

MODERN INSURANCE AGENCY SERIES

THE 40% GROWTH BOOK

The New Content Marketing for Insurance Agents & Brokers



MICHAEL JANS



MICHAEL JANS

ADVISORY



Who is Michael Jans?

Michael has been creating and delivering organic growth and marketing strategies to insurance agents & carriers for 25 years. He founded and ran the industry's largest insurance agency marketing company, Insurance Profit Systems.

In 2008, he founded and ran the industry's largest marketing automation software company, Agency Revolution, and, successfully sold it to a highly regarded private equity firm.

He continues to host "**The Connected Insurance Podcast**" series for **Agency Revolution**.

Michael has published over 50 books, courses and programs for insurance professionals. He is the co-author of "**The Insurtech Book**", published by Wiley, May, 2018.

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Introduction: 40%

Business journals bedazzle us these days with stories of ‘unicorns.’ Start-ups you never heard of suddenly skyrocket at 10X growth rates.

Many are software companies. But, not all.

Very likely, while they may not be software companies, they use software as a critical element of their value proposition.

But, it’s not likely you’ll see the covers of Fortune, Wired or Inc. proclaiming fast-growth stories of insurance agencies.

Why?

Outside of ‘growth by acquisition,’ the stories of accelerated growth are all too rare.

But, as in every industry, innovators and marketers do break growth records.

How do they do that?

Not by proudly proclaiming they’ve ‘been in business since 1937.’

Not by proudly proclaiming they serve the community with ‘trust, integrity and care.’

Not by proudly proclaiming they ‘care about their customer.’

Rather, they do it by:

- connecting with their customers and marketplace, not just connecting with technology, but connecting with their hearts and values
- and using those connections to deliver an **overwhelming and ongoing stream of value.**

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THINGS HAVE CHANGED.



This positions the agency uniquely in the marketplace. The ideal customers – the ones who want an agency relationship – get touched where it matters.

In their values.

Done right, customers don't want to forgive or forget their marketing.

When it's done right, they thank them for their marketing.

The rewards are tangible. What happens when customers are consistently grateful?

They give more referrals.

They buy more insurance.

They stay longer.

That's the trifecta of insurance marketing.

The agency doesn't have to sell on price. They can sell products at the right price. With margins that let them invest more in relationships, more in service, more in delivering value...and still have higher margins than price-driven agencies with price-driven customers.

This approach delivers a hidden benefit. An agency built on 'astounding growth through overwhelming value' aligns the entire team on something they feel great about.

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Making a difference. Changing lives. Delivering the ordinary – insurance – in an extraordinary way.

This kind of culture supports the best of what an insurance agent could want. Clients who love you. And, a team that's excited about what it does.

But, how is this possible? When the average agency records growth at a measly 4 or 5%, how can some agencies 10X industry averages?

In my recent [podcast with Chuck Blondino](#), Director of Agency Capabilities and Programs at Safeco Insurance, he reported on some mind-boggling research his company did on their fastest growing agencies.

Their 240 fastest growing large agencies grew at 26%. Their 240 fastest growing small-to-medium agencies grew at 83%.

THINGS HAVE CHANGED.

Okay, the internet put you in control of the conversation...

It also made me a "publisher."

Now I'm going to publish what interests (and persuades) you.

How? By my analysis, the answer is simple. One, they made the commitment. (Don't underestimate the importance of that little decision!)

And, they **communicated** more with their customers and marketplace. And, they communicated **differently**.

Perhaps, not that much differently than many other companies or industries across the business landscape.

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But, different than most insurance agencies. (Though, as 'old school' methods of marketing, communicating and delivering value are rapidly under-whelming insurance consumers, more and more agencies are turning to this 'new content marketing' – and discovering the benefits.)

Marketing has always had a bold promise. Because it allows you to communicate one-to-many, not just one-to-one, it holds the promise of scale.

I can't guarantee an 83% growth rate. Or even a 40% growth rate.

In fact, the 'magic number' I guide members of my Private Client Group towards is 25.89%, if only for the sheer elegance of the number. That rate of annual growth will 10X an agency in ten years. A laudable goal.

Yet, a number of my clients 'turn the volume down' on their growth rate, if only for their own composure. Even positive change can be stressful.

Marketing has always had a bold promise. Because it allows you to communicate one-to-many, not just one-to-one, it holds the promise of **scale**.

As the independent agency channel faces increasing competition, scaling **your agency** may be a mandate.

Whatever your growth goal, my intent is to unlock the secrets of 'the new marketing.'

Ultimately, I offer this as a guide. A guide to an agency where customers don't just feel loyal. They **act** loyal. By reciprocating with an ongoing stream of positive benefits **back to you**.

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It's not about you. It's about THEM.

Once upon a golden time, insurance agents had a few reliable marketing tricks in their books.

Even if they weren't exactly powerhouse marketing techniques, they were reliably **there**.

Like the yellow pages. Today, that's a sad joke.

Or hanging out at the Rotary and Chamber. Great for one-on-one. But, for rapid growth? Slow as molasses. Expensive as hell.

Yes, those fairy tale days are over. (Frankly, the best insurance marketers always had a few more marketing techniques up their sleeve.)

But, times do change.

Technology changed the way consumers behave. And, competitors inside and outside the agency-broker channel have figured that out.

**TECHNOLOGY CHANGED
THE WAY CONSUMERS BEHAVE.**



And, they figured out how to reach those consumers. Make them take notice. And, quickly earn their trust.

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Yes, often before a new lead ever meets or talks to anyone in your agency, they can already already want to do business with you.

*Smart marketers have cracked the code.
And you've very likely heard of it.*

That way, insurance leads don't just come pre-qualified. They come pre-convinced.

FEAR AND LOATHING IN THE NEW DIGITAL LANDSCAPE

Now, a lot of agents look at the new digital landscape...and freak.

Why?

It's like a baby in diapers. It'll change five times before the day is over. (And, as often as not, someone's made a mess of it!)

And, it seems, everyone has a different idea on the 'hottest new idea in digital marketing.'

You know. **'You absolutely must do this on Instagram!' Or, 'Here's your Snapchat strategy!' Or, 'How to get more likes on Facebook – fast!' (Likes? I want sales!)**

Insurance boasts a hundred gurus who want to pitch the latest **tactic**...without first grounding it in **strategy**. It's no wonder many agents or brokers feel frustrated or disappointed in some digital marketing trick that didn't really do the trick.

Where do you start? What do you do first?

Smart marketers have cracked the code. And you've very likely heard of it.

Content marketing.

And, in particular, the 'New Content Marketing for Insurance Agents & Brokers.' (The kind that makes customers love you. The kind that has every step laid out for you in an easy-to-follow formula.)

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Why? Why is the industry rapidly shifting its attention to this new way to communicate with the marketplace?

First of all, let's simply be happy that it **WORKS**.

- Year-over-year growth in unique site traffic is 7.8x higher for content marketing leaders compared to followers¹
- Content marketing costs 62% less than traditional marketing and generates about 3 times as many leads²
- Conversion rates are nearly 6x higher for content marketing adopters than non-adopters³

Money, money, money...is that what it's all about?

CONTENT MARKETING WORKS.



Certainly, money matters. And, the kind of content marketing I'm about to share with you will bring it in.

But, in my 25 years of consulting with and training agents, I've discovered that virtually every single agent I knew had something else that made them tick.

They wanted to make a difference.

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That's why I'm so excited to share my success with content marketing with you. Because here's what you'll experience:

- Your team will love their job even more. Why? Because content marketing is both the most respectful kind of marketing you can deliver. And, because content marketing inherently helps people. (That should become crystal clear as we move along.)
- Your clients will love you even more. Why? Because content marketing delivers information that is valuable and relevant to the real lives of people who consume it. (How would you like people to THANK YOU for your marketing?!!)
- You will make more money...and that will make open up more and more opportunities for you to contribute time and money to the causes that matter most to you. Or, it will open up more opportunities for you and your family. (Or both!)

Content marketing isn't just the marketing darling of start-ups and software companies. You'd be hard pressed to find a single Fortune 500 company that doesn't have a significant content budget.

But, besides the personal, family and community benefits of content marketing...it definitely feeds the cash cow in your agency

Content marketing isn't just the marketing darling of start-ups and software companies. You'd be hard pressed to find a single Fortune 500 company that doesn't have a significant content budget. (And, most intend to increase that budget next year.)

Industries across the entire business landscape have picked up the content marketing fever. Small, medium and large. Everything from swimming pool installers and plumbers to lawyers and architects.

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But, what can it do for insurance agents? The advantages are huge:

1. Have leads come to you (and you can stop chasing leads forever). Imagine getting an inbound call or web request from someone who chose you **on purpose**.

Smart marketers make a point to understand why their marketing works... so they can do it again and again and again!

Today's consumer either shops around **before** they call – or they're positively triggered by some content you offered. Either way, if you're the one they called (because they already trust your expertise), you've won before the quote is even given.

2. Super-charge the productivity of your producers. Commercial lines producers can fritter away **a lot of time and money** when they spend X% of their time doing their own lead generation. In the ideal world, they're spending maximum time in front of real prospects and customers. Content marketing helps bring those prospects to them.
3. Stop 'practice-quoting' prospects who will never do business with you. One of the most expensive and wasteful activities in an agency is quoting prospects – **who aren't already sold on doing business with you**. Nobody ever gets to 100% but very savvy marketers can easily get it to 80% and above.
4. Gain more control over your lead flow, customer acquisition and retention. Most agencies can't quickly solve their growth problem by saying, 'Let's hire more producers!'

Smart marketers make a point to understand why their marketing works...so they can do it again and again and again!

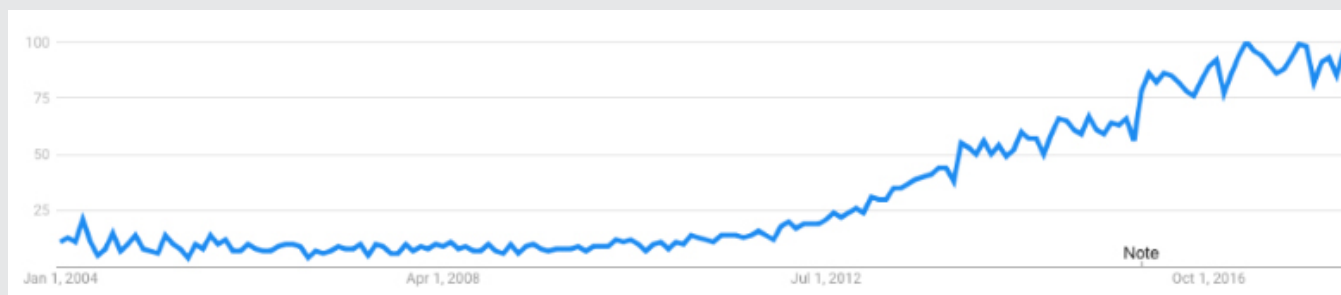
So, yes, it works.

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After all, why would content marketing GROW so much if it wasn't getting killer results that serious marketers look for?

Take a look at the following graph.



Growth in Google searches for 'Content Marketing' 2004 –2018

It shows how much more people are searching for CONTENT MARKETING than they were before.

Here's why content marketing works so well in today's world.

Because consumers have changed. The internet – and all the tools, platforms and gizmos that it offers – has, quite simply, put the consumer **in charge**.

If they want information...they can get it.

If they want information NOW...they can get it.

If they want MORE information...they can get it.

And they can get it anywhere.

Your best prospect could be on top of Mt. Bachelor with nothing but a smart phone. And – you already know this – they could find out just about anything.

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About insurance. About your competitor.

About you... **IF you have something:**

VALUABLE...that solves a problem for them.

FINDABLE...that uses the right words and techniques to get found in the huge ocean of the internet.

