



# Content Marketing Strategies for Lasting ROI





# Introduction

The concept of content marketing is certainly not new.

The term has been present in marketing circles for two decades, but it's only entered our mainstream vernacular in the past 10 years. After Google came onto the scene in 1998, search engine optimization (SEO) was an entirely new concept. For the first time, marketers couldn't just push their way to the front with large budgets and bigger, bolder ads. They had to work for it by creating quality content.

Marketers have always needed content to drive their efforts and provide sales with something tangible to share with prospects. But the reason content marketing is still as important today as it was a decade ago is two-fold:

## 1. We're Consuming More Content than Ever Before

Before smartphones, content came in standard forms like books, newspapers, radio, and television. Today, it has snuck its way into every facet of our lives from tweets to emails to infographics to podcasts and much, much more. Across all forms of media (both traditional and digital), adults now spend upwards of **11.1 hours per day** consuming content—a 20% increase since 2011. On mobile devices specifically, that number jumps to 460% growth over the past decade.

## 2. The Nature of Marketing Content Has Changed

Instead of one-way, company-focused content in the form of advertisements, brands now produce

educational content that provides value to those who consume it. This creates loyal fans and followers who build affinity for the brands whose content they consume. Plus, consumers now have the ability to be more selective about the content they read than ever before. Since they can bypass ads in a number of ways, selling to consumers requires demonstration of value and growth of trust.

A solid content marketing strategy isn't easy, but it's certainly not impossible either. Through a strong understanding of SEO, content marketing best practices, and tricks for boosting production efficiency, you can build a library that keeps consumers coming back for more. In this guide, we explore the ins and outs of content marketing and why no brand should be without it if they intend to compete.



# Content Marketing 101

Content marketing is the creation and distribution of relevant and valuable content to generate engagement from a target audience, thereby driving profitable action.

This “profitable action” may be in the form of increased sales, but it can also be in brand awareness, engagement, and loyalty. Yet, to achieve these consumer reactions requires some planning and strategy.

## 1. Define Your Objectives

Whether your goal is to promote your brand, increase sales, or build customer loyalty, begin with the end in mind. What strategy will get you there, and how will you define success in terms of metrics? Decide as a marketing department ahead of time so you can simplify how you manage content marketing going forward.

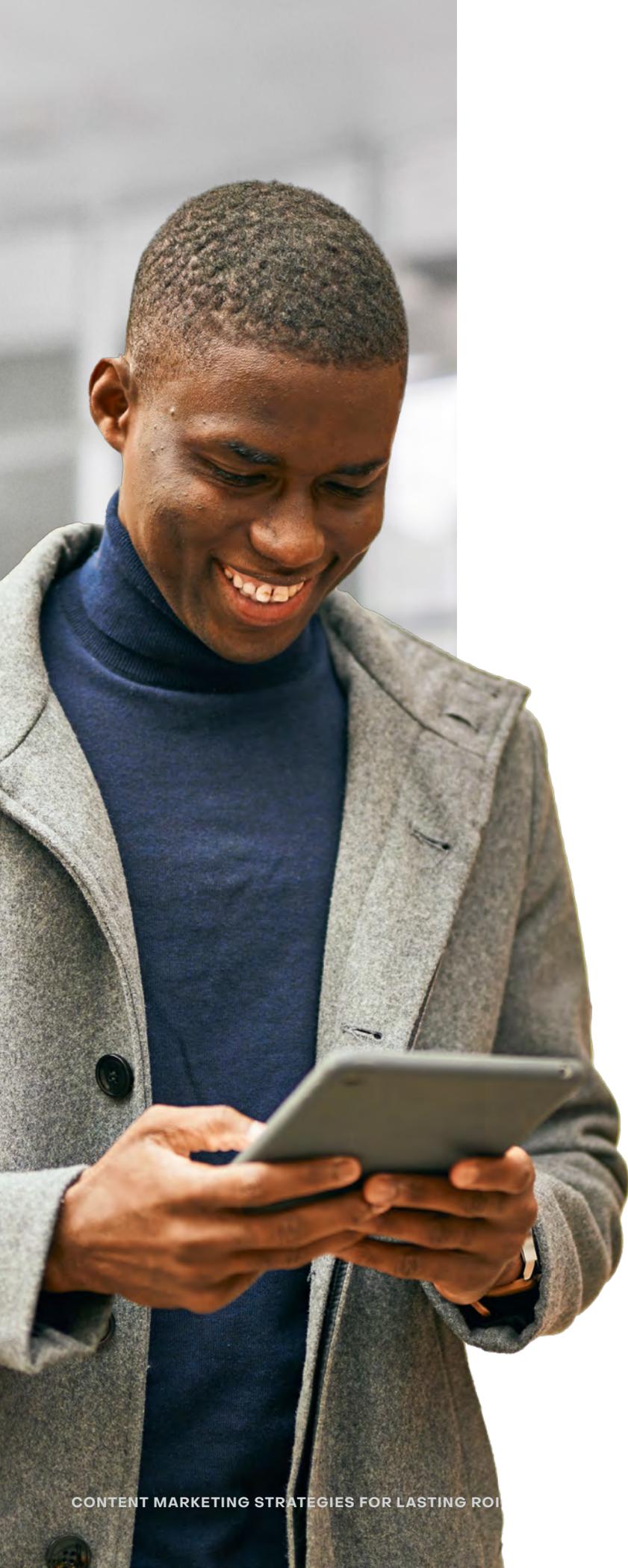
## 2. Embrace a Content Marketing Platform

