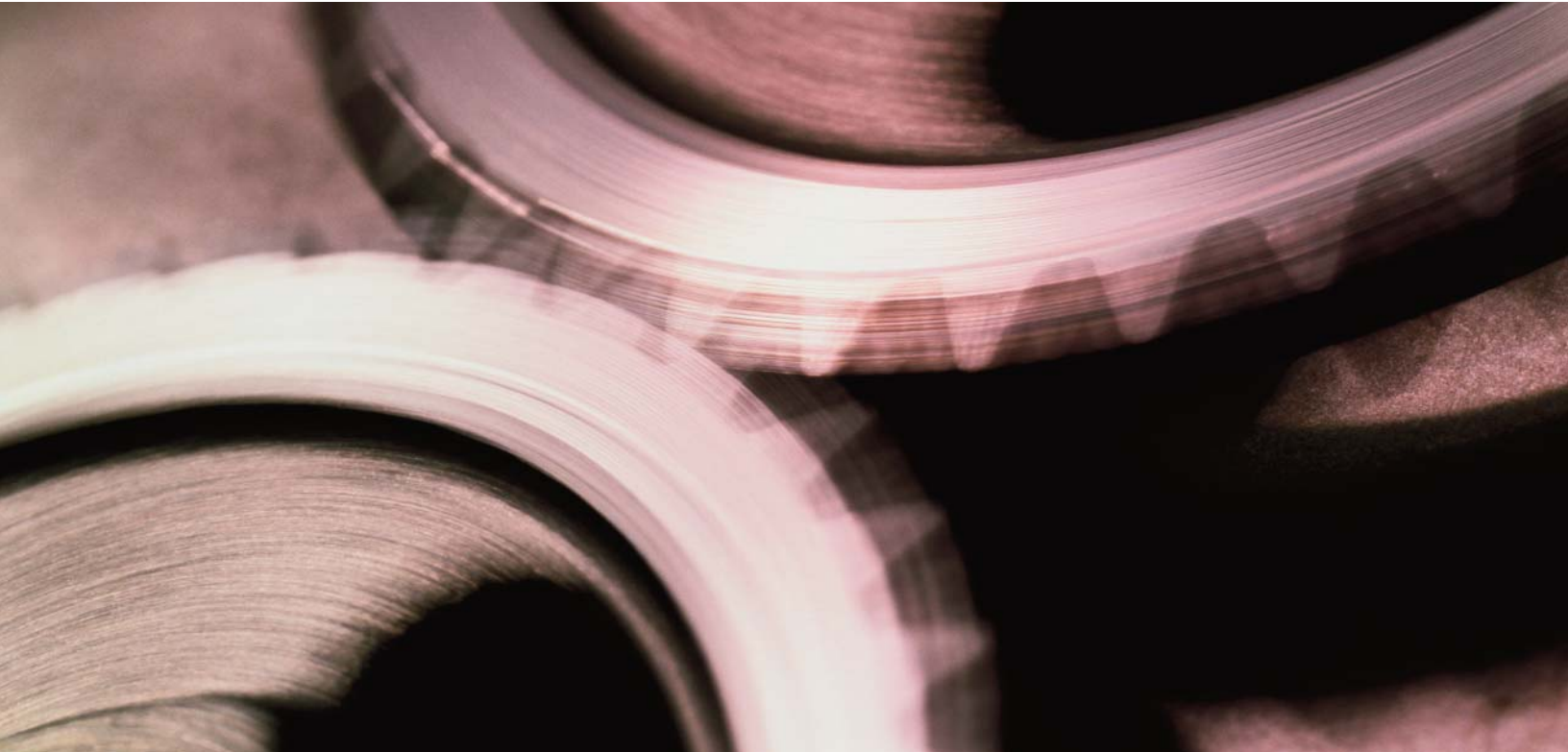


Six Building Blocks for a Content Strategy to Fuel Marketing Automation-Driven Demand Generation



FROST & SULLIVAN



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SUMMARY

Marketing automation delivers great promise of more impactful online BtoB marketing, but it also carries a significant burden for marketing organizations: The requirement for a deep well of compelling content to drive the targeted, personalized communications critical to achieving maximum return on investment in the platform.

This white paper defines the best practices for building and implementing a content strategy that ensures organizations can leverage the full power of their marketing automation platform to attract, engage and convert prospects to closed deals.