MEANINGFUL...that connects with their humanity.

Of course, the human desire for information that's valuable, findable and meaningful isn't anything new.

Great marketers have known this for generations.

Back in the early days of magazine publishing (when that was the 'next new thing' in publishing), marketers commonly offered 'free booklets' to draw consumers into their solutions.

(And, to go back 25 years, this author used that very technique to sell millions of dollars in marketing services to insurance agents...advertising in Rough Notes, American Agent & Broker and the other trade mags, offering a 'free report'.)

But, magazines aren't the 'next new thing' anymore.

For publishing, it's all about the internet.

But, while the internet has put the consumer in the 'power seat,' there's GOOD news for today's insurance agent...

What's that?

You're a publisher.

That's right. The tools to deliver value to your prospects and customers is as close as your computer.

Of course, the human desire for information that's valuable, findable and meaningful isn't anything new.

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So, today, you can meet your customers right where they want to meet: online.

And, you can deliver to them just what they want: **Solutions to their problems. Answers to their questions.**

And, you can deliver to them just what they want: solutions to their problems. Answers to their questions.

And, there's more good news.

While agents & brokers are scratching their heads about digital marketing...or running helter-skelter after strategies that won't get them a single sale...you can be ahead of the pack. And, your competitors won't know what hit them.

It's MUCH easier than most people think. (And this guide is designed to do just what you want: make it smooth as soft butter.)

BUT...you may be thinking, there's a problem.

For example:

- 'Content means you have to write, right? I'm not a writer.'
- 'I'd love to grow more, but I'm already so busy, I can't imagine where I'd squeeze in time for marketing!'
- 'Digital marketing just strikes me as a nightmare. I wouldn't know where to start.'

If you have any of those concerns, this guide was written for you. It's designed to:

- Make it easy to understand just what this new content marketing is
- Appreciate how powerful it is as a way to connect with your marketplace
- Be able to execute without time-consuming mistakes and mis-directions
- Get to 'mastery' level as quickly as you possibly can

But, wait, there's one more concern. It keeps coming up like dandelions on a spring lawn:

"This is a RELATIONSHIP business, right? People don't build relationships on computers. They build them face-to-face or over the phone."

Let's take a very close look at this.

Yes, this is a **relationship** business.

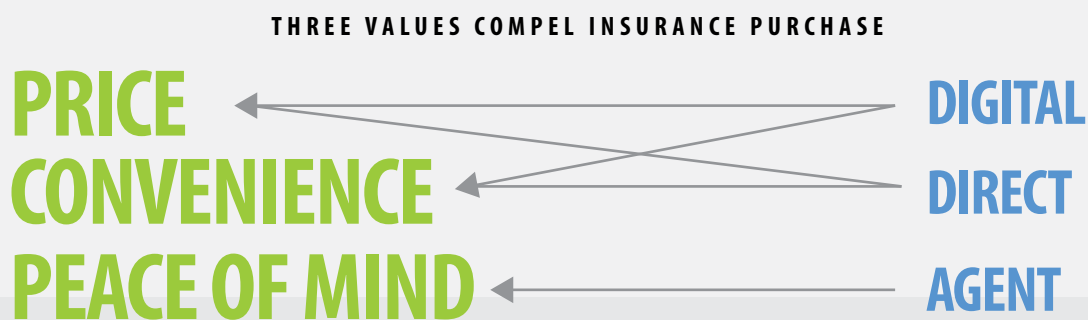
It may not be for the direct channel. After all, their biggest promise is about saving money. (In 15 minutes, right?)

It may not be for the emerging 'digital' channel. They're all about convenience.

But, *research* shows that a huge demographic appreciates the connection and comfort that comes from having an agent.

For them, price is secondary, not primary.

For them, convenience is secondary, not primary.



That doesn't mean they don't matter at all. It simply means that 'peace of mind' matters most.

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Protecting their home. Their family. Their cars.
Their business.

So, yes, they **do** want 'relationship.' It gives them the sense that someone in their community, niche or 'tribe' is watching out for them.

They have someone they can trust if things go south.

So, yes, unequivocally, the concern is right. Relation matters. A lot.

In the agency-broker channel, **the money is in the relationship**. And the deeper you can make those relationships, the more money will flow your way.

So, let's take a look at the second part of the concern: that people can't build relationships online and they only can be built face-to-face or over the phone:

1. First of all, I'm not suggesting that you stop whatever is working for you now. That's foolish. But, I am suggesting that you, at the very least, **supplement** what is working with content marketing. I suppose that if you're reading this, you're not completely satisfied with your growth rate. Or, at least, that you want more. Whatever the case, you'll discover that content marketing will turbo-charge your current efforts. (Yes, I'll frequently disparage the yellow pages – even after running a very successful yellow pages design service many years ago. But, if it's killing it for you, keep it!)
2. Second, in contrast to the assumption, that you can't make relationships happen online, I understand the old-school preference for face-to-face relationships. But, online relationships work. One-third of marriages start there. (So, you can certainly start them online!) And, you can continue relationships online. For example, I've spent well over \$50,000 on Amazon in the last ten years. That's a pretty successful online relationship. You don't have to be a millennial to consider an online-supported relationship as real.

In the agency-broker channel, the money is in the relationship.

3. While the ideal agency-channel consumers want 'relationship,' they don't want you showing up unannounced at the family barbecue. In fact, **they don't even want you to call**. According to a recent report from Mblox, the largest mobile messaging service in the world, 84% of consumers just plain don't want phone calls from their service provider.
4. You probably don't have the time or resources needed to do 'old school' relationship-building with everyone in your book of business anymore. Pressure on commissions

**EVEN THOUGH THE
IDEAL AGENCY-CHANNEL
CONSUMERS WANT 'RELATIONSHIP'...**

84%

OF CONSUMERS
JUST PLAIN DON'T WANT
PHONE CALLS FROM
THEIR SERVICE PROVIDER

have made that impossible. When McKinsey & Co. reported that the economics of the agency channel are 'unravelling,' this is what they meant. You can't do what you (or your dad!) used to do. But, you can deliver precisely what today's consumer wants: ongoing, relevant value, delivered in a non-threatening and non-intrusive manner.

So, if you're ready to grow, let's examine 13 'success keys' to the rapid acceleration of your agency or book of business, regardless if it's personal or commercial lines, life, health or a mix.

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SUCCESS KEY #1

It's not about you. It's about THEM

People approach marketing for obvious reasons. **They want more.**

More leads. More sales. More policies per customer. More referrals. More retention.

THE WRONG APPROACH TODAY

Beginning
Marketer

How much can
I get?

But, your market wants **none of that**. They don't show up at the marketing party to hear about what you want.

In fact, they don't show up to hear about you at all. They are there for themselves. (And, in the insurance space, reluctantly at that!)

Remember the difference between novice marketers and advanced marketers?

Novice marketers approach marketing with the question, 'How much can I get?' This is perfectly natural. And, while it's completely necessary to remember why you're marketing – to get more **something** – in order to succeed, you must set it aside.

And, ask: **what do my customers and prospects want?**

MOST AGENTS DON'T KNOW.

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It takes digging.

You can't just know their words. **You have to know their heart.**

That's why advanced marketers flip their thinking around. Their fundamental question is, 'How much can I **give**?'

Give value. Give meaning.

They'll notice you. Appreciate you. And never forget you.

Make a list. Then ask some real prospects or customers if you got it right.

**THE RIGHT
APPROACH TODAY**

Advanced
Marketer

How much can
I give?

- What do they worry about with their insurance?
- What do they worry about with their safety and protection?
- What do they worry about with their family or business?
- What do they want most for their insurance to do?
- How can they prevent claims from ever happening?
- What are they confused about? What are they uncertain about?

Great marketing isn't about you. It's about them. The people you most want great relationships with.

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SUCCESS KEY #2

It's easy with a PLAN.

(AND A MESS WITHOUT ONE.)

Going willy-nilly on your content never works.

Once you've developed a sense of the problems or questions your prospects and customers have, **put them in order**.

Which ones need to be answered first? Second? And so forth.

You don't need to answer them all at once. (In fact, you shouldn't. We'll cover this in Success Key #6.)

If you understand your customers, this will be easy. And, the benefit is huge. You're simply being asked what kind of relationship you want with your marketplace – and how you can **earn** that relationship. How you can give in to that relationship before you try to take **out** of that relationship.

Ask yourself, 'What should I say to this person so they will trust me and want to do business with me?' And, put it in logical order.

If you think this through **once**, you'll have a much better product and get much higher results. If you look at the last 12 months of agency-to-customer communications, you'll almost always discover three things:

1. There's not enough. There's no 'earning power' in communications that don't exist.
2. They're empty. They lack the thoughtful, interesting and sometimes **delightful** value of great content. (Great content = great agency. I guarantee that. Why? Because it

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means they've really thought through their portion of the value chain and decided to make a difference. This never fails.)

So, it's not about how many. It's about how much. How much will you give? How much value will you add?

3. They're disorganized. They're not just spotty in frequency. They jump from here to there without logic. One week they talk about this...the next week about that. Rather, think like an **engineer**. A marketing engineer. You're building a year-long marketing system. Because you design it in advance, it is purposeful, elegant and efficient. Most agents do the opposite. They'd be like a crew of construction workers designing the Golden Gate Bridge as they build it, inch by inch. It just doesn't get the job done.

Let's address the issue of 'how many times' for a moment. Many agents have told me that 'nobody wants to hear from an insurance agent.' These agents are anxious about delivering outbound communications to their customers. Naturally, they've never done it – and they don't want to be perceived as a nuisance.

They're right, they probably don't want to hear from 'an insurance agent.'

But, they may want to hear or see some valuable information on how they can protect their home. Or about an impending disaster. Or preparing for one. Or about reducing the premium on their worker's comp.

Or about a million other things that are important to **them**.

And, being the **people** they are, they also like to connect with **people**. People who somehow make their lives or they day a tad better. They like to surround themselves with a tribe they trust.

And, content delivery delivers another gift. You.

So, it's not about how many. It's about how much. How much will you give? How much value will you add?

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One of my long-time clients was recently a guest in the podcast I host for Agency Revolution, The Connected Insurance Podcast. She has among the highest industry retention rates in the US, approaching 97% over an eight- year period. One of her secrets is to communicate. 'We communicate with our customers between 20 and 24 times a year.'

Besides, if you're emailing - and you should be - you should welcome a few unsubscribes. It's okay. They're in control.

My guess is that she could push that number way up. But, sadly, it's 20-24 times more than most agents.

I don't want to hear from a bookstore. But, I do want to hear about literature and non-fiction that is tightly matched to my varied interests. Amazon does that. Over 300 times a year. And, they know my interests so well, I'm delighted because I've found treasures I never would have otherwise.

Besides, if you're emailing – and you should be – you should welcome a few unsubscribes. It's okay. They're in control. Don't sweat unsubscribes! The only way not to get them is to not communicate!

Figure out how often you'll deliver content – or answer questions. Then, lay it out on a simple 'editorial calendar.'

A good editorial calendar will answer the basic questions, like:

- What are we going to offer? What problem will we solve?
- When will we do that?
- Who is responsible for what pieces of the puzzle? Who will write or design or video? Who will publish it?

This is the magic 'WWW' of planning: what, when, who.

THE MAGIC 'WWW' OF PLANNING

WHAT WHEN WHO

Put your plan together. If it involves a team, use it to measure your progress and hold each other accountable.

The Content Marketing Institute has an excellent, free and simple [marketing calendar](#) you can download immediately.

I like this calendar because it's simple. No need to complicate it more than necessary.

Plan your content first. Save time later.

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SUCCESS KEY #3

De-Commoditize Insurance

(AND NEVER SELL ON PRICE AGAIN!)