Whether you invest in an outside service or build one inside your [marketing automation system](#), software will keep your content marketing organized and segmented. You'll be able to:

- Ensure content goes through a detailed system of creation and review before it is ever posted for public consumption.
- Plan ahead and create due dates for each piece, including the draft stage, editing, and publishing.

## 3. Write for the Content Channel

Don't forget to create and agree on a consistent voice across your content so everything falls under the same guidelines and feels on-brand. While your voice (the way you speak) should remain the same across content, you can and should change your tone (the words you choose to tailor messages to a particular audience) to be appropriate for the channel. For example, social media copy can be shorter, bolder, and more casual than whitepapers and blogs. In this way, you personalize your content to the reader who chooses to consume your content in a specific way.



## Optimizing for Mobile

Writing for a particular channel or medium also includes anticipating the devices your readers consume content through. Today, mobile accounts for [more than half of all web traffic](#) (55%), with desktop and tablet usage far behind. Regardless of how well your content is written, the majority of consumers won't engage with it if it isn't optimized for mobile. Consider these tips for mobile content consumption:

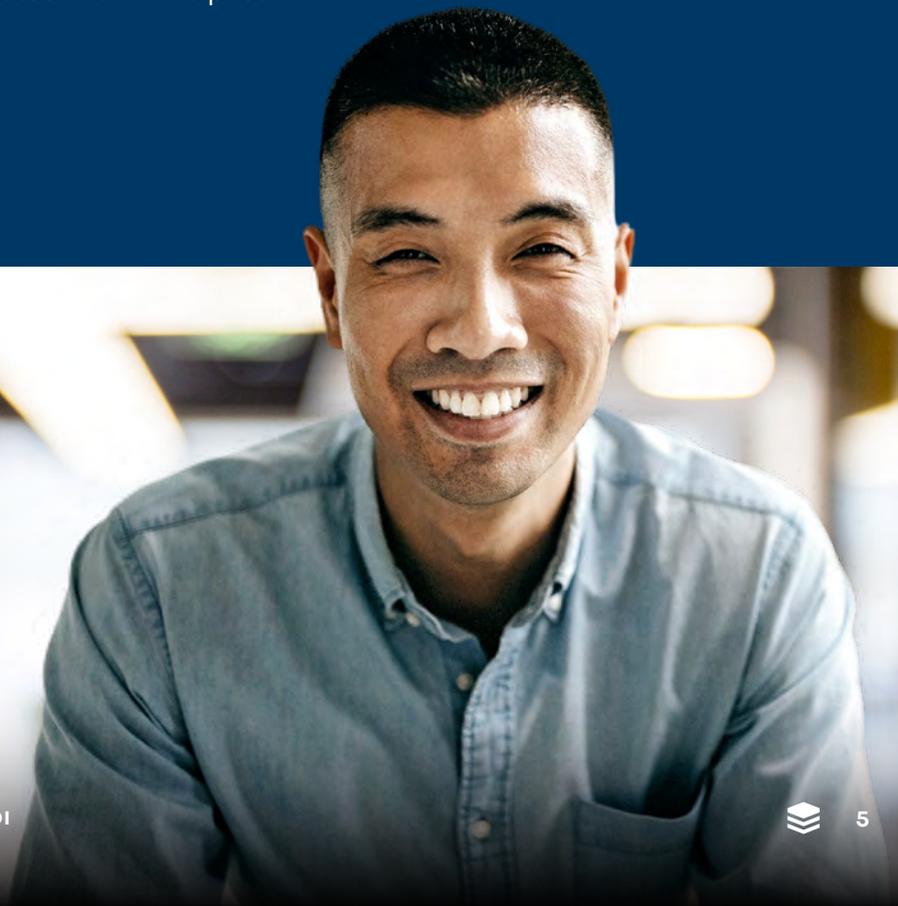
- **Get to the point:** While research shows that [longer content ranks higher](#) in Google search and gains more referral links (or backlinks), it's important to still make your pieces easily digestible. On-the-go readers will appreciate conciseness and the ability to digest concepts quickly. At the same time, no one wants to read disjointed “fluff” either. Do your research. Offer a unique perspective. Don't bore the reader.
- **Add images:** Even if your content isn't an infographic, adding images helps with an article's scrollability and digestion, especially by visual learners and “skimmers.” Images also break up the text and allow you to creatively express and spice up your subject. Plus, they provide another opportunity to include keywords (through alt text and image descriptions) for higher search rankings.
- **Provide answers and fast facts:** The whole purpose of using a search engine is to find an answer or result. Give readers what they want by providing relevant “how to” series, best practices, and direct answers to their most searched questions. Plus, when readers engage through mobile or email, they can easily share with their colleagues.

