

ABC's

of Content Marketing

The **Partner** Marketing Group 



Introduction

Always delivering valuable content is a challenge for many B2B marketers. So much so that searching the internet for “B2B content marketing” on the web produces over 100 million results. Sorting through that many results is overwhelming and time-consuming; it’s a lot of information, ideas, strategies, and tactics. No matter where you are on the experience scale of content marketing, there are a few key fundamental concepts that are helpful to all content marketers.

Based on our recent [2019 Technology Marketing Benchmarks and Trends Report](#), 82% of respondents rated content marketing as at least a medium to high priority for their marketing plan, but only 52% have a plan in place! That’s why we created the ABC’s of Content Marketing to provide a short and simple guide to what you need to know about the hefty and important topic.

Concepts applicable to all content marketers are included in this eBook, whether you’re just starting out or well into your content marketing plan. After reading the ABC’s of Content Marketing, you will walk away with several ideas to improve your content marketing efforts, and consequently, drive more opportunities into the sales funnel!



A

Answer Questions.

The dreaded question all marketers have at some point is, "What should I write about?" Why not write content that answers the questions your customers have?

- What are your prospects asking you at various stages in the sales funnel?
- What are your customers asking?
- What do your customers ask you to help them with?
- Ask multiple people where their industry is headed.

Put a bounty on good questions in your company and then keep a list of FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) that you can answer throughout the year.

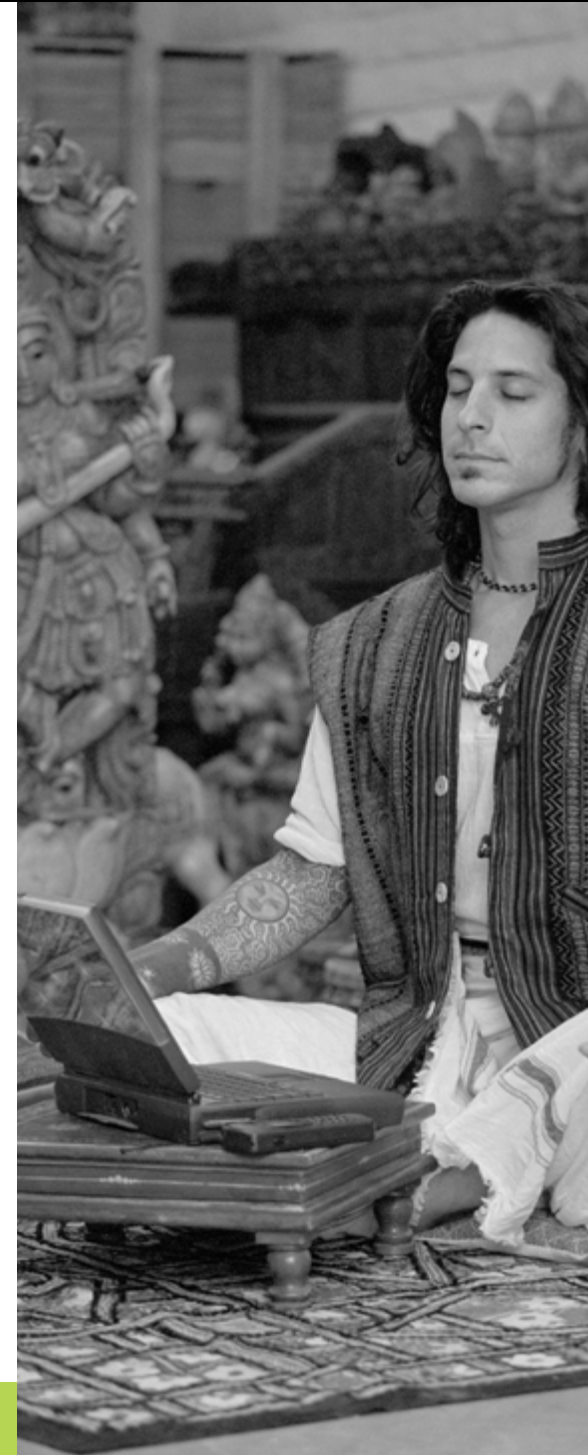


B

Blog.

Blogs are ESSENTIAL to any inbound marketing strategy. Don't have time to write your own blogs? Outsource them. You don't have to turn all your blogging over to a third party by the way, but it's a great way to supplement your own resources and keep an inventory of filler blogs that can be pushed out when you don't have time to think of a new topic.

