

Creating Content That Converts: A Sellers' Compass[®]

White Paper

The New Demand Generator

Content is the new demand generator. Yet, in New Business Strategies' interviews with B2B buyers, only 50 percent of vendor-produced content was considered relevant to the buyer. Of that, 25 percent met the buyer's expectations in terms of detail, language and usefulness. That's because buyers feel that vendors aren't speaking their language, being objective, or offering content on issues that are important to them. As a result, they continue to rely almost exclusively on independent sources like bloggers, analysts and their colleagues for information and advice.

Having the right content for buyers, available in the right channels, at the right time, makes or breaks sales opportunities. While buyers are evaluating strategies, researching solutions and getting feedback from their peers, vendor content should inform and educate while establishing the vendor as a trusted resource early in the buyer's process. Post-purchase, content can drive solution success, showcase the buyers' accomplishments, and encourage evangelism. Vendors with the right content strategy can out-perform their peers in conversion by three-fold or more.

Typical client results:

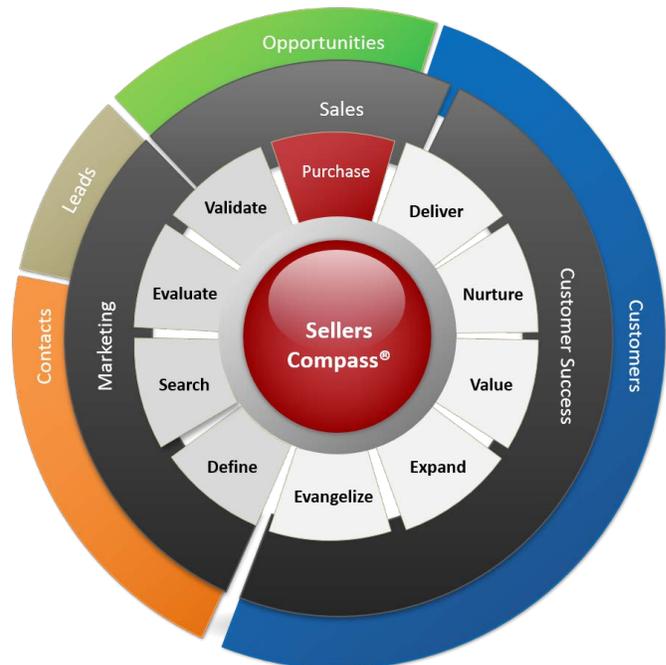
- 30-75% marketing ROI increase
- 100% increase in qualified leads
- 3-5 x pipeline velocity
- 275-310% increase in customer interactions

Background: The Sellers' Compass®

New Business Strategies introduced the Sellers' Compass in our whitepaper "Connecting Customer Experience to Revenue." The Sellers' Compass is a framework for aligning marketing, sales, support and operations to how buyers make purchasing decisions and their expected experience with the vendor. It can dramatically improve customer acquisition, retention and referrals. In fact, B2B buyers will pay a twenty percent premium to a vendor that delivers a better experience.

At the heart of the methodology is the Sellers' Compass itself, a ten-stage map of the buyers' journey.

While the steps that B2B buyers go through is fairly consistent, the specific content needs of prospects is unique to the brand and market-segment. The Compass provides a template that can be tailored to the buyers' journey of each vendor, based on input from customers and prospects themselves. The outcome is a map of the buyer's decision-making process, which New Business Strategies refers to as a journey map.



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Four steps to creating content that converts

Step 1: Know your buyers' journey

The first step in establishing a content strategy is to learn more about the customer's needs and expectations. Content assets need to be aligned not just to a customer's persona and industry but, more importantly, to the specific needs buyers have at each step in their purchasing process.

For example, in the Sellers' Compass New Business Strategies developed for Good Technology™, during the Search phase buyers looked for information on the pros and cons of different technology architectures. In most cases, prospects just used Google to find the information online. A third party blog post with the right keywords, a technical whitepaper promoted through Google Adwords and a webinar or video on the topic could collectively dominate the search results on this niche topic.

Once the buyers' journey is discovered and documented, you're ready to start aligning content and drive conversion.

Step 2: Clean Up Your Content

Knowing what content buyers need and where they go look for it at each stage in their journey enables content marketers to facilitate strategic, surgical strikes rather than bombarding the web and "seeing what sticks."

Deleting content is painful. Resources have been invested, the authors will be offended, and eliminating content that is attracting views will be contested. The content is not hurting anything, right? Wrong. If content does not meet a buyer's need, it leaves a bad impression and disappoints. Over time, buyers rely less on that vendor as a resource and are less likely to put them on their short-list.

The number of views content receives should never be used as a rationale for keeping it. View-count does not measure the content's influence on conversion. It can't tell marketers whether the buyer took another step in their relationship with the vendor.

The same applies to lead scoring. While downloading a white paper might "earn" the buyer points in marketing automation, the action is only important if the buyer acts on the content and, because of it, goes on to the next step in their journey.

With a list of buyer's content needs and expectations at each step of the buyer's journey, compare it with the current content inventory and do some house-cleaning. Delete all content that is not sought and valued by the buyer.

Define content strategy in four steps:

1. Match content to journey steps.
2. Align waterfall campaigns to journey maps.
3. For each tollgate, identify the right call-to-action.
4. Base lead scoring on the sequence as well as on the content.

Step 3: Define Your Customer-Driven Content Strategy

In a customer-aligned content marketing strategy, every content asset, whether created by a vendor, customer or influencer, is a direct match to a buyer's need at a specific step in their journey.

