



Without a doubt, when speaking with our clients, one of their biggest stumbling blocks (apart from Twitter!) is creating content for their social media channels. I have lost count of the times that I've heard phrases such as 'I just don't know what to write about' or 'I don't think I'll have anything interesting to say' or 'I sit at my computer on a Monday with really good intentions and then go blank'. And we are with you – it is really hard to come up with something to say right there on the spot when nothing interesting has happened over the last 48 hours. So that is where content marketing and planning comes in.

So what is content marketing?

Well, it means to create and deliver valuable, relevant and consistent content, to attract and acquire clearly defined audience with the objective of driving profitable customer actions.

Or in other words – to produce great content to the right people at the right time.

And what do we mean by content?

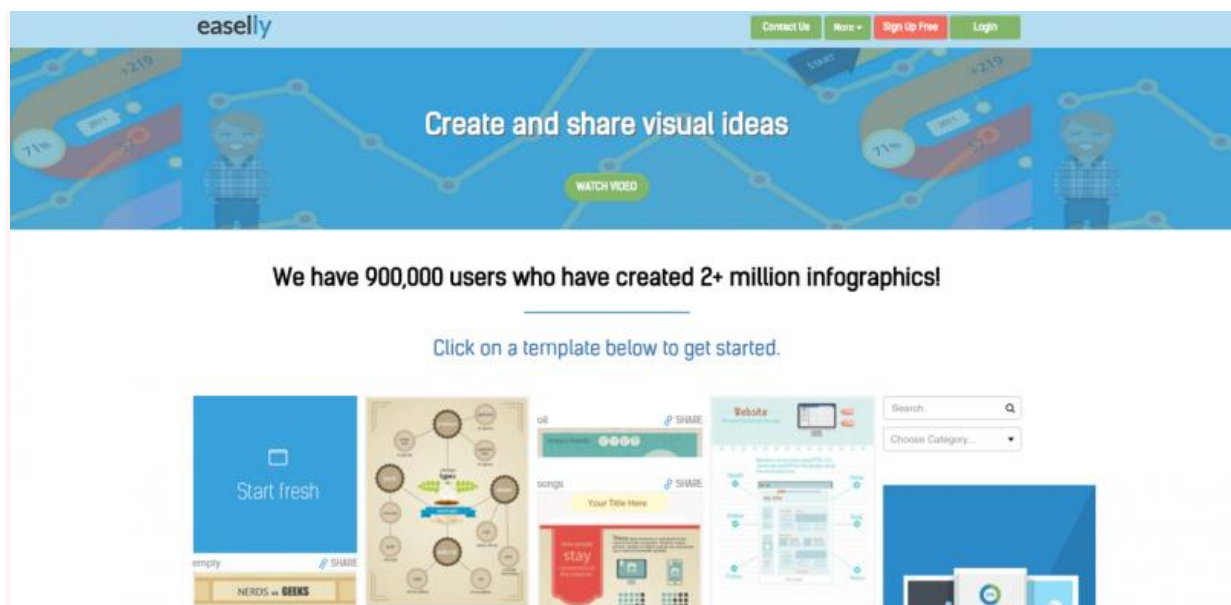
Content comes in all forms, shapes and sizes, and from a content marketers point of view – the more interesting the better! We are talking about forms such as;

- Images
- Infographics
- Video

- Blogs
- Explainers
- Web pages
- PDFs

But we can take it so much further with How to's, Case Studies, Ebooks, Webinars, FAQ's, Guides, Quotes, Vlogs, Surveys, Slideshares, Podcasts and more!

These are great ways of approaching something you want to share. Rather than write a few short sentences you can create a piece of content that will produce engagement, interaction and followers. It is easy creating content such as infographics in platforms like [Easel.ly](#) and [Piktochart](#), so don't be afraid of creating your own!

