



A KUNO CREATIVE EBOOK

THE ROI

of CONTENT
MARKETING



WHY YOU SHOULD READ THIS GUIDE

You know you need killer content. But how do you justify asking your CEO, CMO and CFO for a bigger content budget? How do you determine which content works and which doesn't? In the guide that follows, we'll talk about content marketing's return on investment (ROI), with specific information on defining and measuring ROI, so you can speak confidently about your content campaigns' successes at your next marketing budget meeting.

INTRODUCTION

When we think of ROI, we think in terms of hard numbers. Your CEO, CFO and CMO might want to know how your content marketing efforts weigh-in in terms of costs, profit, revenue and pipeline growth, but because content marketing offers so many "soft" benefits, it can be difficult to communicate content ROI to the C-suite.



The “Soft” Benefits of Content Marketing

The benefits of a content operation have been widely talked about and include advantages such as:



Fueling Trust



Increasing Engagement



Customer Loyalty



Building Relationships



Search Engine Visibility

While you may know deep down that creating great content on a consistent basis pays dividends, it's useful to be able to communicate that information in ways others within your organization will understand.

So where should we start?



What are the Best Metrics *for* Measuring the Success *of* Content?

It's actually pretty simple: the best metrics are the ones that measure whatever it is you're trying to accomplish. So let's start there.

As a marketer, what do you want your content to do?

The first answers that come to mind might be things like, "Increase brand awareness" or "Get more Facebook likes." Those things are great, but to truly communicate the ROI of content to others at your company, you need to think beyond the marketing jargon. How does stronger branding translate into revenue? What effect do your Facebook fans have on your bottom line?

When you pick metrics, make sure they're true indicators of business growth for your specific company. How does your content drive sales, save costs or retain customers? Does it improve lead quality or quantity? Does it shorten the sales cycle or increase brand awareness?



For each “soft” benefit content marketing offers, there are specific key performance indicators (KPIs) you can measure to prove the impact of the benefit.

If your goal is... brand awareness

...measure KPIs like:

- Growth in website traffic
- Number of pages viewed per visit

If your goal is... customer loyalty or increasing engagement

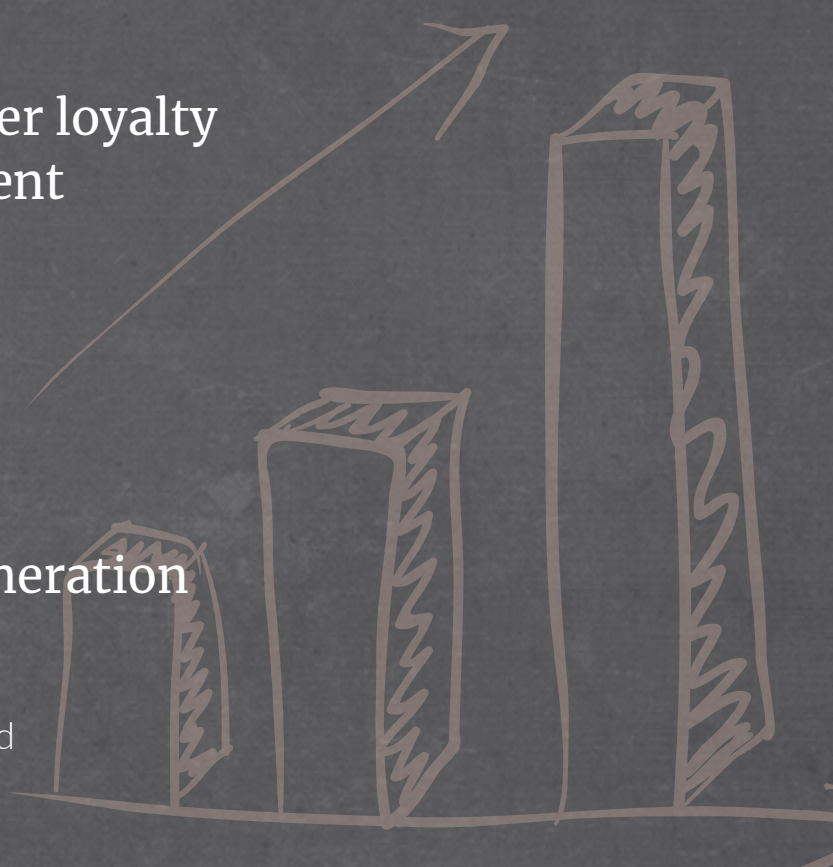
...measure KPIs like:

