THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO CONTENT EXPERIENCE

by **Yoav Schwartz**

Co-founder & CEO of Uberflip

Uberflip

TABLE OF CONTENTS

"We believe content is the most effective way to ignite meaningful relationships. But even the greatest content must be combined with a remarkable experience to reach its full potential."

- Yoav Schwartz, Co-founder & CEO of Uberflip

▶

YOAV

SCHWARTZ

INTRODUCTION
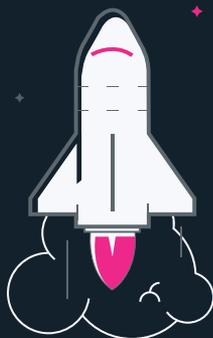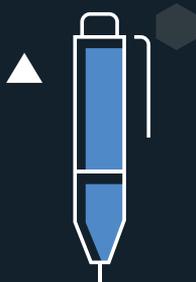
The endless process of content marketing has typically been defined by a three-pillar system:

CREATION

DISTRIBUTION

INSIGHTS

"Creation" is the process of — you guessed it — creating content. "Distribution" is the process of getting eyeballs on your content, and "Insights" is the process of measuring and reporting on those eyeballs.

But this is a flawed perception. The three-pillar system neglects to include a few significant aspects of the process of content marketing. *How* will your content actually be presented or managed? *Where* is lead generation taking place? *What* is getting distributed on social media?

Behold... the fourth pillar:

EXPERIENCE.

CREATION   EXPERIENCE   DISTRIBUTION   INSIGHTS

Even the most amazing content must be paired with a remarkable content experience to reach its full potential.

But, what exactly does "experience" mean, and how can you build and optimize a content experience?

This eBook aims to help you understand what a content experience is, why content experiences matter, and the building blocks you need to have in place to start building your own well-optimized content experience.

WHAT IS A CONTENT EXPERIENCE?
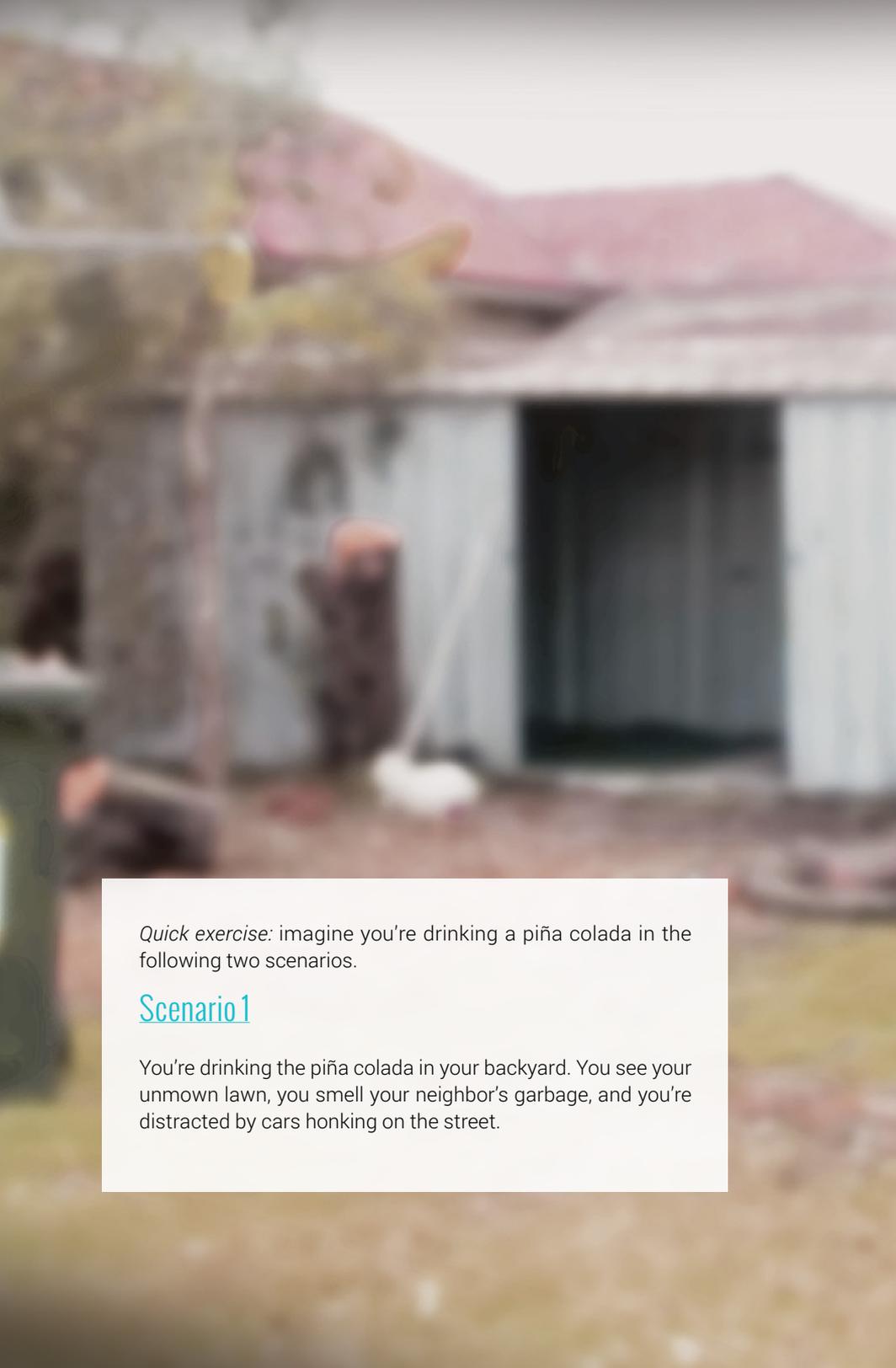
Quick exercise: imagine you're drinking a piña colada in the following two scenarios.

