

Content marketing in South Africa: Don't let your business miss an opportunity

For many businesses in South Africa, effective [content marketing](#) offers exceptional return on investment, and in many sectors, it offers a real opportunity to propel an average business towards becoming an [industry super star](#).

Content marketing is now an accepted strategy for most online savvy business. This post aims to address two basic questions. 1. What is content marketing? 2. What is the relevance of content marketing?

Content marketing: What is it?

Simply, it is the use of content, created or sourced, shared across platforms with a target market to capture the attention of that market and ultimately: acquire new customers; and retain the loyalty of existing customers.

In 1900, the French tyre making brothers Michelin published a free motoring guide for French motorists. At the time, there were only 3,000 cars in France, most of which were for commercial use. Simplistically, the intent of the guide was to stimulate motor vehicle purchases and consequently increase the demand for tyres. Amongst other information, such as maps and useful tips, the guide advised truck drivers of good places to stop and eat. The guide evolved into the Michelin travel guides and Michelin restaurant rating. A one-star Michelin restaurant rating signifies "A very good restaurant in its category"; a two-star rating represents "Excellent cooking, worth a detour"; and a three-star rating "Exceptional cuisine, worth a special journey". A tyre brand with the ability to reduce Gordon Ramsay to tears at the loss of a star rating.



[click to enlarge](#)

Content marketing is creating content that your target market needs to know, or finds entertaining, so they take the time to absorb it and in doing so begin to associate with a brand.

Content marketing: The relevance in an online era

The relevance is two-fold. People and Machines. Or have we got to the point where the importance should be Machines and People? You may want to give that a bit of

thought before answering.

Content marketing and people

People have so much information available to them through the internet. The reality is that online mediums are already the primary entertainment medium of choice. Families don't sit down to watch TV together in the evening, each person picks up their personal device and goes online to entertain themselves, with their respective interest topics. Is getting your brand exposed to millions of people through content marketing relevant to your business?

So how do we capture the attention of the masses? Through providing them entertainment. Captivating, inspiring, funny or serious entertainment. Businesses looking for the attention of people need to feed their target market with intelligent entertainment. Historically, for a commercial entity to access this kind of entertainment was prohibitively expensive, firstly an ad agency and then the delivery medium television, radio, magazine, newspaper adverts etc.

In the online era, someone capturing low-quality footage of a frog eating a dog has the potential to reach millions of people - at no cost. A business can reach millions of target customers, if they have access to content that will capture the imagination of that target group and the technical expertise to deliver it.

The challenge for a commercial entity is: 1. How do we source great content? 2. How do we get our content out to millions of people? 3. Can we achieve this within budget and maintain a positive return on spend?

Content marketing and machines

If the art of content marketing is providing people with entertainment, the science of content marketing is delivering the entertainment in a format search engines assess as brilliant content.

Get your message to the top of Google's pile

A search engine's objective (past and present) is to direct the person using the service to a source of information (website), which that search engine has recognised as an 'expert' in the field. If a search engine user is happy with the results of their search, they keep using that engine, if they are not getting the results they want, they try a different search engine. Loyalty = zero.

Let's put it this way, if you can get your site to **make Google look good**, Google will return the favour and back your site more vigorously, by ranking it higher on relevant search terms.

Understand the Google machine so you can talk its language

A few years back, there was a whole new field of specialisation, called Search Engine Optimisation, or SEO. SEO technicians got so clever, that they could actually 'trick' Google into thinking that a site had the necessary answers, when all it contained was a plethora of unrelated advertising (you may have heard of 'Black Hat tactics'). Entering a search for 'bicycle maintenance tips' may have led the user to a site offering exceptional value on diet, or virility, pills with a lifetime money back guarantee.

Google understandably got concerned about this and changed their algorithms. An algorithm is a step-by-step sequence for conducting a mathematical calculation. In the case of a search engine algorithm, it is more like a collection of very complex mathematical sequences. The Google algorithms now do a lot more than look for key words and Meta data on a site. They have the 'intelligence' to look beyond trickery to determine quality of content.

Mercifully, we are now spared the inadvertent visit to the sites highlighting our dietary and virility challenges. The Google algorithms are taking us, increasingly closer, to where we want to go.

However, these algorithms are not human, they are programmed machine intelligence. Therefore, anyone wishing their content to gain credibility in the eyes of Google needs to make sure the content is presented in a manner that Google machines recognise.

Even the most brilliant content will be ignored by search engines if it is not communicated in a manner recognised the machine

How does Google recognise good content?



How does Google know whether the 'Googler' found your site interesting? Amongst other things, it measures the amount of time the visitor spends on the site. If the content of the site is interesting and relevant, then visitors spend time there and open up the next page for more interesting content. If the visitor arrives and leaves immediately thereafter... well your latest online marketing spend (for example website) isn't going to generate any notable return. If your content is never updated - visitors never return. If the content is so good that visitors start 'liking' and 'sharing' the site,

Google gains even more confidence.

How does a business let Google know that they are an 'expert in their field' to start with? By frequently posting relevant content in optimal machine-readable form on their website.

Optimising the balance between content loved by humans and machines alike, is the pinnacle of content marketing evolution.

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