This is the complete execution of Success Key #1. Flipping your thinking around. Remembering that if you want relationship, it's about them, not about you.

Now, let's put it to work in insurance.

Let's imagine that your competitor can offer the same policy and protection you can.

The **exact** same.

Who wins the customer? This is a critical problem in insurance today.

After all, a LOT of policies are so similar, the average customer just can't tell the difference.

Certainly, not the average customer.

And, the mouthpieces at GEICO and Progressive Direct keep brainwashing the consumer: **price is all that matters because everything else is pretty much the same.**

A lot of the market thinks that insurance is just a commodity.

This is where you can stand out. Not just to get attention.

But to earn respect, trust and loyalty.

How?

By delivering MORE than the product.

Because – while you could try to **change the minds** of consumers who only care about

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price, that's the hardest, most expensive thing a marketer can do. (Especially, when a company like GEICO is willing to spend a **billion dollars a year not** to change their mind, but just to offer that part of the market what they want: the 'promise' of cheap insurance. (NOTE: I'm not commenting on how well they deliver on that promise. See my blog at www.michaeljans.com for more in-depth discussions on that.)

It's much, much more lucrative to attract the people who have the problem you can solve. The ones who want **protection**.

Key point: marketing is not just about lead generation.

The savvy marketer knows that there is more money with marketing after the sale than before it.

Because marketing is simply **communicating in order to bring people closer**, you'll get even more bang for your buck after they know you.

That's how you turn customers into loyal customers. And, [research by Bain & Company](#) showed that loyal insurance customers are worth about 7 times the lifetime value of non-loyal customers. And three times the value of neutral customers.

Further, they showed that advice, information or 'tips,' delivered the most customer delight besides the product itself.

**TIPS ARE THE MOST LIKELY TO DELIVER
DELIGHT OTHER THAN THE PRODUCT ITSELF.**

Bain & Company

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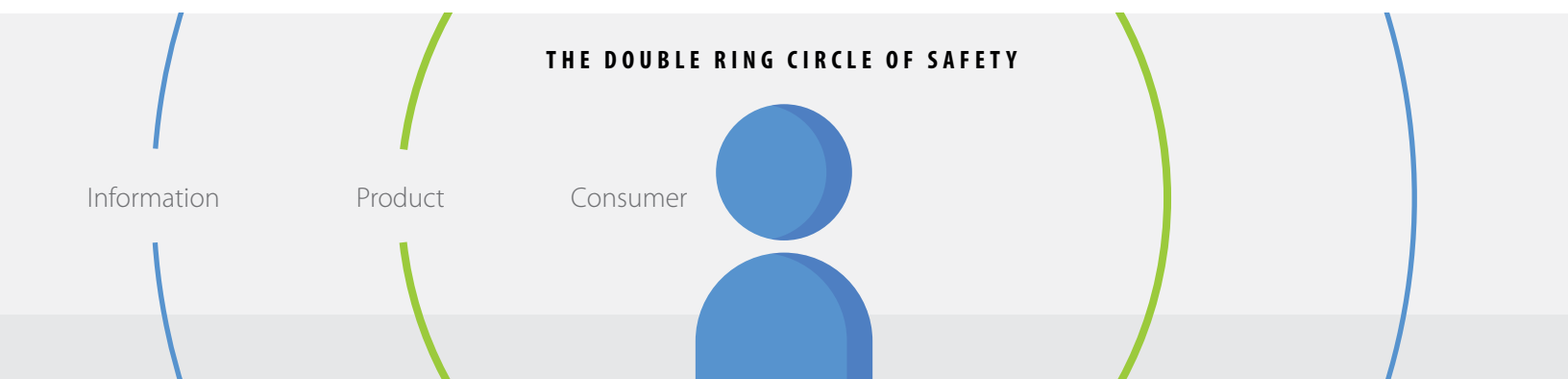
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The savvy agency ‘wraps’ its policies with valuable and meaningful information.

That automatically makes you different than your competitors.

And, it’s one of the most powerful uses of content marketing for insurance agencies.

If the product is the first ‘ring’ of defense – and protects people **after** misfortune, then valuable information can be the ‘second ring’ of defense...and may prevent misfortune altogether. (And, everyone wins then: the customer, you and your carriers!)



But, of course, don’t wait until your prospects become insurance customers before you deliver great content.

One last point. If you’re thinking, ‘Price is the only thing that matters to customers,’ you simply know that’s not really true. You’re a very rare person if you only buy the cheapest of everything.

Not only does Bain’s research prove this is not true, EZLynx demonstrated this unequivocally by analyzing actual customer behavior. According to their research, only 57% of customers reject the first, lowest quote and opt for more expensive insurance.

And, how much more is a customer willing to pay for insurance? Again, according to EZLynx research, between 19-53%.

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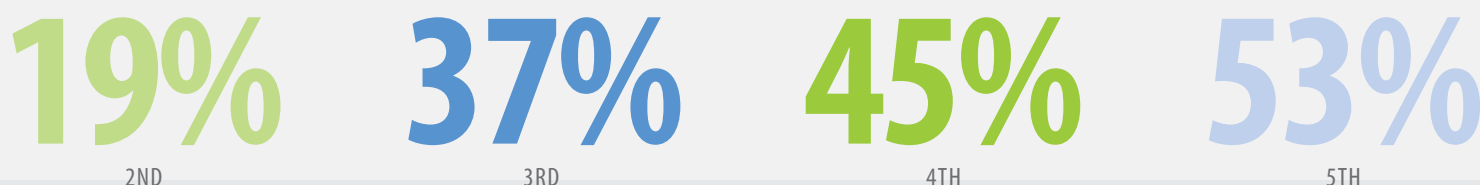
Here's what's most remarkable about that research. It's a complete analysis of industry performance, and does not consider if the agency has any price-related policy at all!

WHICH QUOTE GETS APPROVED BY THE CONSUMER? DON'T SELL ON PRICE.



Price is 'elastic.' Consumers do not have a 'price speedometer' in their head to that scientifically measures the value of a particular insurance product. If in fact, your agency does provide value above and beyond the product, the actual price is determined by the customer – not by you. They choose if they buy it or not.

HOW MUCH HIGHER ARE SUBSEQUENT QUOTES?



And, if they feel that a relationship with you is worth the price they pay, that is a consumer's choice.

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Of course, it's up to you to create and deliver that extra value (and the secrets I will reveal to you through my Podcasts, Blogs, Surveys and these very pages will show you EXACTLY how to do just that - no matter where you are now, or where you want to get to).

The big advantage to charging higher prices? Not only does it support your margins, it gives you more resources to create more value.

Leave the price shoppers to other channels. For the independent agent, it's about value – not price.

The best way to earn their trust and loyalty from prospects is the same way you earn it from customers.

Shower them with value. They'll remember you. And appreciate you.

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SUCCESS KEY #4

Great Marketing is a Team Sport

Content creation and delivery challenges people who haven't done it before. That's natural.

These are new skills for most agents. I commonly hear agents say, 'I don't know what to **create** content **about!**'

Your team may be able to solve that problem quickly for you.

Why? Because, most likely, they're the ones who are on the front lines, talking to (and, most importantly) **listening** to what customers and prospects say.

People ask questions. Especially if they feel that they are being listened to.

Your solution may be as simple as this: give your staff a piece of paper, and ask them to write down the questions they get.

Find the most common questions, and answer them.

With the new Content Marketing, you can be the first one to reach out to them with **the solutions to the problems they already have.**

Robert Collier is often considered one of the greatest advertising copywriters of the early 20th century. The cornerstone of his success was built on this maxim:

'Always enter the conversation already taking place in the customer's mind.'

Don't start a conversation they don't want. It's too expensive.

Good listeners know what that conversation is. Good marketer's enter that conversation, **with an answer to the customer's problem.**

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My friend, Ryan Hanley, once told me that he frequently tells the story of how he created 100 YouTube videos that answer common insurance questions. Even after sharing that – some years later – they still generate a steady stream of leads, he doesn't think **anyone** ever copied this technique – though he's shared it with thousands of agents. (You **should** listen to my podcast interview with him [here](#).)

*Please, don't just be a curious watcher.
Be a passionate doer.*

Please, don't just be a curious watcher. Be a passionate doer.

So, your team members can be a critical source of ideas, simply because they may stand in front of you in the customer stream.

But, because they're so close to customers, they can also be one of your most effective **delivery systems**.

How? By making the same offers that you would normally do online. By offering to give value above and beyond the expectations of the customers.

Here's an example. I call this **The Lagniappe Method**. Lagniappe is a Cajun term that roughly means, 'a little something extra.'

For instance, if you went to a butcher and asked for a pound of bacon, he would load a pound on the scale, make sure you saw that it was a pound of bacon...then he'd put one more piece of bacon on top.

A little something extra. (Apparently, Cajun butchers are well trained in human psychology.)

So, here's how it goes in an insurance agency.

Karen Customer calls with a typical insurance issue. She just bought a new car, for example.

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Sally CSR takes care of the problem. Then she says, 'Nancy, one last thing before you go. Our president, Amy, just published a report on **'11 Ways to Protect Your Home from Burglary.'** Would you like me to email you a copy?'

What did it cost you? Nothing.

What did it get you? The remarkable power of appreciation, delight, gratitude and respect.

Don't forget your team. They'll be able to tell you what the marketplace wants. And they'll be able to deliver it, too!

Don't forget your team. They'll be able to tell you what the marketplace wants. And they'll be able to deliver it, too!

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SUCCESS KEY #5

Efficiency Squared!

HOW TO RE-PURPOSE FOR MORE DOLLARS PER MINUTE.

Content marketing isn't nearly as much work as it may seem.

Yes, you've got to get started (see Success Key #13).

But, once you've got ONE THING, you've solved your biggest problem.

Why? Because you can tweak it, twist it, turn it...and get tons of mileage out of it.

Let's imagine that:

1. You want to focus on lead generation (as opposed to increasing your policy/customer count or boosting your client retention). And,
2. You have a niche. Let's say you specialize in arborists, for example.

So, as we'll soon see, the kind of content that generates insurance leads is good 'top of funnel' content that answers common questions that a lot of arborists have. It may not even talk about insurance (or much). It may not talk about you or your insurance solution (or much).

For example, you may have written just one piece of content. Maybe it's only a page or two.

But, it addresses a key issue for your audience.

Let's say it addresses SAFETY. Every arborist cares about safety. It's dangerous work. One accident could put an employee out of work for weeks or months. Or worse.

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But, you've done some research.

So, you write a piece called, **'13 Critical Safety Secrets for Arborists: Protect Your Business from Danger, Death and Disaster.'**

What can you do to squeeze more juice out of it? Re-purpose the exact same message.

And, you outline 13 safety tips that will help them.

So, let's say you post it on your social media accounts. Then, you discover that arborists really care about safety. They download it.

What can you do to squeeze more juice out of it? Here's a partial list of ways to re-purpose the **exact same message**.

You take the content, and turn it into:

- Multiple blogs
- A short eBook
- Videos on your website (or a 'vlog')
- YouTube videos
- A safety checklist
- A white paper
- Podcasts
- A speech
- A workshop or training
- An infographic

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- A webinar
- An audio recording
- A before and after case study
- Answers to frequently asked questions on the 'niche' page of your website
- An article you send to niche publications
- A 'guide book for safety'
- An industry wide survey
- A timeline that shows how to execute, how long it will take, how much it will cost – and the ultimate benefit
- Interviews with clients who executed on your advice
- And much, much more!

Content marketing is the most efficient marketing system in the world...because it finds clients for you, screens out bad prospects and warms up good ones.

And by the time you get through two or three items on that list, it's probably time to re-launch the original piece you started with!

