

Episode 24

The Importance of Content Marketing for your Small Business

Janice Hostager: 0:04

I'm Janice Hostager. After three decades in the marketing business and many years of being an entrepreneur, I've learned a thing or two about marketing. Join me as we talk about marketing, small business and life in between. Welcome to my weekly marketing.

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When I started my first business, it was really all I could do to keep up with the client work. Truly, the thought of adding more to do each week would put me over the top. But after my website was up and running and I wasn't getting good rankings, I decided to commit to making sure I had fresh content weekly. Now this was several years ago, so things have changed since then, but back then it was really about blogging.

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Now, when I made the decision to do fresh content every week, this was not an easy decision, nor was it easy to do. It was a thing that I ended up doing every Wednesday night late at night when my kids were at their church events and my husband, who's a college professor, was teaching his night class. But that was really the only time I could fit it in because of just doing client work. When I had a design agency I'm not going to lie, it was a lot to do, but it paid off by bringing in business from people who I hadn't heard of, adding new business from my current customers and just being disciplined enough to do it every week. It was hard, but it was worth it.

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So you may be wondering what content marketing is? Well, content marketing is just what it sounds like. It's written or audio or video content that we produce for marketing, like this podcast. It can be long form or short form content that we produce for social media but that's another podcast that we'll talk about that.

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But content marketing is important for several reasons. First of all, it builds brand awareness. I had a blog article picked up by Altop, which is a content aggregator, and I had many calls from all over the US from one piece of content that was picked up. So definitely it's a way to build awareness about your company or about your product or service. It also provides help for

people who are looking for answers to questions through their Google search. If your content is SEO optimized, it will drive search traffic to your website.

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Content marketing also establishes credibility for you as a thought leader or someone who's just qualified and knows what you're talking about. It's difficult to tell these days when you just go to someone's website whether or not they really are who they say they are. It makes it hard to know who to trust. If you've got content out there, at least people can read through it or listen to it or watch a video, and they can tell whether or not you're an expert, it's easy to tell when somebody knows what they're talking about. It also engages and educates your audience, which can lead to a sale. People may be aware of a symptom to a problem, but not aware of the cause of the problem.

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For example, I like to run not far, I just do 5Ks, but recently I've had to heal pain and pain when I get up in the morning, just on the bottom of my feet. I had no idea what this was, and so I went to Google Dr Google and typed in foot pain in the morning, and immediately plantar fasciitis popped up. Although I'd heard of it, I knew nothing about it. So I did a ton of research online and found a product on Amazon that has really helped me, and I found this about this product in an article that I watched, and there was a video on the page too.

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So in that situation I was able to go from awareness to consideration, to compare and purchase, all in about 2 hours, and I moved from symptom aware, because I knew I had pain, to problem aware, which was plantar fasciitis, to product aware, which was this sort of device that I can put on my feet when we're at night. And all of this happened because of content.

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So content can also help you retain followers. It isn't just for attracting new customers, it's also valuable for retaining the ones you already have. Regularly sharing helpful content with your current customers can keep them engaged and loyal to your brand. We have a realtor that still mails us a newsletter with helpful tips on home maintenance. It's great, since we're still in touch and we used them to buy one house and sell another one a few years ago. But we wouldn't have probably used them again had they not stayed in touch with us through this newsletter. So that's another great example of mailed content. So it's a little different than a blog or a YouTube video.

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So another good reason to create content is that it helps you build your list, your email list. Your email list is the single most important thing that you can grow as a business. There's a saying in marketing that goes like this: the money is in the list. Your email list will help you build your business faster than anything else, and you can use your blog as a step to bring people into your funnel and create a nurture campaign, which is to say, once you have their contact

information, you can create an email campaign and automation that will move emails, send out sequence of emails on a regular basis and that sequence will end with an offer to buy a product.

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To do that, I recommend creating deeper content and embedding that in your blog or your podcast or your video, and that deeper content requires a name and an email address to access it. So you can do that with what I call a content upgrade, or basically a deep dive into the topic that your content is about. So this download can be for something such as an additional worksheet, a checklist, a cheat sheet or a deeper training video, so people who are truly interested in your content can learn more about it and get on your email list at the same time.

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So the question that's usually on everybody's mind is what do I write about? What kind of content do I post? So what I do is I recommend that you start out by going to a whiteboard or a sheet of paper and drawing a circle in the center of the page and putting there your main focus. So, for example, let's say you're a health coach, put that in the middle and then draw rays around radiating from the circle and on each of those lines, add something that's part of what your business is about. So as a health coach, you might include vitamins and supplements and exercise, food and diets and maybe self-care, and those become what we call content pillars. Those are the categories that your products are about and those are the categories that people look to you for advice about. So under those categories, then just brainstorm some ideas.

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So for food and diets, for example, you may do a topic, you may just have recipes and how to eat healthy, what foods to include in your diet, what superfoods and so on. So you can kind of brainstorm with these subcategories, just based on whatever it is that your customer is most interested in. This is something that I would also recommend that you could use ChatGPT for. Just get ideas about what people are looking for and then you can also, once you get that list from ChatGPT, or if you brainstorm it, then I would use a tool such as Ubersuggest or Moz.com. Both have a free version and then see what people are using Google to look for. So that gives you an idea about what it is that people are searching for online. So you don't go off on a tangent and write about something that nobody's really looking for. So once you get that figured out, then it makes it a whole lot easier to figure out what kind of content to create for your customer. In terms of types of content.