[Download the article.](#) *To Blog or Not to Blog: Five Questions to Find Your Answer*, published in the Partner Channel Magazine.



C

Curation.

Every piece of content doesn't have to be original, particularly when it comes to social networks. Become a "content curator," finding and sharing interesting content with your prospects. Develop a list of experts and influencers to follow, then share their thoughts (and please add your perspective whenever possible.)

Compilations.

A beacon to all idea (and time) starved content providers. What should you compile?

- The best blog posts by evangelists in your industry
- The best online resources
- Best books of the year
- Best new apps



D

Differentiation.

Content that differentiates you from your competitors is particularly important for later in the sales cycle as your prospects start to consider who they will purchase from. Although most B2B marketers look at case studies for differentiation, there are other options.

- Use client quotes and testimonials liberally throughout all your materials (even your email signature).
- [Create an infographic](#) about what ONLY you can do for your prospects and why you can do it better.
- When you do create case studies, be concise and liberal with call-outs that show ROI and other metrics as well as customer quotes.

"With a fast growing Microsoft practice, we needed to partner with an organization with strong marketing competencies and deep knowledge of our industry to complement our own internal efforts. We have the best of both worlds with The Partner Marketing Group. We are able to focus the creative ideas that will see our practice thrive and use their expertise to collaborate on content refinement, delivery and program management."

Jim Krahn, Partner
BDO Solutions Canada



E

Editorial Calendar.

Build one to keep you on track. Include topics and owners. Take it a step further and note key “events” you want to write for including actual events, tradeshows, webinars and business triggers (such as year-end processes). [Hubspot has a great guide](#) to creating editorial calendars and a free template to get you started.



F

Fun.

Have some! Even in B2B content creation, there is ample room for creativity. Consider fun occasions like “Admit You’re Happy Month” (August) or any of the hundreds of [wacky days](#) on the calendar. Create your own [memes](#) or search for fun images to post. (Please don’t forget to check copyrights).



G

Graphics.

Statistics show that 93% of communication is nonverbal and that people process visuals 60,000 times faster than text. How can you take advantage of that? By using graphics to enhance content wherever possible. Did you celebrate "Have Fun at Work Day"? Take a picture and post it. Ditto if you're speaking at any events. Add graphics to all your content to help reinforce your key ideas.



H

Humans.

In the rush to please the bot and improve your search results, it can be easy to forget you are writing for humans. Get rid of the jargon and be genuine with what you write and it will naturally lead to higher conversions and more sales.



I

Infographics.

Info + graphics. What could be better? Consider creating infographics to complement other thought leadership pieces you have published. Since you've already done the research, the hardest part is behind you. By the way, you can have fun with infographics every once in a while (for example, why DOES Santa need an ERP system?).

Inbound Marketing.

According to Wikipedia, "inbound marketing is advertising a company through blogs, podcasts, video, eBooks, newsletters, whitepapers, search engine optimization (SEO), social media marketing, and other forms of content marketing. In contrast, direct mail, radio, TV advertisements, sales flyers, spam, email marketing, and telemarketing are considered 'outbound marketing.' Inbound marketing earns the attention of customers, makes the company easy to be found and draws customers to the website by producing interesting content."

7 Brilliant Ways VARs, ISVs and MSPs use Infographics

#1 Stand out from the crowd
It's hard for prospects to tell one partner from another. Show off your qualifications, highlight your achievements and demonstrate the benefits of your applications with an enlightening profile infographic.

There are over 100,000 IT service providers in US

Each icon represents 1,000 firms

#2 Move higher in search results
Content is the name of the game to be found online. Infographics give you great content that adds variety and attracts clicks.

36% Top three search results get 36% more clicks

#3 Build visibility in vertical markets
Show your target market you understand their business with an industry-specific infographic. Present interesting facts or creative ideas that prospects will want to share with their industry pals.

Healthcare	43.6%
Legal	40.1%
Financial Services	38.7%
Accounting	31.6%
Not for Profit	27.8%
Insurance	25.9%

#4 Simplify service explanations
Explain the process of the services you deliver through a step by step infographic to help your prospects see the big picture and the value you add.

A picture is worth a thousand words

#5 Appeal to younger workers
Finding and attracting young talent to your business will become even more challenging. Get their attention with an infographic that explains what you do and why they would love to work for you.

