

5 Tips for creating content that converts

Firstly, can content really convert? And, more importantly, if it can, what does 'convert' mean, exactly?

The purpose of content marketing is often misconstrued. People think that, by creating a blog, you create a platform from which to shout as loud as you can about your products and services. And, while company news, product announcements and service updates are all well suited to a business blog, that mindset is, frankly, a little wide of the mark.

Content marketing is about establishing your business as an expert within its field. Nothing more. Therefore, in this context, 'convert' simply means converting passers-by into engaged audience members who may one day turn into customers.

The trouble traditional marketers have in rationalising this is the absence of any obvious product promotion. Why spend hours each week writing words that don't contain explanations of the features and benefits you're able to offer customers?

The reason is simple; customers don't care about your business - they care about themselves. They have questions that need answering and, before they're ever likely to become a prospect, they'll need to build a relationship with a voice they learn to trust.

That voice can be your business.

The key to building an engaged audience lies in creating content people will love, and in this post, we've got 5 back-to-basics tips for doing just that.

1. Research

It sounds obvious, but researching content opportunities before delving into the creative process is a stage that is often circumnavigated.

This is usually because the content in question is being devised, written and published at the last minute. And, if today's the day you *have* to put up that blog post, you're going to have to scabble around for ideas.

This doesn't work for audiences. You need to know in advance what they're likely to engage with, so keep a content calendar handy and research the market; what are the competition talking about? What developments can you foresee taking place?

2. Regularly review your audience

You may have created a bunch of buyer personas some time ago and have since pitched all of the content your produce at that audience. But have you stopped to consider how those personas may have developed since you created them?

People change. Make sure you regularly review the audience you're targeting with content marketing. Will they still react in the same way to the stuff you're writing about?

3. Speak to your audience

Content marketing isn't a one-way affair - you need to proactively interact with your audience if you're to create blog posts they'll read and engage with.

Always take time to speak to your audience. You can do this in a number of ways: in person (if you happen to work in an industry where you conduct face-to-face contact), via social media (get involved in those discussions!) and within the blog posts themselves (if you have comments turned on and you're receiving plenty of engagement, contribute yourself and demonstrate that you're listening).

4. Promote. Then promote again

You could create the best piece of content your niche has ever seen, but if you don't promote it, who's going to find it?

Search engine optimisation won't work alone - you need to be proactive with your content promotion. Amplify it by posting regular links via social media and never convince yourself that you're overdoing it - that simply isn't possible.

5. Review performance

Simply posting content, promoting it and then leaving the audience to do the rest isn't making the most of your content marketing strategy. In order to improve and

ensure that the future work you publish is of optimum value, you need to review the performance of the stuff that's already out there.

How long are people spending with your content? What are they doing with it (sharing, downloading lead magnets, etc)? Sniff out the stuff that's working and that which is doing nothing meaningful and base your future plans on the former.

Wrapping up

Content marketing isn't easy, but if you follow the tips above, you'll build a solid platform from which to build a reputation of being a knowledgeable, approachable and trustworthy thought leader within your industry.