Contently

Content Marketing Dictionary

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Introduction

Content marketing, like any other industry, has its own set of jargon, acronyms, and repurposed terms. It's also a relatively new industry populated by refugees from other marketing disciplines, journalists who've made the switch, and career media professionals—all of whom have imported bits of language from their previous fields.

As a result, the dialect in Content Marketing Country can be overwhelming for new arrivals. That's why we created the Contently Content Marketing Dictionary—Contently's effort to codify the lexicon we hear all day. This should be read as a first edition; like *Merriam-Webster*, we'll be adding new terms when we hear them, and updating the current ones to make sure they stay current. Please don't hesitate to hit us up with feedback or suggestions on things we may have missed. Just don't expect to find "selfie" in here anytime soon.

People

A brand's publishing efforts are only as good as the people behind them. Here's who they are and what they do:

brand newsroom *(n.)*

The group of people that consistently publishes content on behalf of a brand, or the fundamental restructuring of brand communications to mirror those of a media organization; the thing your boss wants you to build.

brand writer *(n.)*

A reporter or blogger who creates stories for a brand publisher.

chief content officer *(n.)*

The leader of a brand newsroom who oversees all creation and multi-channel publication of the organization's content, including text, video, audio, animation, and more; also responsible for overall strategy, working with the company's other business units to ensure that content is approved swiftly, and paving the way to take strategic risks.

data scientist *(n.)*

The wonderful wizard who translates your analytics into actionable insights.

content strategist *(n.)*

Anyone who strategically assists in the planning, development, and implementation of a content campaign or initiative from an editorial, design, or brand-positioning perspective.

compliance *(n.)*

The team or process that often must approve content strategy and certain pieces of content in order to protect the brand's legal interests… and to make your life a living hell.

editor-in-chief *(n)*

The day-to-day head of a brand's content and publishing operations; manages staff, assignments, and editorial strategy; comes into work every morning hoping that this is the day people finally start calling him "chief."

Trade Lingo

For those just entering the brand publishing world, the trade lingo can sometimes make your head spin. Here's a quick primer:

advertorial *(n.)*

A self-promotional advertisement in the guise of editorial content that often fails to offer significant value to the reader: "I Tried This Teeth Whitener, and You Won't Believe What Happened Next!" (Spoiler: His teeth got whiter.)

audience *(n.)*

The people who consume a publisher's content.

audience definition *(n.)*

The process of identifying the types of people you'd like to reach with your content. (Not to be confused with the definition of audience, three lines up.)
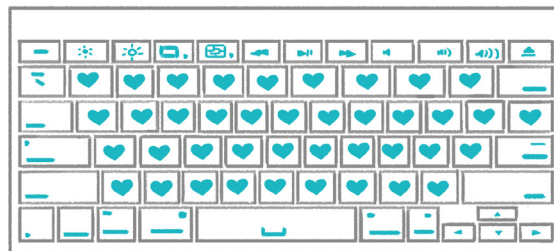
brand blog *(n.)*

One place a brand's content can live online; often a repository for company news and updates.

brand publishing *(n.)*

The practice of a brand telling stories about the things they care about, their brand, and their brand's products in a way that's genuinely engaging and not promotional.

CMS *(n., abbr.)*

content management system: software that allows for the publishing, editing, and organization of content, such as WordPress and Squarespace.