Scenario 1

You're drinking the piña colada in your backyard. You see your unmown lawn, you smell your neighbor's garbage, and you're distracted by cars honking on the street.

Scenario 2

You're drinking the piña colada on a tropical beach. You're stretched out in a lounge chair, you hear the gentle sound of waves rolling in and feel the sun shining on your face… *ahhh*.

Even if you're enjoying the exact same piña colada in both situations, I think it's safe to assume that you'd be far more likely to order another drink in Scenario #2.

Why? Well, the situation facilitated the complete enjoyment of the consumption of your drink. The entire **experience** was optimized for you to stick around, lose yourself in your surroundings, and focus on nothing more than sipping that piña colada.

Environment has a profound impact on human behavior. Not only has this been studied and proven, it's something that retail and service industries have been dedicated to mastering for a long time. They make a conscious effort to provide an environment that creates a positive experience for the customer or end-user so that they'll keep coming back for more.

This is why providing a well-optimized content experience is so important. Not unlike physical environments, the environment where your digital content lives can have a massive impact on how your content is consumed, and can influence your end-user's motivation to act.

The definition of "content experience" is simple, but in reality, your content experience is more than just an environment. Your content experience is the place where all the user action takes place. It's where your visitors consume your content, where they convert to a lead, and where you can control and measure your content's effectiveness at every stage of the buyer journey.

And you can't afford to ignore it any longer.

Let's take a closer look at the common content problems that B2B organizations face today, and how they can be resolved by building a well-optimized content experience.

CONTENT EXPERIENCE:

THE ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH YOUR CONTENT LIVES.

Part 1

CONTENT MANAGEMENT

....

A well-optimized content experience allows you to effectively manage content to meet your organization's goals.

....

88%

of B2B organizations
**are leveraging
content marketing**

According to Content Marketing Institute's 2016 Benchmarks, Budgets and Trends report, 88% of B2B organizations are leveraging content marketing. Since there is a direct correlation between a business' publishing frequency and the amount of website traffic and leads generated, it's clear that a *lot* of companies are publishing a *lot* of content.

Too much content, perhaps — the phenomenon of content production surpassing our limited human capacity to consume it is called content shock, a term coined by Mark Schaefer in 2014.

CONTENT SHOCK:

the intersection of finite content consumption and rising content availability.
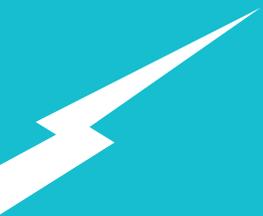
Not only is content shock an issue for the end-user who is tasked with sifting through the clutter in order to discover the most relevant source to fulfill their need, it's arguably a bigger issue for B2B marketers, who must:

1   **Create and provide** the most relevant content to their target audience

2   **Strike a balance** between publishing frequency and maintaining content quality

3   **Effectively manage** their diversity and volume of content assets to build relevant engagement paths, avoid content silos, and prolong their content's lifespan

Building a well-optimized content experience involves effective management and organization of your content assets to meet your goals.

MANAGING CONTENT ASSETS

....

Let's quickly establish the basics — providing a diverse content mix is important because it makes your key messaging more accessible and allows organizations to build a more relevant engagement path.

Simply having a diverse mix of content isn't enough, however. Your organization needs to be able to strategically manage this mix in order to yield results from your content. Consider this: the average blog post costs [$900 to produce](#), and premium content assets cost even more. Mismanagement of your organization's content won't just cost you in traffic or results — it will cost you financially, too.

To the seasoned content marketer, the types of content listed on the next few pages aren't anything new; however, in order to learn how to effectively manage your content assets, it's important to consider the opportunities and challenges presented by each type of content, as well as the channels on which they live.

13X
POSITIVE ROI

EXCELLENT
SEO BENEFITS

Blog posts

Blog posts are usually the foundation upon which many B2B organizations build their content strategy — they're relatively easy to produce and publish, and yield excellent SEO benefits. Plus, organizations who blog are 13 times more likely to enjoy positive ROI. A company's "blog" is often the center of their content strategy, and it's usually managed through a CMS.

AVERAGE QUIZ IS SHARED
1900X

Interactive content

Interactive content is all the rage these days, and rightfully so — the average quiz is shared 1,900 times. Beyond quizzes, interactive content can include polls, surveys, interactive infographics, calculators, contests, and even interactive videos. Interactive content is usually embeddable within a blog post.