22% Technology jobs
6.8% Workforce

By 2020 there will be a 22% increase in technology jobs but only a 6.8% increase in labor force

#6 Explain complex concepts
Technology is complicated and intimidating to your prospects. When you can't explain in person, let graphics help you simplify concepts for non-technical decision makers.

83% of learning occurs visually

J

Journalism.

Use journalistic techniques, such as interviewing sources – to create some very powerful content. Who do you interview? Everyone from employees to clients, vendors and partners, industry influencers and business leaders.



K

Keywords.

Assuming one goal of your content development is to attract new prospects, make sure that everyone writing content for you has a list of your keywords and is bringing them into the copy (but don't over-stuff). What's too much? The preferred ratio of keywords is 1-3% of the overall copy.

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L

Landing Pages.

Most likely, some of your content is being developed as 'calls to action' for a campaign. If you are not including landing pages as part of those campaigns, you're hurting your results. You also may not be alone.

According to MarketingSherpa's Landing Page Handbook (2nd edition), 44% of clicks for B2B companies are directed to the business's homepage, not a special landing page. Why? One reason may be the difficulty for marketing teams to create their own landing pages. If your webmaster is not able to help you create great landing pages quickly – and for all your campaigns – consider a service like [Unbounce](#) which has GREAT landing pages that are easy to create and customize, and a lot of resources to help you get the best results.



M

Metrics.

Like any other form of marketing, you need metrics to help guide your content marketing initiatives. What you measure depends on your goals but simple content marketing metrics can include:

- Content usage (views and downloads), shares and whether content leads to additional actions (i.e., did people sign up for a newsletter, social site or take another action after reviewing your content?).
- Add calls to action within your content and measure clicks on those links.
- Revenue. Yes, you can measure it. How many people downloaded your content, then ultimately purchased your product or service?

There are also, of course, 'reach' metrics – such as followers, likes and visitors to your sites. Although many content marketers dismiss these as “vanity metrics,” we don't agree. There IS value in these metrics.



N

Newsroom.

Earlier we mentioned using journalistic tactics to keep content flowing. Let's take it a step further. Create a "newsroom" within your company by asking a few key employees to write about what's happening in your target markets. Sell cloud solutions? Set up news feeds and alerts and assign the big stories and breaking news for commentary and analysis.



O

Outbound Marketing.

In case you didn't catch this under the letter "I," here's the definition of both inbound and outbound marketing according to Wikipedia. "Inbound marketing is advertising a company through blogs, podcasts, video, eBooks, newsletters, whitepapers, search engine optimization (SEO), social media marketing, and other forms of content marketing. In contrast, direct mail, radio, TV advertisements, sales flyers, spam, email marketing, and telemarketing are considered 'outbound marketing.' Inbound marketing earns the attention of customers, makes the company easy to be found and draws customers to the website by producing interesting content."

Outsource.

(a/k/a: Be realistic.) You're going to need a lot of content. We recommend blogging at least once a week and creating an original thought leadership piece once a quarter as the MINIMUM. This is in addition to all the content you're curating through your social networks. [Outsourcing some of this content](#) is a good way to keep it from crippling your internal resources. On top of the volume challenges, there's also an 80-20 rule. 80% of your content should be NON-PROMOTIONAL. Use your resources where they can do the best job – most likely on the 20% promotional and on curating content that will be valuable to your target audience. Hire a writer to deliver your thought leadership pieces. This has the added advantage of making sure you don't drift into the dreaded features and benefits or "about us" type content where it doesn't belong.



P

Plan.

A content strategy and plan helps you identify the most critical content to create and to identify and allocate the resources you need. According to a survey from the Content Marketing Institute, marketers without a content strategy typically take longer to get content created, use it less effectively and create less than those with a plan. We also see a trend of marketers without a content strategy paying more per piece than those with a plan.

Avoid practicing “random acts of content” by identifying your content needs and building a plan to develop those pieces. A content plan will utilize your buyer personas and help make sure you are creating compelling content for all your targets.

