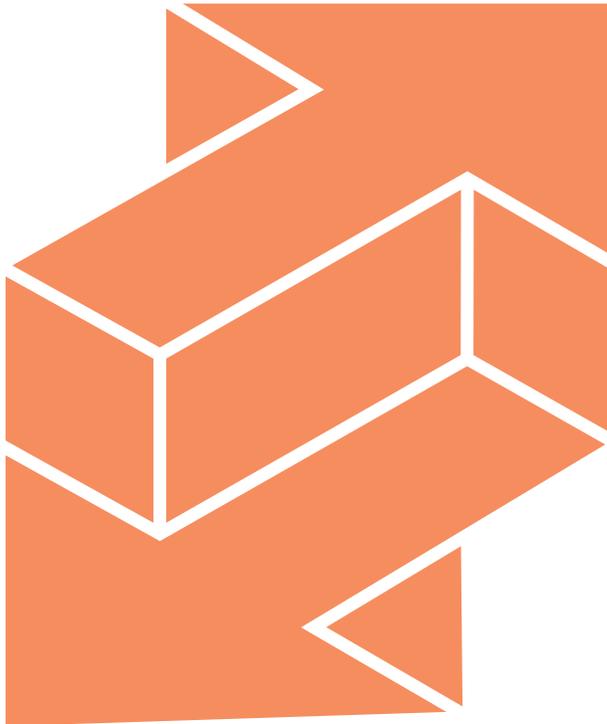


# **Content 2 Customer (C2C)**

## **3 Strategies for Content in a Multi-Channel World**

**White Paper for Netline Corporation**

# THE BACKGROUND



In April 1999, at the height of the dot-com bubble and a year before the bubble burst, *Advertising Age* published an article entitled “Multiple Sales Channels Bloom and Marketers Race to Keep Up.”

In the article, Bob Wientzen, then president and CEO of the Direct Marketing Association noted a “fundamental shift in global commerce” and said the following:

Not too long ago manufacturers made things. Wholesalers sold those things to retailers, who sold those goods in their stores. Meanwhile, catalogers and other direct marketers did their thing, often in obscurity. And never the twain shall meet—or that’s the way it used to be.

The article went on to detail how the Internet was changing the way marketers reached buyers by providing direct access, supplementing—and in many cases bypassing—traditional marketing channels in what one CEO described as “direct marketing on steroids.”

Suddenly every marketer was extolling the power of the Internet to reach new buyers and increase return on marketing investment (ROMI).

The days of multi-channel marketing had arrived.

# THE INTERNET IS THE BEST THING TO HAPPEN TO MARKETING SINCE...WAIT.

In 2008, marketing professors from Columbia University, Duke University and Dartmouth College published a study of four years worth of data on the channel migration habits of Internet buyers in the *Journal of Marketing Research*. The article, which has been frequently cited by other researchers, found among its conclusions that there were “limited loyalty effects for purchases made on the Internet.”

They posited that “migration to the Internet lowers switching costs, making it easier to compare products across firms.” What’s more, they asserted that “Internet interactions decrease the likelihood that users interact with people on the telephone” and that the “attendant reduction in personal service could lead to lower loyalty.”

The idea that people “surf the web” posed a problem for marketers. Sure, the Internet gave them new ways to reach buyers. But it also gave buyers an increasingly ready means to peruse competing companies. No longer did acquisitions managers have to wait for sales reps to visit or for catalogs to arrive in the mail. The only thing that stood between your brand and your competitor’s was the click of a mouse.



# CONTENT REALLY IS KING

So with buyers increasingly less likely to remain loyal to brands, owing to access to so many choices, what's a marketer to do? How can you, as a B2B executive, stay competitive when a few keystrokes can reveal a SERP with dozens of choices for the very product or service that you're trying to promote?

The solution to your problem is one simple word: content.

In a white paper distributed by the Chief Marketing Office Council entitled "Authority Leadership Marketing: Making Content the Cornerstone of Customer Engagement and Relevance," GlobalFluency made the case for adopting a content-driven strategy:

"In today's multi-channel, search-oriented media landscape, corporate buyers, specifiers, and influencers tend to tune out traditional marketing communications. They spend more time conducting independent research on the web and obtaining information and advice from peers and other trusted third-party sources."