It reviews six building blocks recommended as best practices:

- Building Block 1: Diagnosing content needs through a content audit and gap analysis.
- Building Block 2: Planning impactful content by choosing the right tactics for content delivery.
- Building Block 3: Focusing content choices on effective content.
- Building Block 4: Leveraging content for message testing to drive continuous improvement.
- Building Block 5: Maximizing the impact of content through a content center.
- Building Block 6: Ensuring significant ROI by planning for repurposing of content.

INTRODUCTION

What Is a Content Strategy?

An effective demand-generation program requires a smart content strategy. “Content” within the context of BtoB marketing represents any published information that will appeal to a target audience. There are numerous examples of content and a highlighted listing includes: Webinars, white papers, Web pages, articles, press releases, podcasts, reviews, ratings, user comments, surveys, data tables, benchmarks, blogs, brochures, testimonials, case studies, or videos and other rich media experiences.

A content strategy, therefore, seeks to identify the most relevant content and then match it to the appropriate phase of the sales process. It includes the construction of detailed buyer personas to help guide the tactical selection of message and content type; a plan for developing and refreshing content mapped to key messages; and a system to deploy and measure the efficacy of content.

Marketing Automation: The Voracious Content Machine

The advent of marketing automation platforms in the BtoB marketing space has made a content strategy a necessity. While marketing automation brings great promise of more impactful online marketing, it also puts significant requirements on organizations before, during and after implementation—and content requirements top that list. Marketing automation offers marketers the opportunity to speak specifically to prospects based on their profiles and their behavior, enabling the custom communications that drive a scalable, repeatable and measurable demand-generation campaign. However, those multiple tracks of communication all require something valuable and relevant to say. Without the content to back up targeted communications, the overall message is likely to be hollow and irrelevant, defeating its purpose.

Indeed, the pressing need for content across a range of buying stages and personas was the third greatest challenge to leveraging marketing automation, behind only people/skillsets and appropriate process, according to a 2009 survey of BtoB marketing challenges. And 30% of marketers say they will identify external or internal resources in the next six months to produce new content (Executive Benchmark Assessment, June 2009–January 2010).

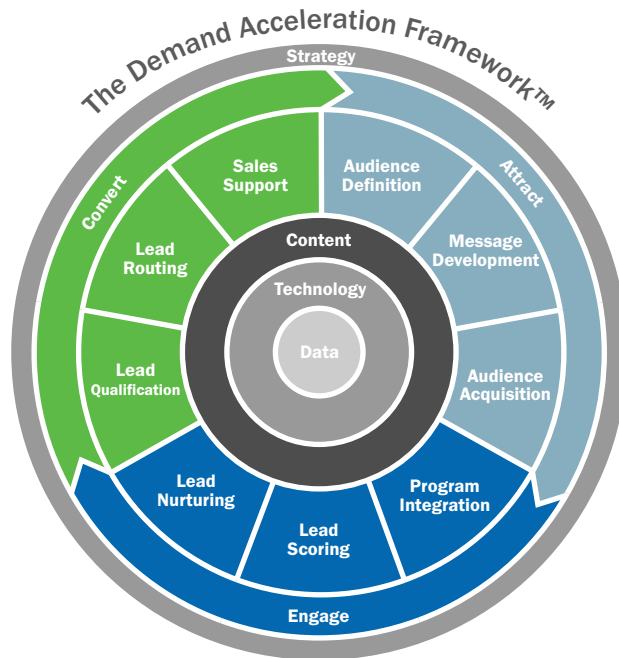
“Early adopters of marketing automation cited better content as a top priority they would change if they were to lead a rollout at another organization,” noted industry publication *DemandGen Report*. “Industry experts point out that new adopters of marketing automation often overlook the need for and the importance content will play in the success of their campaigns.” (“Content Emerging as Critical Factor to Feed Successful Demand Gen Programs,” September 2009).

“Industry experts point out that new adopters of marketing automation often overlook the need for and the importance content will play in the success of their campaigns.”

*DemandGen
Report,
September 2009*

This pervasive need for content to drive scalable demand-generation programs is illustrated in the Demand Generation Framework™, a methodology for demand generation developed by demand-generation agency Bulldog Solutions and Frost & Sullivan, the Growth Partnership Company. The Demand Acceleration Framework guides diagnosis, implementation and measurement of integrated demand-generation programs. At its core are four areas that are considered foundations: Strategy and alignment, data, technology and content. An additional nine practice areas are built in to attract, engage and convert prospects, driving program growth and performance.