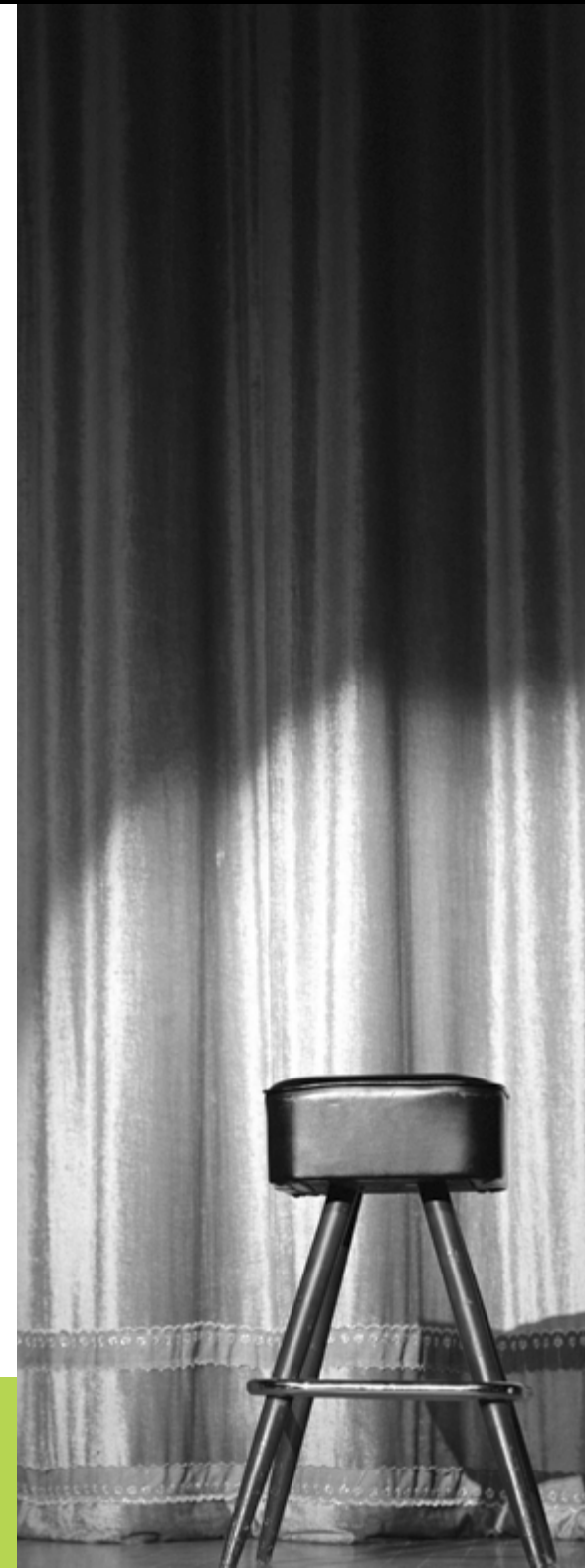


P²

Promotion.

If you build it, they may not come. You need a solid distribution plan for your content that incorporates all possible distribution channels. Make it easy on yourself and create a promotion checklist listing all the vehicles you will use to promote new content. You don't need to do it all for every piece, but having a list will keep you on track.

Think outside the box. Other than the obvious blogs and social networks, where else can you share and promote your content? Can you share with any partners or vendors you work with? If you've created a thought leadership piece (eBook, whitepaper, infographic), they may be willing to share it with their customers and prospects. If you have relationships with influencers, perhaps they will be interested in writing a blog about your latest piece. And beyond online, is it in your email signature? Do you talk about it in your newsletter or other regular communications? You probably spent a lot of time and/or money to build your content so make sure it's viewed by as many people in your target market as possible.



Q

Quality over Quantity.

While you need a steady stream of content to keep your site and offers fresh and effective, it's even more important that you deliver quality pieces. Taking shortcuts (usually in the form of pushing out a lot of promotional pieces) won't work. Be realistic and plan, identify gaps, and if necessary, outsource to extend your resources.



R

Repurpose, Reuse, Recycle.

Once you create a good thought leadership piece, make sure you have a strategy for maximizing the time you put into it. One good piece can go a long way. Did you create a whitepaper on what to consider when selecting an ERP system?

- Consider an infographic to go with it.
- Break down the whitepaper and create some blog posts, and use a blog post to address anything you may have left out.
- Pull out key tips and push them out via social media.
- Take it a few steps further and create an animated video with the top tips and a worksheet that your target audience can download to assess their readiness for an ERP system.



S

Sales Funnel.

When you create your content plan, you should identify what your prospects' challenges are at each stage of the sales cycle. Make sure you carry that through in the pieces you are writing and that everything you do addresses a need for that. For example, early in the sales cycle, prospects are seeking to be educated. Later in the sales cycle, they need information such as customer case studies to help validate their decision.