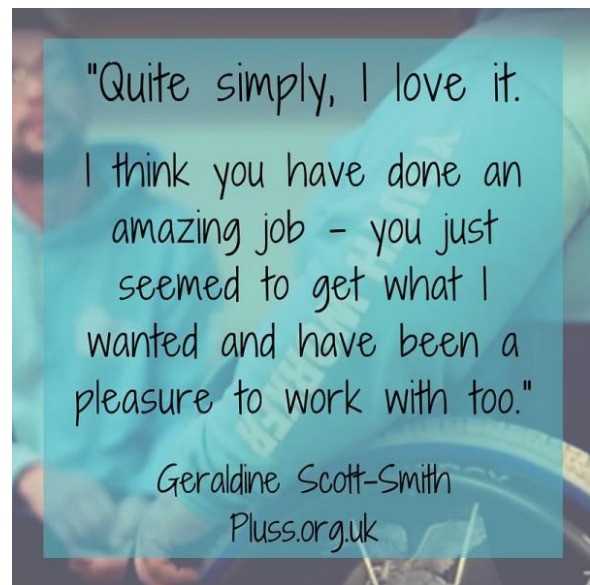


Also, don't be afraid of sharing content that you have shared in the past, as long as it is not time restrictive. Blogs that you have written months ago which are still relevant can be re-shared throughout your social media channels. You can re-use a video that hasn't been shown for a while. Any archived content that you have can be shared as long as it is still relevant and interesting.

Keeping visuals within your content is important, as we have previously discussed, people only remember 10% of what they hear, 20% of what they read, but 80% of what they see and do. 83% of all human learning is visual – so if you can give them that content within a visual fashion you have so much more opportunity for your audience to retain that information.

User Generated Content

There is a lot of discussion currently about UGC, which means that the content you are sharing has come from a users source. For example – feedback from a customer, or an image from a competition you launched. We have created many images with Canva.com for clients using their own images as backdrops with a review overlaid. This can be shared on all of their channels and is a quick, easy and free way of creating an effective piece of content using UGC. This is why looking at what content you already have is important. You may have a lot of images or quotes or testimonials on file that you haven't known what to do with. Creating a visual is one of the best ways to approach this. (For further information on the power of visual please refer to our previous [blog post](#).)



What we are talking about is information sharing.

A Rutgers University research report that we share often throughout our training is about Meformers & Informers. The researchers found that only 20% of us are informers (users who post updates that are mostly information sharing) on social media while the other 80% are meformers (users who post updates that are mostly relating to themselves). However, Informers had more than twice as many followers as meformers, proving that sharing information is better for your follower count than sharing about yourself.

However, regardless of what brilliant piece of content you have, you need to make sure you keep it in context with what you are talking about, and aiming it at the right audience. We saw a great video recently of a father and son

which without context would have looked completely out of place on our social media channels. By letting people know that the video was created with an app and who it was by, it created context for our audience, and gave reason as to why we shared it.



Having this approach in your content strategy is key. Other aspects of your strategy to consider are what makes you stand out from the crowd – in other words what is your USP? Think about your story and what people can learn from you.

It is also important to look at;

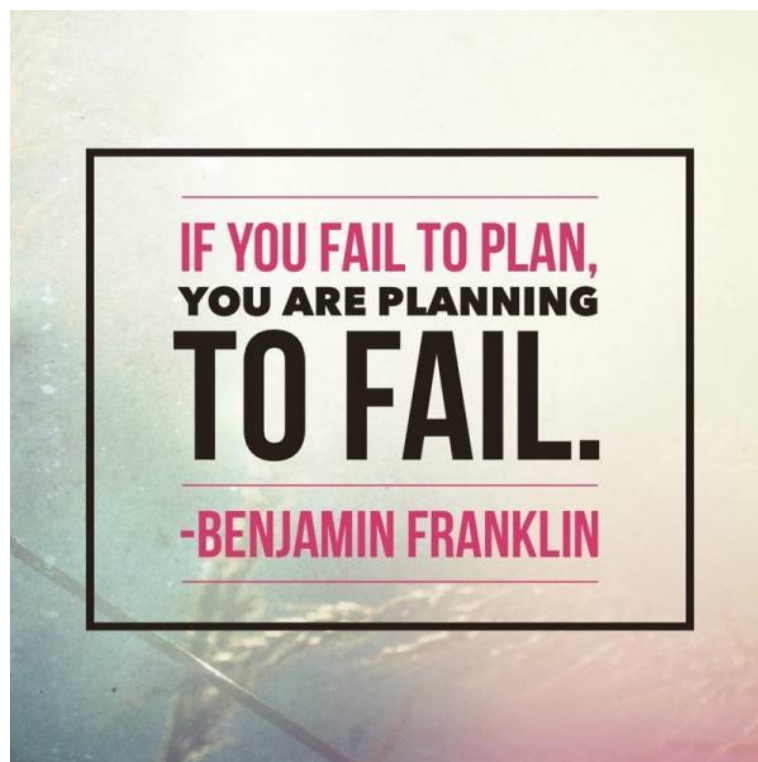
- Who are your users?
- Who are your competitors?
- What do you bring to the table?
- What do you hear?
- What content do you already have?
- What is the purpose of your content?
- How often should you publish & distribute content?
- Who is in charge of producing or maintaining your content?