ONLINE VIDEO ACCOUNTS FOR

50%

OF ALL MOBILE TRAFFIC

75%

OF BUSINESS EXECUTIVES
WATCH WORK-RELATED VIDEOS

Videos

Videos can take on a number of roles at B2B organizations, providing tutorials, product information, or webinar recordings, for instance. Video is a huge opportunity for content marketers — online video accounts for 50% of all mobile traffic, and 75% of business executives watch work-related videos at least weekly. Although videos can usually be embedded in blog posts, they often live on a separate public channel, such as YouTube or Vimeo, or a private video hosting channel like Wistia or Vidyard.

83%

OF B2B BUYERS

USE WHITE PAPERS TO INFORM A PURCHASE DECISION

PDFs

78% of marketers produce white papers for lead generation, which makes sense considering that 83% of B2B buyers use white papers to inform a purchase decision. PDFs are usually the preferred content format for white papers, eBooks, and similar long-form content. They often exist separately from an organization's main blog or resource center, and are usually accessible via a landing page.

TOP 5 CHALLENGE

FACED BY B2B MARKETERS

Landing pages

When it comes to lead generation, landing pages are usually the way to go since they allow for one page to be optimized for one goal; however, getting landing pages built and tested is one of the top five challenges faced by B2B marketers. Otherwise, the lead generation flow using landing pages can be convoluted since you're forced to remove the end-user from your content experience.

CENTRALIZING AND ORGANIZING YOUR CONTENT

··

The list you just read highlights a couple of realities:

- B2B organizations are pouring resources into producing a lot of different content assets
- These B2B content assets are living on a variety of different channels

A well-optimized content experience allows organizations to **strategically organize** their content so the end-user can **easily discover** the information they need to continue along the buyer journey.

What's stopping them from doing so? The **silo-ification of content**.

Content silos are dangerous because they lead to "dead-ends" in your engagement path.

CONTENT SILO-IFICATION: WHEN AN ORGANIZATION'S CONTENT LEADS TO AN OUTCOME THAT DOES NOT INVOLVE THEIR ORGANIZATION OR THEIR ORGANIZATION'S CONTENT.

A few common examples of content silos include:

A) Organizing by content format or type instead of topic

Let's say your organization pours a lot of resources into creating white papers. Think about how you organize those white papers on your resource center in relation to how your end-user is seeking content — no one wakes up in the morning thinking "*Gee, today is a great day to read a white paper!*". Your end-user is far more likely to discover the right white paper by searching via topic as opposed to sifting through a pile of unrelated and irrelevant information in your "white papers" tab.

B) Letting your content pile up by date

Similarly, a content silo could occur if you're letting your evergreen content pile up by date. Your end-user isn't necessarily searching for your most recent piece of content. As great as your latest blog post might be, "new" or "latest" isn't code for "relevant to everyone". By letting your content pile-up by date, you risk leading your end-user astray from your engagement path because you're enforcing recentness over relevance.

CONT
SIL

C) Sending your inbound traffic outbound

Another example of content silo-ification occurs when you send your inbound traffic outbound. For instance, your organization might be producing videos and posting them on YouTube. While tapping into your YouTube audience is a good idea, if you're referring your inbound traffic from your blog or resource center out to YouTube, you risk losing them into a clickhole of obscurity (probably in the form of cute cat videos).

A well-optimized content experience involves the amalgamation and centralization of content for both the content manager and the end-user. By centralizing all content assets (in a content hub, for instance), the content manager can think of their content more holistically and strategically organize it to provide tailored content streams for the end-user, thus providing a more relevant content experience.

TENT
LO

Part 2

ENGAGEMENT

| ENGAGEMENT | LEAD GENERATION | SALES ENABLEMENT | SUCCESS |

A well-optimized content experience allows your end-user to continue their content journey by easily following an engagement path.

72%

of B2B marketers CITE CREATING ENGAGING CONTENT AS THEIR TOP PRIORITY FOR INTERNAL CONTENT CREATORS .

[source]
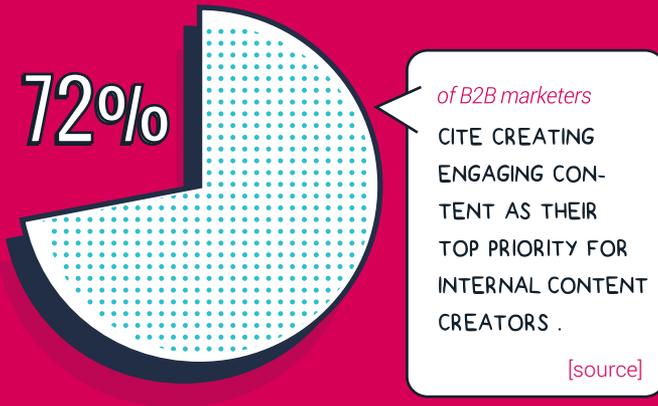
With the surge in popularity of interactive content platforms, many B2B marketers are relying on interactive content assets to remedy their engagement problem.

However, engagement is a bigger issue than achieving poll responses and quiz completions. **Engagement means establishing a meaningful connection and a long-term relationship with your end-user**. While interactive assets can certainly help build these kinds of connections, it's important to think of your content on a holistic level and focus on building an engagement path.

BUILDING AN ENGAGEMENT PATH

..

Let's say you want to bake a lasagna for dinner. You head to the grocery store with a clear list outlining exactly what you need. When you arrive at the grocery store, however, you find all of the store's items piled in one massive heap. Odds are, you wouldn't waste time sifting through the pile of groceries to gather your ingredients — you'd probably head to a different grocery store in hopes that you'll have a quicker and easier experience finding what you need.