# Developing a Content Marketing Strategy

The best content marketing educates potential leads and current customers without directly selling to them. By first providing your audience with the information they want to read and engage with, they will come to trust your brand as a reputable content source—hopefully rewarding you in the future with their business.

More importantly, don't formulate a content marketing strategy in a silo. Brainstorm with other experts around your company and build off their insight. Use employees across departments as content marketing resources, especially those with customer-facing roles. They are the ones who know your audience best and what they care about. Consult with these resources to address and fully understand:

- What challenges the customer faces
- What departments they work in and roles they typically hold
- What content they enjoy and have interacted with in the past



Knowing these answers will help you identify the purpose of your content, whether it be to educate buyers, answer customer questions, act as an industry thought leader, or promote brand culture and awareness.

In addition, incorporating marketing automation into your strategy allows for personalization. This enables you to [tailor messages and content](#) to each individual based on their interests, engagement level, and even stage of the buying cycle. These programs can be set up to run automatically and triggered to start based on a prospect's demographic characteristic, such as job title or even browsing behavior. Plus, try other tactics for greater content personalization such as:

- Managing different customer journeys targeted to each unique buyer persona.
- Easily building microsites and custom landing pages for specific campaigns or audiences using personalized URLs (PURLs).
- Personalizing your email sender information based on which sales rep or customer account manager owns the relationship.





# Things the Best Content Marketers Do

The best content marketers aren't just masters at pumping out compelling content on a daily basis. They make their content work for them in a number of ways from effectively embedding SEO keywords to reusing and building on past content. Most importantly? They're religious about measuring and analyzing results, pivoting strategies when goals aren't being met in favor of a new idea.



## Best Practice #1: Write (and Design) for Favorable SEO Rankings

If you create great content, but no one sees it, what's the point? Search optimized copy continues promoting your content long after you do. Even after you're done using it in ads and drip campaigns, search engines will continue to serve up your content if it's properly indexed and relevant to your target market's search habits. While it's important to keep your content library updated and fresh, evergreen topics will continue to supply readers. You can optimize your blogs, infographics, video descriptions, landing pages, and any other web copy in a few proven ways:

- **Identify and prioritize keywords.** Determine both long and short tail keywords to use throughout your copy. The trick is using them as naturally as possible to avoid perceived "keyword stuffing." Start by developing a list of keywords that are relevant to your content and business. Then, prioritize them based on factors like interest, context, and competition for each.
- **Use headers properly.** Whether it's a landing page, blog post, or other web page, how you organize and format your content matters. Properly assigning headlines and subheadings in H1, H2, H3 tags (and so on) helps search engines better understand what your post is about and appropriately index it.
- **Add links.** It pays to add links to your content. Adding "internal" links to other pages on your site helps build brand awareness among readers, encourage them to spend more time on your website, and make the reader more likely to contact you. Backlinks to other external pages help boost your page's authority and credibility. And when another site backlinks to your content, it essentially gives it a vote of confidence, telling Google to rank your page higher in search results.
- **Localize content.** If you do business in more than one country, localizing your content can make a significant difference in terms of SEO results. In some cases, localization might require translating copy to different languages, but in other cases, it might require making some simple spelling updates (e.g. replacing the suffix "-ize" with "-ise" when going from American to British or Australian English).
- **Measure results.** Last but not least, measure and assess your efforts. Start by setting a benchmark to see where you rank for your target keywords prior to beginning any optimization efforts. Then, track any changes in rankings for the keywords you use at designated intervals so you can see which efforts are paying off the most.



## Bonus: Experiment with Content Advertising

Consider setting a piece of your marketing budget aside to promote your content on LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, or industry websites. Start small, with \$50-100 pay per click (PPC) ads on social media. Advertising ensures that the right buyers have easy access to your content and company. At the very least, you should see an increase in content clicks and engagement.

Whichever channels you choose to post on, don't forget to include links back to your website. This ensures Tweets, emails, and syndicated blogs properly aid your inbound marketing content strategy by allowing readers to come back and explore what else your site has to offer.



## Best Practice #2: Refresh and “Re-skin” Existing Assets

One way to get more mileage out of your content is to create evergreen pieces (or content that is not bound by current events or time-specific topics), ensuring its value for years to come. Evergreen content primarily includes general knowledge topics about your industry, which are great for addressing commonly searched keywords too. While it’s not bad to write content that speaks to the current time period, it’s important to revisit and update it down the road or at least create additional evergreen pieces to round out your library.

Re-skinning also refers to using pieces of a larger content piece (like a whitepaper) and promoting them across various channels for increased traction. If you already have:

- **Whitepapers**, turn them into a blog series, infographic, or case study.
- **Webinar recordings or presentations**, turn them into on-demand videos, slide decks, or an actionable list/toolset.
- **Blogs**, turn them into eBooks or mobile-friendly email campaigns.



# The Benefits of Re-skinning Marketing Assets

Why take the time to refresh and re-skin your content?

## 1. It Makes the Process of Creating New Content Less Intimidating

Instead of reinventing the wheel, breathe new life into older (yet still valuable) content. Re-skinning existing content ensures you have a roadmap for what you want to say.

## 2. It Puts Your Research to Good Use

Research takes time. Re-skinning content and applying it to multiple new pieces makes the most of that hard work, increasing efficiency in producing new content faster.

## 3. It Extends Your Content Team's Reach

Lean marketing teams benefit from re-skinning content by increasing efficiency in production, helping the team produce more pieces in less time.

## 4. It Expands Your Audience

Re-skinning content into different formats allows you to appeal to a broader range of readers. While C-level prospects may prefer content they can scan through quickly, others may prefer more research-heavy writing. Consider exploring new channels and tailoring your content for those specific audiences as well.

