

Developing Content Strategy from Journey Maps

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Most marketers know the advantages of Journey Maps to enable the buyer's journey. What is often overlooked is the fact that Journey Maps are powerful tools to help marketing organizations more effectively manage their *content investment*.

This How-To Guide has been designed to help marketers learn how to use Journey Maps to develop a better content strategy - one that effectively engages and converts prospects based on the information the potential buyer is actually seeking rather than what the marketing or sales organization thinks they should have.

BENEFITS OF CUSTOMER JOURNEY MAPS

There are four key benefits of using customer Journey Maps to develop a content strategy. They are:

1. **A 50 percent reduction in content inventory** by knowing exactly which assets are needed and how buyers use them
2. **A 2X increase in pipeline velocity** by aligning content and channels to specific journey steps
3. **Content that meets the specific needs and expectations of various buyer-personas** in terms of information, tone, language, objective, and scope
4. **Optimized B2B target account marketing programs**



DEVELOPING AN “OUTSIDE-IN” CONTENT STRATEGY

The challenge that most companies face is that their content is created from an “inside-out” perspective. In other words, product marketing, product management, sales, field marketing and corporate marketing all have strong opinions on what information the buyer needs.

This inside-out perspective frequently produces internal struggles as every function within the organization has a list of content that they believe the buyer absolutely needs. The result is content bloat of which less than 40 percent is actually read by buyers and even less is valued by prospects.

The result is a glut of product-specific, unused content that grows exponentially every quarter. The current statistics on content marketing are a testimony to this problem:

- 27,000,000 pieces of content are shared each day ([AOL/Nielsen](#)).
- 0.5 percent of a website’s content drives 90 percent of the traffic ([InboundWriter](#)).
- B2B marketers spend 30% of their marketing budget on content marketing ([CMI](#)).
- The three biggest complaints from B2B buyers about vendor content are that it is self-serving, non-substantive, and too hard to access ([Social Media Today](#)).

Basing content strategy on Journey Maps breaks the organizational and political log jam around what content the seller should invest in. It shifts the perspective from inside-out to outside-in. It gives the marketing team a clear roadmap of what content to create and promote through which channels in order to reach specific buyer-personas at the right journey step.

That change in perspective will improve attraction, engagement and conversion rates and as well as build stronger brand preference.

There are three hallmarks of a successful content strategy:

1. **Enables the buyer at each step of their journey** – measured by engagement and velocity



2. **Builds brand preference and reinforces differentiation** - measured by conversion
3. **Optimizes content investment** – measured by ROI.

DEVELOPING A JOURNEY MAP

Customer Journey Maps are detailed definitions of all the actions that buyers take and the interactions they have with the company -- from the initiating business problem trigger event through a completed purchase and beyond to solution adoption. The map identifies all the content along with the channels, physical and digital, buyers seek at each step. Journey Maps are frequently defined by industry, revenue tier (F100, F1000, SMB, SOHO, etc.) and geography. The latter is important because cultural differences will result in different journey maps for the same industry and buyer-personas; there is no one-size-fits-all global Journey Map.

While the actual format of the Journey Map may vary by company and/or the group developing them, there are three constants:

1. Maps should be created through the lens of the buyer, not the seller.
2. Maps document, in detail, every action the buyer takes across all touch points over the relationship's lifetime.
3. Every piece of content, regardless of source (vendor, competitor, analyst, peer, etc.) the buyer sought at each step, is documented.

Each action mapped should include, at a minimum, the following information:

- Description of the action
- A detailed definition of each piece of content sought
- Through which specific physical-virtual channel(s)
- The buyer's expectation(s) and feelings
- The desired outcome(s) of the action
- Who was involved in the action (Persona-roles)



The key is to develop actionable Journey Maps through the lens of the buyer. The most expedient way to do that is through qualitative or ethnographic research.

Once all the data has been gathered and the patterns, as well any anomalies, have been identified, arrange the buyers' actions longitudinally and assign descriptive step names to each step.

DEVELOPING A CONTENT MAP

The best practice is to develop a content map after the Journey Map has been completely documented. For each journey step identify each specific type of content the buyer sought, what channels they used to look for that content, and how the buyer intended to use the content. It is just as important to capture the content the buyer looked for but didn't find as it is to identify the content the buyer actually found. Additionally, the content map should include all the content the buyer sought irrespective of who provided that content – competitors, customers, industry analysts, bloggers, trade associations, etc.

The easiest way to develop a content map is in a table form as shown in the example below:

Journey Phase/Step	Step Description	Content Sought	Description/Purpose	Channel
Evaluate	1 st Short List of Vendors	Feature/function comparison	Objective comparison of solutions	Google Search and requests of industry peers
		Industry Analyst Report	Analyst rating of vendors' SWOT	Industry analyst websites
		Technical White Papers	In-depth product and engineering information	Vendor websites and industry associations
		Customer Case Studies	Evidence of post-purchase experience from trusted peers	Social graph and back channel of vendor install base

The more detailed and complete the Journey Map information, the more effective the resulting Content Strategy will be.