The same rules apply to your content experience.
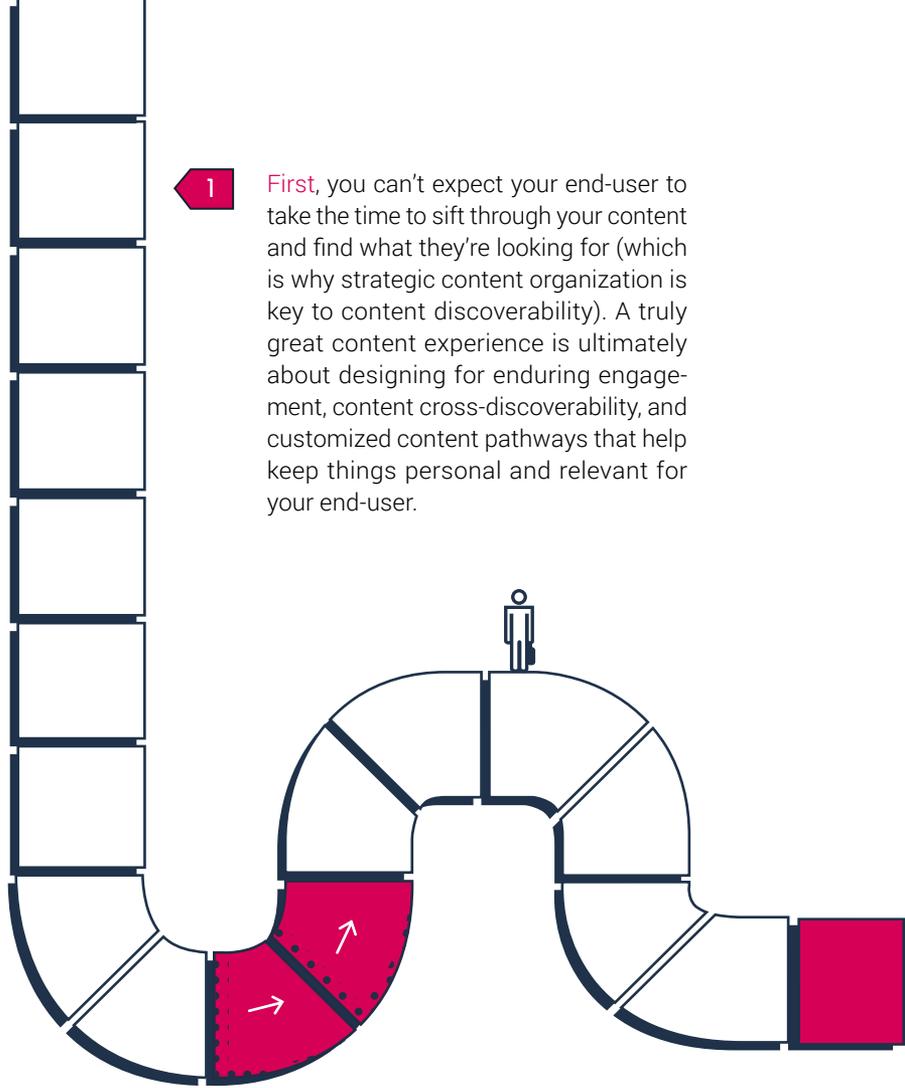
1 First, you can't expect your end-user to take the time to sift through your content and find what they're looking for (which is why strategic content organization is key to content discoverability). A truly great content experience is ultimately about designing for enduring engage-ment, content cross-discoverability, and customized content pathways that help keep things personal and relevant for your end-user.

2 Second, you need to encourage enduring engagement by enabling conversations using certain elements of engagement that will help to build a stronger relationship.

ELEMENTS OF ENGAGEMENT

Organizing and managing your content to create tailored content streams that are highly relevant to your end-user is one way to encourage engagement. However, it's also important to have a few aspects "baked in" to your content experience to facilitate and measure engagement.

In all likelihood, you've heard of some of these tools before, but it's important to understand how these elements work to promote engagement in your content experience.

Enabling comments

Commenting is one of the best ways to start conversations and, ultimately, understand whether or not your content is providing value to your audience by allowing the opportunity for feedback.

Of course, some brands (like Rainmaker Digital, née Copyblogger) have famously disabled their blog's comment section to broaden the conversation using other networks and avoid wasting time cleaning out inevitable spam. It's ultimately up to you and your organization as to whether or not you include comments to meet your goals.

Enable comments by installing one of the following comment tools in your content experience:

DISQUS   livefyre   CAKLE

Add social sharing buttons

Social sharing buttons are also a great way to generate engagement because they facilitate seamless sharing on social platforms, thereby allowing greater distribution and greater opportunity for your content to become part of a conversation.

Add social sharing buttons using one of the following tools to your content experience:

AddThis   **PO.ST**   **sharethis**

Include exit overlays

Exit overlays are "pop ups" that are triggered by exit intent technology, which monitors visitor behavior on your blog or website. When a visitor shows the intent to exit — e.g., by moving their cursor to their top navigation bar, or to close a window — an overlay pops up to encourage them to stay on the site and take action.