- Return visits to your website
- Blog and email subscribers

If your goal is... lead generation

...measure KPIs like:

- Number of new leads generated
- Conversions on website forms

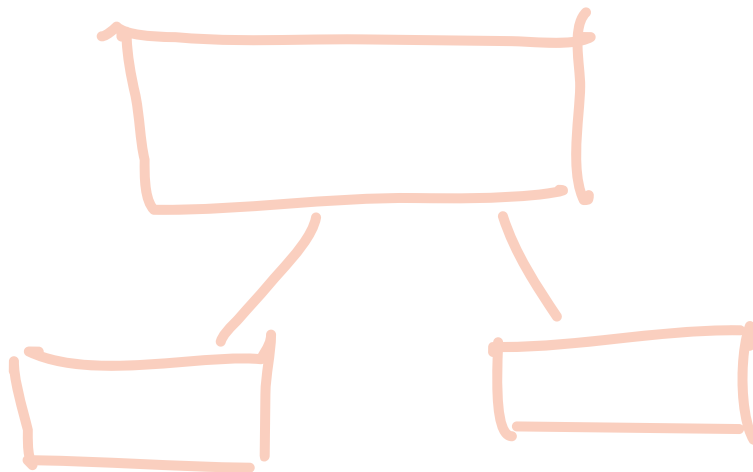




Using Attribution Models to Measure the ROI *of* Content Marketing

According to Google Analytics, an attribution model is “the rule or set of rules that determines how credit for sales and conversions is assigned to touch points in conversion paths.”

*If that sounds like jargon to you,
let’s look at it in the context of
a real-life situation.*

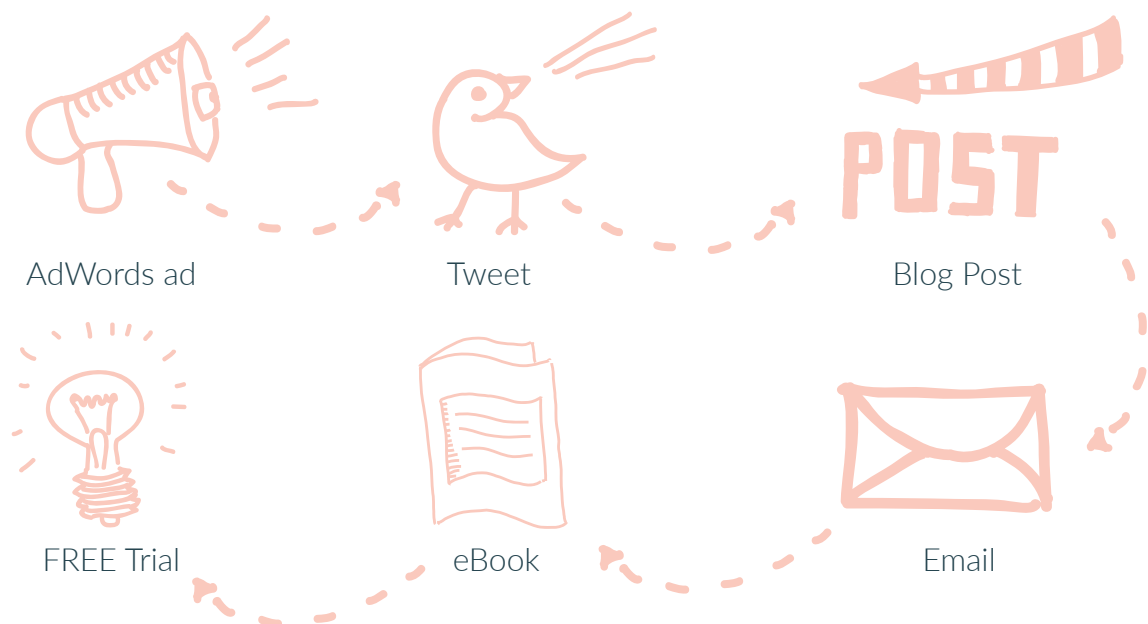




Example:

A buyer comes to your website for the first time after doing a Google search for “applicant tracking software,” and then clicking on an AdWords ad you placed. Three days later, that same buyer comes to your site through a Tweet you posted with a link to your latest blog post, “5 Hiring Horror Stories.” The same day, she visits your site again after receiving an email with a link to your “Applicant Tracking Software Buyer’s Guide” eBook and clicking on it. A day later, she returns to your site again to sign up for a free trial of your software and, a month later, becomes a customer.

