

How to Turn One Idea into Multiple Content Marketing Assets

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In a crowded, cluttered marketing world, the problem isn't lack of information; rather, it's that there is *too much* information. Customers and clients want their problems solved, so they search for experts by looking for people who provide value, not just advertising. That's why content marketing is a key tool for organizations large and small.

In brief, content marketing is about creating material that teaches and sells.

Think about all the material you produce in your organization:

- Some of it might be for teaching purposes, but is not promotional—things like online courses, articles, training videos, educational CDs, books, e-books and so on.
- Some other material might be promotional but not educational—things like sales letters, flyers, brochures, promotional postcards, etc.
- Content marketing combines the two: It's material that's mostly—let's say 80%—educational, but also—let's say up to 20%—promoting of your products and services.

Even before the term “content marketing” became popular, many businesses had been using these techniques. For example, if you publish an email newsletter, write articles, record informative videos or run educational webinars, you've been doing content marketing.

The key principle is that you deliver value—*huge* value—first, and then promote later. But of course, by providing this value, you're also positioning yourself as an expert, not just a salesperson—and that helps your promotion as well.

This has always been part of online marketing strategy, especially for businesses that want more traffic from Google. Google has always rewarded high-quality content from respected authorities, and that has only become more important now. In fact, Google has started penalizing websites that don't provide quality content, because it knows that those sites aren't highly regarded by Internet users, so they shouldn't appear at the top of search results.

Content marketing has always been important, but now it's more important than ever before.

What You Will Learn

Some content marketing consultants urge you to keep creating and publishing new content, and this can seem like an overwhelming task, especially for the business owner or marketer who has many other things on their plate.

Fortunately, there's a better way. It can be just as effective to convert one idea into multiple content marketing pieces, saving you time and effort. This report will show you how.

Broadly, the process is as follows:



1. Identify a key problem, goal or pain point in your customer's life.
2. Create *one* piece of content (article, video, webinar, blog post, etc.) that teaches them how to address that problem.
3. Create multiple "spin-off" products that teach the same material, but in a different way.

Although you're providing the same material in different ways, users will appreciate—rather than resent—your efforts. Some people process information in different formats, others are only subscribed to a few of your channels, others like having it drip-fed to them. By duplicating your material—but presenting it in different ways—you're doing your users a favor, as well as saving time and effort.

Identify Their Problems

The first step is to think about your customer's problems, questions, concerns and aspirations. Your aim is to *prove that you're an authority in solving your customers' biggest problems*.

If you're not sure exactly what problems to address, start by asking these questions:

- What are my customers and clients always asking me?
- What keeps them up at night?
- What do they say is the biggest benefit of working with us?

You might identify more than one issue this way, so choose just one at this stage.

Create One Piece of Content

The next step is to create a piece of content. It might be an article, a video, a webinar, a diagnostic quiz or something else. The format isn't important, but it is important to create *high-quality* content, not just a promotional piece.

Craft a title

You need a compelling title to grab your customers' attention immediately. One way to craft a compelling title is to get inspiration from magazine covers, because their headlines are written by highly-paid marketers. Simply head over to Magazines.com and browse the covers for interesting headlines.

Look for headlines that describe a list of things, because that will make it easier for you to create the content. Here are three examples:

- "Concealer tricks from the pros" (you can see this on the sample cover to the right)



- “Three words you must never say to a guy”
- “Money. Success. Happiness. Your 6-Step Plan”

Then change a few words in the headline to match your area of expertise. For example, “Concealer tips from the pros” might become:

- “Customer service tips from the pros”
- “Social media tips from the pros”
- “Dog grooming tips from the pros”
- “Wedding planning tips from the pros”

Write the outline

You now know the topic and title, so write down an outline of the content. This is easy, because you’re simply putting together a list. Aim for 6 to 10 items. For example, if you’re writing “Dog grooming tips from the pros,” simply list your 6 to 10 tips.

You don’t have to write them out in detail—just a brief list is enough at this stage.

