

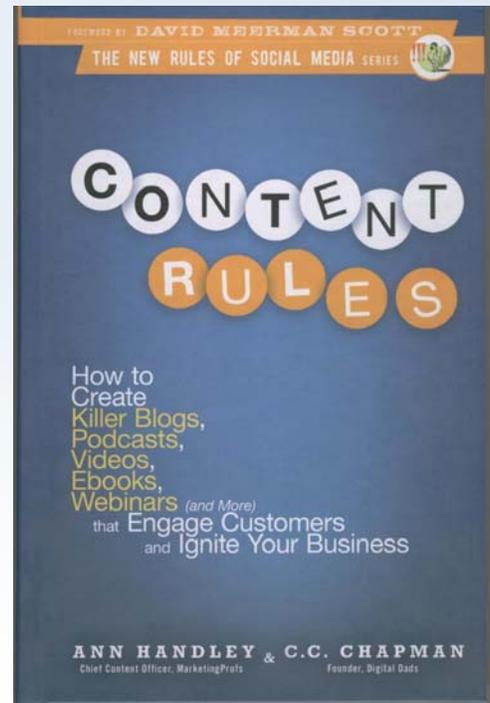
Content Rules

How to create killer blogs, podcasts, videos, ebooks, webinars that engage customers and ignite your business.

Anne Handley & C.C. Chapman, 2011

Highlights

Produce great stuff, and your customers will come to you.
Produce really great stuff, and your customers will share and disseminate your message for you.



Synopsis

Today, you have an unprecedented opportunity to create a treasury of free, easy-to-use, almost infinitely customizable content that tells the story of your product and your business, and positions you as an expert people will want to do business with.

The authors show you how to leverage all of today's tools to create content that truly speaks to your audience. They'll show you how to :

- ▲ Understand why you are generating content – getting to the meat of your message in practical, commonsense language, and defining the goals of your content strategy.
- ▲ Explore ways to integrate searchable words into your content without sounding forced (or sounding like « Frankenspeak »).
- ▲ Write in a way that powerfully communicates your service, product, or message across various Web mediums.
- ▲ Create a publishing schedule that allows you to create different kinds and types of content at once.

Contents

Chapter

PART ONE – THE CONTENT RULES

Objectives	2
Before starting	2
Rules	2
- Speak human	2
- Reimagine; don't recycle	2
- Share or solve	3
- Stoke the campfire	3
- Create wings and roots	3

Responsibilities of your top content person	4
Qualities to look for in a Content Creator / Writer	4
Types of content	5
B2B	5

PART TWO – THE HOW TO SECTION

Blog - Guidelines	6
Faqs	7
Video	7
Podcast	8
Photo	8

PART THREE – SUCCESS STORIES

Evaluate the success of the content	9
Tips and tools	9

PART ONE – THE CONTENT RULES

OBJECTIVES:

- ▲ Attract new customers
- ▲ Raise awareness about your company and create buzz about it
- ▲ Share more information about your company online to make it easier for people to find you
- ▲ Foster your community and give them a reason to tell others about you

BEFORE STARTING:

- | | |
|--|--|
| ▲ Who are you trying to reach? | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ How good are they with technology and social media?▪ Do they have the time to consume a full meal of content, or can they only snack on it? |
| ▲ What are your goals? | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ What do you want your audience to do?▪ What content do you already have? |
| ▲ When and how are you going to develop the content? | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ How will you measure success? Number of subscribers, Inbounds links, Comments, Social validation (by sharing on Facebook, Twitter, etc.) |

RULES:

Speak human

- ▲ Use simple terms, conversational tone with personality, empathy and true emotion.
- ▲ Find your “voice” as they say in literature; your individual writing style in character, point of view, punctuation, etc.
- ▲ You have to care about what you are creating. Approach it with a sense of enthusiasm and even fun.
- ▲ Worry less about shocking customers than about boring them.
- ▲ Let your readers know where you are coming from (*experience, formation*) and how you feel about a topic. It will protect you from being a me-too blogger.
- ▲ By taking a stand, we are stimulating conversation. Don't be afraid to polarize people.

