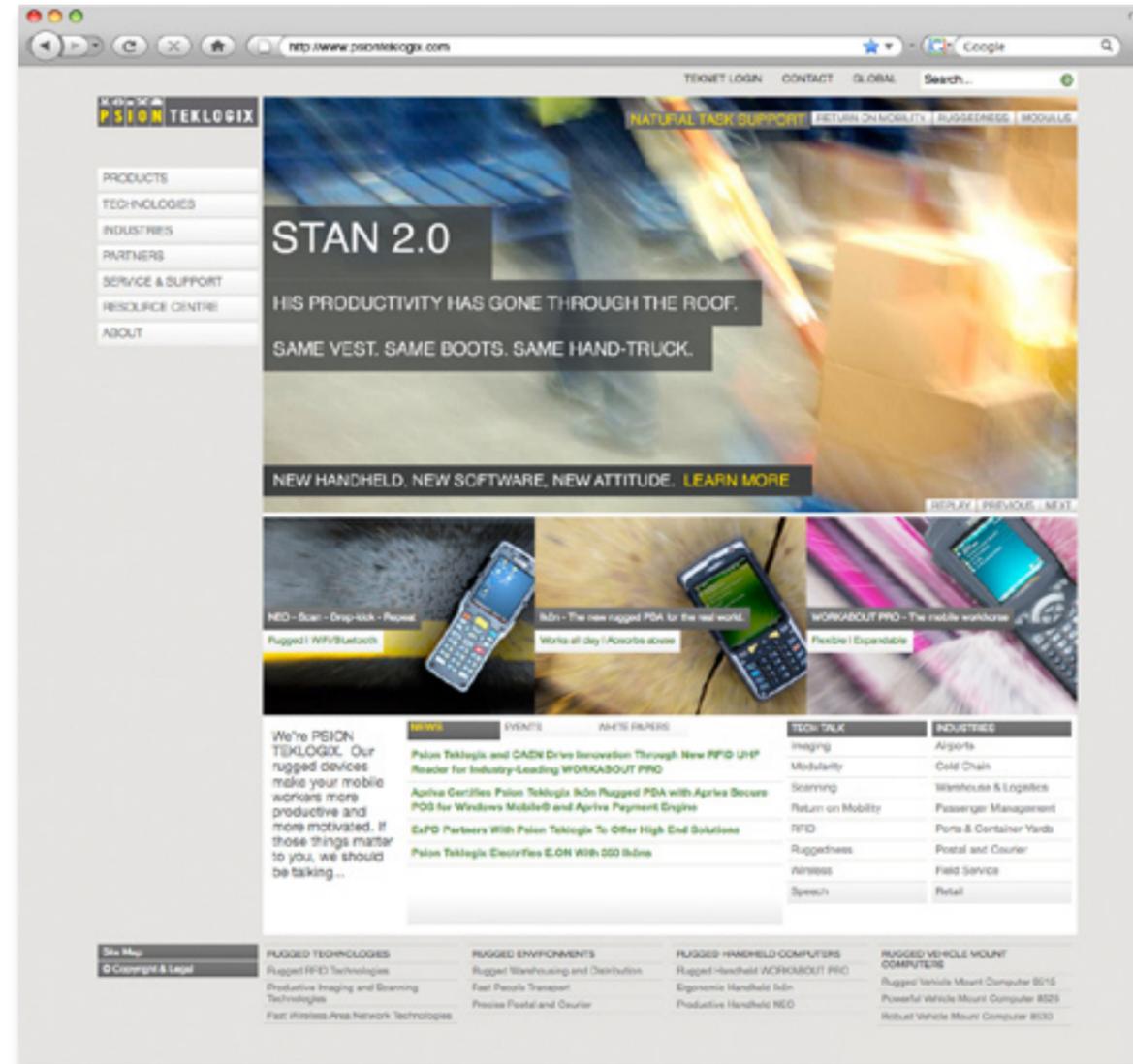
This Picocell Applications Handbook shows mobile network planners how to use ip.access picocells to improve coverage and drive down costs. All very hands-on.



The Web 'Lens'

Your web content can be thought leadership content too. We like to create 'Lenses' within a website that tackle a relevant issue.

For Psion Teklogix, the Lens technique let us address issues such as Return On Mobility, Natural Task Support (the company's unique approach to ergonomics) and Ruggedness (you can drop kick these handheld computers and they just keep working).



Flash demos

Short audio-visual demonstrations (with or without screenshots) can be a great way to explain complex products in a clear, non-threatening way. Use metaphors to make abstract ideas more real.