Create the content piece

The next step is to create the piece of content, based on your list. This will vary depending on the format you’ve chosen, but broadly it will be:

- A brief introduction, identifying the customer’s problem
- Your list of tips, with a bit more information about each
- A brief conclusion, urging them to put these ideas into action
- A call to action, promoting yourself and encouraging them to contact you

For example:

- If you’re writing an article, this will be about 400-500 words, with an introductory paragraph, a paragraph for each item, a closing paragraph and a one-line call to action.
- If you’re recording a video for YouTube, it will be roughly the same material in spoken form.
- If you’re presenting a 45-minute webinar, it will be 3-5 minutes for each item in your list, leaving enough time for an introduction, conclusion, and Q&A.

Don’t obsess about making this perfect. It’s better to get it 80% right *and published* than to wait too long until it’s perfect.



Classify Your Content Piece

Many marketers would now repeat the process above to create more content. That's good, but you can do even better—by taking the content you've already created and turning it into other forms.

For example, if you have written an article, you could:

- Read the article out loud, record it and publish it as *an MP3 file* on your blog.
- Expand each item from a paragraph to a page, and turn it into *a free special report*.
- Present *a Q&A webinar* on the article content, where you briefly list the items and then open the webinar to audience questions.
- Turn the article into a *series of auto-responder messages*, sending one item per day to a subscriber's inbox.

This is such a powerful process that it's worth making it systematic. Try and classify your content piece according to these five dimensions:

1. *Channel*: What format is it using?
2. *Time*: Is it live or recorded?
3. *Depth*: How detailed is it?
4. *Scale*: Is it designed for individuals or groups?
5. *Stages*: Is it delivered in stages?

Let's look at each of these in detail so you can determine how your content piece fits each of these five dimensions. Keep in mind that the purpose of this stage is to prepare you for the next stage, where you'll use this information to create new content.

1. Channel: Some people prefer certain formats

Broadly, there are four ways that people consume material: seeing, hearing, doing and reading.

Let's look at each in turn, with pros and cons.

See (e.g. video, slide shows, webinars, video conferences, screen capture videos, photographs, infographics):

- Pros: People can grasp visual information quickly (a picture really *can* be worth a thousand words!), it's easier than ever to create visuals
- Cons: Some visuals take longer to download and play (video, for example), Google doesn't index the content from visuals well, it's harder to skim through a video quickly, sometimes visuals are unnecessary



Hear (e.g. MP3 downloads, podcasts, teleseminars, interviews, music):

- Pros: Good for multi-tasking (while driving, at the gym, and so on), downloads are smaller and faster than video, your voice gives a more personal connection
- Cons: Not easy to quickly skim the material, no big website for distributing audio (unlike YouTube for video)

Do (e.g. multiple-choice quizzes, surveys, games, online discussion groups, chat rooms, phone apps):

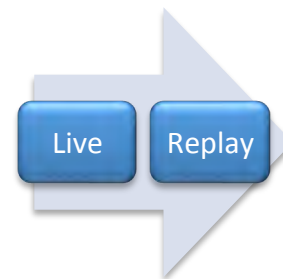
- Pros: Participants feel more engaged and committed, they remember their experience more, they can create customized results
- Cons: It takes more work to get them involved initially, not always easy to design and deliver in electronic form

Read (e.g. e-books, special reports, email courses [auto-responders], articles, email newsletter, blog posts)

- Pros: Familiar format for most people, can be consumed on almost every device, easy to flip back and forth, easy to skim for an overview
- Cons: Information overload, some people don't learn well from reading, people are impatient

2. Time: Some people learn later

The phrase “time shifting” originated with video recorders, where you no longer had to watch television programs at the time they were scheduled on TV. The same concept applies to the content you create: much of it can be recorded for your customer to consume at their convenience.



Also keep in mind the opposite choice, where you deliberately schedule an event in order to create a live experience.