## 5. It Cross-promotes Your Content

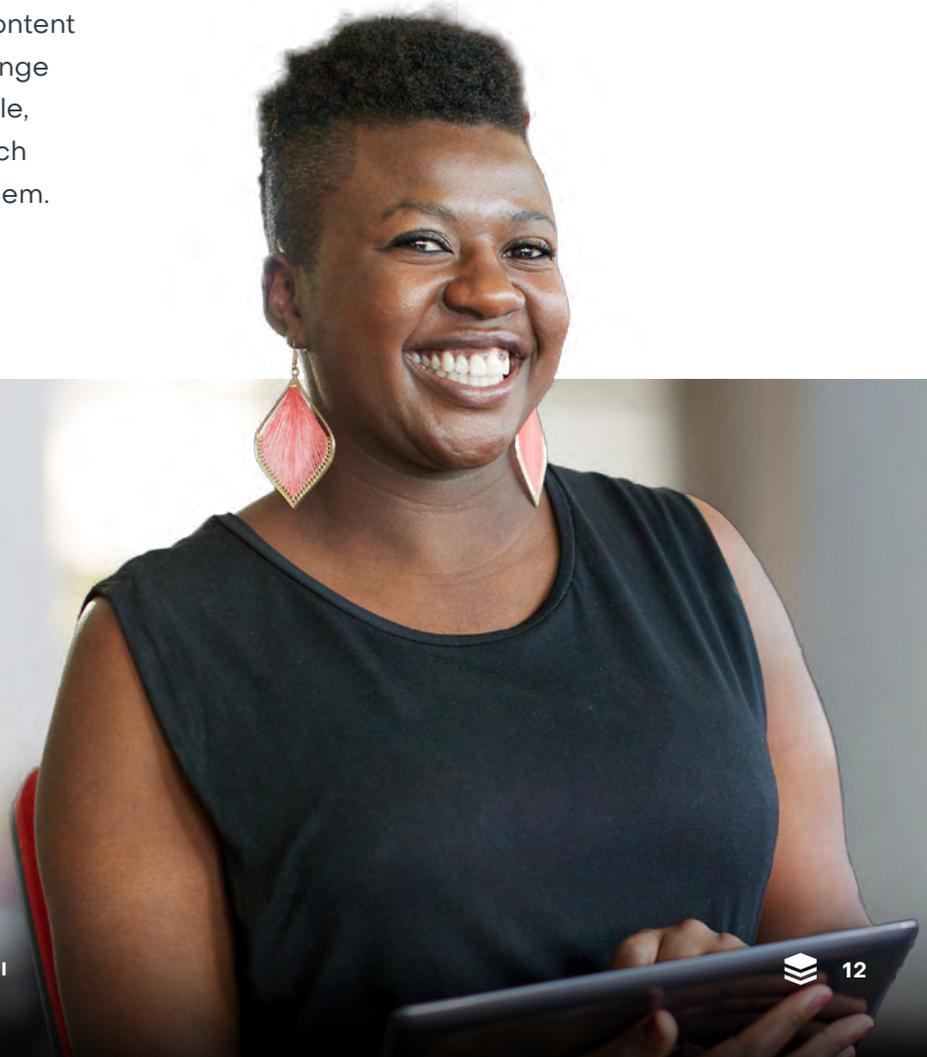
Developing smaller pieces based on a larger work allows you to use the deliverable as the call to action, driving readers to fill out the download form and become a prospect.



## Best Practice #3: Adapt for B2B Content Marketing

Content marketing is an adaptable strategy for all B2B marketers, no matter what your product or service is. As prospects conduct online research in your industry, having a library of content featuring relevant search terms will lead them to your business, making it a primary source for lead generation. Secondly, B2B content marketing can help promote your website, build brand awareness, and educate leads ahead of time so they're more qualified when they finally engage. Make sure you choose a variety of content marketing platforms to post from, including:

- **Blogs.** Corporate blogs are a great way to invite new audiences into your circle, while still giving them control to explore and consume content on their own terms. Appeal to a broad range of topics (within your field), and if possible, categorize them based on multiple search factors so new viewers can easily find them.
- **Webinars.** Ask one of your C-level executives to lead a webinar promoting your product, or ask a subject matter expert within your company to educate your audience about a particular topic. Attendees will appreciate the thought leadership, and you'll have an "in" to start the sales conversation.
- **Visual Content.** Visual content is great for the on-the-go content consumer. It also gives audiences a better sense of your brand. Whether through videos, infographics, or even drawings that help explain your business and humanize your web pages, visual content offers an easy way for audiences to consume otherwise dry and stuffy material.