What's more, they said, "Most companies in complex, multi-channel markets...need to assume thought leadership positions and provide meaningful insights, perspectives, and commentary on market needs, problems, issues, trends, and requirements."

In short, **content marketing is the future.**

In a survey of more than 1,400 marketers by the Content Marketing Institute and MarketingProfs, conducted in August 2012, fully 91% of respondents said that they use content marketing, with 55% using 10 or more tactics.

B2B marketers are spending an average of 33% of their marketing budgets on content marketing, up from 26% last year. Some 54% say they plan to increase spending on content marketing next year. (A similar study by sponsored by IDG Enterprise and released by Optify found that 84% of responders planned to increase their content budgets over the next year.)

While there were differences between the rankings of individual content strategies among the surveys we analyzed, there was nevertheless general agreement as to their effectiveness for B2B marketing.

Three strategies stand out.

- ⚙️ Infographics
- ⚙️ Text (includes emails, white papers, case studies, blogs, etc.)
- ⚙️ Video

*Wait a minute, you may be wondering. Why isn't social media on that list?*

We've chosen the above strategies because the current marketplace for information about content marketing is saturated with information about social media. We want to provide you with information that may not be as readily available, information that you may not already know.

With that in mind, let's begin.

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# Strategy #1: Get Their Attention.

Would it surprise you to know that the infographic is the fastest-growing content marketing strategy for B2B companies?

The IDG Enterprise survey revealed that 43% of marketers rated it as a very effective marketing tool compared with just 28% last year, and the trend is only expected to continue upward.

Why is this?

It starts with what marketers consider the three most important elements of effective content: engaging and compelling storytelling, originality and customized content. Few forms of content are as inherently able to do all three as a well-executed infographic. And execution really is key. For an infographic to be successful, it absolutely must be executed well.

The components of a well-executed infographic are:

-  **It has *both* information *and* graphics.** Check out the site [visual.ly](http://visual.ly) and you will see a lot of fine infographics. But you will also see examples of infographics that contain a lot of information on a pretty background or, conversely, a fancy background with little information. A successful infographic needs both to tell an effective story.
-  **It is customer-centric, not company-centric.** Of course you want an infographic that reflects well on your company. However, an infographic is not so much about telling people how great your company is as it is about providing them with information that surprises them, that resonates with them, that makes them want to find out more about you—and ultimately to share the infographic with their colleagues.
-  **It is easily shared.** Make sure that the marketing department coordinates with the IT department to ensure that the infographic can be “liked”, tweeted, Stumbled, shared on Tumblr, pinned on Pinterest, and embedded into blogs (extra points for a one-click JavaScript button).

Infographics represent a growing and exciting trend for B2B marketers. For examples of successful infographics, check out [this one by Cloud Industry News](#), [this one by Vision Mobile](#) and [this one by unbounce](#).

# Strategy #2: Get Them To Think.

According to the IDG survey, five of the seven content formats that B2B marketers considered most effective were text-based. The use of case studies topped the list, followed by white papers/ebooks, online articles, e-newsletters, blogs and press releases.

In the CMI/MarketingProfs survey, case studies also topped the list among B2B *recipients* as the type of content they had the most confidence in, with 64% rating them “effective” or “very effective.” Blogs came in at 59%, e-newsletters at 58%, and research reports and white papers both scored 57%. Ebooks ranked sixth among text-based content at 55%, and online articles garnered 53%.

There is much that could be said about each of these content types, so while there isn’t space here to cover them all, we will leave you with a few important points.

-  According to a 2011 survey by TechValidate, case studies are the *most effective and the least expensive* forms of content marketing for B2B companies.
-  The same study revealed that *content by third-party analysts ranked higher* in terms of being “extremely effective” or “very effective” than content produced in-house.
-  According to a July 2012 study of 932 million emails by Adestra, B2B emails with subject lines of *20 characters or 90-plus characters had significantly higher click-to-open-rates (CTOR)* than those that were medium length—between 21 and 89 characters. In other words, it’s better to either keep subject lines short or make them long.
-  The same study found that shorter subject lines (i.e., 20 characters) were better when usability was an issue and that longer subject lines were better when there were multiple benefits that needed explanation.
-  The study also found that subject lines containing monetary symbols, monetary phrases such as “turnover”, “revenue” and “profit” achieved above average CTOR results, but that “B2B”, “business” and “industry” performed poorly.