Sales.

Once you complete the mapping of your content to the various stages of the sales funnel, make sure your sales team is aware of what's available and when and how to use it. Keep a sales collateral library organized by top, bottom and middle of the funnel and prospect type so that they can easily grab the content you've created. If you don't connect them with the content and keep it top of mind, don't expect it to be used.



T

Titles.

A good title:

- Can make or break your content.
- Should communicate in very few words who the piece is for and what they will learn.
- Will incorporate your keywords.

It's a lot to ask and yet most writers will spend far less time on a title than it warrants. Take the time to create a powerful title and you'll see markedly better results. [Read this article](#) by Neil Patel for some great advice on writing powerful titles and headlines that will get your piece read.



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Unique.

Unique content appeals to both humans AND search engines. A well-researched original content piece (for example, the results of a survey you conduct or future trends in distribution) will add to your credibility, position you as a thought leader, and encourage more shares and forwards. At the same time, search engines will embrace the uniqueness of your content.



V

Video.

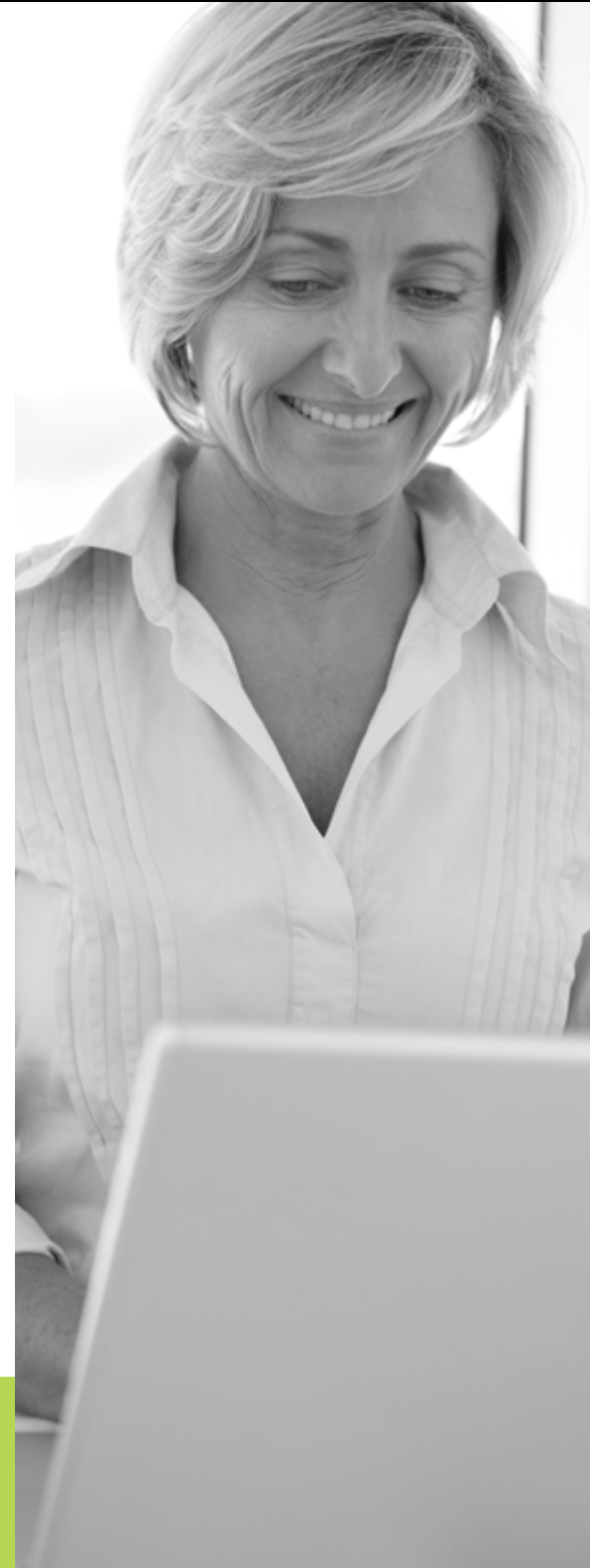
According to Forbes Insights, 75% of executives surveyed said they watch work-related videos on business-related websites at least weekly. For the letter V, let's consider video to be all forms of moving images – including animation, whiteboard animation, screen casting and the more traditional video. Take time to research what's out there and include this powerful vehicle in your content planning. Visit and sign-up for updates from [ReelSEO](#) for inspiration.