Content marketing is the most efficient marketing system in the world...**because it finds clients for you, screens out bad prospects and warms up good ones.**

Re-purpose your content – over and over – and optimize every moment and every dollar you invest in your marketing.

SUCCESS KEY #6

Bulls Eye! Target your message where the money is.

Most people confuse 'advertising' with 'marketing.' Sure, sometimes you can use them interchangeably. But, advertising is generally a sub-set of marketing.

The purpose of an ad is usually to get attention. It's to generate leads.

The purpose of marketing is to guide the entire 'customer journey' from beginning to end. It's not just about 'getting the word out there.' It's about **communicating** and **developing relationships**.

And you want those relationships to be deep and strong.

That journey often starts at the moment someone discovers you and is **motivated or inspired to begin to move your direction**.

Ideally, if you've attracted the right kind of person, it's a relationship that lasts a lifetime.

Even if they leave, a good marketing sequence will bring them back.

Marketers frequently divide the marketing sequence into two 'big chunks:'

1. Before they're a customer, and,
2. After they become a customer.

Then, marketers frequently chunk the 'before' stage into three subsets:

1. **The Awareness Stage.** This is when you try to get their attention. And you try to get them to pay attention...by solving a problem that is common with the market you're trying to reach. This is usually called 'Top of the Funnel' (or ToFu).
2. **The Consideration Stage.** This is when the prospect is considering if they should pursue a solution. It's usually too early for them to consider you...but they are thinking about finding a solution. This is where you start to share more in-depth details about the kinds of solutions that are available to them, including the features that you offer. This is usually called 'Middle of the Funnel' (or MoFu).
3. **The Conversion Stage.** This is when the prospect has decided they probably need to make some decision about the solutions – and they want details. They want information that will give them confidence about their decision. This is usually called 'Bottom of the Funnel' (or BoFu).

The first thing you want to do is get attention. They need to be aware of you. But, beyond that, you want that awareness to be coupled with positive emotions.

Let's walk through a simple example of the kinds of marketing content an insurance agent or broker may use in the real world. Imagine, for example, that you want to expand your niche in the arborist market.

1. **The first thing you want to do is get attention.** They need to be aware of you. But, beyond that, you want that awareness to be coupled with positive emotions. Like trust, respect and confidence. But, remember, a lot of your prospect won't be looking for your solution yet, but you still want to get them into your marketing funnel.

They'll move through the funnel at their own pace. So, you need to reach them with a piece that has very, very broad attraction. I often recommend to my clients that

they start with a very level topic that doesn't necessarily 'pitch' insurance but allows you to introduce it. This niche may very well respond to a piece (like a bog post) called something like: **'11 of the Most Dangerous Mistakes Made by Arborists and How They Can Destroy Your Business.'** One or more of the '11 dangerous mistakes' should probably reference 'the wrong insurance.'

2. **Now you have some leads in your funnel.** They may not know much about you or your solution, so you want to build more trust – and begin to answer more comprehensive questions. At this point, it's usually time to get serious about selling insurance and moving them down the funnel, so you may want to offer them something like: **'7 Arborists Who Almost Killed Their Business with the Wrong Insurance.'** This could be a piece where you profile case studies of seven of your clients who had a claim that was covered (because it was in **your** insurance program) that would not have been covered by a non-specialist.

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2.5

REFERRALS



97%

RETENTION

25%

MORE INSURANCE

Or you could simplify it by profiling one client: **'The Ohio Arborist Who Saved His Business with This One Simple Decision.'** It should demonstrate the benefits of the kind of insurance you offer and, conversely, show the danger of choosing the wrong protection. Remember: this content should be mostly 'about them and their problem' – not just about you and how great you are!

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3. **Now it's decision time.** They're considering how they should protect their business. Help them decide on you. Good BoFu content includes things like free audits, insurance checklists, assessments, or, written pieces like **'The Ultimate Buyer's Guide for Arborist Insurance.'**

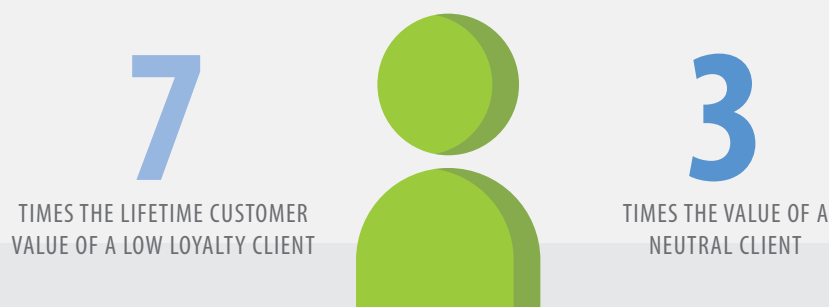
So, throughout the sequence, you 1) get their attention, 2) get them warmed up and 3) help them make a decision. If you're the right decision, they'll probably choose you.

So, you want to **focus** your resources.

Do you need more leads? Or are you wasting too much time talking to leads that don't close? Do you need to warm them up better? Or do want a killer closing rate – and you want them 'sizzling hot' because they've read your buyer's guide? Focus.

But, many, many agents miss where the big money really is. They always think that they need more customers in order to grow.

THE HIGHLY LOYAL INSURANCE CLIENT



But, a lot of research demonstrates that the fastest growth and highest margins come when you get more **loyal customers** – and the easiest, most efficient way to do that is to help your existing book of business move from being mere customers to becoming loyal customers.

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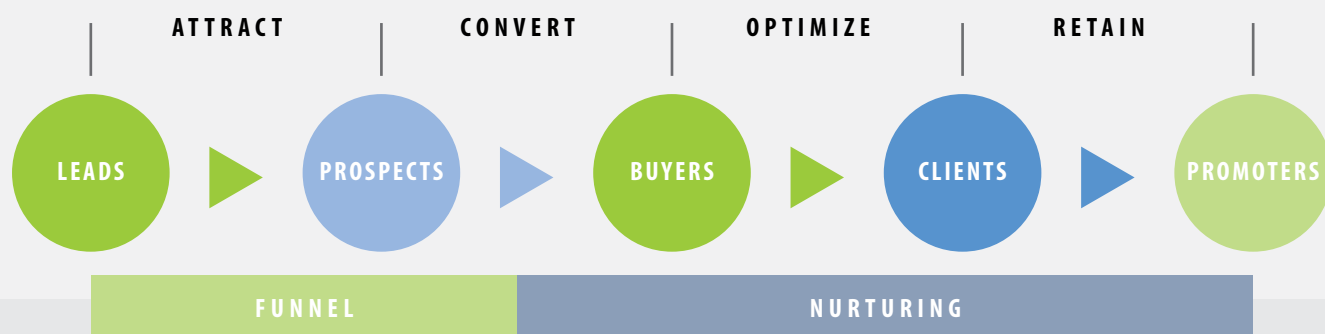
Bain & Company's research shows that highly loyal clients deliver (a stunning!) 7 times the lifetime value of low loyalty clients and three times the value of neutral or 'mid-loyalty' clients.

Seven times the Customer Lifetime Value?! With those numbers, you can probably work your existing book for years without any new clients!

How is this possible? Because loyal clients deliver:

- 250% more referrals than neutral customers. (Low loyalty clients don't deliver referrals. They deliver complaints!)
- 97% retention.
- 25% more insurance purchases.

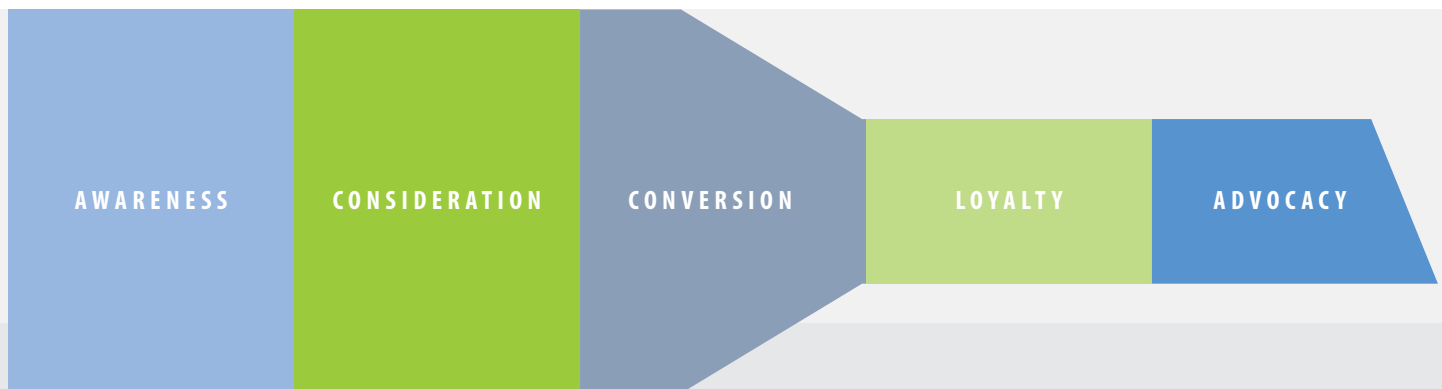
Not only do they give more, generating revenue from them **costs less**. Most marketers agree that it costs 5 times more to get a new client than to save clients you already have.



One useful way to see the content marketing process in action is to look at it in the context of the four-stage ACOR marketing model that I developed when I owned Agency Revolution.

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In the middle of Stage Two – **Convert** – they become customers. Before that, you’re guiding them through the three stages of the funnel. Then you guide them from ‘new customer’ to ‘loyal customer.’

Many agents spend resources, energy, time, talent, marketing dollars and so forth, to get new customers – the most expensive part of the process. Then, they under-invest in the actual customer relationship – the most **lucrative** part of the process.

Once someone becomes a client, you should be delivering high quality content to them!

Hint: look for ‘triggers’ in their customer journey where your customers are especially receptive to receiving content:

- When they become new customers, they’re receptive to content about this new agency they now have a relationship. You can ‘onboard’ your customers with content about your team, about your services, hours, philosophy and so forth.
- If they have a claim, they’re receptive to content about how to have the best possible claims experience (and about how you care!)
- When they close that claim, they’ll be receptive to interactive content from you about their experience.

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- As they approach their renewal, they're most receptive to content about their protection, gaps and possible savings.
- Any time there's a natural disaster or threat to their assets, they're receptive to information about how to protect themselves.
- All year long, they'll be receptive to information about safety and protection. Some seasons or months naturally suggest topic ideas. As summer approaches, they'll appreciate content about how to protect themselves or family when they travel; or how to protect their home when they're away. In the winter, you may want to send information about driver safety – and on and on.

Running a great business means creating great customer relationships - and you create great relationships by communicating.

Running a great business means creating great customer relationships – and you create great relationships by communicating.

NOTE: Agency Revolution can deliver much of this content automatically by triggering message campaigns based on changes in your agency or brokerage management systems.

One final and important note. [Deloitte](#) recently reported that insurance customers perceived they received 'no service above and beyond shopping' for the policy from their agent. Further, the global consulting firm [EY](#) reported in 2016, 44% of insurance customers perceive that they had zero communications from their insurance provider in the past 18 months.

That puts insurance in a very dangerous position. But, with good content marketing, you can fix that. At least for yourself!

Content marketing attracts people who want to do business with you. And, guides them to the best relationship for both of you: loyal customer.

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SUCCESS KEY #7

More bang for the buck! The 80/20 Marketing Formula.

Creating content, of course, is just the start.

People need to **consume** your content. In order for that to happen, they need to know about it.

Many marketers subscribe to something like an '80/20 formula:' they spend 80% of their marketing time promoting their content and only 20% of their time creating it.

How do you promote it? Here are a few tips.