## Get Creative! (Within Your Brand Guidelines)

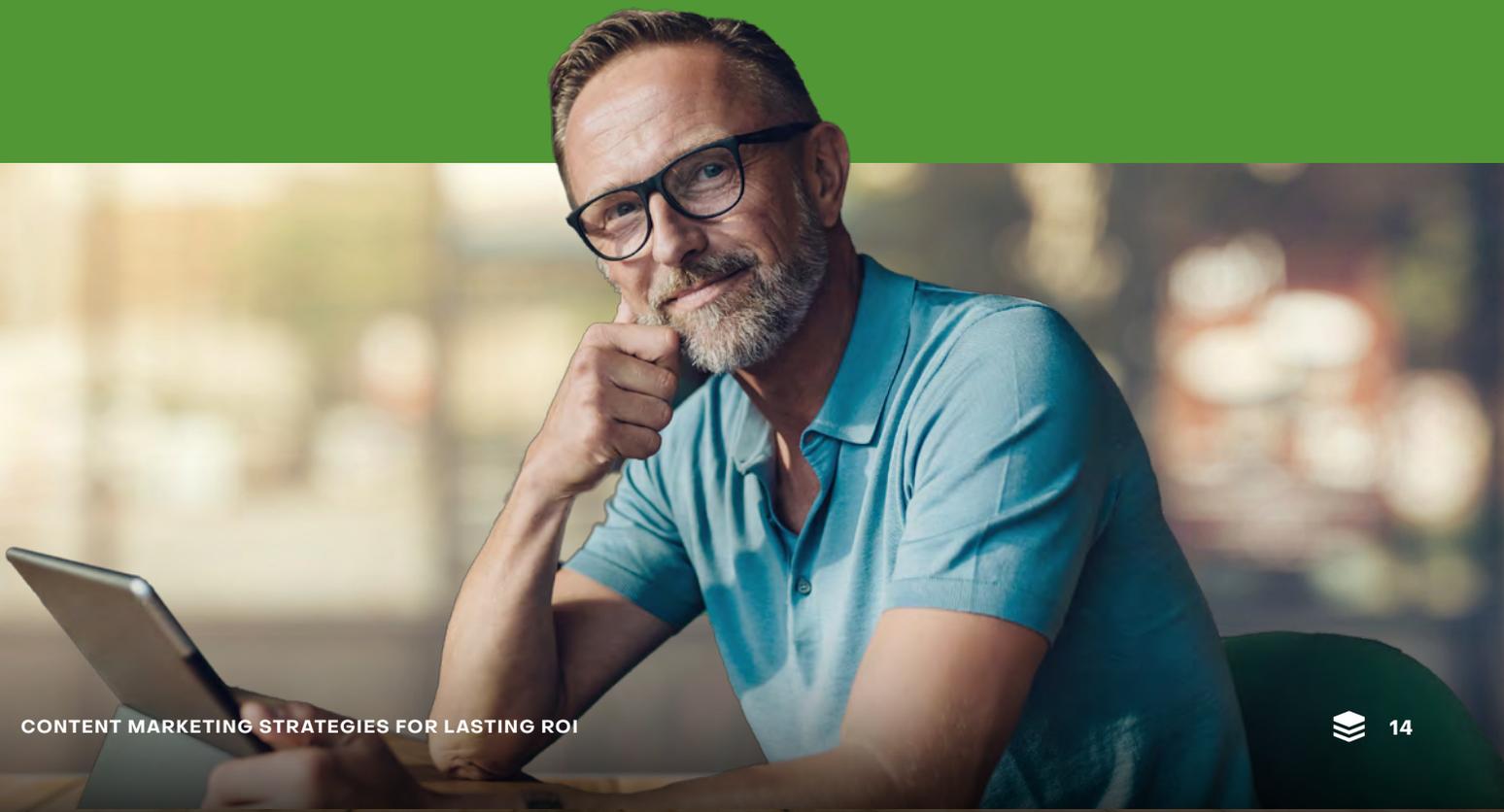
B2B prospects are consumers too. Consider other mediums that might draw them in like interactive web pages, online quizzes, podcasts, or even a book authored by one of your company executives. At the same time, encourage your internal teams to develop and promote new content marketing by creating a content marketing guide complete with tips and tricks on the company writing style, voice, spelling and grammar, hyperlinking, etc. This ensures your brand content stays consistent no matter the author, channel, or audience.



# Making the Most of Your Content Marketing Efforts

In a sea of advertisements and gimmicks, consumers are constantly on the lookout for authentic educational content. By taking advantage of the expertise and knowledge your employees already possess, you can build engagement and relationships with new audiences—while also adding to the funnel.

With a content marketing strategy that addresses key goals and the topics your audiences want to learn about most, you can create content that lasts longer than just a week of promotion. And with a marketing automation system to manage promotion and personalization, getting your content in front of the right eyes is easier than ever.



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## About SugarCRM

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