

The little book of...

content
marketing



Hello

I am Alice Hollis.

Copywriter. Cake lover. Mummy.
Shoe appreciator. Wife...but not
necessarily in that order.

Success lies in how well you can
tell a story...let me help you tell
yours.

"The best copywriter I have
worked with in the past 25
years: ideas, research,
content, structure, style."

Content is...

Any form of communication that you use to share your message with the outside world, such as blogs, articles, ebooks, videos, illustration, podcasts, infographic, presentations...

For the purpose of this book, I will focus on what I know best – the written word.

Content can be...

Long-form, such as a sales letter or white paper.

Or it could be short-form, such as a Tweet or email.

But...

Whatever way you
choose to package
your message, the key
to creating successful
content is
engagement.

Once upon a
time...

Advertising got you everywhere.

Think about Mad Men; smart guys with slicked back hair, overindulging in cigars and cognac while dreaming up catchy straplines that won big business:

Coca-Cola:

"Sign of Good Taste"

Wrigley's Doublemint Gum:

"Double your pleasure, double your fun"

Kellogg's Rice Krispies:

"Snap, Crackle, Pop"

But that just doesn't work anymore. Today, the world in which you operate is very different...

It's blind to
advertising

Research from Media Dynamics suggests that adults are exposed to 360 adverts a day across TV, radio, Internet, newspapers and magazines.

When you factor in the ads you see in your inbox, the labels on the jars in your cupboard, the clothes people wear, the cars you pass on the road...other studies place the brand exposure at 3,000 to 20,000 messages a day.

But if we just consider the 360 direct adverts we see a day, only 150 are even noted...

Even less lead to an eventual sale.

So why doesn't it
work?

Inattentional
blindness

This psychological phenomenon concerns the inability of the human mind to process anything that is not the direct focus of attention in a specific moment.

It means people are only ever going to see the adverts they're already looking for...

Imagine you're
walking through
town...

If you're hungry, you'll see Greggs
or Subway.

But if your child has a birthday
coming up, you'll see The
Entertainer, or The Disney Store.

And if you've just moved home,
you'll see John Lewis or Claus
Olsen.

It's all about satisfying those
needs in the moment.

Stop
throwing
spaghetti
at the wall
and hoping
something
will stick

Advertising works on the premise that if you blast a message out to enough people, the laws of statistics say someone will buy.

But sending a blanket message out in the HOPE someone you want to talk to will see it, is just not effective.

Hope isn't a strategy.

It's not the smartest way to find new business, it's not the best way of using your marketing resource and it's not the most effective way to spend your budget.

Focus on
engagement

If you really want to grow your business and see your marketing efforts deliver a good return, you need to focus on engagement.

When you switch from a scattergun approach to engagement, it optimises your conversion rate at every stage of the sales cycle.

Achieving this engagement starts with understanding your customer journey...

In the
beginning...

Nobody knows who you are. So understandably, you want to be found.

So how do you do this?

Blogging

Publish regular blogs to your website that are packed with relevant keywords and phrases that people are actually searching for helps to boost your organic SEO (search engine optimisation).

Now people will naturally find you when they're actively looking for a solution to their problem.

Pay-per-click (PPC)

A more 'in your face' way of broadcasting your message, PPC allows you to sponsor the keywords and phrases you want to be found for.

Since you've paid for the click, people expect to see a more direct sales message when they hit your landing page.

But beware...Google is more than happy to take your budget without helping you to optimise your PPC campaigns. And our industry is rife with so-called PPC 'experts' that see an opportunity to make an easy buck.

Public relations (PR)

Placing editorial in key publications that your target audience is reading gets you exposure to a wider audience and is great for boosting your credibility.

It's trickier to track the ROI as you can't be sure who's read the article, but it's really effective for positioning you as an expert in your field.

Articles

Becoming your industry's 'thought-leader' to get yourself noticed requires you to share your experience, impart your knowledge, educate the market and demonstrate you have something original to say.

Of course, your opinion(s) should be backed up with credible research. And it's quite a powerful way to align yourself with the industry analysts.

Case studies

Rather than tell your customers why you're so amazing, why not show them through someone else's eyes?

Case studies are so effective at proving your product/service's value because they share a real-life example of your offering being used, along with tangible benefits.

And if you choose to go down the PR route, case studies are the most effective way of gaining traction in the media.

White papers

Long-form content, white papers exist for you to impart your wisdom on a very specific topic.

These should be really detailed, containing research, testimonials and case studies to back up your argument.

To secure even more value from your white paper, use it as gated content (where people need to submit their details before getting their hands on it), or host a complimentary webinar to present your findings.

Email marketing

When I started my career 13 years' ago, email marketing was the hottest tool in the box. But now, you're going to need an exceptional subjectline to cut through the noise of someone's inbox.

But...

Done right, email marketing yields impressive results.

Top tips: always offer something of value, keep it short (150 words) and drive to a dedicated landing page.

Direct mail

There's been a resurgence of direct mail – because who doesn't love receiving an unexpected gift in the post?

And you can make it as simple or as complicated as you like – from a humble handwritten letter, to KitKats urging you to 'take a break' while you visit a dedicated landing page, through to impressive bespoke artwork to adorn the office walls.

With direct mail you can really let your creative flair shine.

Award submissions

Ok, so this might not be the first thing that springs to mind when you think about content, but award submissions are really valuable if you're looking to boost your credentials (and employee morale).

There are literally hundreds of awards out there you can enter. The key to success is finding one that's credible, where you have a compelling story to tell and the evidence to back it up.

Excellent!

You're on
the radar.

Time to
pitch...

NO!