# Strategy #3: Get Them To Click ‘Play’.

When done right, video is another medium that possesses the three components B2B marketers want—engaging storytelling, originality and customized content. And marketers are increasingly turning to video as a means of brand promotion. In both surveys—the one by IDG and the one by CMI/Marketing-Pros—more than 60% of B2B marketers said they use video as a content marketing strategy.

Yet with 72 hours of video uploaded to YouTube every single minute, it’s all too easy to get lost in the quest for views.

Nevertheless, some B2B companies have achieved incredible success with their YouTube channels. Intel, for example, has nearly 40,000 subscribers and approximately 45 million views. Cisco’s channel has more than 25,000 subscribers and 4.2 million views. And IBM has more than 13,000 subscribers and 5.6 million views.

So what are these companies doing right?

In order to be successful, a B2B video needs three things.

-  **They’re based on objectives.** Whether the objective is to increase brand awareness, establish authority, build brand loyalty or attract new business, it’s critical to establish it before the camera rolls. Having clear objectives for video marketing will not only determine the type of video produced (i.e., comical, moving, informative, etc.), it will also—as with any marketing effort—enable you to track results.
-  **They solve problems.** Videos aren’t commercials. At least not in the strict sense of the word. The most successful B2B videos consider the needs of the end users and answer questions—perhaps even questions they didn’t know they had. They surprise and inform at the same time. Check out this [video by Intel for their Ultrabook for Business](#).
-  **They’re imaginative.** Viral B2B videos find a creative way to tell a story. Sure, your audience is other businesses. But businesses are made up of people, and people like to be engaged and entertained. To promote itself as a leader in shipping for businesses, for example, UPS made a brief video for its YouTube channel called “[UPS Drivers Rock!](#)” The video not only demonstrates how the company satisfies its business customers, it also reflects well on the company by showing its appreciation for its employees.

As with any content strategy, marketers need to make sure that videos are promoted. YouTube is just one of many Internet channels available for posting videos. In addition, marketers need to coordinate with IT to make sure that the videos are searchable through titles, descriptions, tags and transcripts.

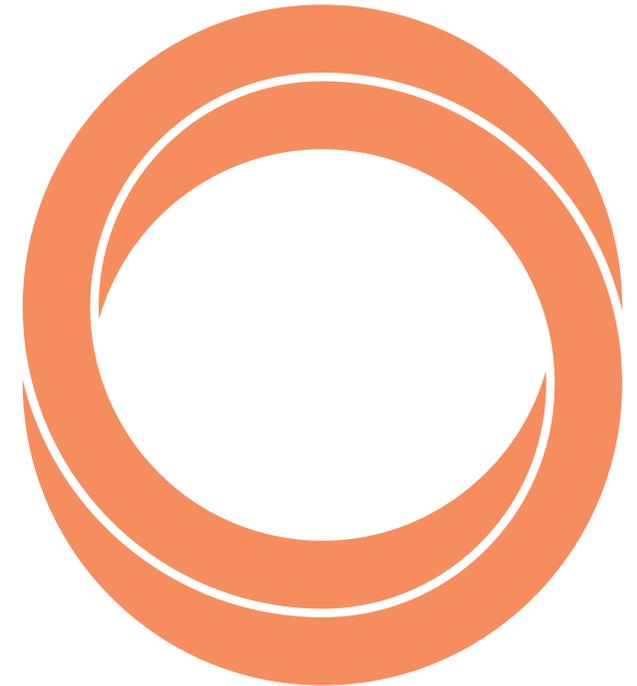
# Imagine All The People: Creating Viral Content

You don't need research to tell you that peer-to-peer sharing is vastly more valuable than any other B2B marketing strategy. When one executive sends something to another—or better still, his entire list of contacts—and says, “I've done business with Company X; you should look at this,” it carries far more weight than if it had come straight from a marketer.

In March 2012, marketing professors Jonah Berger and Katherine L. Milkman of the Wharton School published an article entitled “What Makes Online Content Viral?” in the *AMA's Journal of Marketing Research*. Within the article are the findings of the first-ever psychological study aimed at developing an understanding of what factors cause certain types of content to be shared more than others.