Reimagine; don't recycle

- ▲ Ask yourself “How can we repurpose content development efforts to yields as many assets as possible?” Create “Content Food Chain”
- ▲ Rethink what you already do to produce different format of content: ebooks, white papers, blog posts, videos, photos, podcasts, tweets, Facebook status, Customer case studies, etc.
- ▲ Find you Big Idea that will lead all the content you'll produce.
- ▲ Inventory all the information you already have and that you created and categorized them by topics.
- ▲ Variety in format and in kind of content: express your ideas in various formats, lengths, and media. Vary the kind of content you are producing within each format.
- ▲ Tips:
 - Instead of founding a group that bears your company name, create a group that **unites members around a common challenge or theme.**
 - **Go behind the scenes**, get an insider's view.
 - **Remake the news:** Take a recent news release from your company and write a short blog post on its significance.

Share or solve

- ▲ **Your content must share a resource and solve problems.** Don't just publish articles, go further by giving ideas, possible solutions, experts' names to contact...
- ▲ Don't talk about the product. Talk about situations, topics related...
- ▲ **Your job is to generate new ideas and pull compelling stories.** What is your audience genuinely interested in reading, seeing, or knowing about?
- ▲ Invite guest posts, readers, employees, etc.
- ▲ **Channel your inner surly teenager:** Take the opposing or contrarian view on an issue that's on your mind, in the news or about an event everyone goes to but that you're not a fan of.
- ▲ **Leave stuff undone.** Every piece of content you create doesn't have to be perfectly crafted, nicely argued, or well said. **Leave room for your audience to step in with their thoughts and ideas.**

Stoke the campfire: Good content sparks interaction and ignites conversation.

- ▲ The more welcomed your visitors feel, the longer they will stay, the more they will invite others to visit, and the more often they will come back.
- ▲ **Visit other blog posts** or other online content that's related to your industry, and leave appropriate comments on them. Then invite readers to check out your stuff as well.
- ▲ **Create** on your site a series that is **highly shareable.** About a current issue that everyone has an opinion on. Think about what you could create that people would find value in and immediately want to share.
- ▲ **"Your awesome site isn't awesome. Getting your stories into the hands of the people who need them is awesome."** - Chris Brogan.

Create wings and roots: Ground your content solidly in your unique perspective, but give it wings to soar and be shared across platforms.

- ▲ **Passion is contagious.** It triggers an emotional reaction from your audience.
- ▲ Surprising articles and those who go beyond to awe, trigger a feeling of admiration, are more shared.
- ▲ **Make sharing across all social networks as effortless and easy as possible.**
- ▲ **It's ok to share more than once** (Twitter & Facebook, LinkedIn & Blog).
- ▲ Move **beyond words. Photos and videos** break up the text and get attention.
- ▲ **Shorten URLs through bit.ly**
- ▲ **How to make your content go viral? You can't.** You are not in control of what goes viral.

Play your strengths: You don't have to create everything and publish everywhere. It's better if you do even only one thing, but very very well.

Create a **Publishing Schedule** to plan, produce and publish content.

For the next 3 to 6 months.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| ▲ Daily | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ News items you read elsewhere that are relevant▪ Responses to blog comments on your own blog▪ User-generated content on your site |
| ▲ Weekly | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ New short blog post▪ Short video▪ A how-to article▪ Participation in related forums |
| ▲ Monthly | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ New longer blog post▪ Send a newsletter▪ Produce a podcast▪ Create a powerpoint presentation▪ Organize related offline activities▪ Publish a case study or customer success story |
| ▲ Quartely / Biannual / Annual | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ White paper▪ Video series▪ Bigger events |

RESPONSIBILITIES OF YOUR TOP CONTENT PERSON :

- ▲ Leading the web content strategy initiatives in consultation with other key players;
- ▲ Creating web content standards (like voice, tone, timeliness, relevancy, etc);
- ▲ Deciding what you'll publish (and for whom, and where, when, and how);
- ▲ Participating in operational discussions about resource planning and management, content management technology, etc;
- ▲ Creating content and grooming, training, and motivating content creators.