Chart: Demand Acceleration Framework™



9 Practice Areas:

- Audience Definition
- Message Development
- Audience Acquisition
- Program Integration
- Lead Scoring
- Lead Nurturing
- Lead Qualification
- Lead Routing
- Sales Support

IDENTIFYING THE CONTENT CHALLENGE

Building Block 1: How Much Content Is Needed?
The Content Audit

Most organizations have little or no comprehensive view of exactly what kinds of content assets—Webinars, white papers, Web site copy, presentations, podcasts, rich media assets—they have at their disposal. Content is often created in a reactionary mode on an as-needed basis, then forgotten once the immediate need has passed. And while the Executive Benchmark Survey data found that more than half of BtoB marketers believe they have content to support multiple messages, further digging into specific content needs, illustrated by the results of a content audit, shows that’s not always the case (Executive Benchmark Assessment, June 2009–January 2010).

Before engaging in resource-heavy content development projects, high-performing organizations engage in a content audit and content gap analysis to determine:

- The buying stage, buyer persona or other requirements of content to drive marketing programs
- Which relevant existing content can be leveraged in support of current needs
- The “holes” where little or no content exists or out-of-date content needs to be updated

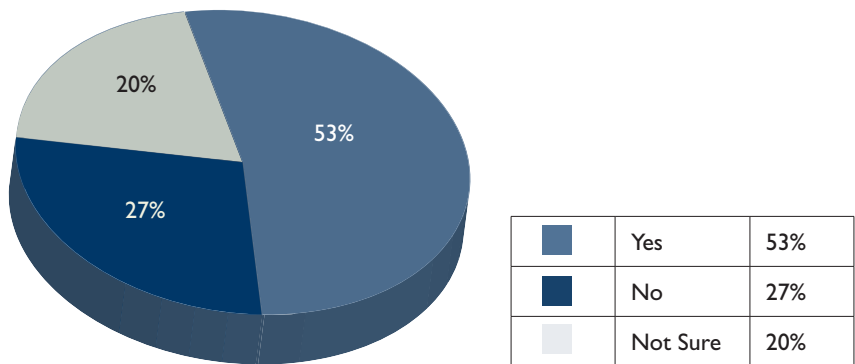
The first step to a content audit involves determining content needs. To do this, the marketing organization, in consultation with the sales team, must create a matrix of factors relevant to their audience. One structure looks at the stage in the buying cycle, from opt-in through education through decision support. That can be overlaid with buyer personas and/or product groups to create a 3x3 or 4x3 matrix. This matrix, in effect, lays out the complete view of required content and ensures that subsequent efforts are aligned with an overarching strategy.

The second step is to fill in each box with content that is relevant to that message. Consider the example of a 3x3 matrix in which there are three stages to the buying journey identified along the X axis and three buyer personas along the Y axis. In each of the nine resulting boxes, the team notes existing content that fits the relevant message. There are often repeats, as one piece of content might provide a relevant message for all three buyer personas. Often after this exercise, organizations will discover a wealth of content in one area and very little or no content in another.

Once the holes are identified, the organization can go about creating a plan to fill them. A gap analysis and content creation plan built in this way ensures that the content creation (or repurposing) plan is based on a strategy of engagement, not just a reactionary drive to build more content.

Chart: Measuring Sufficient Content

Do you have sufficient content to support multiple messages and calls to action?



Source: Executive Benchmark Assessment, June 2009–January 2010

COMPETING AGAINST THE MASSES: HOW TO STAND OUT

Building Block 2: Choosing the Right Tactic for the Right Audience

The Internet has fundamentally changed the buying process. More than ever, the buying decision is made “upstream” of marketing programs and the sales process, and typically involves as many as eight people (more for significant IT purchases). Additionally, a variety of factors have colluded to make the Internet a crowded and confusing place. Some of the developments contributing to this confusion include:

- Publishers have moved almost exclusively online, blurring the lines between “news,” information, advertisement and entertainment
- Consumers have responded to the online publishing movement and reacted with blogs, reviews, forms, communities, commentary and other user-generated content
- Online advertisers aggregate content and information not for human consumption, but rather for search engine optimization that drives online ad revenues
- Social media has emerged as the “media darling” by driving whole new messaging segments and tactics that enjoy broad-based appeal despite a lack of structure and transparency for marketers

All of this content creates a blanket of white noise that makes it very difficult for BtoB marketers to stand out from the masses and attract the right sets of eyes. Despite this overwhelming crush of content, almost half of all BtoB marketers continue to select content tactics with an unfocused, shotgun approach. The good news is that for the savvy BtoB marketer, the problems are obvious and the solutions are no less obvious, yet surprisingly few take the time to follow a few simple rules.