competitive analysis *(n.)*

An evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of your content relative to one or more competitors.
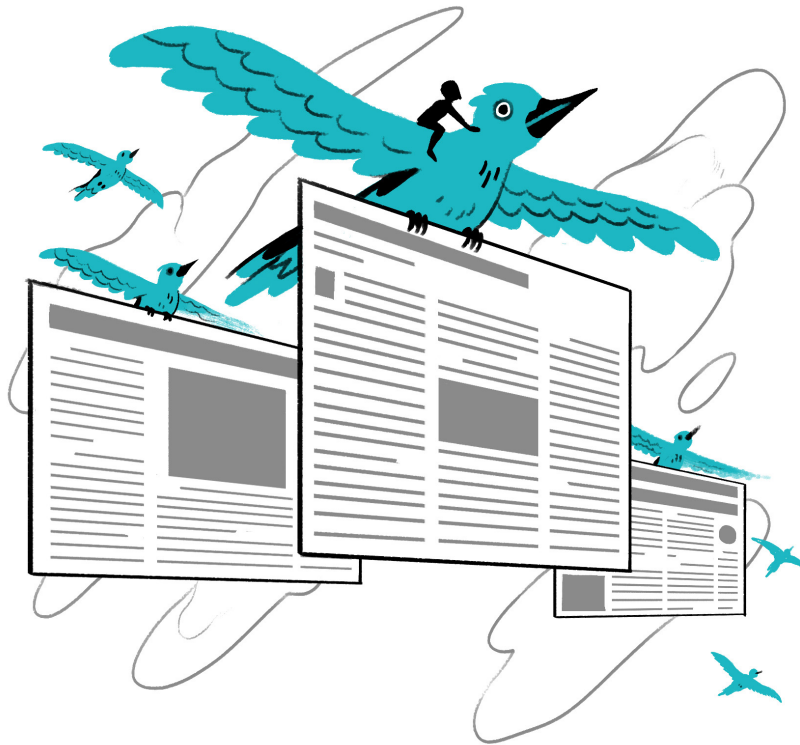
content audit *(n.)*

The process of evaluating the effectiveness of your content on a website or group of websites.

content migration *(n.)*

The process of moving information from one CMS to another.

content targeting *(n.)*

The distribution of ads, such as native content, that are relevant to the content that surrounds it.

dek *(n.)*

The summary that teases the narrative below the headline of a story and is pretty much impossible to pronounce.

e-book *(n.)*

An electronic book read on a computer, tablet, or e-reader; often used to describe any piece of digital content over 3,000 words.

editorial *(n.)*

A story that presents the express opinion of the publisher, editor(s), or writer.

editorial *(adj.)*

Everything relating to stories created for publication.

feature story *(n.)*

A story, often longer than usual, that's not tied to a specific news event; likely an in-depth profile of a person or major event, often written in a distinct personal or narrative style.

headline *(n.)*

The heading at the top of a story that tells the reader what it's about. (Or not, if you're doing the whole Upworthy thing.)

KPI *(n., abbr.)*

Key performance indicator: a set of quantifiable metrics relative to your business goals. Once you know this term, you've gone down the rabbit hole of marketing speak, never to emerge again. Sorry about that.

lead *(n.)*

The first few sentences of a story that are used to hook the reader and compel him or her to continue reading. As a rule, writing "Merriam-Webster defines [BLANK] as [BLANK]" as your lead is not okay.

microcontent *(n.)*

Short-form content that has its length and depth limited by a design constraint of some kind; often used in reference to social media.

multimedia stories *(n.)*

Stories that use a combination of content forms, such as text, video, photography, and games.

output channel *(n.)*

A site or platform through which content is published or distributed.

parallax design *(n.)*

A graphic scrolling technique, common in featured stories, in which the background images move faster than the foreground images, creating an illusion of depth.

native advertising *(n.)*

Advertising that fits the medium in a way that does not interrupt a user's experience; i.e., the ad is as good or better than the expected non-ad content on that medium.

pitch *(n.)*

An idea for a story, presented to an editor or other editorial decision-maker; may erroneously lead to your hungover social media editor throwing a baseball at your monitor.

