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Are you building your brand?

When it comes to marketing today, there is an element of truth to that classic movie line from “Field of Dreams” — “If you build it, they will come.”

Through content marketing, businesses and organizations are drawing the very people they want to form a relationship with simply by providing information in their areas of specialty and making it easy for people to find it.

William Baker, professor and chairman of the marketing department at The University of Akron, says he can’t imagine a better marketing tool for niche publications trying to strengthen their brand. “Keep in mind, because of what’s available in social media, you have the potential to have the same kind of impact larger marketers do,” he said. “The small business, the small publication, has the potential to reach the whole world with YouTube. It has the potential to reach the whole world with blogs and articles. With search engines, people can find them.”



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The process

Content marketing is an especially good fit for publications because the process starts with your specialty: creating content.

Baker gives an example of a magazine for golfers. "So, say someone is looking into whether they should buy a composite golf club, and they do an Internet search. If you've done an article on that topic and posted it, and you've done some search engine optimization work, they will find your article."

So the consumer's search leads him to your article, and the article leads him to your publication and brand, and, hopefully, your website.

"It's very inexpensive," Baker said. "You're basically letting consumers find you by writing articles that are relevant to them."

Baker suggests supplementing your publication's articles with blogs on topics that would be of interest to your reader base. The pieces you write should be posted on your publication's website and on all of your social media sites.

Be sure to work in key words that will help people find you in an online search. The words should be aligned with the types of things people in your area of interest would enter on a search engine. If you're not sure what they would be, there are tools available to help you. Google, for instance, offers a keyword planner (adwords.google.com/KeywordPlanner).

It helps to include a key word in the article's headline and URL (Uniform Resource Locator) that gets to the heart of the topic. For a golf club article, the headline might be "Pros and cons of composite drivers," and its URL could be www.yourjournalname.com/pros-and-cons-of-composite-drivers.

Make sure the words you add to the body of the article or blog are used

correctly and go with the flow of your content. And above all, offer high quality, useful content. People will catch on quickly if your content is nothing more than a device to frame search words. "The key is you're offering truly authentic articles, not just veiled promotions," Baker said.

The next level

The content you offer doesn't have to stop with blogs or articles. For example, a golf magazine could create videos on swing improvement and top courses. It could work key words into the videos' content and post the videos on its own YouTube channel. "None of that costs much," Baker said. "You can film a video with your iPhone."

utilize. Advertising always is an option for getting the word out about your organization and publications. "If you're a niche/hobbyist publication, there are so many places to go online and place ads, and many are more cost-effective than traditional advertising," Baker said.

But put careful thought into where you invest your advertising dollars. Advertising won't benefit you unless you reach your target market and hit it multiple times, Baker said. "The beauty of what I'm talking about (with content marketing) is you're getting people when they're making a decision; you're getting them at exactly the right time."

Baker acknowledges that it can be difficult to carve out time for anything beyond the day-to-day work associated

Resources

This site explains the basics of URLs:

<http://www.w3.org/Addressing/URL/Overview.html>

This site provides a beginner's guide to SEO:

<http://moz.com/beginners-guide-to-seo>

Another good option for trade and technical publications would be to write a white paper. "It's just a more technical version of an article. You can get into the trends impacting your industry and the latest research out there," Baker said.

You can also send an email offering a free copy of the white paper to your database of customers or prospective customers. "Again, the content should be real," Baker emphasized. "It's authentic. It's helpful. But you've embedded your publication's name in there."

He suggests short, direct verbiage in the email that states that the paper was produced by your publication or organization.

Content marketing certainly doesn't have to be the only marketing tool you

with your publication, let alone for an ongoing marketing campaign. But it is important to present your publications as relevant resources that can meet readers' needs.

It's easy to assume that as a niche magazine or journal, you have a captive audience. That assumption would be wrong, Baker said. "If you're putting out a magazine on a topic, there are many other places people can go to find information and many things competing for their time.

"People are searching for benefits all of the time. You just have to make it easy for them to find you," Baker said. "The beauty is you become available to people looking for exactly what you have to offer." 

One on one

JPA profile: Angie Adams, operations coordinator

Number of years with JPA: 3 years

Why she loves JPA: : "I'd always worked for big corporations before coming here, so I enjoy the small company atmosphere," Adams said. At JPA, she's been able to get involved with nearly every aspect of the operation. "There's always something new and different happening at JPA."



Angie and Shane



Clockwise from bottom left: Nate, Marshall, Jake, Angie, Shane, Josh, Abby

Family life: Adams is a newlywed. She and her husband, Shane, were married in March of 2014. Their new blended family now comprises five children. They are Jake, 16; Josh, 14; Marshall, 9; Abby, 7; and Nate, 6. The family enjoys traveling, camping and family barbecues. Because Marshall plays with the Central Illinois Youth Football league, everyone in the family is now an avid football fan, and Abby cheers. Adams and her family also have two Shih Tzu dogs, Gabby and Pebbles, who have distinct personalities of their own.

Hobbies: Adams is a dedicated fan of the

Chicago Blackhawks, and was delighted to see the National Hockey League team advance to the playoffs against the Los Angeles Kings in 2014. Needless to say, she has been following every game to root for her team. Adams' other interests include gardening. She usually keeps a small vegetable garden and cares for the flowers around the Adams' home. She also enjoys reading just about everything, especially science fiction.

One cool fact: While Adams was working on her communications degree at Kishwaukee College in Illinois, she became a published poet. One of her poetry class assignments called for writing some poetry and then submitting it to the local newspaper. A number of Adams' pieces were printed. "It was pretty cool," she said. "At the time, I really thought I'd get into journalism or technical writing after college. Being published helped me get through the class, which seemed kind of flowery at the time. It was exciting." 



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RECIPE

Leftover hamburger bun snack

Hamburger buns
Honey
Cream cheese
Almond slices

Spray a cookie sheet with oil. Place the buns crust side down on the cookie sheet. Bake at 350 degrees for about five minutes until golden. Dribble 1 teaspoon of honey over each of the buns. Spread cream cheese over each of the buns and top them with the almond slices.

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