High-Value Calls to Action

For hard-to-reach or executive-level stakeholders, traditional calls to action, such as subscribing to a newsletter or downloading a white paper, usually aren’t effective in driving a meaningful engagement. Often these high-level prospects are too time-pressured to respond to anything less than a high-value offer.

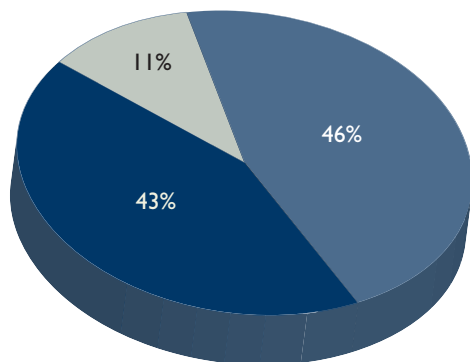
A high-value call to action brings a broader value offering together with consultative selling. It’s designed to create urgency around an exclusive, executive-to-executive engagement between the organization and its target prospect.




Benchmark assessments, such as the Executive Benchmark Assessment from Bulldog Solutions and Frost & Sullivan, are high-value calls to action that offer valuable information—benchmark data on key foundations of demand generation—in exchange for the decision-maker sharing insight into the specifics of a program. The Bulldog and Frost & Sullivan Executive Benchmark Assessment was recognized as the winner in the Sales Achievement Category of the 2010 Stevie Awards for its efficacy in generating productive sales conversations.

Read more about high-value calls to action at: www.bulldogsolutions.com/solutions/engage-audience/eba

Chart: Buyer Personas

Have you developed buyer personas of your prospects?



	Yes	46%
	No	43%
	Not Sure	11%

Source: Executive Benchmark Assessment, June 2009–January 2010

Knowing the audience is the first and foremost rule of BtoB marketing. Yet, as the buyer persona chart indicates, many marketers resist the construction of even simple buyer personas to define audiences, messages and tactics. Best-practice guidelines recommend building buyer personas around three or four basic buying profiles: the technical buyer, the economic buyer, the executive buyer and the influencer. The well-constructed buyer persona will address the following key areas: pain points, motivators, validators, media sources, and finally, scoring criteria to identify ideal prospects.

Economic Buyer:

Looks at the proposition purely from a bottom-line point of view based on available budget.

- Owns the buying decision and possesses a certain degree of autonomy
- Owns the budget
- Often leads or is part of a team or committee charged with providing the solution

Influencer:

Exerts power with the decision-making and decision-makers but does not control budget or final purchase authority. Influencer will help find other key buyers and help clarify their stance on the proposal.

- Typically at arm's length from the decision
- Resides within any level or area of the organization
- Level of impact on the decision may vary from minimal to involved

Technical Buyer:

Focused on “Does the solution fit the requested specification to the letter?”

- Sets technical requirements at the investigative stage
- Ensures that requirements are met in the final solution
- Focused on features and product/service details

Executive Buyer:

Controls oversight or policy creation; by setting the parameters for the strategy, the executive can either include or exclude a solution from the strategy.

- Sets the “macro-vision” for the solution
- Ensures that the final solution is in alignment with the corporate vision
- Often has veto power and can wield it any time for any reason

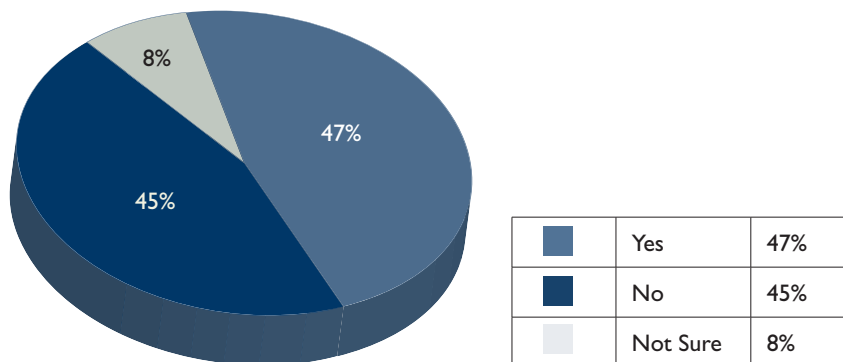
With the creation of buyer personas, content tactics begin to emerge:

Buyer type	Themed Message Focus	Delivery Tactic
Economic	Outcomes	ROI/TCO calculators, testimonials, case studies, Webinars, best practices, benchmarks, scenario-based Webinars
Technical	Detail	Educational Webinars, white papers, product briefs, checklists
Executive	Thought leadership	Case studies, best practices, high-value calls to action, benchmarks
Influencer	Information	Newsletters, user-generated content (e-mail-a-friend)

Despite representing a best practice, fewer than half of all BtoB marketers have mapped messaging to specific buyer types.