A short flash demo for ShipServ Pages took prospects through the product, screen by screen. Another for TradeNet involved selling more abstract ideas including a before and after view of purchasing department communication flows.



Presentation slides

Sharing slides works well for topics than can be easily summarised in very few words. If your slides need the commentary, add audio.



Our own presentation on [Twitter in B2B Markets](#) got 1300 views in its first two days on Slideshare, the presentation sharing website.



Articles

Don't forget traditional media!
An article in a well-regarded industry journal is great positioning, with the added authority of the magazine.

Our article on Mobile Web Marketing in B2B magazine got some attention and comment.



PROMOTING YOUR CONTENT

You've produced a great piece of content.
Now it's time to turn it into a campaign.

Here's a quick guide to how we like to do these
two things...

You can think of any content marketing campaign
as having two parts:

Driving people to your content – promoting it online
and offline while spreading backlinks that bring people
to your website to get it.

Driving your content to people – putting the content,
or versions of it, all over the social media sites where
your prospects can trip over it.



Drive people to your content.

The basics of online promotion.
Don't forget to use your keyphrases
every time you do any of these things
to maximize the SEO value:

Put it on your website – duh.

Flag it on the home page – double duh.

Optimise it – make sure the download page
is crammed with keyphrases and meta-tags
for SEO performance.

Blog about it – at least once.

Issue a press release – and get it on the
distribution hubs.

Tweet about it – you don't have hundreds
of Twitter followers yet? Go get them.

Bookmark it – social bookmarking services
like digg, delicious and Stumble Upon increase
backlinks and traffic.

Comment about it – drop comments on relevant
blog posts – be transparent and keep it relevant.
No one likes a spammer.

Tell your Social Media groups about it –
as news or discussion items on the right groups
on LinkedIn or Facebook.

Feature it in your email newsletter –
a natural cover story; tell people what's in it
and why they need it.

**Make it the call-to-action of all outbound
marketing** – every ad, mailing and web banner
needs an offer.

Put a link to it on every business email –
that footer/signature space is great for promoting
the latest paper or video.



Drive your content to people.

Online marketing used to be only about getting traffic to your site. Now it's also about atomising your content and spraying it around the web where people (and search engine spiders) can come across it. Like this:

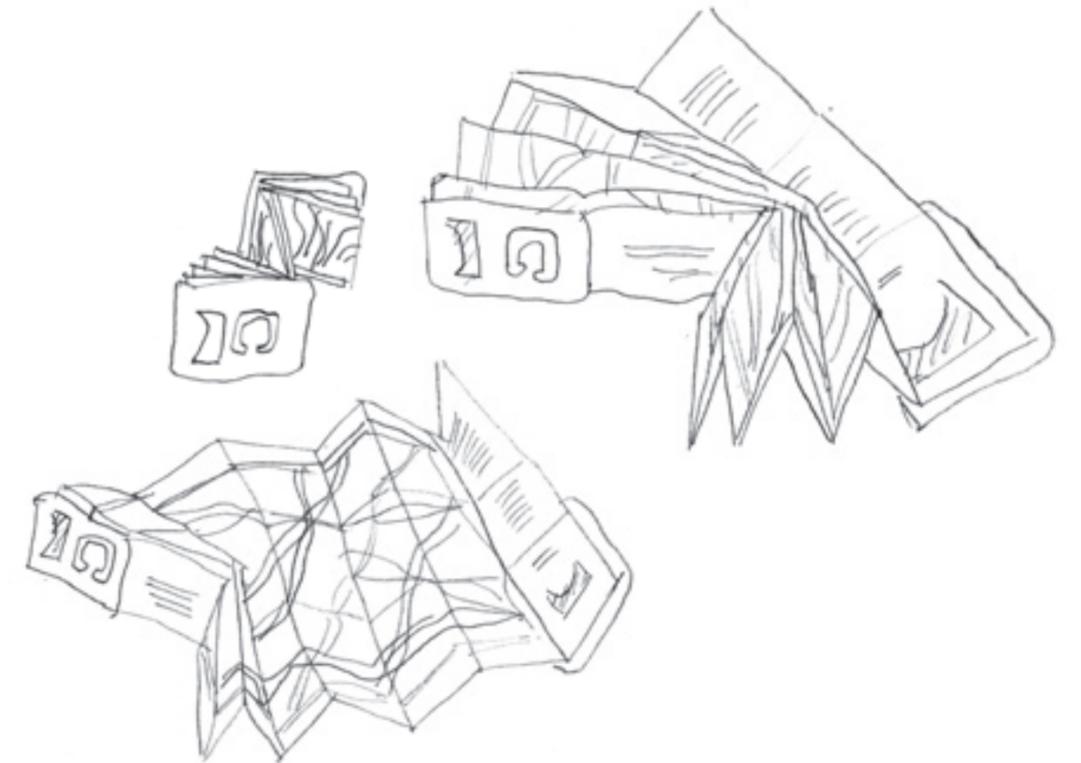
Turn it into a presentation – and post it on Slideshare.

