

On the Mark

Helping you **mark** your credit union for success



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Content Marketing: Crafting a Strategy

(Part Two of a Two Part Series)

Last month we introduced the concept of content marketing and discussed how it is changing the rules of traditional marketing. This month, we continue that discussion with information on how to craft a content marketing strategy consistent with your brand and goals.

Crafting a Strategy

Like any other marketing initiative, it's best to have a plan of action in place instead of picking random marketing channels and tossing in relevant content every once in a while. Before you can begin crafting a content marketing strategy, there are several things you should know up front. First, content marketing requires time – to develop content, to execute your strategy and to see a return on your investment. Second, good content requires you to think like an editor or publisher and less like a marketer. If you don't have someone on staff with this type of expertise, you might consult with an agency or freelance writer to help craft your content. Third, content marketing should be integrated into your overall marketing strategy. In fact, your marketing plan will most likely change once you begin integrating content marketing.

Start your strategy by listening to your members/customers. What type of information is important to them? What financial issues or problems do they need solutions to? How do they want to access this information? You can collect this information in various ways like web polls, blog comments, e-mail surveys or even in person. There also are several free online tools to help you discover if your members or other people are talking about your company on the Internet. Joe Pulizzi, content marketing expert and author recommends these three: [Google Alert](#), [Technorati](#) and [Twitter Search](#). Pulizzi also recommends hiring or assigning someone to the position of "Conversation Champion" or "Chief Conversation Officer" – someone who loves social networking, lives your brand and can be the voice on your corporate forum and other online forums where people are discussing your organization.

“Establishing “listening posts” will help you monitor and survey the wants, needs, and behaviors of your customers and prospects, and get an overall feel for the types of things they’re talking about. What sets them off? What are they passionate about? What types of things seem to engage them most? What do they think about your brand, your service? What have their experiences been? Armed with this information, you can better develop content to satisfy those interests and engage in the con-versations,” writes Pulizzi in his e-book, [Seven Content Strategies To Build Trust With Today’s Savvy Consumers](#).

Take Inventory

Before you develop new content, take an inventory of everything you produce, both electronic and print, to communicate with members. Then, conduct a content audit on every communication to determine which ones truly serve as content marketing. If they are more about your organization, product or service, they don’t qualify as content marketing. Remember, the goal is to provide relevant content that consistently delivers tangible benefits to members/customers.

That doesn’t mean you have to start from scratch. The place to start with your strategy is most likely with the marketing channel you use most often for content marketing purposes. It could be anything – brochures, website, e-mail, etc. of recreating the wheel, examine what you have and decide what changes need to be made to make it more effective. In fact, your strategy be divided into categories like: existing content, content that can be produced in-house without stretching resources and content wish list.

Resources are critical to executing a content marketing strategy – especially for online content marketing. Blogs and forums must be updated regularly – at least once or twice a week – with fresh content. Even websites should be refreshed. If your home page looks the same every time someone lands there, they will continue looking elsewhere for new information. Creating and managing content is a full time job and requires its own process.

“Define and deploy a repeatable process in order to maintain and expand your content. Although great ideas underlie great content, without effective process management you cannot hope to deliver consistent quality. This is very much like a traditional publication which develops an annual editorial calendar and a carefully crafted workflow for each issue. Since you are now in the publishing business, you need to do exactly the same,” writes Newt Barrett in his [blog](#) on [ContentMarketingToday.com](#).

Finding Your Information

Figuring out how people will find your content is an important part of any content marketing strategy. This may require assistance from an SEO (search engine optimization) specialist for content that resides online, because you want non-members to view this information, too. That’s the whole point. If you can grab the attention of non-members who land on your site by Googling a specific topic, you’re starting the relationship process with prospective members.

Finally, when crafting a content marketing strategy, think outside the box. Your members/customers are unique. Your approach to helping them live a better life should be unique, as well. What works for one organization may not work for yours. It goes back to listening to what your members want. Be creative. If you publish a blog, you don’t have to call it a blog. Call it an Internet café or choose a name that resonates with your target audience. Instead of offering classes that require members to

be on sight, offer webinars with the same information. Or, make a video of your classes for others to watch at their leisure online. Put helpful videos on You Tube. In this age of information, there's really no limit to what you can do.

Seize the Opportunity

We live in a world where consumers want to make up their own minds about the things they buy. They have more tools than ever at their disposal. By the time they are ready to buy something, they have an arsenal of information acquired through research. That information can come from you, or it can come from someone else. The bottom line is this. They are more inclined to buy from you when they feel they know you and can trust you. Seize the opportunity to give them the information they need.

Upcoming Webinar...Emerging Marketing Technologies - May 19, 2010

IM. Live chat. Text alerts. Social networking. Viral marketing. Blogs. Podcasting. Are these emerging technology marketing trends or just the latest fads that will fade away?

As the marketing and technology fields merge, marketing executives must have a firm grasp on the latest technologies and how to best use them to reach their members. As an award-winning marketing executive and author, Arnold provides thoughtful insights for credit unions to consider.

This session will cover:

- Technology strategies and trends
- eMerging technologies
- Benefits & best practices
- Implementation tactics

The webinar will be held Wednesday, May 19th, at 2 p.m. Eastern, 11 a.m. Pacific. [Register Here!](#)

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Blog Updates

Follow Mark's blogs for frequent and timely information on topics like marketing, branding, generations, leadership, Tha and more. New blog posts are weekly. Here are links and summaries for some recent posts.

Differences Between Banks and CUs Members Really Care About

Credit unions expend much effort promoting the differences between banks and credit unions, but are they promoting the factors members actually care about? Mark offers a fresh approach to marketing the difference between banks and credit unions that may actually catch your members' attention.

Seven Signs Your CU May Have Jumped the Shark

Has your credit union has reached its defining moment with nowhere to go but down? Many credit unions don't think so, but the truth is that our industry loses hundreds of credit unions every year. This blog post is a must read to see if your organization shows any signs of jumping the shark.

Warp Speed or Slow Down the Bus?

What do you do when life hits warp speed? It doesn't necessarily have to be work. It could be your personal life. Or, it could be both. Read Mark's tips for staying on track when your project load reaches the ridiculous phase.

Online Buzz

Comments and Ideas from Mark's Blog Readers

Content Marketing Changes the Rules

"This is great stuff Mark and right up our alley with how we are working to help credit unions by taking content marketing to the next level with blog, video and podcast management. We have seen this stuff work time and time again both for us and for our credit unions. True... you may not see instant results. However, over time, a trusted relationship will be built and that is priceless." - **James Robert Lay**

"I would expand this post further to be sure credit unions are recruiting Gen Y for their boards, as well. There are so many credit unions whose board members have been on the board since the organization started. You're not going to attract Gen Y members if you don't have Gen Y employees and Gen Y leaders running the

Differences Between Banks and CUs Members Really Care About

"I agree...While customers do like to hear about the differences involving the back end of the financial institution, they care much more about what can be done for them. That is like only telling someone that your restaurant uses very eco-friendly supplies and healthy ingredients. While that may sell some people, if the food also tastes amazing (customer service) and is healthy, you will definitely convince them of your value." - **Max Silver**

organization. Great post, Mark."

- Colleen -

We want to hear from you. If you have used an idea or learned something of value from one of Mark's blog posts, be sure to leave a comment on the blog so others can benefit from your experiences, as well.

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