To recap, the different touch points involved in converting this buyer were:





So, how do you gauge the success of these individual pieces of content?

That depends on your attribution model. Let's look at a few different attribution models to see which content piece would come out on top.



FREE Trial

In the **“Last interaction”** attribution model, the free trial offer would get 100 percent of the credit for making the sale.

Who should use it?

Companies with short sales cycles and customers who don't spend much time in the consideration phase.

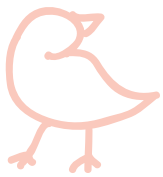


AdWords Ads

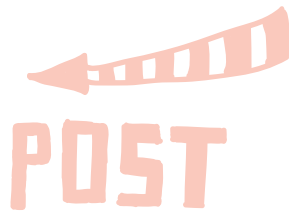
In the **“First interaction”** attribution model, the AdWords ad would receive 100 percent of the credit for the sale.

Who should use it?

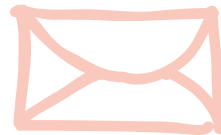
If your brand isn't well known and you need to create more initial brand awareness, this model is the way to go.



Tweet



Blog Post



Email



eBook

In the **“Linear interaction”** each touchpoint in the conversion path – paid search, Twitter, email and valuable content – would share equal credit for the sale.

Who should use it?

Companies that want to measure the success of content marketing throughout the entire sales cycle.

There are infinite possibilities with regards to attribution models, including creating custom models or creating hybrids of **“first”** and **“last”** attribution models.

For a more detailed introduction to this subject, read Google Analytics’ [“About the Attribution Models”](#).





When Your Content *Isn't* Generating Enough ROI

From our perspective, there are a few major roadblocks that stand between great content and positive ROI.

In no particular order, they are:



You're not taking *buyer personas* into account.

A recent survey conducted by ITSMA revealed that 83 percent of marketers feel their buyer personas are only being used “somewhat” effectively. Every single piece of content your brand produces should take advantage of what you've learned from buyer persona interviews. Without that element, you're in risky territory. If your content's ROI isn't where you want it to be, check to make sure you're applying buyer insights to your messaging and content creation.





You're trying to hide the fact *you're selling something.*

We all love creativity. But, as HubSpot's Shannon Johnson [recently wrote](#), "You are not Pixar. Even if your content is valuable, it's probably not what your prospects consume for fun. It's what they consume so they can be better, faster, smarter, or otherwise more efficient at their job so they can go home and then read fairy tales to unwind."

In all of this hoopla about creating amazing content, there seems to have been some miscommunication around the fact that it is still OK to be direct about the fact you're selling something. Everyone who comes to your website knows you're selling something. In ["The Other 'C' Word: What makes great content marketing great,"](#) Doug Kessler says one of the keys to creating great content is exposing your agenda. "Weak content comes across as slightly dishonest," he says, "because it's not really comfortable with its selling role. If you believe in your offer, you want people to have it. That means selling to them is not a dirty thing, it's a friendly one. Be open about your selling agenda. (It wasn't very hidden anyway.)"





You're not creating *conversion paths*.

How do you really measure the success of one piece of content? Attach it to some outcomes you'd like to see happen, and then create a pathway for that to become possible. For example, if you'd like your latest eBook to get you 100 new leads, put that eBook behind a landing page, send it to those contacts who might find it interesting, and see if 100 people fill out a form to get it. If they do, then that piece of content was successful.

A great way to approach content marketing ROI measurement is to create a campaign around a piece of content you want to promote. For each piece, you might have one or more email campaigns, PPC and social media ads, calls to action on your website and blog posts shared via earned media. For each channel, create unique landing page urls so that you can track them independently but also aggregate them under a campaign summary. Now, as you promote the campaign, measure impressions, click-throughs and conversions from each channel. This gives you both attribution metrics as well as an overall view of the effectiveness of the campaign. Fold in the cost of each part of the campaign and the number and lifetime value of the customers it generates, and you have a realistic appraisal of ROI.



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CONCLUSION

While it can be powerful to drill down into things like attribution models and landing page conversions, it's important to keep in mind content marketing is a holistic effort wherein no "one" piece of content is likely to be responsible for a sale. Just like the old saying, "There's no 'I' in TEAM," there's no single piece of content that, all on its own, is going to make or break you. The key is in the content mix, and the secret to content ROI is creating great content consistently, finding the right KPIs for your brand's business goals and measuring them over a long period of time. Then, and only then, will you have the ammo to communicate the ROI of content marketing to anyone and everyone who asks.



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