Chart: Mapping Messaging to Specific Buyer Types

Have you developed messaging to map to specific buyer types?



Source: Executive Benchmark Assessment, June 2009–January 2010

“...fewer than half of all BtoB marketers have mapped messaging to specific buyer types.”

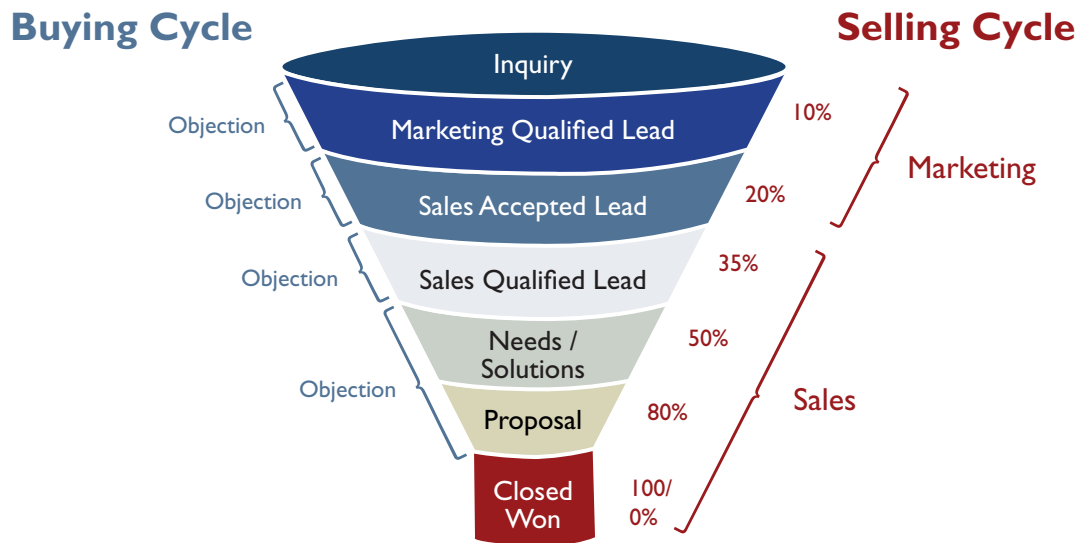
Mapping the Buying Process Against the Selling Process

The buying process is less of a “process” and more of a journey. The buyer has a need and typically begins by searching the Internet for either specific products or described solutions. Research shows overwhelmingly that buyers begin the search on the Internet and forego specific vendor Web sites until later in the buying journey. Thus, for the vendor it is essential that products and services not only be visible on their own Web sites, but that their sites be optimized for searches that match the described solutions, and that they also have a thought leadership presence in the places where their buyers might seek information and validation. At the same time, effective messaging will anticipate and manage objections the buyer might possess. With a fundamental message framework comprised of three basic themes— “Why

change?”, “Why this vendor?” and “Why now?”—virtually all needs can be showcased and most objections can be managed.

This message framework can be constructed against the sales funnel so that “Why change?” attracts potential prospects by addressing the argument for need. “Why this vendor?” messaging engages potential prospects to consider a new vendor while laying out features and benefits of the product, service or vendor. “Why now?” builds a sense of urgency to convert the prospective buyer into a client.

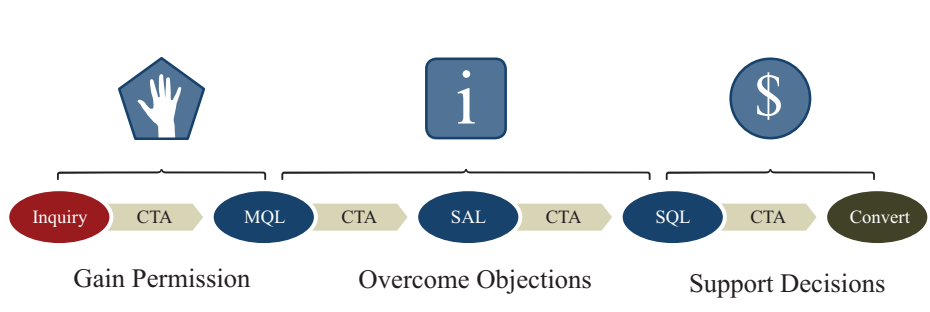
Buying Cycle and Sales Cycle Funnel



Building Block 3: Understanding What Makes Content Effective

There is a science and an art to understanding what content is effective at each stage. On the scientific side, there is a process to mapping the content to the buyer journey and the selling process.