Exit overlays can be used to build subscriber lists, or offer exclusive content, or suggest content recommendations — the opportunities are endless. A few exit overlay tools include:

SumoMe   **PICREEL**   **rooster**

Provide content recommendations

Part of building an engagement path means always providing a logical and tailored next step to keep your end-user engaged with your brand's content. One of the easiest ways to do this is by implementing a content discovery engine that provides targeted content recommendations.

Think of content recommendations as an automated system that lays the next content "brick" in your end-user's engagement path. The path will continue as long as there are enough relevant bricks ahead! A few content recommendation tools include:

Part 3

LEAD GENERATION

| ENGAGEMENT | LEAD GENERATION | SALES ENABLEMENT | SUCCESS |

A well-optimized content experience moves your end-user through the funnel to generate leads and fuel marketing automation.

85%

OF B2B MARKETING TEAMS

SAY LEAD
GENERATION
IS THEIR
MAIN GOAL

Content satisfies many B2B marketing benefits; however, the main goal for 85% of B2B marketing teams who have invested in content is to generate leads and build rich lead profiles.

On its own, content isn't enough to generate leads. Your content needs to be supported by an experience that is optimized to collect lead information and fuel your marketing automation system.

Take a minute to consider the typical conversion process that occurs when you use a landing page:

1.

Your blog visitor clicks on a CTA within your blog or resource center.

2.

They arrive on the landing page.

3.

They complete the landing page form and the asset they wish to receive is either downloaded immediately or emailed to their inbox.

4.

When applicable, they retrieve the asset from their inbox.

This process should be all too familiar to the experienced B2B marketer. It might even be a process upon which you've based your entire lead generation strategy.

However, let's take a closer look at this process and identify how it can cause potential leaks in your content experience:

1.

DOWNLOAD

Your blog visitor clicks on a CTA within your blog or resource center.

2.
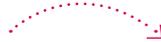
They are **removed from your content experience** as they arrive on the landing page.

3.

They're expected to **leave the landing page and retrieve the asset from their inbox**, or are presented with **yet another CTA** on the landing page to download the asset.

4.

When they finally access the document, you have **no insight as to whether or not they actually read it**.

When you look at it this way (and with the help of bold, pink formatting), you'll find that the traditional process of digital lead generation is actually quite disruptive.

What if you could put that entire process in one seamless content experience? It's possible when you use the right lead generation tools and tactics.

EFFECTIVE LEAD GENERATION TACTICS

Forms & Overlays

Forms work as a passive lead generation tactic for visitors to your blog or resource center. By sprinkling form CTAs throughout your resource center, or by strategically placing them inline or next to a blog post, you can capture information from visitors when they're ready to provide it.

When it comes to reliably capturing leads with your content over time, forms can also help marketers take a more aggressive approach. By placing a form as an overlay that "pops up" after a time delay as someone consumes your content, forms can be leveraged to literally get in your end-user's face and encourage them to respond to an offer.

Forms work best when they're highly relevant to the content experience, and it's usually a good idea to allow overlay forms to be dismissable if you're making a soft ask or "opt-in".

Gated Overlays

Gated overlay CTAs are really where the lead generation magic happens within a content experience. Similar to a landing page, a gated overlay acts as a barrier to access premium content, requiring the end-user to provide their information to unlock or "pay" to obtain the content.

In addition to lead generation, a key advantage of gated overlays is that they increase the likelihood that the content asset they're gating will be shared. For obvious reasons, people are less likely to share landing pages, which often means that they end up sharing the PDF file or link. This is problematic for the marketer, who doesn't get the benefit of collecting new lead information that may result from the share. As an integrated part of the content experience, gated overlays eliminate the option to share either the ungated content asset or the landing page.

Unlike a landing page, gated overlay CTAs don't remove the end-user from your content experience. Rather, they appear on top of your content, allowing potential leads to see that they are mere seconds away from the content they desire, and they don't have to take any extra steps to download it or retrieve it from their inbox.
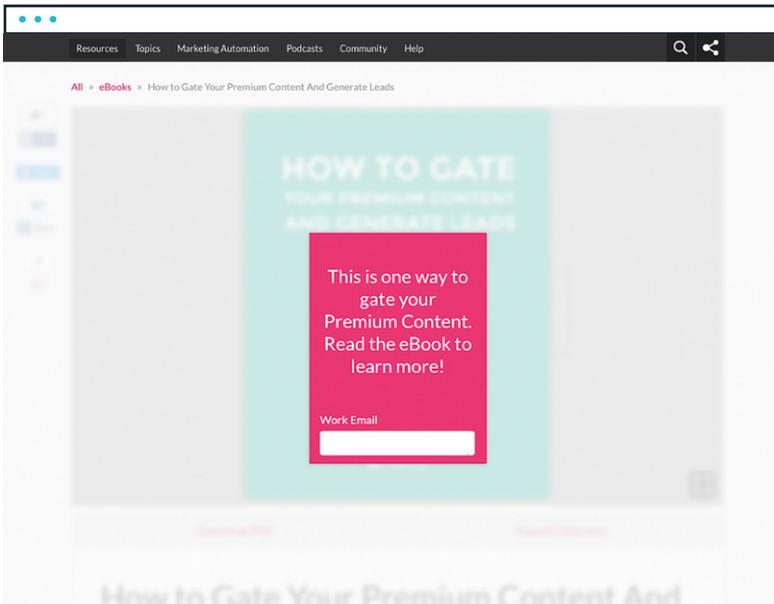
FUELLING DEMAND GENERATION

The real advantage of using forms and gates to collect your end-user's information is that it helps to fuel marketing automation by enriching your lead data. Enabling a feature such as progressive profiling on your forms will allow your demand generation team to build more robust lead profiles.