QUALITIES TO LOOK FOR IN A CONTENT CREATOR / WRITER

- ▲ Nose for a story and know how to make it human and interesting.
- ▲ Digital intuition: Understand the dynamics of the internet ecosystem.
- ▲ An amateur passion
- ▲ Social butterfly online: Know how to use his relationships to spread his content, without abusing them.
- ▲ An open mind: For businesses, content is a mean to an end, not an end in and of itself. Every article, tweet is assessed based on its ability to generate visitors and customers, not on any subjective judgment of content quality. Only quality content ultimately succeeds in meeting the necessary business objectives.
- ▲ ADOS (Attention Deficit... Ohh! Shiny!): Always looking for the newest and shiniest gadget. They're experimenting.

TYPES OF CONTENT:

- ▲ In-house created content
 - ▲ Curated Content (created by others that you post on your site)
 - ▲ Co-created content
 - ▲ User-generated content (UGC)
- ▲ Favour UGC by:
- Planning for engagement: Have the engine to moderate, respond to, and encourage participation.
 - Be prepared for the undesirable: Your audience might participate in ways you might not expect or want.
 - Craft community guidelines (Terms and conditions): With clear specific rules, using moderators and automated filters against truly offensive or litigious content. Enlist your top users to help you (“Inmates running the asylum”)
- ▲ Licensed content

B2B

- ▲ **Your prospects are avoiding you.**
- They will avoid contacting your company until they are closer to actually making a purchase, or quite late in the buying cycle.
 - But most of these buyers turn to the web to access information, solicit opinions from social medias or your web site.
 - If your company isn't delivering relevant information, it's not going to make the short list of possible vendors.
- ▲ **Develop long term relationship:** Develop a strategy that will keep them engaged until they're good and ready to talk to you or your rep.
- ▲ Why:
- **Each piece of content you produce should be tied to a short-term goal** (sign up for a webinar, increase sales by 15% in Québec, etc).
- ▲ Who:
- **What makes them tick**, their concerns and objectives?
 - Who is the company trying to reach and engage?
 - Develop buyer personas for all majors roles involved in the buying process.
 - **What question does this person need answered?**
 - What work issues keep this person up at night?
 - What motivates this buyer to take action?
 - What sources does this person turn to for information and daily news?
 - What types of organizations does he belong to and what event does he attend?
 - How is this person dealing with the problem today?
- ▲ What: Map what you know to how they buy
- ▲ When: What's special about the **B2B Editorial Calendar**?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each piece of content should be considered as an element of a larger whole, not as an ad hoc exercise. Develop a production schedule for each individual project.
▲ How	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do something unexpected. Ex: Cisco's campaign for router. Rather than real customer testimonials, it sought testimonials from Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny, talking about how dependant they are on the network. Use competitive comparisons. Create a document that offers a feature comparison of your product to your competitor's. FAQs: Producing the content your prospects and customers are looking for can be enough to set you apart; remember, they're not finding the info they want a majority of the time.
▲ Where:	Make it easy to share your content.

PART TWO – THE HOW-TO SECTION

Blog: A blend of the terms “web” and “log”

Guidelines:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Reliable schedule: At least twice a week. ▲ Mix it up: Mix short and long posts, meatier and less serious posts ▲ Beyond the words: Use photos, charts, checklists, etc. ▲ Size matters: A post should be long enough to say what you need to say, but not too long. Follow the “miniskirt theory of perfect length” ▲ Killer headlines: Spend as much time on it as you would the whole post if you need to.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pique curiosity Use superlatives Use surprising or odd analogies Be specific Simplify a complex subject comprehensively Be contrarian Use numbers, especially odd numbers.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Design is important. Should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An RSS icon Option to subscribe by email Clear way to contact you Search box Archive of recent posts by topics Social sharing icons Links to where else they can find you online (Twitter, LinkedIn...)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Categorize and tag everything: Categorize every blog post and add tags to each post. ▲ Write the way you speak: Friendly, casual, accessible. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have an editor to re-read you
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Don't overthink: Leave room for development and opinions of others.
Post Template:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Title <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to... 9 ways to... The secrets of... What you should know about... The weirdest/Best/Worst”Funniest”Most ridiculous... I ever had

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ First Sentence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ask a question ▪ State something mildly controversial or universally interesting that might spark intrigue (Ex. Have you ever wondered what it might feel like to trade jobs with someone for a day?) <p style="text-align: center;">Keep it simple: one idea per post</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Paragraph ▲ Bullets ▲ Image
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Close with a question <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Something specific to entice your readers to share a bit about themselves. (Ex. So what’s the job you always wish you could do for a day?” or “What’s the worst/best job you ever had?)