Chart: Objectives Throughout the Buying Cycle



The buying cycle shown on the previous page requires different types of content for the three different phases of selling.

Gain Permission

At the beginning of the process, content is required that will attract the attention of the prospect and gain their permission to communicate with them. “Gain permission” means the prospect will identify his or herself via a registration process that captures critical contact information. There are many ways to accomplish this, but the most prevalent tactics are via Web site content that requires a low level of information exchange, such as a newsletter. The unifying theme of this content class is its ability to stand out like a beacon and attract attention.

Overcome Objections

Once a likely prospect has been identified, additional opportunities must be offered for deeper engagement. These might occur with thought leadership material such as Webinars, in-person meetings or with other opportunities for Marketing to qualify leads. When a lead is handed off from Marketing to Sales, different content needs are dictated by the sales team and the selling process unique to each organization. Typical content requirements for this phase of the selling process include brochures, white papers, ROI/TCO calculators and other content that is designed to be informative or instructive. The unifying theme of this class of content is its ability to educate and manage anticipated buyer objections.

Support Decisions

After the sales engagement process has qualified a prospect to the point where a proposal can be issued or a solution is agreed upon between the buyer and seller, the content needs to shift again. At this point, the solution needs to be reinforced and the buyer needs to understand that the decision to buy is correct. Typical content requirements include proposals, case studies, testimonials, referrals, ROI calculators and endorsements. The unifying theme of this type of content is not to introduce any new evidence but support everything that has been communicated up to this point.

On the “art” side of understanding what content is effective at each stage of the buying cycle, there are three simple things to remember about content:

Actionable: Content should illustrate a key need, educate on a specific problem or generally provide some meaningful need for the intended audience

Relevant: Content should always be relevant to the target audience

Timely: Content should be appropriate to the needs of the time; topics should address current needs and describe currently available solutions without being too time-sensitive (see box on the following page about content half-life)

30% of marketers say they will identify external or internal resources in the next six months to produce new content.

Executive
Benchmark
Assessment, June
2009–January
2010

Content Half-Life: What is it?

Half-life represents a mathematical or scientific formula that measures exponential decay. When applied to content, it describes the time frame for which content will remain useful to generate demand. For example, a Webinar typically holds a half-life of 30 days, meaning that in the first 30 days after the Webinar, 50% of all the leads possible will have been generated. By 60 days after the Webinar, 75% of all the leads possible will have been generated. By 90 days after the Webinar, 87% of all leads possible will have been generated, and so on. After about 6 months, the Webinar will cease to generate a meaningful number of leads. A white paper typically exhibits a lengthy content half-life of about 3 months, while a press release exhibits a very short half-life of about 3 days. There are factors which may increase or decrease the half-life rate of decay, but there will always come a time when the content ceases to generate meaningful demand. The most meaningful predictor of half-life is content type, so consider the useful lifespan of your content against your content needs when budgeting and planning.

Number of half-lives elapsed	Fraction remaining	Percentage remaining
0	1/1	100
1	1/2	50
2	1/4	25
3	1/8	12
4	1/16	6
5	1/32	3

Building Block 4: Using Content for Message Testing

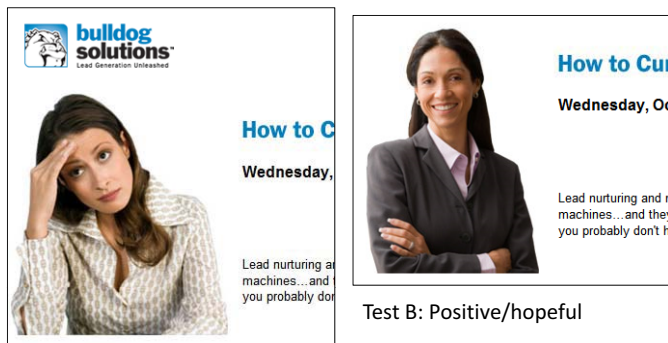
Content is working for the organization 24 hours a day. If content is stored in an “apples-to-apples” environment—behind a single registration such as in a content center (see definition on the following page) or as part of an ongoing cost-per-lead (CPL) program through syndication, it’s delivering data to the marketing team on the messages that resonate and the keywords that are impactful. This data can feed back into planning by providing insight on the messages that are working.