- **Email is the workhorse of marketing.** If you have a list, use it. Your customer list, of course, is the most valuable list you have. When you have content that is appropriate to them, let them know. After that, you should place a lot of value on your former customer list (lost souls) and your prospect list.
- **Your own website is usually considered the most valuable 'marketing real estate' you own.** (You don't really 'own' your social media platforms, and, as we often see, simple changes in their algorithms can seriously depress the visibility of your content – as many Facebook marketers have seen.) Your blog is a very valuable content promotion system. Search engines love content. It's probably the single biggest influence you can have over your traffic generation. So, blog!

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- **Reach out to influencers in your market.** See if they'd be willing to allow you to guest-blog on their site, write articles for their publications, or if they'd be willing to share a valuable piece of your content. (And, yes, industry publications are hungry for content. You'll often find them to be very receptive, and, it's well understood that the author will want a link back to their site – or to some related piece of free content.)
- **Announce every piece of content on all of your social platforms.** Not just once, but several times. Most experienced marketers reach back to content that delivered good results, even months or years ago, and re-promote it.

Your content won't work if the market doesn't consume it.

Your content won't work if the market doesn't consume it. Tell them about it. (Do you see why offering valuable content is so much more powerful than jumping on social media and telling everyone how great you are! Nobody wants to be part of that conversation!)

Getting people to consume your content is the right thing to do, because your content is good for them. Promote it with pride.

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SUCCESS KEY #8

Shortcuts! How to find what they want.

Creating content can be a challenge.

NOT because you don't have anything to say! You know so, so, so much more about protection, safety and insurance than the average consumer.

You have expertise, authority and experience that they don't. And, because they care about their family or business or assets, they want to be protected. And they want to be smart.

No, creating content can be a challenge because it's a little new. A little different.

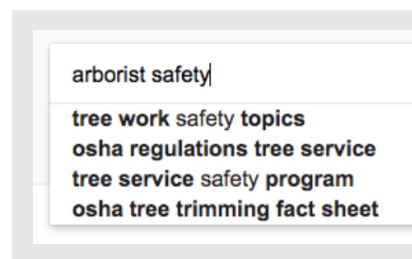
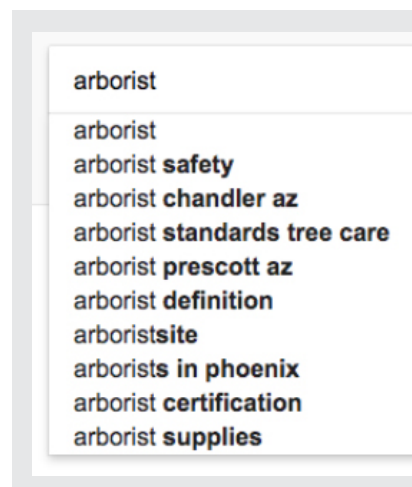
You're probably used to **talking** about your expertise.

But you may not be accustomed to **writing** about it. (Of course, you don't have to write. You can start with **video**, for example. Or...see Success Key #10.)

But, if you're having trouble thinking up ideas for content, remember this little secret: set up systems to help you listen to your customers... **because they do have questions.**

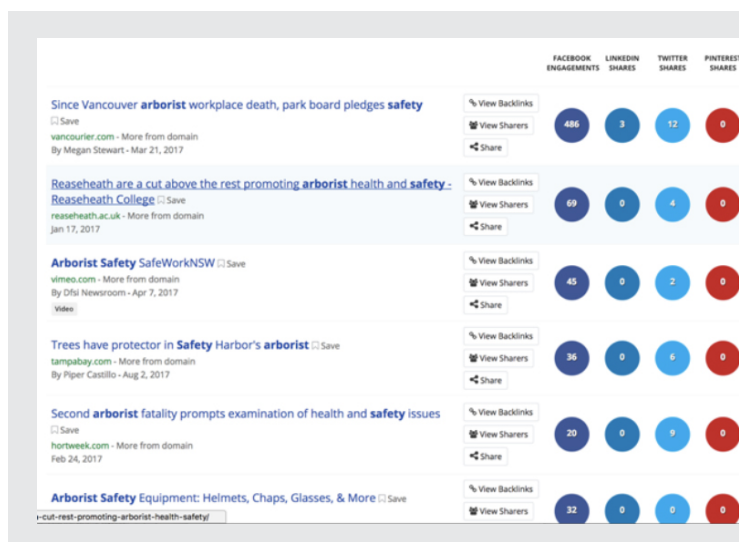
1. Ask your producers or CSR's to keep a list of all the questions they get for a week or two. Get them together for a brainstorm session. Think of all the questions you've been asked over your career.
2. Or, email your client base⁵ and tell them you want to answer their most pressing insurance questions, no matter how big or small. Tell them why (because you want them to be protected).

3. Call a few clients. Tell them what you're doing: creating content that will help them be better protected. Ask them what they'd like to know more about.
4. Google your niche. For example, if I google 'arborist,' I get several 'auto-fill' suggestions. The top one, in this case, is 'arborist safety.'
5. Then, if I google 'arborist safety,' I get a more detailed list of suggestions. Plenty of content you can use⁶.
6. Discover the 'watering holes' for your niche. Where do people in your niches (including personal lines) 'hang out' online. For example, a quick google of the term 'arborist forum' led me to this forum, Arborsite.com (next page).



Then, a quick query on the site for 'safety' delivered even more results (next page).

7. Enter your topic into a tool like [Buzzsumo](#) (limited daily searches are available for free.) This tool will rank content for you by consumption, so you'll know what is most popular in that category. Here's an example of what I got when I recently entered 'arborist safety' in Buzzsumo:



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8. If you're listening to your customers (and prospects), you'll never be short on ideas.

Finally, central to the point of removing roadblocks and getting content in front of people who matter, the biggest roadblock just may be in your head. Don't let perfection kill progress.

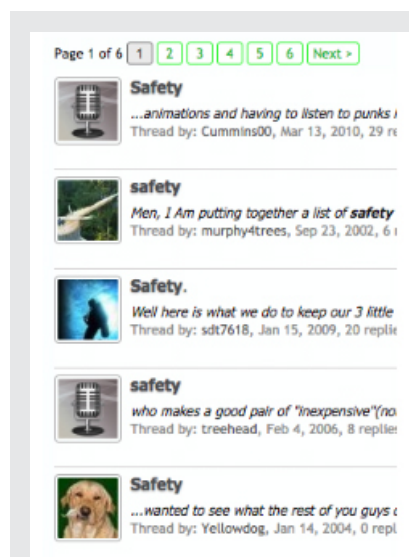
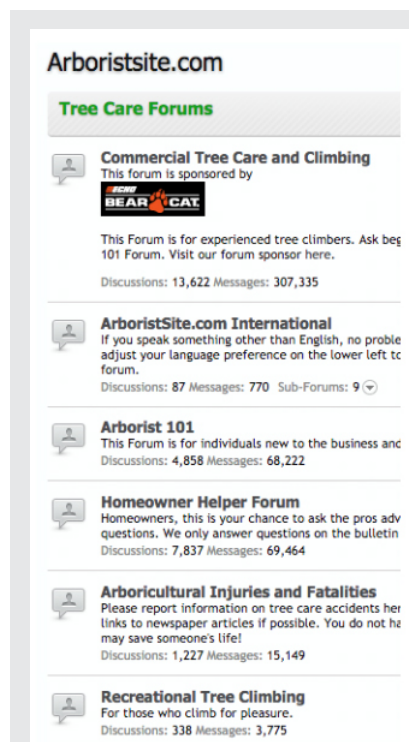
Good prospects and customers want good information. Don't make a Hollywood production out of a one-page cheat sheet on arborist safety. Get it out there!

Here's an example. Almost 25 years ago, I self-published my first book. As I recall, it sold for \$595. (As books go, that's seems kind of expensive!) I wrote it on my computer. Printed it on my printer. And copied it on our small copier as orders came in.

One day, a new customer sent it back, **with every typo circled**, requesting his money back. (Which he promptly got.)

The next day, I got a phone call from another customer. He said **one idea** from my book made him \$90,000. As a customer, over the next few years, he invested over \$100,000 with me. And, his testimonials and referrals were worth more than that.

Overall, I sold over \$1,000,000 of that book. (One of these days, I should really get around to fixing those typos!)



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The moral of the story: I was more focused on delivering and making sales, than fixing my typos. (Hey, 25 years ago...no spell-check!)

Of course, I would've preferred a typo-free product. But, it's impact on a very successful business was nominal.

Money likes speed. Use good shortcuts to find out what they want...and to get it in their hands.

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SUCCESS KEY #9

Numbers! Know the ones that matter.

Direct marketers love their numbers. The success of the effort is measured by a few simple numbers. Like 'cost per lead.' Or 'cost per sale.' Or, as you become more adept, 'cost per lead per campaign' or '...per email.'

As far back as 25 years ago – long before digital marketing was a glimmer in the eye – I routinely advertised in four insurance trade magazines: Rough Notes, American Agent & Brokers, The Professional Agent and The Independent Agent.

As a reminder to you that the principles of content marketing are grounded in age-old, proven concepts, I offered 'content.' A free report on how other agents were achieving record growth.

If a lead was interested, they'd call an automated 800 number and 'follow the instructions at the prompt,' and leave their name and (yes, snail mail!) address.

Because I assigned a different 800# for each magazine, and because each lead was recorded and transcribed, I simply downloaded the summary report for each number.

Simple math showed me how much I was paying for each lead. It was the price of the ad divided by the number of leads.

Within a month or 45 days, I could do a little more math, and see how many of them converted into sales. Then I'd know my cost per sale.

Since the sales were generally received by fax (that's right, fax!), I couldn't push a button to find my cost-per-sale-per-source. It required a little more manual labor.

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But, it paid off, as sales exploded.

The results per magazine varied wildly. That showed me where I should invest my resources, and where I should withdraw. (Believe me, I withdrew from plenty of magazines. I was **testing ferociously**.)

If a certain ad began to fatigue, I'd know that, too. Then, it was time to change the ad.

While you, as an insurance agent, can generate leads online, you'll generally be closing those leads off-line: with real people talking to real people.

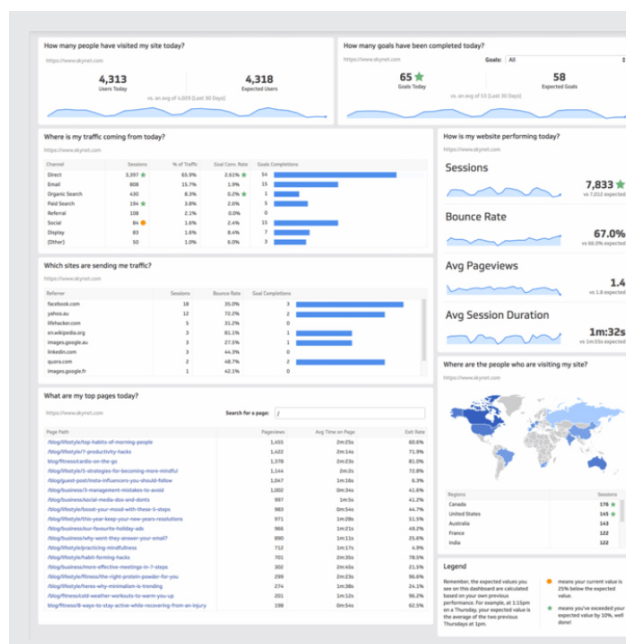
That makes tracking the source of a sale back to the source of the lead a little tricky. Your commitment to accurate 'marketing math,' is a choice you'll have to make – and a skill you'll improve over time.

But, Google Analytics can help. A lot.

It won't track your sales, but it certainly can track your leads.

And, it will give you valuable information on things like:

- Which keywords get the most traffic?
- Which referral sources send you the most leads?
- Which email campaigns?
- What about paid ads?
- Which social media sites send the most traffic?