Live (e.g. webinars, teleseminars, chat rooms, multiplayer games):

- Pros: Participants have access to you immediately, events have built-in scarcity, easier to build buzz around an event
- Cons: Some people (including you!) might struggle with using the technology, technology glitches can occur, need to account for different time zones and time of day

Replay (either recordings of live events or pre-recorded material):



- Pros: Participants can access at their convenience, easy to share with others, can consume it over and over again
- Cons: Harder to build buzz, no immediate access to you

3. Depth: Some people want more detail

When you go on holiday, are you a person who likes the “21 cities in 21 days” holiday, or do you like spending time in one or two places? Maybe you prefer a mixture of the two?

Overview: The accelerated “21 cities in 21 days” holiday is an *overview*, and you can do the same with some of your content marketing—for example, articles, tip sheets and book summaries:

- Pros: Good for novices, introducing a new idea, getting a point across quickly, leaves customers wanting more
- Cons: Too lightweight for some users, too many other people doing the same thing, leaves them wanting too much more

Detail: The in-depth holiday is a *detail* product such as an e-book, book, MP3 series, or auto-responder series:

- Pros: Good for experienced users, demonstrates depth of knowledge
- Cons: Too detailed for some people, can seem intimidating, takes time to consume it

Sample: The third type, a *sample*, is taking an extract from an existing product. For example, if you already wrote a special report that you gave free on your website, you could probably split up that report into individual articles—each of which would be a sample.

- Pros: Demonstrates depth, faster to consume, doesn’t give away too much
- Cons: Doesn’t show breadth of knowledge

4. Scale: Some people work with others

Many marketers think of their content as a one-to-one process—that is, one person reads your article, watches your video or listens to your podcast. However, this doesn’t necessarily have to be the case. Here are four levels of scale and examples of them in use.



One-to-one (e.g. email newsletter, e-book, video, podcast): Most downloadable material falls into this category because it's downloaded by one person for individual consumption.

Group (e.g. webinars, teleseminars, videoconferencing for small groups): A group is more than one person and fewer than a crowd. This style of content marketing takes the form of small-group events, where participants feel comfortable asking questions and interacting with each other.

Team (e.g. discussion forum, facilitation by webinar or teleseminar, bulletin board, chat room, blog with comments, wiki): A team is a group that works together. The dynamics are similar to that of a group, but because they are working together, they can be more cohesive and more engaged than a group of individuals.

Crowd (e.g. large webinars, large teleseminars, videoconferencing, webcasting): This is potentially a very powerful marketing platform, because you can reach many people at the same time, and viewers can be anywhere in the world. However, people don't feel as engaged in a big crowd, *you* might not feel as engaged with them, and it's more nerve-wracking for the presenters.

5. Stages: People consume content over time

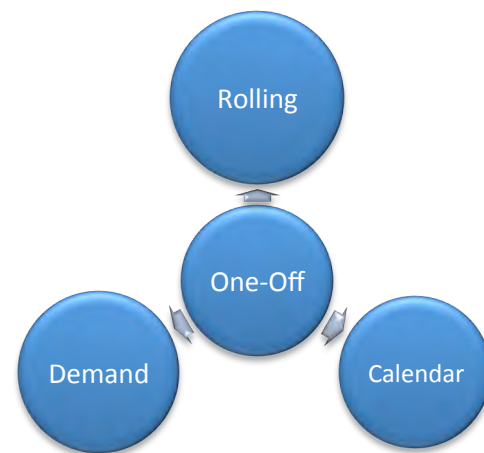
Think about a rocket going to the moon, coming apart in planned stages. Do you deliver your material in multiple stages as well, or is it all in a single piece? There's nothing *wrong* with a one-off service, but it's only one of the four ways of staging your material.

One-off (e.g. e-books, special reports, video download, MP3 file, teleseminar, webinar):

- Pros: They get everything they need at once
- Cons: it can seem overwhelming

Calendar (e.g. email newsletter, podcast, webinar or teleseminar series, other live events presented as a series): With this model, you break up your content into pieces, and deliver it in sequence, where everyone on a certain date gets the same thing.