As a result, marketers can use these insights to inform their content strategy, execute more targeted email campaigns, and ultimately, provide a more relevant content experience.

Part 4

SALES ENABLEMENT

ENGAGEMENT > LEAD GENERATION > SALES ENABLEMENT > SUCCESS

A well-optimized content experience allows organizations to satisfy the entire buyer journey.

When you hear the word "content" in a business context, you probably automatically associate it with "marketing". This is a fair association — after all, much of the information regarding content experiences in this eBook has been presented through a marketing lens. In reality, however, content no longer lives exclusively in the marketer's domain. Content is the lifeblood of your entire organization.

Content certainly starts with marketing, playing important roles in generating awareness, engagement, and of course, leads. But this is only the start of the buyer journey.

LEVERAGING CONTENT ACROSS YOUR ENTIRE ORGANIZATION
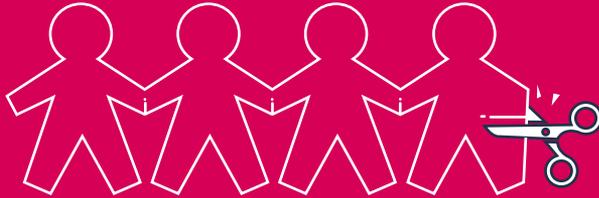
As a lead converts to an opportunity and enters the sales realm, content can (and should) be leveraged by sales teams to build relationships, handle objections, and target key accounts. Providing content for sales enablement is a powerful way to educate and nurture potential customers, clarify value proposition, and ultimately, expedite the sales cycle.

Content also plays an equally important role once the prospect has converted into a customer. Your customer support or success team can (and should) leverage content to coach and empower your customers. Building a knowledge base or resource center with product-centric content improves customer marketing effectiveness by allowing the nurturing process to be continued even further. Filling your knowledge base with bottom-of-the-funnel content that enables customer self-service will increase your success team's productivity and, more importantly, improve your customer retention rates.

SMARKETING AND BEYOND

A healthy relationship between Sales and Marketing is vital to any B2B organization's success. One of the best ways to nurture and strengthen this "SMarketing" relationship is through content. Sales can provide valuable insights that can fuel Marketing's content strategy, and Marketing (as the central source of content creation) can provide content that Sales can tailor and leverage to help them close deals.

This can happen through a variety of use cases, including:

Building a content library for sales enablement

Arming your sales team with content — that is, creating middle and bottom of the funnel content specifically made for your sales team's usage — is key to educating prospects and expediting the sales cycle.

However, creating content is only half the battle. In order to truly enable your sales team, it's imperative to centralize the content and make it easily available to them to use and send to opportunities and prospects. This centralization and management is otherwise known as building a content library for sales enablement.

PERSONALIZED CTAs CONVERT

42%

BETTER THAN GENERIC CTAS

Providing a tailored content experience

Personalization has a massive impact on marketing conversion rates — personalized CTAs have been proven to convert up to 42% better than generic CTAs. As such, it only makes sense to provide a highly tailored content experience, especially when you understand exactly who you're selling to. Salespeople should be providing the most relevant content in a highly targeted content experience whenever possible.

Providing a highly personalized content experience can be a lot easier said than done, however. In a recent study by Econsultancy and Monetate, the most commonly cited barrier to adapting personalization was IT roadblocks (47%).

Account-based marketing

Account-based marketing (ABM) is a strategic approach in which organizations consider and communicate with a defined universe of target accounts, each as markets of one. Similar to providing a tailored content experience, ABM requires a high-degree of personalization in order to be successful at reaching and communicating with key accounts.

The sophisticated personalization that's required to execute ABM highlights the difficulty in scaling such tactics using legacy technology. Most content management systems simply aren't equipped to provide the experiences that are necessary to satisfy the entire buying journey.

Which brings us to our final chapter....

TECHNOLOGY AND TOOLS FOR CONTENT EXPERIENCE MANAGEMENT
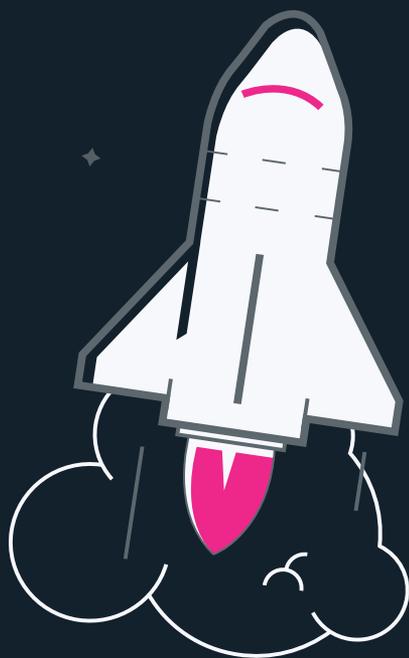
SORRY,

BUT YOUR **CMS**

WON'T CUT IT.