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Google Analytics can mystify the beginner. But, an hour or so of training – online or with a qualified expert – can quickly make you an expert enough to master your own traffic data.

Numbers matter. At some point, they end up in your bank account.

Numbers matter. At some point, they end up in your bank account.

Start with a few that make a difference. Track them. Pay attention to them. Get your team to pay attention to them.

Remember, what gets measured gets done.

SUCCESS KEY #10

Cheat Sheet! Get Twice as Much done in half the time.

There's an old saw that says 'writing is easy.' Just sit down at the typewriter, stare at the blank page and...slit your wrists.

Okay, that may be a little dramatic – but I don't know an author who hasn't chuckled in recognition. And, it does get a point across: work is work. Even professional writers run into blocks.

But, prolific writers have created solutions. (How else could Stephen King put out a book every year?)

Here are seven secrets to creating epic content – and doing it quickly – that I rely on.

1. **Don't ever stare at a blank screen unless you know what you're going to write first.** (Same thing goes for video, audio, etc., of course.) Blank screens are devilishly powerful. They like to win. Go back to Success Key #2: It's Easy with a Plan. Remember, brainstorm like crazy. Think of all the things your marketplace really cares about. Keep the keepers. Dump the losers. And, put them in order. Creating epic content is much easier if you do the planning first.
2. **Have a template.** That way, you don't have to think of everything at once. Just one thing at a time. For example, I often use this one:
 - **What's my Big Idea?** (Is what I am trying to show is important or urgent? Why does this matter to my market? What is the big benefit?)

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- **What supports my Big Idea?**

Choose at least three ideas or facts that support your premise. Or three or more solutions to the problem you're trying to solve.

Unfortunately, that's the way unseasoned writers write...with their own 'editor-in-their-head' critiquing their work as they create it.

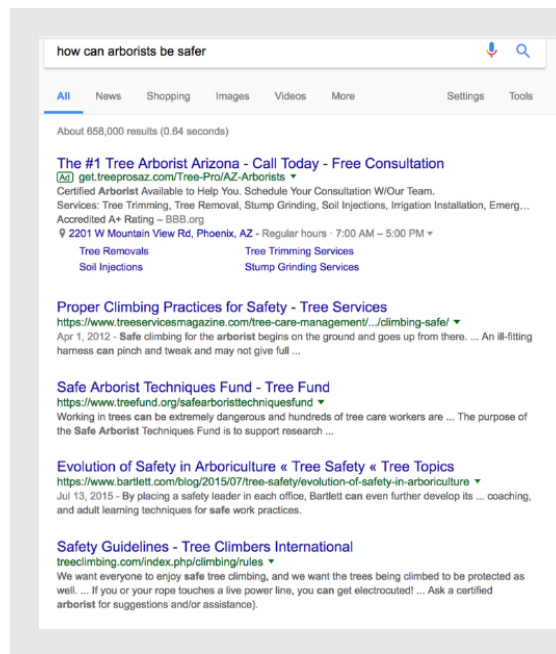
- **What Action Plan do I want to**

present? Usually, your content presents an idea that's best served with more than a summary, though you may want to summarize your key ideas at the end. Most of your content probably requires some action. Make it easy for your audience to grasp what those actions are. Make it easy to see how taking action will solve their problem.

3. **Get the editor off your back!** Can you imagine a writer doing their job...with their editor reading everything they're writing, constantly making judgments and suggestions? That would drive anyone crazy. Unfortunately, that's the way unseasoned writers write...with their own 'editor-in-their-head' critiquing their work as they create it. Separate the process. Write furiously. Edit ruthlessly. (Just do the editing later. Not when you write!)
4. **Focus on the customer. Not on you.** Not even on the quality of your content. When your content is important, it's much, much easier to create. And, what makes it important is if it's important to your audience. The question you need to sit down with isn't, 'What should I create?' That focuses on you. It should be, 'What problems does my marketplace have?' For example, if you know that your arborist market worries about workplace safety, it will probably be easy to uncover seven, or nine or 11 ways that arborists can make work safer for themselves and their team.
5. **Do research. It gets the gears going.** And it practically delivers content on a platter. For example, if I Google 'how can arborists be safer?' I instantly get this.

Enough meat ‘n potatoes to fill blogs, videos and whatever else for a year. (And if I can’t find enough on that page, Google offers 658,000 total results)

6. **Do you get ‘writer’s block’ when you think you have to write.** Then, don’t think like that. Write like you talk. Like I am now, y’know? Most persuasive copy sounds and feels like someone is talking to you, anyway. My former copywriting mentor, Gary Halbert, ran into this problem with his protégées all the time. Salespeople could sell. But, they’d freeze up in front of a blank page. He’d have them record themselves delivering their best sales pitch, transcribe it – and, they’d have the foundation for a good piece. You can probably picture someone you’d be sharing this information with. Do that. Imagine you’re addressing them personally. Then put it in writing.
7. **There are a few key elements of copy you should pay special attention to:**
 - If it’s an email, the **subject line**. Subject lines either open doors – or keep them locked.
 - The **headline** and/or the **title**. This is where you grab their attention, deliver the promise of a benefit, and get your reader to dive into your content.
 - The **first sentence**. Ted Nicholas – another early copy mentor of mine – taught that first sentences have a very specific purpose: **to get them to read the second**



sentence. (And, guess what the purpose of the second sentence is? That's right! To read the third... and so on and so on.) But, the most important sentence: the first.

Content curation allows you to deliver value without the effort and expense of creating it yourself.

- **Subheads** break up the copy and encourage the reader to dive into the next paragraph.
 - **Bullet points** also break up the copy, and make it easy to read. Plus, they let you deliver key points, rapid-fire. (Like this paragraph here.)
 - The **Call-to-Action** simply tells people what to do in order to get the results you promised⁷.
8. **Curate other people's content.** (And, do it the right way.) I'm developing a guide to content curation for insurance agents...but until then, here's what you need to know:

Content curation allows you to deliver value without the effort and expense of creating it yourself. However, a few 'rules' apply.

- You need to balance it with your own content. If you're perceived of as a mere (lazy) pass-through, who needs you? Not much value there. Most marketers would probably like to see no more than 20% curation of other people's content.
- You should have very strict guidelines about what you share. For example, it probably should be **exceptional** content. People have content overload. They don't need you adding to. Don't be known for sharing fluff or being average. But, people will never tire of **exceptional** content.
- It should fit within a narrow scope of content categories. People need to know what you stand for and why they should connect with you. This establishes the

values of your brand in the mind of the marketplace.

Content curation has three phases:

- **You find it.** To do this effectively, you need systems that present you with information in the categories you selected.
- **You curate it.** Then, you need to add your judgment to discern if it meets your criteria. Ideally, you'll add value to the content you share. You'll share an insight that makes it even more relevant to your audience. You can structure your curation to make it more interesting or digestible. For example, you can group content into 'themes' or 'weekly round-ups.'
- **You share it.** Content curation is ready-made for social sharing. But, be careful about sharing according to the best practices of each platform. For example, your Facebook audience may not be the same or share the same values as your LinkedIn network. (I highly recommend the use of a 'social scheduling' tool, that allows you to quickly and easily load your content across platforms, on your schedule and at your convenience⁸.) For very high value items, you may consider using email to share, or as part of an agency newsletter. Always give credit to the source of your content. (You may also want to inform your source that you're sharing their content. Where appropriate, that could lead to an ongoing business relationship or, at least, a reciprocal link or shout-out for you.)

Ideally, you'll add value to the content you share. You'll share an insight that makes it even more relevant to your audience.

SUCCESS KEY #11

OPW! (Other People's Work) What You Need to Do & What Others Can Do For You...

You don't need to do it all yourself. As we discussed in Success Key #4, Marketing is a Team Sport.

Your own team – the agency staff – must be engaged. To help the agency 'listen' and record questions that your marketplace has. And, to help distribute content using 'the Lagniappe Method.'

But, your team – and your expanded team – can easily help you accelerate the production of high quality content.

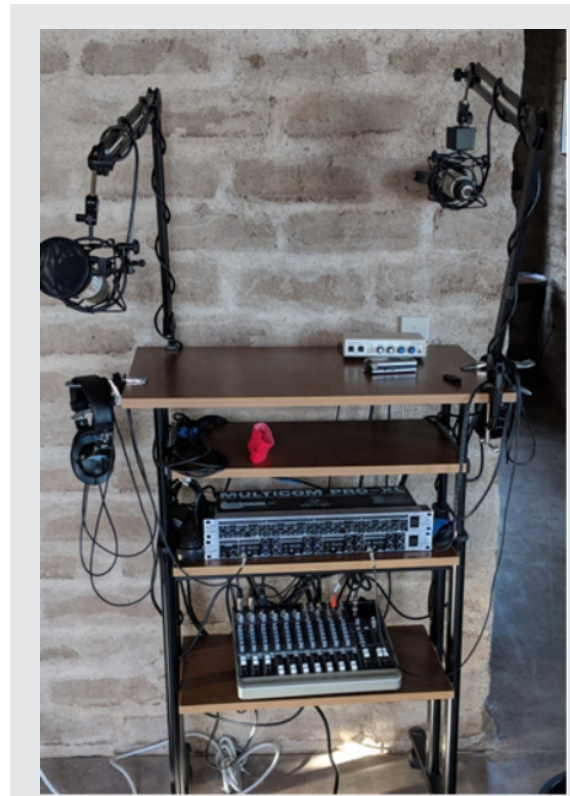
Let's identify some of the key roles in content creation and distribution:

- **Strategy.** Content marketing – like every other activity in your business - must fit within some larger strategic context. Where is the agency going? What are the trends, supportive and obstructive, that will affect your ability to get there? Where will you get the most results relative to the investment of resources? How will you deploy resources most effectively? How will you present your 'brand' to most effectively support your strategy? These are 'big picture' issues that must guide your content strategy.
- **Writing.** Most content involves some writing, even if it's an outline or a general script for a video. Editing and proofreading can be put into this broad category.

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- **Design.** All content has some ‘look.’ From a Facebook post to a special report, someone needs to deliver design that supports the content of the message itself.
- **Video and other A/V.** More and more content is using video. It’s not hard. It doesn’t need to demonstrate Hollywood production value. But, decisions need to be made – and someone needs to push buttons! (With a little training, I ‘push my own buttons’ for my weekly podcast series. That’s a lot of buttons!)
- **Publishing.** Somebody needs to effectively get this content into whatever platforms your using.
- **Promotion.** And, somebody needs to make sure your audience knows about it.



Now, what do YOU need to do? And, what can or should you let others do?

Of course, that depends on your role.

Let’s touch on that for a moment. Agency staff structures are changing. More and more agencies are waking up to how good marketing accelerates growth – whether it’s in personal or commercial lines.

And, that has meant that people need to do things that agencies didn’t have to do before.

In August of 2017, I interviewed [Chuck Blondino](#), Director of Agency Capabilities and Programs at Safeco Insurance in for Agency Revolution’s Connected Insurance Podcast series.

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Safeco assessed the difference between their top performers and their average performers.

Here's a critical difference: the top performing agencies **communicated more**, and, in order to make that happen, many invested in some form of position that didn't used to exist in insurance agencies: **marketer**.

But - a key point - many of the functions of 'marketer' do not have to be performed by a full or even part-time staff member.

In smaller agencies, more of the marketer functions tend to be executed by leadership. Sometimes all of them.

But, in larger agencies, more principals are realizing the enormous ROI of marketing, and they're investing in some commitment to make that happen.

The functions of that position may change. And, I suspect, it may evolve as the industry matures its commitment to marketing.

But – a key point – many of the functions of 'marketer' do not have to be performed by a full or even part-time staff member. (As we'll see in a moment.)