W

Webinars.

In line with videos, webinars are a powerful form of content that you are most likely already utilizing. Extend your efforts by recording all webinars and making them available in your library. Use your webinar tools to record SHORT webinars (15 minutes and under) as well. As with other forms of content, don't forget to promote your webinars via blogs, social media, on your website, and in your newsletters.

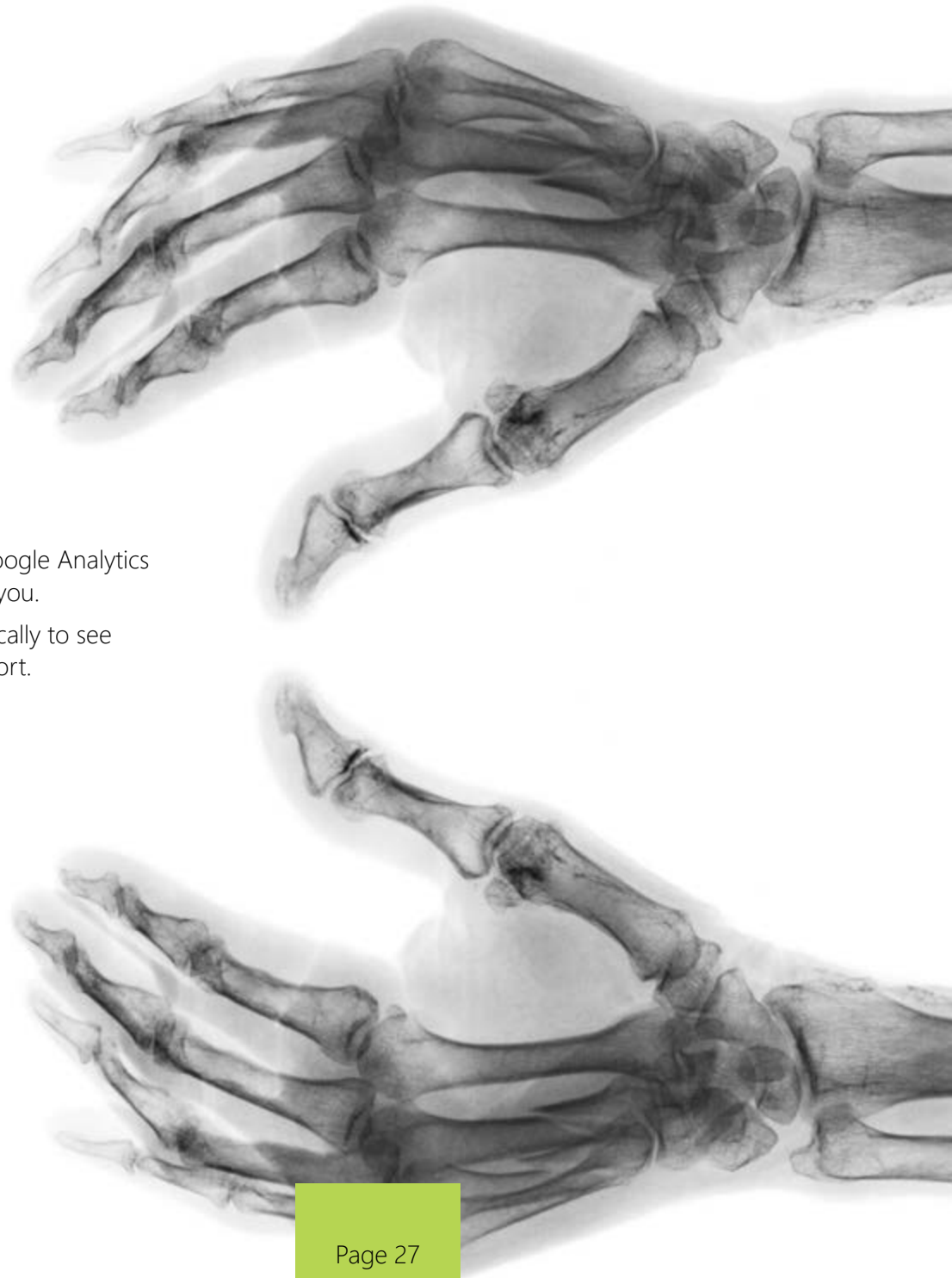


X

X-ray.

Take a look at your content like you would look at an X-ray. Use Google Analytics and social stats to clearly see which content is performing well for you.