platform *(n.)*

An environment in which software is designed to run. Most commonly used to describe social media sites and content management software.
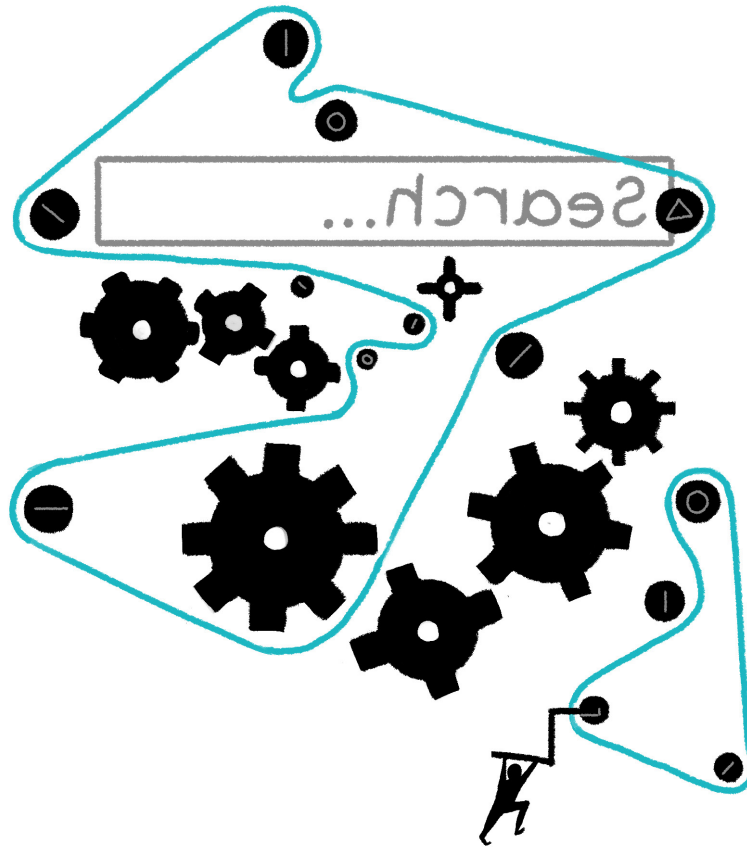
programmatic marketing *(n.)*

The automated buying and selling of ads and content that are targeted to individuals based on their online behavior; the reason those Birkenstocks you clicked on that one time are following you across the entire Internet.

SEO *(n., abbr.)*

search engine optimization: the fine-tuning of content and site structure to maximize exposure through search engines.

social content *(n.)*

Content specifically created to be native to social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, Pinterest, WhatsApp, and LinkedIn.

story *(n.)*

A piece of content that contains a narrative.

storytelling *(n.)*

The practice of creating narrative content; the tool that most helps humans navigate life, and (potentially) the top business skill of the next five years.

thought leadership *(n.)*

The publishing of unique and intelligent analyses of topics in a specialized field; the most abused buzzword in B2B content marketing.

utility content *(n.)*

Content that provides useful information or tools to a user, but does not include a narrative or storytelling elements; e.g., the Nike+ Running app, the Walgreens app.

voice *(n.)*

The editorial style and tone unique to a given publisher; arguably the most important part of a content strategy.

white paper *(n.)*

An authoritatively written guide or report that illuminates an issue, problem, or opportunity, often through proprietary data.

Audience

The biggest challenge in content marketing is getting eyeballs on your content; these terms will help you navigate that world.

content recommendation advertisement *(n.)*

A piece of content distributed through content recommendation widgets such as Taboola or Outbrain.

custom sponsored content *(n.)*

Content created by a brand or publisher on behalf of the brand that runs on publisher's site.

impression *(n.)*

A measure of the number of times a piece of content is seen, whether it is clicked on or not. Each time an ad displays, it is counted as one impression.
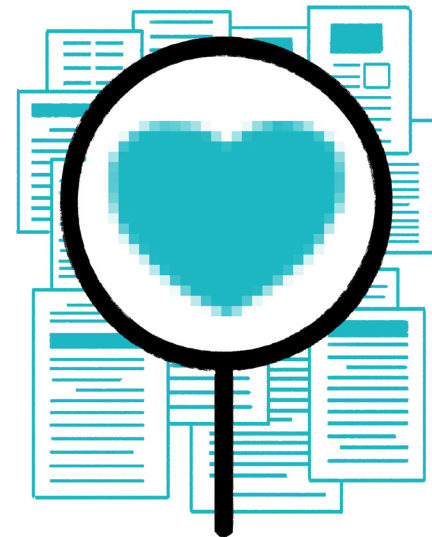
native advertising *(n.)*