However, some functions must be maintained at the level of agency leadership.

Strategy belongs to leadership. Leadership has to make certain key, high level decisions.

- Where does the agency most need to put its attention now?
- Attracting more leads into the marketing funnel?
- Attracting better leads?
- Increasing the conversion rate?
- Generating more revenue per relationship?

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- Boosting retention?
- Which lines of business will deliver the most opportunities?
- Which niches?

Team selection belongs to leadership.

- What functions will be performed by whom?
- How much resource will be committed to it and where will it be deployed?
- What will be performed by staff and what will be outsourced?

Approval of plan and performance belongs to leadership.

- Leadership doesn't necessarily need to develop the plan. But, they need to 'own' it.
- Likewise, leadership doesn't need to execute the plan, but they need to 'own' it, too.

So, some functions can't be abdicated. But, some can be delegated.

And, they can be delegated to 'outsiders.'

If you want to delegate **a lot**, you can easily find a full-service agency (as in 'marketing agency' that can drive the whole process.

But, beware. Do **not** delegate the three functions I identified above.

Nobody cares about results like you do, so don't give away the critical pieces of the puzzle that belong to you.

Or, you can easily piece-meal your delegation.

For example, Google 'freelance content writers,' and you'll find about 1.4 million suggestions.

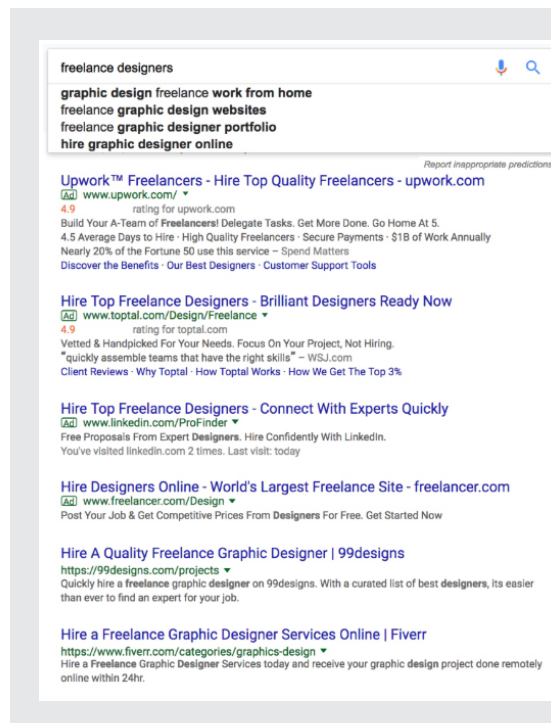
Or visit freelance job sites, like [Upwork](#) or [Fiverr](#).

You can do the same with anything. You can find designers. If you want to get a little sophisticated and deliver a podcast, you can find people who will do everything for you – including the actual interviewing.

The biggest caveat on delegating – whether you’re doing it in-house or outsourcing it: if you don’t provide some clear strategy, it’s expensive. Because there will be a lot of waste.

That understood, hiring outside expertise is remarkably affordable. Nothing should stand in the way of accelerating your growth quickly – if you act.

Once again, marketing is a team sport.



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SUCCESS KEY #12

Sky High ROI! 3 Places to Begin...

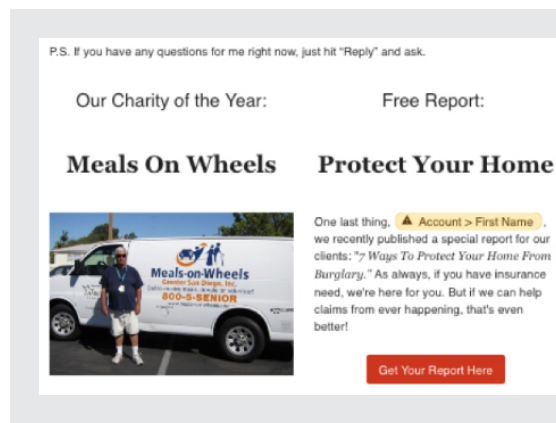
Put your marketing where it comes back to you – in multiples. A few dollars in. Lots of dollars out.

As your content marketing journey evolves, you'll test and experiment. And, you'll discover hidden marketing gems that work for you.

But, when you start, start with the proven winners.

1. **Your current customers.** Marketers hunger for the 'best list,' as if it were the holy grail. Marketers know there are lots of ways to cultivate a list. You can buy them. Rent them. Partner with joint ventures to access someone else's list. But, marketers know that the best list is always 'the house list:' the list of people who have made contact with you. And, sophisticated marketers further segment their house list:

- Leads, organized by how recently they've come in.
- Former customers, organized by how recently they left.
- And, current customers. This is your holy grail. This will be the most responsive list you have. Marketing to this list will generate more policies per customer, higher retention rates and more referrals. Most agencies have so much untapped value in their relationship to their customer base, this list will keep you busy for years. (The image above shows the preview screen of an emailed client newsletter



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that offers a 'special report' on **7 Ways to Protect Your Home from Burglary** with a red button that drives the reader to the agency website page that allows them to download the report.)

Hence, if you want your content to be read: email it to your customer list!

2. Email vs. Social. In the marketing community, this isn't even an argument anymore. When you post something on your Facebook page, for example, you might get 1-2% of your followers to see your post. Maybe more...but usually not much. A [2016 Study](#) put the average email marketing open rate at 21.7%.

Hence, if you want your content to be read: email it to your customer list! It has the magic marketing combination: 1) there's a lot of money in that list and 2) they'll see your content.

3. AUTOMATE YOUR MARKETING. This is the ultimate solution for agencies. Marketing automation has been around for many years. However, large, horizontal marketing automation firms has had little success in most vertical industries, including insurance. That's because it quickly confronts two barriers:
 - Most agencies maintain their data in an agency or broker management system. Successfully integrating a marketing automation system with an agency management system is a huge engineering feat, far outside the scope of almost any insurance agency.
 - CONTENT! The kind of 'conversation' that ideally occurs between agencies and their leads and customers is peculiar to the industry – as it is with any industry. Creating successful content that delivers the results that agents want requires an intimate and in-depth knowledge of the industry and the nature of the agent-client relationship.

Now that problem has been solved⁹. The most advanced industry-specific marketing automation systems can automatically 'read' the information in your agency management system and use that information to trigger personalized campaigns **to the right person with the right message at the right time.**

In other words, you can use contemporary tools to deepen and strengthen your customer relations, guiding them from 'new customer' to 'raving fan.'

Hence, depending on the campaigns you choose to use, your agency can automatically reach out to everyone today who is a new customer; files a claim; closes a claim; has a birthday; approaches their renewal...and so forth. And, each message is personalized and **delivers the very message you want them to receive.**

Additionally, you can use marketing automation to launch cross-sell campaigns, referral campaigns, reviews campaigns, agency newsletters – and much more.

In other words, you can use contemporary tools to deepen and strengthen your customer relations, guiding them from 'new customer' to 'raving fan.'

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BONUS SECRET

Start Here!

Here's the promise I can make to you. Content marketing can and will turbo-charge any phase of marketing you want. (Or, better yet, all of them!) For example, this is what it will do:

- **Load your marketing funnel with leads.** But, not just 'leads' – like the kind you can so easily buy (and 4 other agents are trying to sell). Not just leads that you can so easily buy – and, they don't know you, don't desire you, don't have any special reason (or emotional trigger) to do business with you.

Rather, leads that come 'pre-baked.' Just the way you like them. Hungry to do business with you. Pre-sold to do business with you. Stamped with 'Your Next Great Customer' on their forehead. Plus, you can turn the tap up or down, depending on your appetite for growth and your capacity to service.

- **Skyrocket your closing ratio.** Leads are fine. But most agents don't calculate the real cost of getting, attracting or buying leads you don't close. Quoting half-hearted prospects is not 'the cost of doing business' in the insurance industry. That's like standing in a crowd at Mardi Gras and thinking you've got street full of prospects. Nah.

When people know you, your closing ratio goes up. When people like you, it goes up again. When people respect you, admire you – and feel like you've already given them value through your content, it soars above the clouds. Content marketing doesn't just make you money. It saves you soooo much money. (And, it makes your staff feel like winners, because their bringing clients into the business who want to be there!)

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- **Sell more policies per customer.** Two reasons. First, you must be delivering quality content to your customers. (See Success Key #12: 3 Tricks for Sky High ROI.) They've already made the biggest, toughest, most challenging transition in business. They've gone from 'outsider' to 'insider.'

Great retention is not about renewing policies. It's about continuing and deepening relationships.

Second, it's about 'heart.' As you can tell from what I've shared so far, great content marketing isn't just about 'selling.' It's about creating the best possible feelings that someone can have about you and your agency – and doing it in the most respectful and caring way: by delivering useful and valuable information that helps them. When these people join your tribe, they come with gratitude and an open mind. These people are pre-disposed to trust your good advice about 'full coverage' and what that means to themselves, their families and their business.

- **Get the highest retention possible.** *Bain & Company's* research on insurance customer loyalty showed that loyal clients retain at 97%. That's the number you should be shooting for. (I have one client who achieved a stunning 98% retention). You won't ever hit your best retention by selling a policy and riding off, adios, into the sunset for a year...and then showing up a year later with your hand out.

Great retention is not about renewing policies. It's about continuing and deepening relationships. And, nothing earns loyalty like delivering an ongoing stream of value, exceeding expectations. (And, walloping the dreadfully low expectations set by other agents!)¹⁰

But, even with big promises like that, a problem gets in the way.

I've run into this problem thousands of times in my 25 years of consulting and training insurance agents and brokers in marketing. It goes by a few names, like:

'I don't know where to start!'

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'It looks great...but I'm overwhelmed.'

'I love it...but this is so new to me.'

'Can't wait...but gonna have to 'cuz I'm so busy!'

So, let's make it easy-peasy.

I have TWO suggestions for you. Two simple places to start.

Oftentimes, what you'll discover is that, once you create your first piece, it's easy to use it over and over again. You can re-purpose it. Use it in different media. But, very, very often, that **one piece** gives you more juice than you dreamed of.

For principals: this is the ultimate marketing ROI.

For marketers: this is often the piece that **proves** your value.

So, about those TWO pieces.

But, first, a brief story.

For years, when agents have clamored for growth, I've heard them cry for 'LEADS, LEADS, LEADS.'

This is the case around industries, around the world. It's a case of 'Shortcut Thinking:' if you want growth, you need leads.

Of course, leads are good. And, if you're getting good leads and have a good closing ratio, they bring future income with profitability. (Bad leads may bring income but rarely bring profit. As a whole, when they become customers, they get subsidized by your other customers.)

But, 'Shortcut Thinking' is dangerous thinking. I wanted to prove the value of something very simple: increased retention.

But, 'Shortcut Thinking' is dangerous thinking. I wanted to prove the value of something very simple: increased retention.

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Retaining customers is one of the easiest ways to increase your bottom line.

For example, if you bump your retention by 4 points on a million-dollar book, you'll generate an **additional \$1,143,900 in the next 10 years!**

Strategically, focusing on your existing customers and deepening those relationships is wise.

Or, bump it by 8 points – and generate \$2,594,216 in the next ten years.

Then, I devoted the first part of a workshop to lay out precisely how much each agent in the room would make with a bump in their own retention.

Everyone was drooling. Not only did they discover that retention is easy to affect. Compared to generating new leads, it's cheap. So the ROI is huge.

Strategically, focusing on your existing customers and deepening those relationships is wise.

Once, when I was teaching this topic to folks before the lunch break, I conducted a little exercise. I asked everyone to cast votes on what they most wanted to focus on in future training.

After I softened them up to think 'retention, retention, retention, what ONE topic do you they most voted for?