It's worth your time to step back from your work and look at it critically to see where you need to increase focus and where you can minimize effort.



Y

Year End.

The end of the year is a super rich content time so start planning now! Year-end articles can run as early as September and go through January. Topics can include everything from specific tips to compilations, the year in review, and 'what's ahead' pieces.



Z

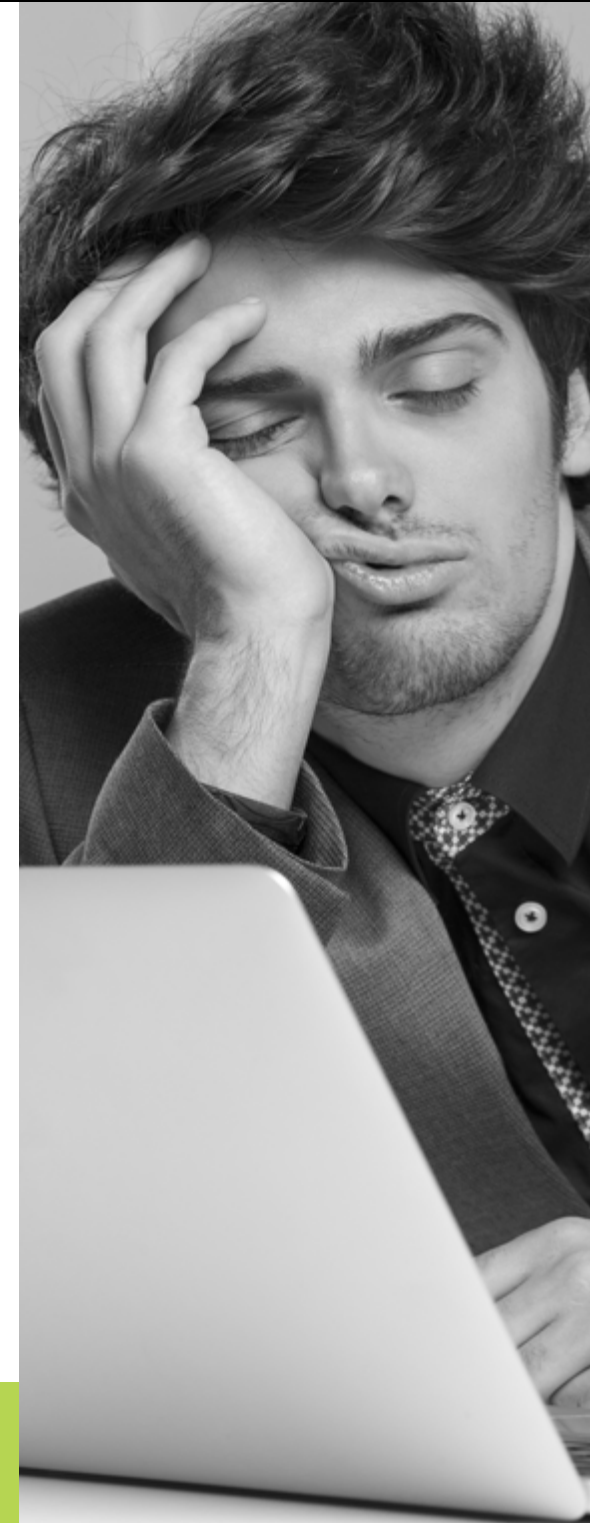
Zzzzzzzzz.

Is your marketing a snoozefest? Let's face it—technology can be boring!

Look for ways to incorporate some excitement into your marketing through images, video, engaging stories or interactive polls.

Need some inspiration? [Read this blog](#) by Hootsuite for 12 Ways to Promote Your “Boring” Brand or Product on Social Media.

One of the tips Hootsuite recommends is to promote your company culture and you can [read our blog on that very topic](#) for tips on how to do that.



The Partner Marketing Group

See “O” for Outsource.

Our Services

The Partner Marketing Group is dedicated to helping technology companies and software vendors grow through inbound and outbound marketing. We tap into your company’s value, goals and focus to create strategic marketing plans, content, channel programs, training and more.

Our People

Our team consists of professional, experienced marketers with decades of devotion to the technology channel. We know how to help you achieve your goals from day one. Working with us is a collaborative effort and you can feel confident knowing you have a dedicated marketing partner with the passion, expertise and commitment you need to succeed.

Contact us today to get started.

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