

## Dick Maggiore: Winning content inspires audience to engage, buy

By [Dick Maggiore Special](#) to The Canton Repository

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In a recent column, we quoted marketing guru Seth Godin's profound observation, "Content marketing is the only marketing left."

Yes, content marketing is that important.

Content includes many tactics, from blogging, vlogging and social media posting to e-books, webinars, podcasts and email. In the recent column, we covered basics of the No. 1 content marketing tactic: email.

Several readers followed up with requests for pointers on making content effective.

With so many people and companies publishing content, getting attention has never been tougher. We're living in a world of "infobesity." If information were calories, we'd all be fat.

Getting and holding attention starts with creating quality content. Great content is essential, and it is not easy.

First, you must do your homework to understand what content will get and keep attention. A great deal of information on industries, markets, trends, prospects, customers and your competition can be found by searching the internet.

A professional research firm can validate your findings. Its associates will advise what you need to know. Not only will you be assured of greater objectivity, but the methods employed also will be more reliable.

Your goal is to find that strategic idea that will differentiate your product or service from the competition in a meaningful way in the minds of your customers. That is your brand's [position](#).

The brand positioning idea will be the foundation for preparing your content.

Examples of brands and the idea they own in our minds include, in the pizza category, Domino's "delivery" and Papa John's "taste." In the pasta category, Barilla owns "Italy's No. 1 pasta." In the beverage category, Red Bull owns "energy drink." In the business equipment category, Xerox owns "copiers." WordPress owns "free websites."

Once you have your differentiating idea, it's time to execute by developing content that springs from the positioning idea. The tools for producing content are pictures, words and sounds.

### Creating brand personality

Compelling content is where creativity comes to play. This is where your strategy takes form and substance that is significant, relevant and valuable to your audience. You can call this the brand personality.

FedEx thought strategically. It became one of the world's largest shippers when it changed its focus to "overnight delivery." It expressed that with the creative expression, "When it Absolutely, Positively Has To Be There Overnight." All of FedEx's content reinforced the positioning idea of "overnight delivery."

To understand the relationship between the position and the creative execution, think of a coin. One side of the coin is the strategic brand positioning idea, and the other side is the expression or dramatization of the positioning idea. Together they combine to make the "big idea."

A little magic is necessary at this stage. It can be very difficult to recognize a big idea, let alone come up with it.

Here are considerations when developing content.

Your research should reveal the demographics (gender, age, income, marital status, size of family, position title where employed and more) and psychographics (habits, hobbies, values, likes, dislikes and more) of your customer persona.

Picture in your mind that you are telling your story to one person, your ideal customer. Visualize that person. Think of writing a personal letter to her or him.

### **Win attention**

Get right to the point with your copy. Our attention spans continue to decrease since the introduction of the smartphone. Only 20 percent of people read past the headline. You can't afford to lose them, so you must win their attention from the get-go.

Use language your ideal customer understands and is comfortable with. Simple conversational language is preferable. Specifics sell. Generalities don't. Back up your claims with reasons to believe.

People are emotional. That's why the concept of storytelling often is used. Remember, however: You are selling something, not writing a screenplay. Your content must weave in emotion connected to your brand's positioning idea and personality. The goal is attaching your customer emotionally to your product or service.

Break up text with pictures and video. When selecting visuals, photographs usually work better than illustrations. Photos of people work best. Just like with the words you choose, the visuals must be relevant to your brand's positioning idea and brand personality.

Keep sentences to 20 words or fewer. Paragraphs should be short, written around one thought.

Avoid overused words: awesome, literally, amazing, basically, honestly, really, incredible, fabulous, superb, core values, key issues, etc.

Content marketing's secret sauce is that every blog post, podcast or video should be crafted to improve your company's or brand's organic (nonpaid) search engine results. This is known as search engine optimization, or SEO.

Every piece of SEO'd content is its own opportunity to get indexed and found through search. This adds exponentially to your web presence, beyond the pages of your website.

Developing a compelling brand position, personality and message is difficult work. It must define your brand distinctively to break through the clutter and ultimately result in purchasing behavior.

David Ogilvy, the father of modern advertising, said, "You can't save souls in an empty church." Great content is the key to building your congregation.

*Note: A Clevelander, Joe Pulizzi, founded the Content Marketing Institute. He also founded the world's largest content marketing annual event, Content Marketing World. It will be in Cleveland this year, Sept. 3-6.*

*Dick Maggiore is president and CEO of [Innis Maggiore](#) founded in Canton in 1974, and today recognized as America's leading positioning ad agency helping brands compete and win in the marketplace here and across the country.*