Retention, right? (After all, I'm such a persuasive trainer!)

Nope. Not retention.

You guessed it.

LEADS.

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So, here's my bottom line. If you ever choose to work with me on an advisory basis – one-on-one – I'm going to make sure you have a comprehensive approach to **all four stages of marketing**.

But, to satisfy the market for what they most want, I'll always teach the most powerful ways to get LEADS!

So, here we go.

You want leads? Here's how to get them.

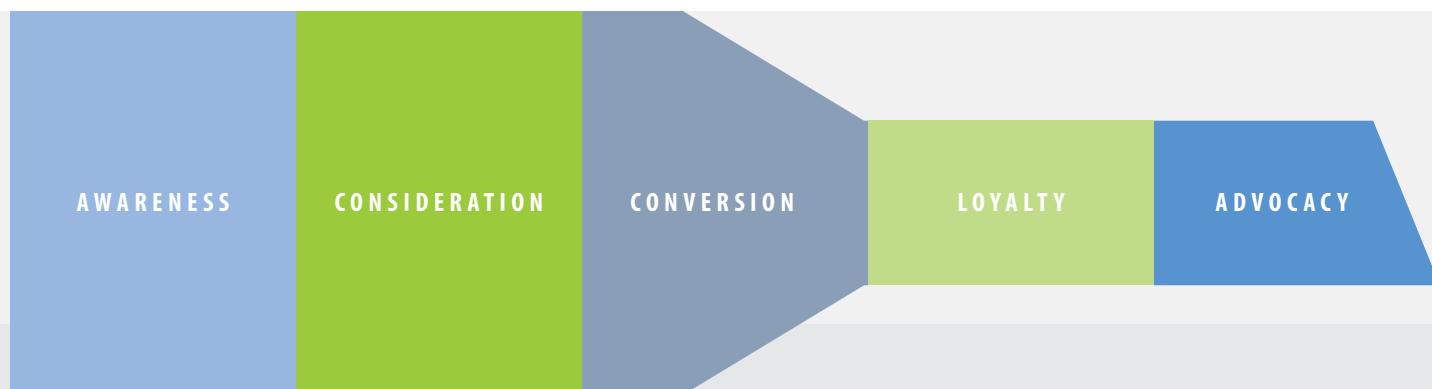
Not bought leads. Not leads who don't know you from Adam.

Leads who want you.

1. Pick your niche. For this example, let's pick a commercial lines niche. Arborists. In Ohio.
2. Remember, you're shooting for LEADS, not anything else. They're not thinking of you. (And, they may not be ready for you, but when they think 'insurance,' and they are ready, you want them to think of you.) So, go Top of the Funnel, remember? Pick a topic of broad, common concern that can lead to you. So, what topic is of broad concern to arborists? Do some research using my 19 Shortcuts to Epic Content for Insurance Agents & Brokers. I'll give you tools that practically do the research for you.
3. Give it a title. A 'listicle,' for example, like the one I mentioned earlier: **'13 Critical Safety Secrets for Arborists: Protect Your Business from Danger, Death and Disaster.'**
4. Write your 13 'secrets.' Make it easy to read.

So, here's my bottom line. If you ever choose to work with me on an advisory basis - one-on-one - I'm going to make sure you have a comprehensive approach to all four stages of marketing.

5. Make your byline and bio easy to identify.
6. Publish. (You may want to use a 'landing page' or a form on your website in order to 'gate' your content. That way, you can exchange your information for their email. Then, of course, once you have their email, you must continue to deliver ongoing value, and help them move through your marketing funnel.)
7. Promote. (And, promote, promote, promote.) NOTE: remember to include your team as part of your promotion and distribution system, using the Lagniappe Method described in Success Key #4.



What's the second way? Don't get leads. Get **depth**. With your existing customers.

Now, you're past the awareness, consideration and conversion stages of the relationship, and deep into the loyalty stages.

Again, ask yourself, what do these people care about? What can you share with them that delivers relevant, ongoing value?

And – a big question – what is the best possible role you can play in their lives?

Are you the agent who considers your book of business to be like a 'flock' or a 'tribe' for whom you have some leadership responsibility? Are you the one who worries that they never come to harm?

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If so, brainstorm a list of concerns they may have. Let's assume, for example, that you have a book with a lot of homeowners. What do they care about? Protecting their home and family. Nobody wants to come to harm. And, you can be perceived as the person who watches out for them.

In fact, much of the 'lead gen' content can be used for 'loyalty' content. Look at the arborist example. Wouldn't both leads and customers be interested in work safety? Of course.

- How to protect your home from burglary.
- How to protect your home from fire.
- How to protect your home from flood.
- How to prepare for an earthquake.
- How to communicate with your family or friends in the event of a natural disaster.
- What you should have on hand, right now, before natural disaster strikes.
- How to protect children when they're not with their parents.
- How to make sure children are safe at Halloween.
- How to protect your home when you travel on vacation.
- How to protect your valuables when you travel.
- A few simple but important terms every homeowner should know to help them understand their own insurance protection...and so forth.

In fact, much of the 'lead gen' content can be used for 'loyalty' content. Look at the arborist example. Wouldn't both leads and customers be interested in work safety? Of course.

Now What?

In the year 2000, my company, Insurance Profit Systems, taught the first 'Internet Marketing Course for Insurance Agents.' Around the same time, our company launched its first marketing automation technology, ZipDrip, proclaimed by Independent Agent Magazine as a 'must have' web tool

Agents were 'wowed' by the wizardry of what the internet could do. These were things that were almost unimaginable:

- Communicate with thousands of people at once – 'amazing!'
- Pre-schedule a year's worth of nurturing messages – 'I can't believe it!'
- Send thousands of emails, with everyone's first name – 'love it!'
- Automatically send emails to people who click a link on a website – 'a homerun!'... and on and on.

But, I remember more than one agent approaching me after the course, saying, 'But...do you really think the consumer will respond to this?'

Here we are, almost two decades later, and the consumer has answered that question.

And, in response, smart marketers have figured out how to 'join the dance.'

Competitors to the agency system have stepped into this space and cultivated millions of customers.

Now, new competitors are jumping into what they perceive as a growing gap between the agent channel and our customers.

In 2016, venture capital investors risked \$1.7 billion dollars into 'insurtech' – the emerging technology-driven insurance sub-industry. Agents must take note: according to [McKinsey](#)

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& Company, of the 15 different categories into which they invested, **more money went into P&C distribution than any other category.**

WHERE INSURTECHS ARE FOCUSING

NUMBER OF INNOVATIONS AS % OF TOTAL IN THE DATABASE

	PRODUCT	MARKETING	DISTRIBUTION	PRICING	CLAIMS
P&C	8%	4%	17%	10%	7%
HEALTH	5%	3%	11%	8%	6%
LIFE	3%	2%	9%	5%	2%

But, in spite of growing competition, agents have an advantage. Your best customers **want** what you have to offer: real protection **and the peace of mind that comes with it.**

Do they feel that peace of mind? Do they have the **confidence** that you're delivering it?

According to the research, not really. Not when they think the agent disappears after they sell the policy – and shows up a year later with their hand out¹¹. **Not when 86% of insurance consumers are 'not very satisfied' with the communications from their insurance provider. Or when 44% report they recalled NO communications from their provider in the last 18 months.**

But, the new content marketing solves the problem for you.

- It positions you in the marketplace as a trusted advisor – long before people even meet you
- It helps make you the 'obvious choice' – regardless of the price of your product
- It allows you to 'be there,' present in the lives of your customers – in a helpful, non-intrusive way

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**YOUR BEST CUSTOMERS WANT
WHAT YOU HAVE TO OFFER:
REAL PROTECTION AND THE
PEACE OF MIND THAT COMES WITH IT.**

86%

OF INSURANCE CONSUMERS
ARE NOT VERY SATISFIED
WITH COMMUNICATIONS
WITH THEIR INSURER

- It lets you deliver ongoing value – without the massive expense of outbound phone-calling and on-site visits

All in all, it supports, strengthens and supplements each and every other form of marketing, communication and service you're already performing.

Does it work? The research is overwhelming. Clearly, this is the kind of messaging that customers actually want.

Sometimes, marketing gets a bad rap. After all, good marketing is persuasive, and people are naturally suspicious of the whether the interests of the marketer align with their own.

But, marketing that consistently delivers **value**?

This is the big paradigm shift that changes everything. Because technology has placed consumers in such a powerful position, they can demand value from their providers in ways we could never imagine.

Agents and brokers who can step up to the challenge...agents and brokers who truly care about their customers...agents and brokers who can act swiftly...these are the ones who will own the market of the future.

They'll get more customers.

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They'll get better customers.

They'll keep those customers longer.

And, they'll experience something they probably never dreamed of before:

Customers who thank them for their marketing!

That is the promise of the new content marketing for insurance agents.

If ever there was a time to take action – and to prove the value of the agency system, and of your agency - that day is today.

*If ever there was a time to take action
- and to prove the value of the agency
system, and of your agency - that day is
today.*

APPENDIX

The full set of marketing responsibilities

Content marketing respects the recipient. Done properly, your customers thank you for your marketing. Why? Because what you deliver is carefully crafted to earn gratitude.

The internet has rapidly delivered the tools to be a publisher to anyone and everyone. The result is powerful. Thoughtful marketers have become content marketers. And, content marketers kill it in the marketplace.

One way to look at content marketing is – not just ‘things’ to create and publish – but, as a core marketing philosophy. To respect the client and to always add value.

Hence, content marketers often transform their own business from the inside out. In order to add value, your business needs to be able to create value.

There are, of course, other marketing responsibilities that do not traditionally fit within the content marketing bag o’ tricks. But, if the philosophy of content marketing is the engine of agency-customer relationships, it’s useful to consider them as part of the overall content marketing execution.

This is a reasonably comprehensive list of marketing responsibilities. Larger agencies have the advantage of capacity: they can invest more at less risk into their marketing program. Hence, this list tends to represent a more advanced scope of marketing activities – and, one that every agency should work toward.

1. **Brand Discipline:** Facilitate consensus and articulation of brand values, story and brand guidelines. Help clarify ‘what we want to be known for, remembered for’ – and how that will be communicated.

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2. **Analytics.** Determine 'what's working/what's not' in order to allocate resources most effectively. Will require online tools for analysis, A/B testing, lead scoring, progressive profiling, etc.
3. **Customer Evangelism.** Identify, nurture and leverage evangelists for case studies, testimonials, online reviews, etc.
4. **Content Marketing.** Identify various user personas and develop a comprehensive 'customer journey' of touch-points through top, middle and bottom of funnel stages. This likely includes text, video, audio on various online (social, email) and offline platforms.
5. **Paid Acquisition.** Explore and assess the viability of paid advertising, including social (LinkedIn, Facebook) and, possibly, offline resources (trade magazines).
6. **Web Conversion.** Establish clarity of purpose of web presence and determine key metrics. Work with engineers and designers to optimize various user funnels.
7. **Product Marketing.** Work with appropriate teams (engineering, sales, etc.) to clarify customer/user needs, segment the market appropriately – and suggest modifications based on customer/user feedback.
8. **Communications.** Public relations to manage brand strategy in the wider industry landscape (press, partners, etc.)
9. **Fundraising & Acquisition.** It's uncommon for agencies to seek investors, but if they did, marketing should be involved in crafting the communication package, such as the 'pitch deck.' On the other side of the investment equation, agencies frequently compete for an acquisition, and, the 'marketing department' – however it's configured – should definitely help design the messaging.

For more information: www.michaeljans.com.

What Others Say...



'Michael Jans isn't just the best marketer in the insurance industry. He's our best philosopher. Pay attention to what he is saying.'

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"...the insurance marketing maven."

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