- Pros: Multiple marketing opportunities, people who subscribe are more loyal than one-off consumers
- Cons: People who miss the starting date miss out on the older material



Rolling (e.g. auto-responder sequences): Similar to the calendar system, except this time they receive their installments depending on when *they* begin the program.

- Pros: Multiple marketing opportunities, even later people don't miss out
- Cons: Difficult to schedule calendar-based events for subscribers

Demand (e.g. password-protected webpage, membership site, resource website): You still break up your material into pieces, but the customers choose their own time frame for consuming it.

- Pros: They choose their own time frame and sequence
- Cons: Can seem overwhelming, needs discipline for them to consume it, not enough guidance

Create Spin-Off Material

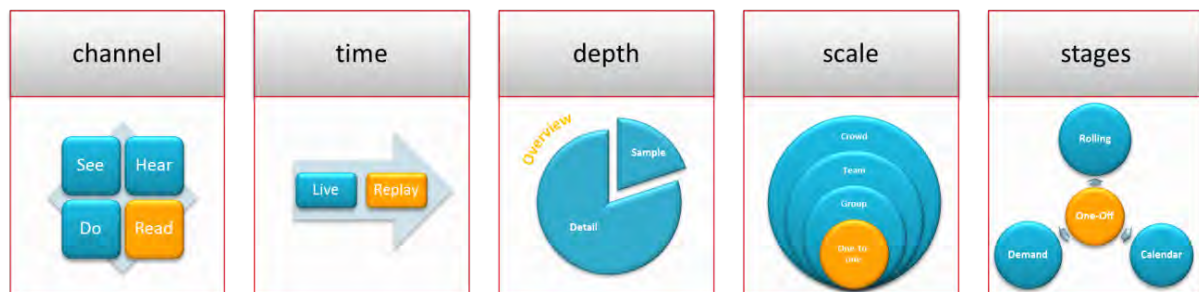
The next step is to take your content piece, look at its five dimensions and simply change one of them to create a new content piece. Broadly, you can “spin” any piece of content in five ways by changing those dimensions:

1. Switch channel: Change the format between audio, video, text and interaction.
2. Shift time: Record live events or present live versions of recorded content.
3. Fill depth: Create different levels of detail.
4. Magnify scale: Present it to one person at a time, small groups or large groups.
5. Manage stages: Deliver the content in multiple stages.

Let's look at some examples to make this clearer.

Example 1: Article

If we consider the five dimensions of a plain-text article, it would look like this:



From here, it's easy to see other possible content marketing pieces—for example:

1. Change *read* to *see*: Record a YouTube video explaining the article content.
2. Change *read* to *hear*: Read the article out loud and record it as an MP3 file.

3. Change *read* to *do*: Write each of the seven items in the article as a survey question, with a 0-5 rating, for the reader to complete as a diagnostic tool.
4. Change *replay* to *live*: Run a webinar on the article content.
5. Change *overview* to *detail*: Expand each of the points to about 400 words and publish it as a special report.
6. Change *overview* to *sample*: Each of the points in the special report is then an article in its own right.
7. Change *one-to-one* to *hroup*: Start a new discussion about the article topic in a LinkedIn group.
8. Change *one-to-one* to *team*: Run a small-group online meeting and facilitate a discussion of the article content.
9. Change *one-to-one* to *crowd*: Run a large-scale webinar about the article content.
10. Change *one-off* to *calendar*: Publish the articles from the special report (see #5) in your email newsletter.
11. Change *one-off* to *rolling*: Create an auto-responder series with the same articles from the special report.
12. Change *one-off* to *demand*: Make these articles available on a password-protected page of your website (where anybody can get the password in exchange for joining your mailing list).