By now, you probably have a good understanding as to why you should be focusing on providing a remarkable content experience, as well as the building blocks that you need to acquire to build it. You know it's in your best interest to build a content experience, but what tools and technologies are actually required to build one?

I hate to be the one to break it to you, but if you want to build a truly remarkable content experience — one that allows for you to properly manage content, build an engagement path, generate leads, and leverage content across your entire organization — your current content management system (CMS) probably won't cut it.

A traditional CMS is designed for building static web pages. Despite the number of plugins that are available to encourage engagement and lead generation (we mentioned a few in this eBook), it can be difficult to fudge together and manage your content experience when you've built it from the same blueprint as Frankenstein's monster.

In addition to aggregating and managing large quantities of content, as well as allowing your content to be leveraged from all corners of your organization, the solution you choose to build your content experience needs to be able to:

Provide a responsive experience

If your content experience isn't accommodating different screen sizes, you're in trouble. Thanks to Google's Mobi-legeddon update and the fact that the majority of content is consumed on mobile, you risk creating more leaks in your content experience if your technology does not facilitate responsive design.

Seamlessly integrate with the rest of your technology stack

Modern B2B organizations understand the value of having the right technology, and more importantly, the value of having technology that seamlessly integrates with the rest of their technology stack. The results of having a disjointed martech stack can be dire — after all, if your content leads aren't properly feeding into your marketing automation platform, you'll not only miss opportunities, but will also lack accurate insight into your content marketing and lead gen performance.

Eliminate IT barriers

It's difficult to separate IT from your organization's technology; however, IT barriers are all too often the cause of massive productivity issues. Technology that inhibits a marketer or salesperson's ability to perform nimbly and to the best of their ability is almost contradictory. It's important to seek software solutions that empower your employees (especially for non-tech departments such as Sales and Marketing).

CONCLUSION

ENGAGEMENT | LEAD GENERATION | SALES ENABLEMENT | **SUCCESS**
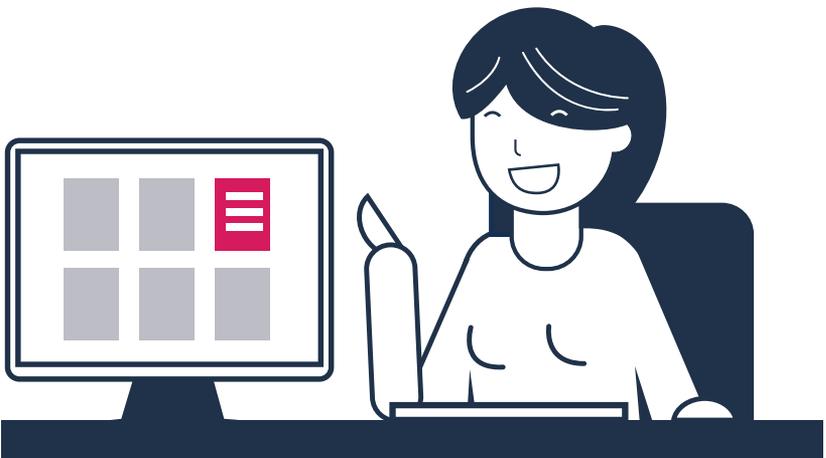
The concept of a content experience isn't new, but B2B organizations — particularly, marketers — haven't necessarily been putting forward the amount of resources required to properly optimize their content experiences. Perhaps it's because the focus of much of our recent content marketing lexicon has been on creation, distribution, and insights. Or, maybe it's because we have been limited by the technology that's available to manage content.

Whether you're leveraging content for marketing, sales, or success, your goal should always be to provide value to your desired end-user. Your content's value shouldn't be limited by the experience in which it lives — the experience is an integral part of the content marketing process, and, like any environment, can have a profound impact on your end-user's behavior and, ultimately, your content's performance.