Finding out who your audience is, is fundamental when understanding what content to put out. You probably already have a good idea of who your customer is, but if not there are a few ways to look into this. YouGovProfiles is a great tool which collates a huge amount of data and gives demographics of a searched audience.

Looking at how your competitors approach their online activity will help you understand how to utilise yours. How are they interacting and engaging with their customers? What can you do differently? And how can you target your customer before they do?

By keeping up to date with current news and what others are talking about through listening on Twitter or using [Google Alerts](#) you can be right at the forefront of what is going on within your industry. Being able to talk about news as it happens keeps you as an influencer and therefore others will look to you to find out what they need to know.

Making a plan as to when and how to publish your content is important so that you know when to prepare and build that content (we will talk more about planning next time.) And if there are a number of you within your organisation it is important you have a voice that represents your company, and you are all clear as to who is in charge of distributing that content.

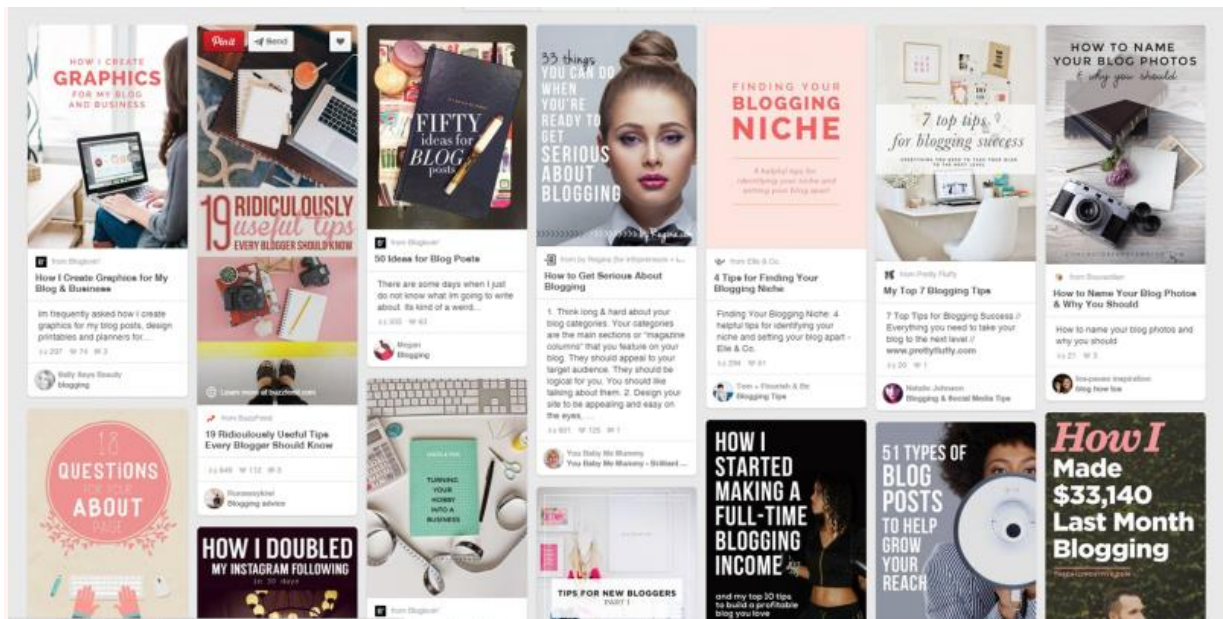


Storytelling

We have said it once but we will always keep saying it – you need to tell your story! What is that story? What will make people stop and think? What can you teach people? Working out what your story is and how you want to convey it is the first step in creating the persona you want to show your audience. Always be honest and authentic and give your customers a real taste of who you are and what you like.