Define content assets in detail for each persona, including message and most trusted author. Content drives conversion when assets and calls-to-action are also directly matched to buyer tollgates. Tollgates are a buyer's internal milestones that they need to overcome to move the purchase decision forward. Tollgates include activities such as a business case, RFI, RFP, or a management presentation.

When content is associated with specific steps in the buyers' journey, the buyer's progress through their purchasing process can be measured easily and quickly. The right content, offered at the right time can effectively "pull" the buyer along their journey faster.

Creating new assets should be justified on the basis of solving a customer's specific need and distributed only in channels where buyers go to look for answers.

Don't forget to update your content strategy every six months to stay in step with evolving buyer expectations and market conditions.

Step 4: Measure Conversion

View-counting, time-on-site and similar data dominates today's measurement discussion because this data is easily accessible and quantitative. However, these measurements only account for the popularity of the content and not its effect on buyers. Landing page data, account based-scoring and spot surveys can produce measurements much closer to buyer-influence.

For example, if a buyer visits a blog post that helps them understand the business problem in more detail and then attends a webinar on best practices, the buyer has moved from the "Define" to the "Search" phase of their journey. We also know, based on their journey map that their next step is to evaluate solutions, so this may be an ideal time to ask if they would like to download a trial.

When the Sellers' Compass is applied in lead scoring tools, we can measure how fast prospects are moving through the purchasing process and which content is associated with higher quality and velocity leads.

Specific metrics to use include:

- Conversion rate of leads to sales
- Sharing of content between audiences
- Download of content at tollgates
- User-generated content linking back
- WOM social graph recommendations of content

Conclusion

What is the Business Impact?

Customer success strategies fail not because the strategy is flawed but from siloed, short-term oriented implementations. As much attention must be devoted to aligning your people, processes and technology outward to customer behavior and expectation as to the strategy itself. The questions below help you to assess the how well your customer success strategy has been made operational to yield significant and sustainable revenue gains.

Revenue Acceleration

Your customer success strategy has resulted in:	Yes	?	No
A 20% or greater increase in total revenue (net new and repeat business) annually			
Issues are resolved within 24 hours and issue escalation actions are coordinated cross-functionally			
Increase in sales pipeline velocity of 2X for net new customers and 3X for repeat purchases			
Inbound marketing spend is comparable to your industry's best-in-class peer organizations			
Customer experience is treated as business discipline with an executive management 'owner', business metrics and a dedicated centralized team			
Marketing has committed to delivering 50+% of the annual revenue objective			
Sales and Marketing collaborate on account plans by synchronizing customer experience and feedback activities with account timelines			
'At Risk' High Value customers are identified early and treated separately by a cross-functional team that identifies root cause and remediation			
Score			

Enter the total number of check marks for each column in the Score row.

Assessment of Revenue Impact	We're OK	Needs Work
Revenue Acceleration		
Experience Innovation		
Technology Ecosystem		
Customer-Centric Culture		

Use the space to the left to record your overall assessment of the dimensions listed.

How Well Is Your Customer Understood?

Answering the following questions will help you assess how well your organization understands its customers and prospects as well as how robust your customer success strategy is. If your organization has multiple lines of business or a diversified product line, you may wish to consider these questions separately for each business unit and/or product family.

Put a check mark in a column next to each description. A check mark goes in the 'Yes' column if your organization has fully achieved the attribute described. Check the '?' column if you are not sure of, don't know the status or the activity is performed sometimes. Check the 'No' column, if the attribute is not being addressed. Also place an 'A' in the column to note your aspirational goal for each dimension.

Journey Understanding

Your customer success strategy is based on:	Yes	?	No
Qualitative research for each market segment on the detailed, specific actions that personas undertake in their journey			
Defined the Trigger Events, by persona and market segments, that kick-off a new or repeat purchase cycle			
Defined specific customer expectations, by persona, at each step in their journey			
Gap analysis of expected vs. actual customer experience including identifying disruption points			
Assessment of how trust is developed during the customer journey			
Markets segmented based on multiple attributes and implemented at the target account level			
Demand generation campaigns that mirror the customer journey and use integrated multi-channel techniques to effectively pull the persona along their purchase process			
Score			

Enter the total number of check marks for each column in the Score row.

Assessment of Customer Understanding	We're OK	Needs Work
Journey Understanding		
Trusted Content		
Buyer Enablement		
Competitive Advantage		

Use the space to the left to record your overall assessment of the dimensions listed.

“New Business Strategies has a laser focus on helping businesses understand how their customers buy and map their marketing and sales efforts to their buyers’ needs.”

— Good Technology™

79% of B2B markets use content marketing and they are spend more than 30 percent of their budgets on it. Content marketing has come of age with B2B marketers but “seeing what sticks” does not drive revenue velocity.

Organizations that understand each step of their buyers’ journey and align content to it convert revenue more effectively. By creating content customers look for, that solves a specific customer need and distributing it where they go looking, content marketing can evolve from a carpet-bombing approach, to a laser precision shot that produces real, measurable, business results.

Learn how well you know your buyer and how effective your content is. Contact us for a complimentary Health Check Assessment.

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New Business Strategies®

We listen. We craft. We deliver.

New Business Strategies is a strategy and customer experience consulting firm.

Based in Silicon Valley, CA, we have the proven track record and methodologies to successfully foster enduring, and profitable customer relationships. .

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