Advertising that fits the medium in a way that does not interrupt a user's experience; i.e., the ad is as good or better than the expected non-ad content on that medium.

native social ads *(n.)*

Sponsored content placed into the users' feeds on social media sites; e.g., Facebook Sponsored Posts, Promoted Tweets, Sponsored Tumblr Posts, Instagram Ads.

organic reach *(n.)*

The amount of people exposed to a piece of content through non-paid means.

paid reach *(n.)*

The amount of people exposed to a piece of content or advertisement through paid channels.

programmatic sponsored content *(n.)*

Sponsored content that is automatically placed on a publisher's site through an automated native advertising platform such as Nativo.

reach *(n.)*

The amount of people exposed to a piece of content.

sponsored content *(n.)*

A type of native ad in which a brand pays to put its branded content on a media property that it does not own.

underwritten sponsored content *(n.)*

Editorial content sponsored by a single brand that has no influence over it.

Numbers Speak

In brand publishing, analytics are next to godliness. These terms can help you unlock your holy grail:

bounce rate *(n.)*

The percentage of users who visit a site and leave after only viewing one page. A high bounce rate can be a sign of poor content quality or poorly constructed site navigation.

brand lift *(n.)*

The percentage increase in a marketing objective as the result of a brand advertising campaign; e.g., after reading a piece of MINI branded content, users were 32.9 percent more likely to agree that MINI was a car they might consider for their next vehicle purchase.

click-through *(n.)*

When someone clicks on a linked ad or piece of content.

click-through rate *(n.)*

The number of clicks on an ad or piece of content divided by the number of times it was seen by a user (impressions).

conversion *(n.)*

When a consumer takes a desired action, such as buying a product or signing up for a newsletter.

conversion rate *(n.)*

The number of users who take a desired action divided by the total number of users.

exit rate *(n.)*

The percentage of users who leave after visiting a particular page, regardless of whether it was the first page they visited; often confused with bounce rate.

engaged time *(n.)*

The amount of active time that a user spends consuming content, as measured by page scrolling, highlighting, and other factors that indicate the user hasn't just left the browser window open while watching a Hugh Grant marathon in the other room.

CPC *(n., abbr.)*

cost per click: a pricing model in which an advertiser is only charged if their ad or content is clicked on.

engagement *(n.)*

The act of a user choosing to pay attention to a piece of content, and probably the only term in this list that will ever be used at a bridal shower.

CPM *(n., abbr.)*

cost per thousand impressions: the most common way of pricing online ads.

pageview *(n.)*

An occasion where a user visits a page on a site.

repeat visitor *(n.)*

A visitor who has been to your site before and returns. A high number of repeat visitors is one of the telltale signs of a loyal audience.

unique visitor *(n.)*

A distinct individual who visits a site.

visit *(n.)*

An instance of a user arriving at a site.

Gibberish!

brand journalism *(n.)*

A mythical discipline that cannot and should not exist within the space-time continuum of our media universe. While brand publishing provides information and entertainment and should hold itself to a standard of ethics, journalism must be independent.

contentology *(n.)*

A made-up word used by agency folks hoping to score a teaching gig.

contentvertising *(n.)*

Not a real word. Not a real thing. Not even close.

content marketing cloud *(n.)*

A fictional type of cloud. Cirrus, cumulus, nimbus, content marketing, etc.

macrocontent *(n.)*

A term you use when you want to sound like you know what you're talking about, but are completely and totally lost.

scrollocity *(n.)*

A term for the speed in which a user scrolls that's probably also the title of a future Skrillex album.

snackable content *(n.)*

Content that sounds like it comes with a pack of Dunkaroos but, tragically, does not.

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