Absolutely not. Never.

No-one really wants to be sold
to...ever.

So launching into a sales pitch
isn't going to do you any favours.
And in the nicest possible way,
these prospects really don't care
about you, they're only interested
in themselves.

So scrap the sales pitch.

Instead, talk TO them...and ABOUT them.

Answer the questions that are on their mind.

Give them the information they need to help them make a decision.

Give them the reassurance that you're going to deliver.

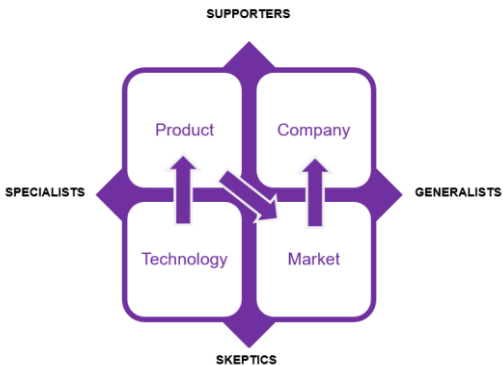
And...

Deliver your
message the
right way

Get the basics right

I love this marketing model.

It's possibly the most useful model I've come across in my career and I genuinely use it all the time to help structure my messaging.



It's all about the person's mindset,
and therefore the type of message
they will be receptive to.

By following the framework and
applying it to your content, you're
onto an engagement winner.

For example...

The managing director of an existing client is more receptive to information on your company, whereas the IT manager wants to know details of your products/services.

For prospects, or those you're yet to engage, you need to speak more broadly and focus on educating them on the underlying technology, or discussing key issues in the market through white papers or case studies.

Don't forget
your value
proposition

Before you begin writing any piece of content, think about your value proposition – i.e. the most important thing you want someone to take away from reading your communication.

There's no point creating content for content's sake.

Content needs a purpose, so start with the 'why', and the result will always be something engaging.

Don't forget
to state
your call-to-
action

Good content will leave the reader in no doubt as to what you want them to do next because it states the call-to-action (CTA). And because you've created content that is so engaging, they're left feeling like they have no option but to take action.

I see a lot of companies, particularly in the IT sector, which end every communication with '*Book a demo*'. But that's a huge, scary commitment for someone to make – they're thinking they'll have to speak to someone who's going to spend an hour trying to sell to them.

So soften it...

Rather than '*Book a demo*', think about:

- Watch a demo video.
- See why ABC analyst says the product/service delivers 321% ROI.
- Download a white paper explaining the competitive landscape.
- Read a case study.
- Follow us on social media.
- Subscribe to the podcast.
- Find out about our upcoming webinar.
- See where we're exhibiting the product/service this year.
- Read this blog on XYZ.

The list goes on, but you get the point.

These are small, baby steps. But for each step they take, they're improving their level of engagement with you, buying into your offering more.

At each step you're answering their questions and overcoming those barriers to sale and therefore moving ever closer to signing on that dotted line.

If you only
learn one
thing today,
let it be
this...

Content marketing is
all about people.

So write to a person.

And not anyone that might happen
to be reading your content...

Not a group of people you deem
to be your target audience...

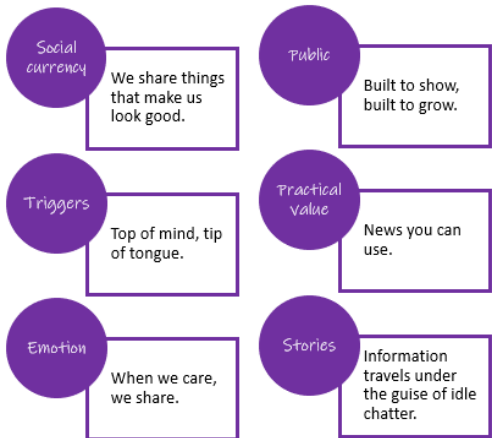
But to one person. An individual.

And yes, we all wear a different
label – whether it's freelance
copywriter, IT director, CEO,
executive assistant...

But at our core, we're all the same
– emotional beings that act based
on a number of triggers:

If you haven't discovered it yet,
you must read "*Contagious*" by
Jonah Berger.

Based on extensive research and
human psychology, he discovered
that copy engages and is shared
when it contains six traits:



So talk to Alex, Jacob,
Oscar...

Speak to the individual and make
a personal connection...

We all eat because we're hungry.

I buy Paw Patrol merchandise
because it makes my children
happy.

People buy Apple products
because of the social status they
feel it gives them.

Forget the typical features and benefits pitch and tell a story.

Share your story with all its plot twists - good and bad (because we all live in the real world where life isn't perfect) and show them why you're the hero.

Make it personal.

You want to
stand out
and be
different?

Shed the corporate façade

Strip away the industry jargon, waffle, fluff and technobabble and just talk to your customer as you would a friend or colleague.

When you communicate with people on that emotional level, you make a deeper connection.

That's what successful content strategy is really about.

Thank you!

Hopefully the ideas in this book have given you food for thought.

By way of thanks, I'd like to offer to review a piece of your content and provide feedback on how you can make it even better to deliver greater returns.

Email me at:

hello@alicehollis.co.uk

And keep in
touch...

You can pick up more of my
content musings at:

www.alicehollis.co.uk

And please connect with me on
LinkedIn:

www.linkedin.com/in/alicehollis/

"Alice has an amazing talent
for creating engaging and
relevant content."

"If you're looking for pithy,
straight to the point copy
then look no further!"

"Creative, diligent, super
efficient...always exceeds the
brief."

"Everything Alice does is
100% awesome!"

Alice Hollis

www.alicehollis.co.uk