In other words, why do some videos, tweets, Facebook pages, blog posts and articles go viral—reaching thousands or even millions of viewers—while others languish in obscurity forever?

Berger and Milkman conducted a comprehensive survey of 7,000 *New York Times* articles to see if they could determine why certain articles made the “most e-mailed list.” Then they did a controlled study to test their results. Their investigation focused on whether the valence of a particular piece of content (i.e., whether it was positive or negative) and the emotions it evoked contributed to whether it was shared more frequently.



They found that, overall, positive articles are more likely to be shared than negative ones. But there's more. They conclude:

“[The]relationship between emotion and virality is more complex than valence alone and...arousal drives social transmission. Consistent with our theorizing, online content that evoked high-arousal emotions was more viral, regardless of whether those emotions were of a positive (i.e., awe) or negative (i.e., anger or anxiety) nature. Online content that evoked more of a deactivation emotion (i.e., sadness), however, was actually less likely to be viral.”

People share information for a variety of reasons: to be helpful, to appear knowledgeable, to generate reciprocity. But what's clear from this study is that it's the *kind of information* they share that is significant.

Steve Jobs was a product genius, but he was also a genius at marketing his company and he wasn't afraid to push the boundaries. The famous [“1984” commercial for the Apple Macintosh](#)—which is nothing if not anxiety-producing—is still considered one of the greatest commercials ever made. And his “Think Different” campaign is truly awe-inspiring.

What this study tells us is that, as B2B marketers, we shouldn't be afraid to push boundaries of our own if that's what it takes to make our case, to tell our story, to open new doors to business.

**“online content that evoked high-arousal emotions was more viral, regardless of whether those emotions were of a positive (i.e., awe) or negative (i.e., anger or anxiety) nature”**

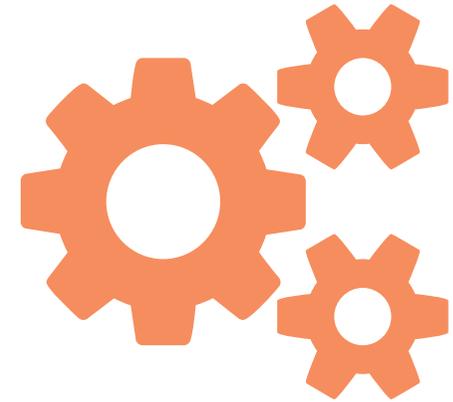
# A Final Word: Distributing Content Through Multiple Channels

So you have invested time and resources into developing compelling content, content with the potential to go viral. Now what?

Content distribution is both an art and a science. It's an art because it's vital to know when and where to distribute the content; it's a science because results must be backed up with metrics and data.

Your content marketing plan will involve distribution across multiple channels. The channels you choose will be based on research into where your target business audience is likely to receive content. The ideal channels include:

- ⚙ Websites
- ⚙ Expert blogs
- ⚙ Newsletters
- ⚙ Social media outlets
- ⚙ Mobile apps
- ⚙ RSS feeds



By distributing content across these many channels, you increase the likelihood of reaching contextually relevant users who will download your content. A user who has downloaded your content is then a lead for your business. (Hint: Adding custom questions to content download forms will help you to identify the most viable leads.)

Finally, a successful content marketing strategy will also include reporting and analysis, or metrics, for each piece of content and for each channel. This will help you to determine what types of content generate the most leads and will allow you to refine your future content marketing strategy.

# Appendix: Resources

Adestra, "[Subject Line Analysis Report.](#)"

Berger, Jonah and Katherine L. Milkman, "[What Makes Content Go Viral?](#)" (*Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 49, April 2012, 192-2050)

Chief Marketing Officer Council "[Internet Marketing: Facts-Stats.](#)"

Content Marketing Institute and MarketingProfs, "[B2B Content Marketing: 2013 Benchmarks, Budgets and Trends – North America](#)"

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IDG Enterprise for Optify, "[B2B Content Marketing Trends – 2012 Survey Results.](#)"

TechValidate, "[2011 State of B2B Content Marketing Survey Results.](#)"

Valentini, Sara, Elisa Montaguti, & Scott A. Neslin, "[Decision Process Evolution in Customer Channel Choice.](#)" (*Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 75, November 2011, 72-86)