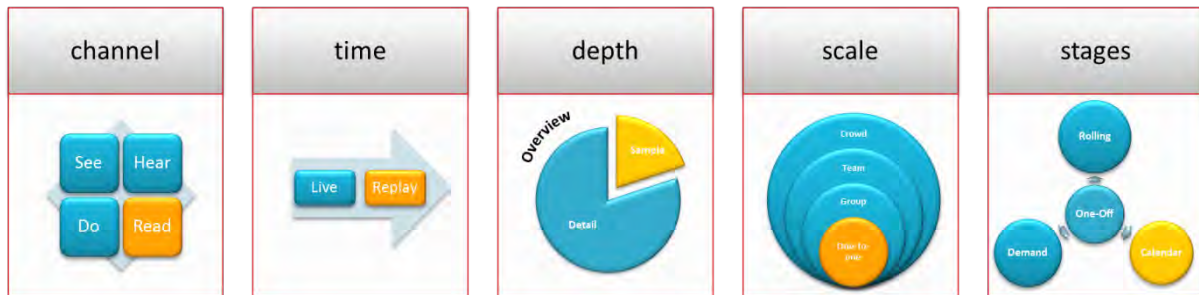
We've only just scratched the surface here. You can create even more content marketing pieces by varying these five dimensions in other ways. For example, if you combine item #1 (a YouTube video) with item #11 (an auto-responder series), you get a video auto-responder series, which is another effective content marketing product.

You use this process to create many potential *ideas* for new content marketing pieces from the same material. Some of these ideas might not be feasible or worthwhile, but others will.



Example 2: Email newsletter

An email newsletter has these five dimensions:



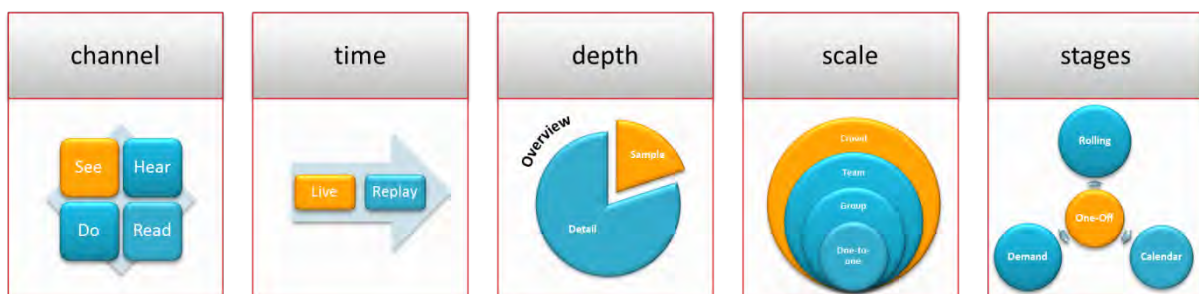
Here are just a few of the spin-off content marketing pieces you can create by varying it:

1. *Read to see:* Publish infographics in your newsletter.
2. *Read to hear:* Read articles out loud and publish in a podcast.
3. *Read to do:* Each newsletter ends with a poll question.
4. *Replay to live:* Run a webinar series.
5. *Sample to detail:* Publish a newsletter of recommended e-books.
6. *One-to-one to group:* Facilitate an online book club.
7. *Calendar to one-off:* Publish each newsletter article to EzineArticles.com.
8. *Calendar to rolling:* Create an auto-responder series with the same articles as your newsletter.

Again, there are many other possibilities you could find.

Example 3: Promotional webinar

A webinar has these five dimensions:



Try the exercise yourself, creating new content marketing pieces by simply changing one of these five dimensions.

Conclusion

This process will help you create multiple marketing pieces from a single source. Don't be fooled by its simplicity. It's deceptively easy, but very powerful.

Keep in mind that different people consume content differently. Creating your content in multiple formats helps them, and improves—rather than harms—your credibility. After all, you're promising to address their biggest problems and concerns, and you then create articles, videos, webinars, reports, slide-shows and infographics that do just that. This clearly demonstrates your commitment to *their* needs and puts you a long way ahead of the competition.



About Gihan Perera

Gihan Perera is a consultant, speaker and author who helps thought leaders and business professionals leverage their expertise.

He is the author of the book *Webinar Smarts and Fast, Flat and Free*, among others; *Forbes* magazine rated him the #5 social media influencer in book publishing.

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