Post it on other sharing sites – the video version goes into your YouTube and Vimeo channels; the document version on Scribd.

Turn it into an article – on social sites such as BizNik and FastPitch.

Put it into new web pages – using services like Squidoo or YouBundle.

Make a Wikipedia entry – don't bother if it's purely commercial/promotional but if there's merit, Wikipedia works.

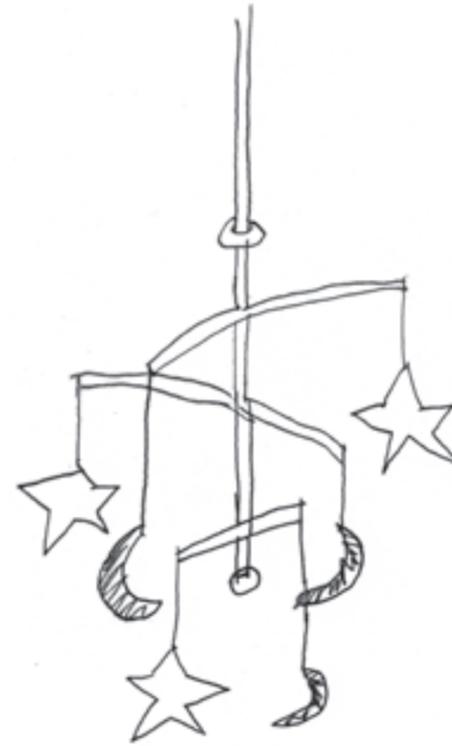


Now nurture the leads.

Generating downloads and views is not the end goal of your content marketing campaign – they're just steps towards a sale.

We're big believers in lead scoring and nurturing tools that let you walk each prospect through your marketing funnel, scoring as you go (based on behaviours like downloading a paper or opening an email) as well as demographics (based on company, sector and job title).

Running your content marketing campaigns in this kind of environment puts each campaign in context with every other marketing activity. It also lets you wrap up leads that are really sales-ready and deliver them to your grateful sales team.



Get smart.

Get help.

Thought leadership and content marketing is the new face of B2B marketing – especially in information-hungry technology markets.

In contrast to the old ‘interruption-based’ marketing model, this is based on real customer engagement that moves naturally into profitable dialogue.

And it all starts by thinking about your customers, identifying their pressing issues and sharing the expertise that already exists inside your company.

The sign that you’re on the right track? Customers and prospects actually thank you for your content marketing efforts (instead of resenting the intrusion).

Every B2B marketing department should be built around the processes that content marketing demands. Doing as much of it in-house as possible makes sense.

But in the great content marketplace, you’re battling for attention not just against the competition but against Hollywood, Twitter and the latest kitten video. Your content doesn’t just need to be good, it needs to be great.

We know a digital B2B agency that gets this stuff. Talk to us.

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Some content marketing resources.

Websites and blogs

[Velocity's Blog](#) – a joy ride through the mean streets of B2B

[Junta24](#) – the content marketing and custom publishing site

[Econsultancy](#) – a fantastic digital marketing community and resource

[Web Ink Now](#) – David Meerman Scott's blog on online thought leadership

[Content Marketing Today](#) – Newt Barrett's blog

[Seth Godin's blog](#) – which needs no introduction

Other stuff

[The Velocity Vimeo Channel](#)
For some videos that worked

[The Benefit Hierarchy](#)
Linking features to benefits and vice versa
A short paper

[A B2B Social Media Checklist](#)
A one-page worksheet to help you 'pimp' your content on the web

Books

[Content Rich](#) by Jon Wuebben

[World Wide Rave](#) by David Meerman Scott

[All Marketers are Liars](#) by Seth Godin

[Speak, Memory](#) by Vladimir Nabokov
Nothing to do with content marketing but what a book...



About Velocity.

Velocity is a consulting-led B2B marketing agency specialising in technology markets.

We help B2B companies create compelling stories, turn these into great content and use the content to generate sales leads.

Visit us at www.velocitypartners.co.uk or contact stan@velocitypartners.co.uk

Like the idea of doing an eBook like this instead of a boring old white paper?
[Drop us a line.](#)

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