Where can you find your content?

Firstly take a look at what you already have. Is your website full of content? Do you blog regularly? How active are you throughout social media? You can find content in all places but looking at what content you have already generated is always a first port of call. Time is a factor here, and we have spoken about how little time we all have, so collating current content will save you some!



Look at your other social media channels, listen through your twitter account using hashtags or by following industry experts. Through Facebook groups and pages you will find blogs and discussions. Pinterest is one of our favourites to source a wider amount of content, and by reading more and more blogs. Subscribing to regular newsletters will make sure that the right content gets delivered to you, which you can then share. Using apps such as [Feedly](#) or [Flipboard](#) allow you to choose what news you see, and so you can tailor that to your industry. Ultimately, it is being at the forefront of your industry and keeping up to date with all the latest news and events.

So, you are collecting all this content, but how do you store it?

We would love to hear your thoughts on this. At Cosmic we use a number of ways. We have our own private Facebook group where we store all the news reports or relevant blogs that we have come across. This means we can share anything relevant to other staff members here too. We also use public and secret Pinterest boards to store our content. Pinterest is a great social media tool to share content with your followers, but you can use secret boards to store ideas for weekly blogs, or monthly activities, or client suggestions.

You can also use cloud apps if you are already using them. [Trello](#), [Evernote](#), [Google drive](#) can all store information. It is working out what works best for you, and how easy you can access that content. By storing it well, you can then plan how and where you are going to share it.

So you've got your great piece of content – how do you share it?

The beauty of content is that you can share it all over. You can have one piece of content that you can then distribute throughout all of your social media channels. If that content is a video, an infographic, an image, it doesn't matter, it can be put on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram & Pinterest (or wherever you hang out.) If it is something that requires more thought, then writing a blog post would be the best approach, which then you can share throughout Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn etc. What we are saying is to use the COPE approach – Content once, Post everywhere. All that needs to be done is to speak the language of the platform you are sharing it on.



What do I mean by this? Well, on Twitter you only have 140 characters and if you are sharing an image or link that will take up 21, and if you are sharing both that's 42. You only have a limited number left to 'speak', whereas on Facebook you can say a lot more, and on Instagram you can hashtag the hell out of that post! Learning the language of each channel will help with maximising the content post.

Planning & Scheduling your content

Planning is so important with regards to content sharing and helps to eradicate the panic you feel at the beginning of the week! We have come across many strategies with regards to planning, and each of them works for their own user, but ultimately it is about deciding what content you want to put out, and when.

CoSchedule has a great downloadable planner and tips to create a great plan and it is well worth a look.

Always try to link your content marketing strategy within all of your social media and we recommend you take the following advice.

- 70% of your content to be planned campaigns
- 20% near future
- 10% real time

And remember the Rutgers research, and try to flip it so that 80% of your content is shared from another source, and 20% to be your own.

Once you have planned your content it is then easy to schedule it out using tools such as Tweetdeck or Hootsuite. We have spoken about these time saving tools **previously** so please do take a look to help you get to grips with them!

So to summarise, you need

- Clear strategy
- High quality, relevant content
- Aimed to the correct audience
- Quality visuals and videos
- Conversational writing tailored to the correct channel
- Correct grammar & spelling
- Shareable information
- A comprehensive plan!



We understand how important it is to get your content strategy right, and we can support you on this. We provide a content creation service where we will meet monthly with you to discuss step by step recommendations and assist you in developing and delivering that great content. If you would like further information on this please contact Helen on 0845 094 6108 or helen@cosmic.org.uk