

Why Creating Great Content Needs to Be One of Your Top Goals

by Colleen Francis

In today's market, you and your organization are more than sales professionals: you're subject experts who can offer something of value to customers and prospects.

That is why it's so important to create a base of [thought leadership](#) in your work: transcending what you are selling, and sharing what you know. This is especially vital if you're selling to large-sized businesses, where you're dealing at once with many more decision makers and much a longer decision-making process.

In my webinars and sales training sessions with clients, I've talked about how [big changes](#) in the marketplace are rewriting the rules on sales. Selling is far more relationship-based than it used to be. That puts a premium on likeability and trust. Adapting to the new normal isn't an option anymore: it's essential.

The best way to ride that tidal wave of change isn't by pitching more of that impersonal marketing collateral that everyone has seen and read before. The solution is **your ideas**, shared in your voice as a subject authority. This is what customers crave. Feed that appetite. Whether you're a small company or part of a large organization, creating great content needs to be one of your top goals.

What do we mean by content? Taking your ideas and insights and sharing them online with a mass audience, using products and tools that are enjoyable to use.

Let's look a little deeper at why this is so important...

You are the sum of what you create and share.

What's the first place people go today to find out more about you, your company and your products or services? It's not the yellow phone directory, and it's not your company brochure.

They turn to Google and other online search engines. When they do that, they're hoping to find more than just your website.

With every article you post, every personal video you create, every free ebook you publish, every product review you share, and every comment you make via social media, you are building your profile, sharing what you know and adding value to your relationships with others online.

Know how you are seen.

Do an audit of your existing online content. Google your name (or your company name). Examine the results carefully. What do the results tell you about how customers and prospects perceive you when they look you up online? Since the content you create and share has a direct influence on how you are seen in your market, start thinking about how you can increase your output of ideas and advice and sharing it online.

Cycles have changed.

Growing a rich forest of content helps you tackle two very important changes in the marketplace. First, since the decision-making cycle is longer now than before, you need to work harder at being persuasive. One of the key ways you do that is by showcasing your knowledge and contributing something of value to your readers on a regular basis.

The second important change is in how quickly information spreads now. As Google CEO [Eric Schmidt notes](#): "The harsh message is that everything will happen much faster. Every product cycle, every information cycle, every bubble, will happen faster, because of network effects, where everybody is connected and talking to each other." When you create and share thoughtfully developed content, you help your readers gain knowledge faster...and that positions you as a trusted resource.

Audience attention is scarce.

Seth Godin explains it [this way](#): "In a world where everything is a click away, and in a world where everyone can have their own YouTube channel, ten blogs and a thousand email accounts...the only thing that's scarce is attention." It's not enough anymore to just generate traditional marketing collateral and hope that someone will read it and respond. You can't count on having anyone's sustained attention for long periods of time anymore. However, with regularly posted content, you have a great opportunity to connect with people for brief periods on an ongoing basis.

More than just opinions.

Sharing what you know is about a lot more than just stating your opinion on something. Back up what you have to say with facts and research. Whether that comes from your own research in your company white paper, or sharing the results of an industry-leading think tank, insight and knowledge thrive best when it's shared. [We living in a world now where every two days now we create as much information as from the dawn of civilization up to 2003](#). Use that to your advantage.

Add extra value to social media activities.

By posting and sharing all-original content, you also create a platform that you can build on via social media. No pitching. No hard selling. When you use social media to share what you know via your content (e.g., blog posts, newsletter articles, white papers, ebooks), you become a resource to others.

Tie-in what you know to what you do.

Engaging content sticks with people. It's memorable because it's not about you: it offers something of value to them instead. That's a much more effective way to remain on someone's radar and makes your job much easier to connect that knowledge with the value of what you are selling.

More than just websites, white papers and blog posts.

Advertising legend Lee Clow says that today "[everything is media](#)." You have at your disposal the ability to share what you know with far more people than just your existing customers and prospects. You can shoot how-to videos on your mobile phone and post them to a special YouTube page. You can create a personal magazine on your smartphone or tablet and share your favourite stories via Twitter, Google+, Facebook or LinkedIn. You can collect your blog posts and self-publish your own ebook.

Things that used to require an entire industry to do over a period of months, you can create on your own over a period of days. This is a huge shift and a major opportunity for anyone in the selling business.

Do it yourself if you have time. Get help if you don't.

It's important that your voice remains authentic in all your content. But let's face it: in sales, your time is always at a premium. You still need to concentrate on prospecting and looking after your existing customers.

Get help. There are writers and content specialists out there (I can recommend some, too) who will help fine-tune your persuasive message and grow your audience while ensuring that the ideas you are talking about and the voice you use to do that remain your own.

You are your own media channel, if you want to be. Make it happen by making content creation a top goal for yourself and your organization!

Colleen Francis, Sales Expert, is Founder and President of Engage Selling Solutions (www.EngageSelling.com). Colleen has studied the habits of the top sales performers to complement conventional sales wisdom with proven strategies that get results in today's tough economy.