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First of all, really understand your target audience and especially your ideal customer. I have more information on this in a free download that I have and I'll put the link in the show notes. But look not only at the subject matter, but how they like to consume content. Are they readers? Maybe a blog would work best, or do they listen to podcasts? Or do they prefer to watch videos, or maybe it's even something completely different, like infographics. After that, create content that resonates with them and write or talk like you're talking to your best ideal customer. So it comes across as being very natural and it resonates with them. So think about what you'll do realistically. If you don't like to be on camera, don't do videos. My thought was I can talk, so I

can just do a podcast. That shouldn't be that hard. Just ask my teachers back in school. They'll tell you how much I like to talk and I love talking to other entrepreneurs about their business. I also know that my ideal customer listens to podcasts, so for me, a podcast was a no-brainer. I also publish a transcript on my podcast show notes page, which Google treats like a regular web page, so it crawls it and gets that information. Google can't really listen to a podcast, but they can crawl that information on my page, so I have the benefit of gaining search traffic as well. Plus, fresh content is something that Google likes to see, but we'll talk more about that in a minute.

9:02

For a long time, I did just write written content and if that makes more sense for you and your ideal customer, for sure do it. If it's not something that you like to do or you're good at, you're not going to want to do it on a regular basis.

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So how often should you publish content? I would say as often as you can. I would recommend doing it at least weekly, on the same day each week for the blog content. After a while, your audience will start to expect it on a certain day. Then, after you write it, I would send a link to your email list and let them know that you have new content available, and it's also a great reason to reach out to them so that your customer keeps you top of mind. Okay, so I just touched on SEO a minute ago, but SEO is search engine optimization and keep in mind that anything you do on your website or on a blog post is written for two sets of people. First of all, it's your customers and second of all, it's the search engines. So there's a lot here, so I'll make this as brief as possible.

10:05

Moz.com also offers a limited free keyword search tool that you can use too, and so when I say keyword, there's also something called a long tail keyword, which is another way to say a phrase, since we don't usually search for one word, for example, we don't go to Google and search just for like pickleball, because the answer would be way too broad. It's usually a phrase such as how to improve my pickleball skills, or something like that. So that's called a long tail keyword, and those are the things you want to be searching for when you do your research.

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You should approach keywords like this too. Don't go too broad, but focus on exactly what your article or video is about, which should also be what your ideal customer is looking for. If you post a blog or have a podcast with a show notes page on your website, just like I talked about a minute ago, make sure your keywords are in the meta description, the meta title, your page title, your subheads and throughout your text in a natural way. Don't keyword stuff in an unnatural way. Google has learned to pick up on this and will downrank you for that. Just keep the flow in the writing natural and throw it in places with your keyword and your key phrases. Throw them in in places that make sense.

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If you produce your content in video format, youtube is owned by Google and because of that, hosting the video on YouTube will give you the biggest SEO bang for your buck. Make sure your keywords are used in the video's title and in the description of the video on YouTube as well. You probably know that Google is the biggest search engine, but YouTube is the second biggest search engine, with more than 3 billion searches per month, so it's important to have your video SEO optimized too. On your content pages. Pay attention to your loading speed by keeping your image size as small as possible and, if you have a video, embed the link to YouTube or wherever your video is hosted, instead of uploading the video directly to your website. That will help your loading speed too.

12:02

So how do you measure if your content is really successful or not? Sometimes it could be hard to know what content will resonate with your audience. So I would recommend really paying attention to your analytics. Pay attention when you post it to social media, how many likes it receives and how many shares, and then look at your email stats to see how many people click on your link to read it, watch it or listen to it or whatever. That's the click through rate or the CTR on your email service provider analytics. On your Google analytics, see how many people visited your page and how long they stayed on the page, sometimes no matter how well it ranks on Moz. So I'm talking about your keyword. The topic isn't quite right for your ideal customer. Only your analytics will be able to tell you that.

12:47

Okay, so you've done all the really hard work. You've written your blog, you've recorded your video or podcast. Then what do you do? Well, it's time to distribute it and repurpose it. Don't let your hard work sit in the dark. Get it out there. As Tony Robbins says, repetition is the mother of skill. When we're learning something, it's important for people to see it multiple times for it to sink in. In marketing, we have a principle called the rule of seven. The rule of seven states that a prospect or a customer, potential customer, needs to be touched at least seven times before they will act on a call to action. This is true for your content as well. Splitting a blog post apart into smaller chunks for social media is a great way to teach this information and also so people can acknowledge you as a thought leader. You can share it on social media. As I said, you can create YouTube scripts from a blog post. You can create a slide share presentation or turn it into a talk at a workshop. You can create it and turn things into infographics or eBooks, or pull out quotes for social media or share it on Reddit, medium or LinkedIn. Whatever you do, once you've created it, get it out there and share it.

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Repurposing your existing content isn't meant to be an alternative to creating new content, but it's a way to get your content out to the audience who really needs to hear it. You can continue to create new content while, at the same time, giving new life to your existing high quality pieces and provide your audience with relevant, helpful information.

14:25

So today we went through a lot of information about content marketing. So what do you think? Are you ready to get out there and create, I believe, a new friend? I know you can do it. If you have any questions about today's episode, you can send me a DM on Instagram. I'm at @Janicehostagermarketing, or you can email me at hello@myweeklymarketing.com. You can also visit my show notes page at myweeklymarketing.com/24.

I am so glad you're able to join me today. I'll see you next time. Bye for now. I'll see you next time.