Allow your content to reach its full potential by building a remarkable content experience.
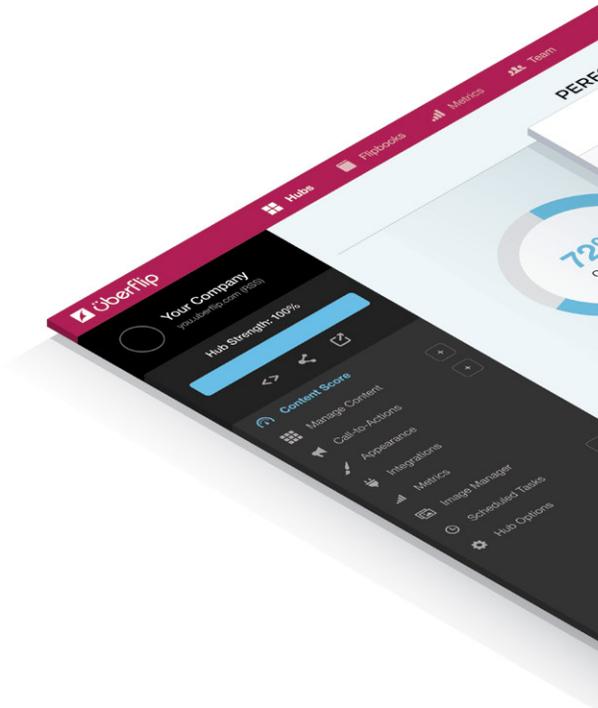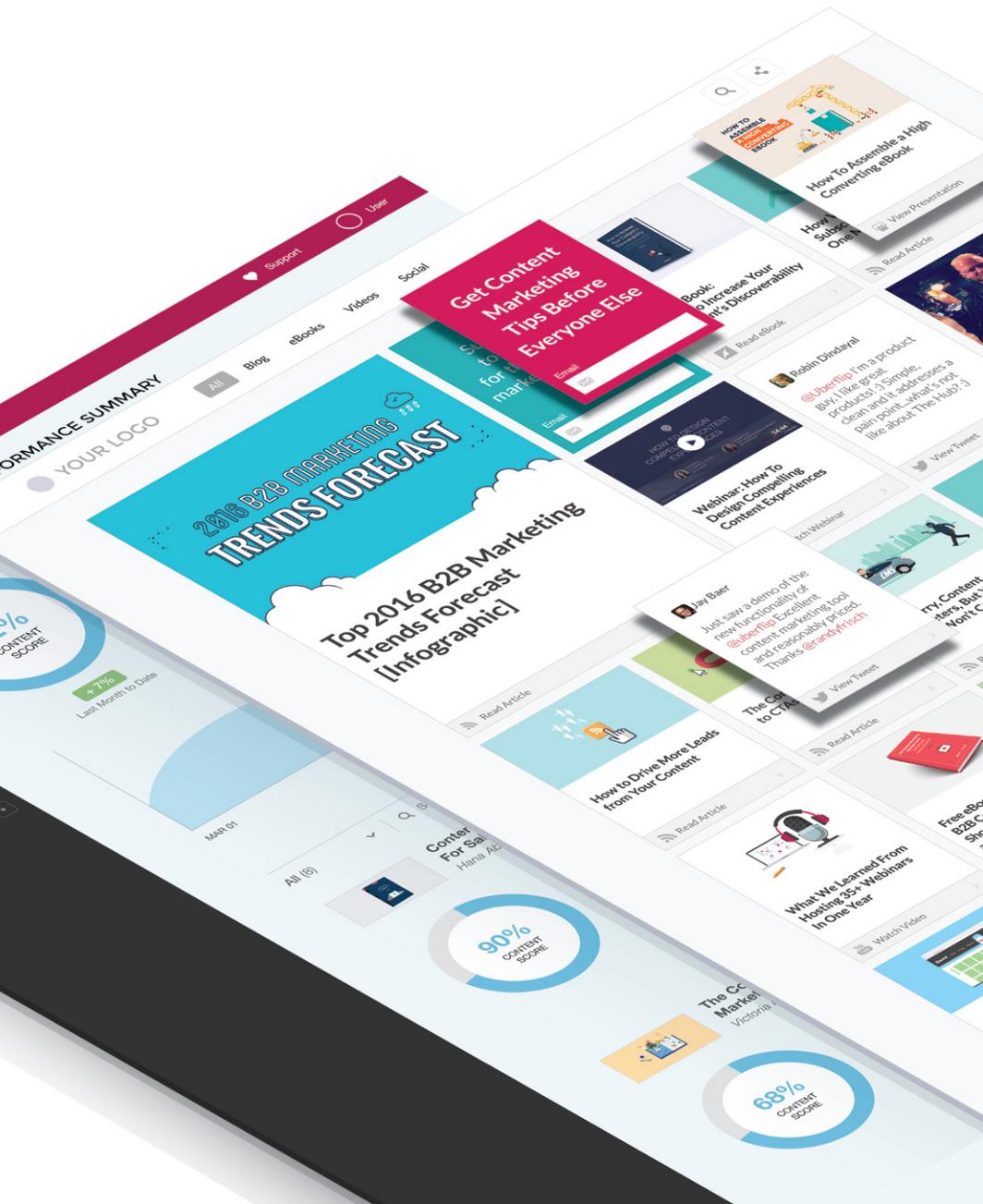
PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

YOUR LOGO

All

Blog   eBooks   Videos   Social

Support   User

CONTENT SCORE

+7%
Last Month to Date

2016 B2B MARKETING TRENDS FORECAST

Top 2016 B2B Marketing Trends Forecast [Infographic]

Read Article

Get Content Marketing Tips Before Everyone Else

Email

Email

eBook: How to Increase Your Content's Discoverability

Read eBook

How To Assemble a High Converting eBook

View Presentation

How To Subscribe One E...

Read Article

Robin Dindayal
@Uberflip I'm a product guy I like great products! ;-) Simple, clean and it addresses a pain point...what is not like about The Hub? :)

View Tweet

Webinar: How To Design Compelling Content Experiences

Watch Webinar

Jay Baer
Just saw a demo of the new functionality of @Uberflip Excellent content marketing tool and reasonably priced. Thanks @randyfrisch

View Tweet

ny Content ters, But... Not C...

The Co... to CTA...

Read Article

How to Drive More Leads from Your Content

Read Article

MAR 01

All (6)

Conter For Sa
Hana Al

90%
CONTENT SCORE

Free eBo B2B Mar Sh...

What We Learned From Hosting 35+ Webinars In One Year

Watch Video

The Co... Market
Victoria

68%
CONTENT SCORE