For example, if an organization has six white papers all made available through a syndication program, after a period of time the data will show which are most often downloaded or which have peaked and perhaps outlasted their relevance. This information can guide timing for a refresh or even retiring of time-sensitive content. It shows which messages are most impactful, and those messages can be incorporated into other initiatives or keyword strategies for search activity.

High-performing marketers view every communication as an opportunity to test. The image below shows the results of a message test performed by Bulldog Solutions for a Webinar in October 2009 that discussed how organizations can meet the content challenge.

The Bulldog creative team chose two messages with complementary images: One message played on fear and uncertainty; the other was a more positive, hopeful message about the benefits of a content strategy. The results—the positive message won—influenced subsequent promotions as well as the content of the Webinar itself.

Chart: A Sample Message Test



Test A: Fear/uncertainty

Test B: Positive/hopeful

Message “B” performed better at driving conversion.

LEVERAGING CONTENT FOR MORE IMPACT

Building Block 5: The Content Center: More Effective Engagement Leads to Better ROI

Because intense labor and resources often go into content creation, organizations should look to squeeze as much impact out of content as possible. The work product of a content audit and content repurposing and creation plan is effectively leveraged in a content center. A content center, also called a resource center or resource library, puts all public-facing assets in a single location, creating a user-driven experience for prospects and customers. The one-stop location makes assets easy to find and access on the user’s timeline, which also creates cross-sell and upsell opportunities. Yet fewer than one-quarter of BtoB marketers have a fully functional content center, according to the EBA survey data (Executive Benchmark Assessment, June 2009–January 2010).

A best-in-class content center employs a structure best suited to the organization’s business rules. An organization that has multiple persona constituents may organize a content center along buyer personas such as those described earlier in this white paper. Education software company CompassLearning, for example, must target audiences with different viewpoints and levels of decision-making ability and influence, including school administrators, district administrators and educators. Its content center is therefore organized in a modular fashion that eases the ability of various constituents to identify themselves and focus on the section most relevant to them. Fujitsu Network Communications, shown below, also developed a

“...fewer than one-quarter of BtoB marketers have a fully functional content center...”

content center with a buyer persona structure. Other options include offering assets by topic or by mode (grouping like assets such as white papers together in one section; Webinars in another). An understanding of the audience—the same understanding that leads off a successful content audit—is critical to determining the most impactful way to organize a content center.

In addition to enabling a user-driven experience, the content center also offers significant benefits to the organization. Content can be placed behind registration in order to collect data about user interest and create a standardized, branded follow-up effort, reducing variance between the follow-up for different assets. For example, a company may have over the years produced multiple white papers and placed some behind different types of registration pages. Users downloading white papers from that organization will have a different, and potentially confusing, registration experience if they want access to multiple assets. A content center standardizes that experience and can even include a one-time ID function that allows people to access multiple items after registering just once.

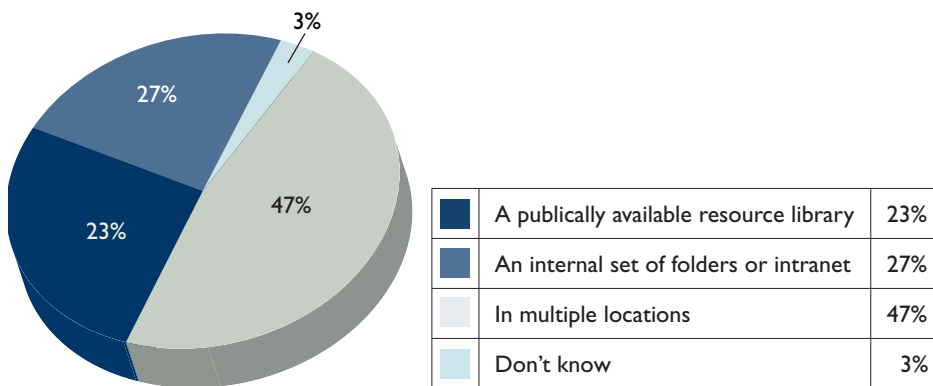
Centralizing data about the impact of content can also guide the marketing team on which messages are most impactful, as noted earlier in this document. Seeing the activity around multiple assets arrayed in one report can paint a picture of which topics generate the most interest. That information can guide the creation of future assets, keyword activity and messaging for future programs.

