

# CONTENTI Insights

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## CONTENT STRATEGY

# The Expert's Conundrum: Those with the Most Expertise Have the Least Time to Communicate It.



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### What I'm thinking:

- ▶ Sharing technical insights from internal subject-matter experts is an important part of any content strategy.
- ▶ Organizations must find ways to facilitate experts' input without monopolizing their time.
- ▶ High-level internal support for a company's content strategy is a key success factor.
- ▶ An internal or external technical/marketing writer must be empowered to coordinate and offload the writing burden from busy experts.

**B2B** organizations that want to share their expertise and innovations with wider audiences face a dilemma. They don't want to squander the valuable time of their subject matter experts by having them write content. After all, writing may not be something they have time for or are comfortable with, particularly if they are writing in something other than their native language. AI writing tools can help to some degree, but the iterations required to express technical ideas with the appropriate nuances and accuracy can be a time-consuming and frustrating process.

B2B organizations need a solution that allows the 'voices' and expertise of their scientific or technical innovators to shine, without taking up too much of their time or effort. I've experienced first-hand the challenges that companies face in transforming deep expertise into compelling long-form content. There are indeed a lot of good reasons to choose an external partner to help you coordinate, shape and execute your company-wide content plan. But whether you select an external partner or take care of it internally, what follows are some of the takeaways from my experience and what I think is the right formula for success.



# 1 Identify your content streams

Coordinating your internal experts to create reliable streams of engaging content sounds daunting, but it's definitely doable. But it must be done in a way that a) limits the time required or your experts, b) sets expectations on all sides, and c) takes the pain out of the process. We've seen a lot of client-side content initiatives start then fizzle out from lack of a clear goal and clearly defined processes. Without creating the right conditions, contributing content can be perceived as a drag on people's time, which could take them away from the jobs

they'll 'really be evaluated on.' Finding the right formula that works for your organization and that ensures a steady flow of brand-building content is not only possible, but it's essential. In fact, your most successful competitors are already doing it.



## 2 Optimize your experts' time

Nobody wants to feel like their time is being wasted. High-level technical or scientific staff who focus their expertise on critical tasks won't always have the time to produce customer-facing content. And, while they may be experts in their fields, they may not be expert in, or comfortable with, writing long-form content. That means, any content production tasks are likely to be pushed to the bottom of the priority list, mostly by necessity. Ensuring that your organization produces a steady flow of high-quality content, including long-form formats, means you must reduce the content burden on your experts. We recommend taking the following steps:

- ▶ Make sure all your content sources understand the importance of your company's content strategy and the support for it at the highest levels;
- ▶ Make your expectations clear, and discuss in advance both the subject

and format of the content they will be contributing;

- ▶ Create a copy brief that specifies the angle of the article then work with your expert to produce an outline of the piece's key points and conclusions;
- ▶ Set a clear timeline stipulating when drafts are due and that factors in adequate time for your company's validation process;
- ▶ Work with a qualified, experienced individual with the required technical and commercial writing skills to take on most of the writing tasks and interface directly with your experts. This person's mission should be fully supported by management and the individual should have the stature to ensure that deadlines are respected. If someone internal will be doing it, content writing and editing should clearly identified as part of the person's job description, with ample time allocated to meeting writing responsibilities.

# 3 Write with validation in mind

The validation cycle for technical or scientific content, particularly in highly-regulated sectors, can be long. When not managed efficiently, it can also be a source of inefficiency, frustration and, ultimately, poor content quality. For regulated content, ideally all claims should be vetted and approved prior to structuring and drafting the content piece. In all cases, an approved brief at

the beginning of the project will ensure content will be easier to validate. Because copy quality can be altered during validation, a final correction for readability should be programmed at the end of the validation process. Content contributors must be able to plan in advance for any demands on their time during the validation process.

# 4 Connect customers to the science

When you're a subject-matter expert you tend to be most comfortable speaking to other experts. But communicating innovations to all stakeholders is essential. No one among the decision makers involved in purchasing your products will be as specialized as your own experts! Special care should

be taken in ensuring that technical and scientific messages connect with the full range of stakeholders. This may involve adapting technical notions to reach a wider audience and/or repurposing expert content to achieve that goal.

# 5 Plan ahead for content and frequency

Expert content is often employed to establish thought leadership. But whatever your content goals are, planning ahead is essential. We recommend establishing a 6-month rolling content plan, updated and adapted as required. This should entail a mix of content formats and subjects mapped to target

profiles, stages in buyer journeys, if appropriate, and selected channels. Anyone involved in content production within your organization should receive a planning calendar well in advance so that they can integrate their contribution into their schedules. Content produced by your internal network should

be proofed, edited for SEO, and vetted for consistency with brand messaging. The content plan should incorporate meaningful metrics that will allow your company to monitor progress and adjust as needed.

**“Unfortunately, some content initiatives start strong then fizzle out from lack of a clear goal and clearly defined processes.”**



# Let the content flow!

Activating your internal people to create a steady flow of effective content doesn't have to be a headache. However, there are few shortcuts, and not planning adequately can create a drag on your enterprise that will ultimately frustrate and impede your content strategy. There are a lot of good reasons to choose an external partner to help you coordinate, shape and execute your company-wide content plan. It ensures that you'll have the support of experienced, knowledgeable content experts that can structure the content brief, deliver impeccable prose, track progress with your internal content providers, and break down information silos that may make inter-departmental communications projects complicated. However you choose to organize your content strategy, the one thing we've found that separates success from failure is strong and vocal buy-in and commitment from top management to a vigorous and high-quality content program.

#### **About the author:**

Amy was born in Newport Beach, California, and spent her youth between California and New York, where she received her Master's degree from Columbia University. At CONTENTI, Amy applies her writing, editorial and organizational talents to a wide range of projects and clients. Her keen analytical skills are invaluable in understanding and expressing clients' complex scientific and technical subjects.

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