

# Clear content marketing strategy = happy customers + happy boss

 By Leigh Andrews

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Content marketing is essential for your brand to become a thought leader, but that's impossible without a well-planned strategy in place. Here's what I learned from BlueMagnet's recent content marketing and social media training course, such as how to 'poop candyfloss', among other magical things.

The data-driven performance digital marketing and training company held a two-day content marketing and social media strategy course at the end of March at the Business Centre in Century City. Our small group of attendees hit the ground running with BlueMagnet's head of content and social media strategy, Jessica Rose McEndoo teaching us, amongst other things, a skill she describes as 'pooping candyfloss' – writing just one amazing article and creating thousands from it through '10 to the power of 10'. But before testing out the practical side, we absorbed a good dose of theory...



Content so good, your readers won't believe their eyes. Image © Kaspars Grinvalds – [123RF.com](https://www.123RF.com)

McEndoo started us off with the knowledge that while content marketing is a good concept, it's essentially misunderstood. Think about it. Advertising is fabulous at getting consumers' attention through a burst of disruption, but how many of us *really* know what to do once we have their attention? If that's not bad enough, it becomes a whole new animal when it collides with digital.

Advertising messages are absolutely everywhere, but as consumers pay less and less attention to this, it's their voice that has the most power. That's why user-generated content, where your target market talks about you just based on their positive experiences with your brand, is the ultimate, especially if you have the know-how to harness that into lead generation and conversion. Sounds like a win-win, but it involves a lot of hard work and planning.

The adage 'failing to plan is planning to fail' has never rung more true. World Wide Worx's stats show that up to 56% of SA businesses are just spraying and praying their messages as they're not strategically crafting each engagement.

This Facebook post is no longer available. It may have been removed or the privacy settings of the post may have changed.

This is where a well-devised content marketing strategy can elevate you above your competitors. But what is this magical creation I refer to?

## Content plan basics

Simply put, a content plan is a clear document for managing all your content development and promotional activities that are designed to reach a target audience through a relevant channel to reach a required reaction.

Yes, that's **every single message** you share with your audience, from a Facebook update to an emailer about your latest sale items. That's because as much as 72% of your content is ignored, and in just 2.6 seconds you've either got their attention or lost their interest. If you've not put thought into it, your messages will float over your intended audience's heads. That's unfortunate, as correctly targeted marketing leads to better brand awareness and user engagement.

So take a good, long look at the marketing messages you're sending out. If the content is mainly promotional, you're doing it wrong and should go back to the drawing board. McEndoo quoted Ann Handley who advises that you make content about your customers and what's in it for them – make the customers the hero of the conversation. Watch the video embedded below for more tips from Handley:

McEndoo also shared the following **seven step content plan**:

1. Understand your audience and what they want: what are search engines searching for, what are people searching for on desktops and mobile?
2. Strategy: take time to research first and map it to reach your business goals – working three months ahead is ideal
3. Audit it through qualitative and quantitative competitor analysis and gap benchmarking
4. Then plan and set up your editorial calendar
5. Only then do you create the content
6. Promote or share it through social media and press releases
7. Measure you authority or popularity and web traffic through conversion and engagement rates

Note that your content plan isn't a free-for-all – the editorial calendar should be organised by one accountable person so that all your marketers can align specific dates and your designers can get the required work in on time. We're not just talking lengthy word posts here (though content should be 1,000 words in length to rank on Google) as visually presented content is much more appealing: think video and infographics. You also need to keep track of your past posts and ensure the whole company is aware of what's being promoted so that your receptionist or call centre alike can handle queries with ease and not a blank '[computer says no](#)' response.

But just because a certain type of content seems to work for your competitor doesn't mean it'll work for you – you'll need to do all the groundwork yourself. McEndoo also warned us to regularly check for our own content being duplicated, plagiarised and scraped online and explained how to file a complaint with Google's Digital Millennium Copyright Act to reclaim ownership of that carefully crafted content.



A clear content strategy will turn you into this unicorn, leaving satisfied customers clamouring for more of your magical marketing messages. Image © Shamain – [123RF.com](#)

If this still seems confusing, wait for my feedback on the social media section of the workshop coming your way on Monday, for a little more clarity – but your best bet is to sit in the course yourself and soak up all the skills you need to create conversational content. You'll learn the ideal length for each type of content post, how to reduce, reuse and recycle that painstakingly created content, as well as how to use Google AdWords and Google Trends to craft the content your readers actually *want* to read and before long this new way of work will be second nature to you.

The instruction to "make it original, unique and sharable, targeted, accurate and professional," will seem like a challenge you can tackle with ease rather than something to fear, as you'll be following a proven strategy plan that makes your customers smile as well as your boss when all that content you're putting effort into leads to more money in the bank!

Find out more from [BlueMagnet's](#) website, as well as their [Twitter](#) and [Facebook accounts](#).

## ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of diversity, inclusion and equality, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! She can be reached on Twitter at @Leigh\_Andrews.

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