On-demand assets such as Webinars and white papers can also feed an “always-on” element of a promotion plan. Cost-per-lead programs can be built around these assets to ensure a steady flow of qualified leads to fill in gaps in a demand-generation program, creating even better ROI without additional effort beyond setup and monitoring.

Chart: Content Center Sample

Chart: Storing Existing Content

Where do you store and categorize existing content?



Source: Executive Benchmark Assessment, June 2009–January 2010

Building Block 6: Planning for Repurposing

One solution to the prospect of a labor-intensive content creation plan is repurposing. Repurposing involves planning and executing content that can be used in a wide variety of formats, consumable at multiple stages of the buying cycle across multiple personas. Call it “getting the most bang for the buck.”

When a marketer begins with good ingredients, content creation becomes easier. A powerful piece of content can work exponentially. White papers, Webinars and trade show presentations can be repurposed for bite-sized content pieces such as podcasts, blog posts and newsletter content. Planning the content with the endgame in mind makes this process much easier.

For example:

- Develop Webinar content in sections that are easily chapterized. This makes the on-demand version much easier to navigate and creates natural segments to be used as podcasts later.
- The Q&A sessions from live Webinars can be turned into written Q&A articles for newsletters, briefings or blog posts. Let speakers know beforehand they may be asked to answer additional questions for inclusion in the article.
- Speakers can also be asked to participate in audio-only exclusive interviews that are offered only to select prospects or used as an incentive to attend a Webinar or download a white paper.
- Create white papers with a future Webinar in mind. Develop white paper content in sections that will fit naturally into a chapterized Webinar presentation. Along the same lines, plan to excerpt white paper content into short articles for a newsletter and even shorter pieces for a blog.

Most organizations have large “spheres of influence” that encompass professional associations, clients and executive relationships. These are all viable channels from which to mine content to repurpose in support of a marketing campaign. Remember that an audience will measure a white paper, article or blog posting that you provided on their intrinsic value, which includes the validity of the source as well as their ability to apply the content to their challenges.

How This White Paper Fits into a Repurposing Plan

This white paper itself fits into a repurposing plan as described in this section. The content contained herein has been developed into a range of pieces, including:



Newsletter article: “Content Creation a Big Headache? Here’s Your Aspirin”



Rich media presentation: “Make Your Content Work Overtime”



Live Webinar: “How to Cure the Content Headache,” featuring Bulldog Solutions, Frost & Sullivan and NetLine



Newsletter article: Q&A from “How to Cure the Content Headache”



Best Practices Guide: Content Repurposing



Blog post: “Curing the Content Headache”

FROST & SULLIVAN AND BULLDOG SOLUTIONS

The Frost & Sullivan/Bulldog Solutions Demand-Generation Partnership

Demand-generation agency Bulldog Solutions and Frost & Sullivan, the Growth Partnership Company, offer end-to-end integrated demand-generation solutions through a partnership created in 2009.

The partnership, unique in the BtoB demand-generation industry, builds turnkey demand-generation programs that attract, engage and convert prospects to closed deals. It leverages world-class growth strategies from Frost & Sullivan's global research-driven content covering 10 industries and more than 300 markets, along with market-leading strategic planning and best-in-breed execution of demand-generation programs from Bulldog Solutions.

The partnership employs the Demand Acceleration Framework™, a methodology for sustainable, repeatable demand generation.

www.bulldogsolutions.com/about/partners/Frost

About Frost & Sullivan

Frost & Sullivan, the Growth Partnership Company, enables clients to accelerate growth and achieve best-in-class positions in growth, innovation and leadership. The company's Growth Partnership Service provides the CEO and the CEO's Growth Team with disciplined research and best-practice models to drive the generation, evaluation and implementation of powerful growth strategies. Frost & Sullivan leverages 49 years of experience in partnering with Global 1000 companies, emerging businesses and the investment community from more than 40 offices on six continents. To join our Growth Partnership, please visit www.frost.com.

About Bulldog Solutions

Bulldog Solutions is a demand-generation agency that changes the way BtoB companies define demand-generation strategy, engage prospects and convert leads to customers. We power demand-generation and demand-management programs for many of the best business brands in the world. Industry leaders have recognized our unique process and technologies as best-in-breed at turning a higher proportion of prospects into sales and improving the return on marketing investment. We're headquartered in Austin, Texas. www.bulldogsolutions.com