*Tips: Brevity is best.

Webinar: Chapter 12

Ebook & White Paper: Chapter 13

Customer Success Story: Chapter 14

FAQs

- ▲ If your visitors are already mining the questions looking for answers, chances are they are already thinking of doing business with your company. So, done right, the FAQ page helps build trust, educate customers, and ultimately further your relationship.
- ▲ Get to the point and skip the extra words.
- ▲ Answer with facts, not fluffy opinions.

Video

- ▲ Too many companies think that they can turn off that setting and drive everyone to the company site to watch the videos. That’s bad business decision. You **should allow sharing your videos even without links to your website.**
- ▲ **Thumbnail:** The image that people see before they hit “Play” on the video.
- ▲ Ideas:
 - **Diary-style:** Tips or tricks for using your product, answer a common support question, give an update, etc.
 - **Interviews** with staff, customers or those who might be considered rock stars in your industry: You could ask your audience via Twitter, Facebook or your newsletter what questions they might like to hear answered.
 - **Product tours:** Highlight the features of your product, live video instead of photos.
 - **Behind-the-scenes** videos

Podcast

- ▲ Export your audio from videos. You may add a powerpoint presentation instead of photos.
- ▲ Keep length in mind.

Photo

- ▲ Passionate, product-loving shots.
- ▲ Tag the people in the pictures.
- ▲ Add as many descriptive tags to the photo.

PART THREE – SUCCESS STORIES

Reynolds Gold Academy

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Videos on “New Rules of Golf Instruction” You Tube channel. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Along with serious videos, there are funny ones like “The Proper Way to Throw a Club”, “Anger Management”.
<p>Ideas to steal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Play your strengths. Figure out if you’re a good writer, a good radio person or a good video person and do what you’re best at. Don’t try to force the creation of a bunch of content you don’t feel suited to. ▲ Measure what you post that works and do more of that. ▲ Use a photo of yourself as the avatar rather than the company logo. It attracts more listeners as they appear more human. ▲ Always be learning. Producing any regular stream of content keeps you almost by necessity on the cutting edge of best practices and developments in your particular industry. ▲ It’s about meeting your consumers where they are. Marketing is no longer about driving your consumer to a single point of contact. ▲ Create content that makes your buyers run faster and jump higher. Think coaching tips, concrete steps, how-to guidance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ There is no business like show business. Content that entertains (like Confessions of a Sales VP) surprises and engages your buyers. Periodically, create a quick survey on your business blog as a way to get some specific feedback from your readers. What do they like reading about? What kind of content format they prefer? Add a comment box. ▲ Maintain a schedule and plan your posts with special dates: events you’re going to, who should write it, mark important holidays (Mother’s Day, April Fools’) and play with it, include special events (like Olympic Games or World Cup). ▲ Make contributing as easy as possible by giving bloggers a template for posts. ▲ Hire well. Make sure your contributors are good writers and want to post. ▲ There is no topic that is too niche-y.

EVALUATE THE SUCCESS OF THE CONTENT

- ▲ Never judge solely on the number of comments or like.
- ▲ Use complete tracking system.

TIPS AND TOOLS

- ▲ Use **Search.Twitter.com** to see all mentions of word or phrase on Twitter in the past 2 weeks. At the upper right, copy the URL where it mention subscribing to a feed of that search.
- ▲ **Trolls:** “One who posts a deliberately provocative message to a newsgroup or message board with the intention of causing maximum disruption.” NEVER feed (respond) the trolls. Do not acknowledge them.
- ▲ **Responding to an angry person/client:**
 - Apologize
 - Thank the client for bringing the issue to your attention so that the business can make this right.
 - Quickly take the discussion offline (email or phone).