OPERATIONALIZING CONTENT MAPS

Before developing your journey-based content strategy, conduct two simple but crucial analyses.

The first analysis is to develop a comprehensive inventory of all the content in your organization. That means all assets including soft and hard copy marketing materials, tools, technical documentation, commissioned studies, white papers, videos, etc. The inventory should include asset creation date, last update date, target buyer-persona and why it was originally created.

Next, assign each asset in the content inventory to a specific customer journey step(s). Utilizing analytical tools you have in-house, determine how frequently each asset has been accessed (downloaded, read, registered for, etc.) over the past 12 months. If possible, capture that information by geography, industry, company size and buyer-persona. The content inventory becomes the foundation in determining which assets to keep or delete.

The second analysis is to conduct a content map gap that compares the content sought and valued by buyers for each journey step with the content inventory. A sample gap analysis template is shown here:

Journey		Buyer Sought Content		Vendor Existing Content	
Stage	Step	Content	Channel(s)	Content	Channel(s)

If you find that the journey or content maps do provide enough detail to complete the gap analysis, the best course of action is to go back and research the missing information. That may mean re-interviewing customers, conducting a customer roundtable, focus group, or survey. Trying to complete the gap analysis without the right level of data will result in a content strategy that misses the mark and doesn't deliver the conversion results.



THREE STEPS TO AN EFFECTIVE CONTENT STRATEGY

Creating an effective content strategy at this stage involves three steps:

1. **The content gap analysis identifies what content is missing by buyer-persona and journey step.** Determine if existing content can be repurposed or if new content is needed and who should author that content. Keep in mind that the most valued content is not vendor-authored but customer-created.
2. **Identify content that can be deleted by comparing the “buyer sought” content listed in the gap analysis with the content inventory.** Any asset in the inventory that is not listed in the content map under “buyer sought” should be deleted. Keeping ineffective content damages a brand’s reputation. Poor or misaligned content dissatisfies buyers who, in turn, are less likely to consider that vendor during a purchase evaluation.
3. **Develop your content strategy at the buyer-persona level.** For each journey step, define how content fits into the buyers’ activities and the channels through which asset(s) should be distributed. Lastly define each content asset in terms of:
 - Target buyer-persona
 - Journey step
 - Buyers’ intended use of the content
 - Buyers’ expectations
 - Tone
 - Language including industry terminology
 - Length
 - Trusted source/author
 - Format (video, whitepaper, case study, etc.)



BUILDING GOOD CONTENT HABITS

To keep your content strategy productive each asset needs to stay relevant, valued and sought after by buyers. Avoid content glut by having a clear criteria for evaluating new content. The rule of thumb is “if the buyer doesn’t seek it; don’t build it.”

Your content strategy should include mechanisms for periodically measuring and analyzing each asset’s effectiveness. The natural tendency is to measure content’s effectiveness based on the number views or downloads; a more effective measure is each asset’s impact on funnel velocity and conversion.

ACTION PLAN

In order to create your content strategy based on Customer Journey data, follow these steps:

1. **Complete a Customer Experience Management Assessment.** This assessment assists you in evaluating your organization’s capabilities when it comes to overall Customer Experience Management. Creating this baseline enables you to better understand your customers and the lifecycle they experience with your company.
2. **Use our Customer Journey Map to identify the touch points with your company.** With a clear guideline of each buyer persona’s experience with your organization, you can identify any weaknesses in your customer experience and prepare yourself to improve your content strategy.
3. **Follow our Content Marketing Plan Methodology.** Create a results-oriented content marketing plan using our detail 41-page planning methodology supported with 24 tools and templates that provide a step-by-step guide on how to build strategic process and a comprehensive content plan.

BOTTOM LINE

The often used strategy of “See what sticks” is an expensive approach to content strategy that can damage a brand’s reputation. **Defining your content strategy based on Journey Maps aligns your organization’s investment directly to the information that buyers seek and value.** The result is, on average, a 50 percent reduction in content inventory coupled with a 2X increase in pipeline velocity.



ABOUT THE RESEARCH ANALYST



Christine Crandell is a B2B strategy, marketing and transformation expert who helps CEOs, CMOs, CROs, COOs and investors accelerate revenue growth.

She leads a team of seasoned marketing and sales professionals with deep experience in strategy development and operationalization, corporate marketing, go-to-market planning, organizational development and coaching, and customer experience transformation.

It is from her 20+ years of marketing and strategy experience that she developed the Sellers' Compass™ methodology for leading companies to become customer-aligned and accelerating revenue.

