

The 4Cs of effective content creation

By  [Melissa Attree](#)

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To execute on a defined content marketing strategy, you need to approach the sourcing, publishing and distribution of your content with your Anna-Wintour-esque publishing hat on...

We are familiar with portioning content according to themes or regular features but it's important to consider the source of your content. Sourcing, planning and the distribution of your content are as critical as the actual content itself.



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Once you have established where your content is coming from and the relevant % weighting it then becomes easy to map out the required resources. By having all the info available, you can plot the requirements on a calendar that is integrated with all your other communication activities.

This process helps with the planning and publishing process:

Content = Curated + Created + Commissioned + Crowdsourced

Curated

This type of content is the easiest way to start any content marketing journey; discover relevant articles, videos, photos from the web and use them as part of your publishing. Don't steal stories but rather have an opening paragraph that lets your audience know why you think this info is important, together with an excerpt from the article. It shows that you've taken care with the curation process and that you are packaging and distributing carefully selected content for your audience.

It's likely that when you start on your content marketing journey, at least 70% of your content will be curated. The art of curation is a skill that needs to be developed. To make this process easier develop 'headline mood boards' and agree on what existing articles align with your content themes. For ease of reference, create a library reference list of websites that you can check on a regular basis for new and relevant content.

There is so much information out there and the clutter can be overwhelming. Think of effective curation as a way of helping your audience to discover relevant, interesting and shareable stories. Always credit the original URL and, where possible, put some effort in and give your audience some context as to why you have chosen to curate a specific story.

Created

This is where the process gets a little more complex. Created content is obviously what will set you apart on an ongoing basis, as you have the freedom to experiment and create work that matches your content strategy and vision.

It is sometimes less daunting to start the creative process by electing to effectively repurpose any existing content you have. Many brands are already sitting on a lot of quality content - most of the time this content isn't shareable or easily digestible. Audit the existing content you have and select the key items you can work with. For example, a video can become a transcript, or a series of quotes, or shareable .gifs, or a photo essay, or a podcast. Select your hero pieces of content and choose how to repurpose them so they are distributed to the right people through the right channels.

When creating any content, try have some key objectives in mind that you use to sense-check your stories. This ensures that you stay on track strategically and that you give your audience what they need and want.

How do you measure success? Seth Godin uses the 'will they miss you when you're gone?' rule of measurement. For me, success is as simple as seeing others curate what you've created.

Commissioned

When you're starting out with a content marketing strategy, it's tricky to gain momentum on your own. It makes sense to try and get other, more experienced people involved in your planning. Many brands use influencers or have relationships with key bloggers or journalists. Work together with these people so that you can add a different dimension to your content offering.

For example, Facebook launched their new office space by inviting Instagrammers to photograph the space in their own way. This ensured that they got coverage on the right sites and also used the extended networks of key photographers and Instagrammers.

Select people who you would like to work with and, as a magazine would, commission paid-for editorial pieces. Make sure that you commission pieces from people who align with your overall content strategy and themes; always think about content in multimedia terms. It's likely that well-commissioned pieces will add credibility to your content and give you exposure to a wider audience.

Crowdsourced

When in doubt, ask.

If you're embarking on a content marketing strategy by creating a centralised content hub, it's likely you'll also be using social media platforms to distribute your content. Tap into your existing communities (include the comments section and

email databases) - ask them questions, questions that could lead to audience-inspired stories 'created by you, for you.'

Make sure that you always feedback, to your community and credit their work, by involving your audience in the journey you'll gain trust and boost conversation.

ABOUT MELISSA ATTREE

Melissa Attree, director: content strategy, Ogilvy & Mather Cape Town, is a creative digital and marketing consultant who has worked on many major brands, including ABSA, Adidas, Big Blue, MasterCard, Nando's, Nedbank, SAA, SAB, Toyota, Vodacom and Woolworths. Attree began her career as a copy writer, before managing the local strategic transformation of the Kérastase brand for L'Oreal and then providing the social media strategy for 5FM for four years.

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