

Applying Data to Content: What Questions to Ask and Where to Find the Answers

Quality content that answers customer questions at the right time can have a significant impact on conversions and revenue, so the ROI of applying data to content can be very high.

Separating the definition of content marketing above into its main components reveals outcomes for the process:

- ✦ Creating narratives
- ✦ Creating relevant experiences
- ✦ Connecting with your buyers
- ✦ Meeting your buyers where they are

Creating narratives requires content insights:

- ✦ What messages are best suited to each stage of the customer journey?
- ✦ Is the storytelling balanced with conversion-oriented signals?
- ✦ Are benefits or features more prominent in content?
- ✦ Is the educational style appropriate to the audience and industry?
- ✦ Is the content consistent with brand qualities?

These substance-based insights are often best attained through **professional analysis**, with **new technologies** adding a machine-driven component. After all, qualitative data is still useful data, as long as the source is trusted and trustworthy.

Content marketing done well is creating narratives and experiences that connect with your buyers where they are.

Creating relevant experiences requires engagement insights:

- ✦ Which pieces of content have attracted the most attention?
- ✦ Which pieces of content have attracted the most engagement?
- ✦ Which pieces of content have prompted sustained user engagement?
- ✦ What content formats tend to attract the most attention, engagement, and sustained engagement?

Attention volume can be measured through **top-level metrics** like traffic, comments, shares, and social engagements. These metrics shouldn't be used to evaluate overall marketing performance but are useful as components of overall data.

Engagement metrics include **length of time** spent on the page and **response to conversion signals**, while sustained engagement is often measured by **how many other pages** were viewed during visits that started with the content.

Connecting with your buyers requires **buyer insights**:

- ✧ What trends are most relevant to our buyers' industries right now?
- ✧ What terms do our buyers search for?
- ✧ What topics come up most often in our buyers' social media posts?

Sources for trend data would include **volume of online discussions** about the topic by region, while **search query data** can provide information on popular search terms. **Social listening** can provide quantitative data and qualitative analysis, depending on your partner for that function.

Meeting your buyers where they are requires **buying cycle insights**:

- ✧ How much time do our buyers spend in the buying cycle before making a purchase?
 - ✧ What stage consumes the most hours for them?
- ✧ At what stage are our buyers most likely to abandon the buying cycle?
- ✧ What questions do they have throughout the buying cycle?
 - ✧ What questions do they still have near the end of the buying cycle?

This data can come from quantitative and qualitative sources. **On-site search data** can show the questions buyers have throughout the buying cycle, while **your sales team** can tell you what questions buyers still have before they complete the cycle. (Your closing process could even include 1-2 questions about how buyers perceived the cycle, including time spent and overall impression of the experience.)

And **competitive insights** should be a priority throughout the process:

- ✧ How do the messages, storytelling, style, and consistency of our content compare to our competitors' content?
- ✧ Which of our competitors' content pieces have received the most attention, engagement, and sustained engagement?
- ✧ How well does our competitors' content speak to our buyers' current concerns and industry trends?
- ✧ Do our competitors anticipate and answer buyers' questions throughout the cycle, and does their online experience encourage conversions/purchases?

Competitive insights will generally come from the same sources as content insights: **professional analysis**, with **new technologies** adding a machine-driven component. Remember that qualitative data is still useful data, as long as the source is trusted and trustworthy.

