



3 ELEMENTS TO RE-TOOL CONTENT

that isn't converting the right leads

INTRODUCTION

Scissors are pretty nifty objects. They've been around **since the time of ancient Egypt** and have remained an essential tool in nearly every office and home. They're really good at cutting things.

But when you want to hang framed artwork in your office or home, those nifty scissors leave something to be desired. You need a tool that's designed to get a nail into the wall, not a tool designed to cut things.

According to a 2016 study by Content Marketing Institute, only 30% of B2B marketers say that their organizations are effective at content marketing.

Many of these B2B marketers are getting lots of "likes" and "shares." People genuinely appreciate their content—it's helpful, engaging, and interesting. But while engagement is important, it's not what B2B marketers ultimately need. 85% of B2B marketers say their top goal is lead generation, and 84% say it's sales. B2B marketers are tasked with delivering quality leads that the sales department can convert to paying customers.

So why is all this content that's delivering engagement not delivering leads or sales? The logic of providing free, helpful content in order to generate leads and sales relies heavily on the principle of reciprocity: if I do something nice for you, you'll be motivated (and feel obligated) to do something nice for me (like agree to a conversation with a sales rep).

But **according to psychologists**, reciprocity has an expiration date. The more time that passes, the weaker the draw to reciprocate becomes. So when a prospect downloads your content, files it in his or her "to read" folder, then finally sits down two weeks later to read it, reciprocity really isn't in play.



THE PROBLEM

We know the problem isn't content quality or a poor promotion strategy, because many marketers are seeing excellent engagement metrics. **The problem is the content of the content**—it doesn't motivate prospects to take action on the next step in the funnel.

To move prospects to action, your content needs these three elements:

1. **Connection to a personal pain or gain**
2. **A reason to act now**
3. **A clear call-to-action that guides prospects to the next stage of the funnel**

Let's dive into each of these and look at how to put them into practice.



1

CONNECTION TO A PERSONAL PAIN OR GAIN

Research by CEB shows that “personal value is twice as powerful as business value in achieving a broad range of commercial objectives (including awareness, consideration, purchase intent, willingness to pay a premium, loyalty, willingness to recommend).”

The business value has to be there—you absolutely have to meet the business need or you won't even make it to the consideration set. But let's face it: unless you offer something truly revolutionary, most providers (your competitors) also meet the business need, even if they don't do it exactly the same way.

Personal value is where B2B buyers look when trying to decide between several good options. Buyers want to know:

- Which provider will be the easiest to work with?
- Which service will save me the most time?
- Which product is the least risky?
- Which decision will get the nod of my boss?
- Etc.

Personal value is where B2B buyers look when trying to decide between several good options.

ACTION STEP:

Create a list of each job title/role involved in your prospects' decision-making process. What personal value is each of these people looking for? Customize your content to address the needs of each decision-making persona.

2 A REASON TO ACT NOW

People are **wired to avoid loss**. They fear change because it involves risk—a potential for loss. And that’s what a buying decision is: change, risk, a potential for loss. The default for prospects who read your content is to appreciate what they’ve learned... and change nothing.

Unless part of what they’re learning is that it’s riskier to keep the status quo than it is to move forward with the buying decision. When you clearly show prospects why their status quo is such a problem, outlining the costs and risks in concrete terms, you’re giving them a reason to act now.

ACTION STEP:

Think through all the pains and problems associated with your prospects’ status quo. How much money are they losing each month they put off the decision? How much time are they wasting? What risks are they taking by doing nothing?



3

A CLEAR CALL-TO-ACTION

People are busy. Most of your prospects aren't going to take time at the moment they're reading your content to figure out what the next step is. Maybe they'll call you—but probably not, unless you invite them to and make it easy for them to get in contact.

You know this, but it's easy to forget in the mad dash to create more content: the more specific and clear a call-to-action is, the more effective it will be. Tell prospects exactly what they'll get when they click that CTA button, and make the value crystal-clear.

When you're crafting your lead-nurturing emails for prospects who have downloaded content but aren't yet ready for a sales call, use your marketing funnel as a guide. A top-of-the-funnel eBook offer could follow up with an ROI calculator offer or a case study. Middle-of-the-funnel offers could follow up with a free demo or a brainstorming session offer. Each "next step" should not only be clear, but should also guide prospects down the funnel toward that sales conversation.

The more **specific and clear** a call-to-action is, the more **effective** it will be.

ACTION STEP:

Map out your marketing funnel and be sure that each piece of content fits strategically within it. Next, check to see if each piece of content includes a clear call-to-action that leads prospects to the next step in the funnel.

CONCLUSION

Just like that great pair of scissors designed for one task but not another, engaging content is great for getting comments, likes and shares—but it's not enough to generate the types of leads you're looking for.

If you want to rise above your competitors, overcome the natural tendency to avoid risk, and get busy prospects to take action, you'll need to be more strategic with your content. Incorporating these three elements will transform your content into the tool for the job—to get the results you want.

Can I help you with your
content marketing?
Let's chat.

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ABOUT IDEALLY:

Ideally is the writing and marketing consulting practice of Laura MacPherson. Laura has been helping B2B companies with content marketing for over a decade. She maps content to the appropriate stages in the buyer's journey and uses insights and persuasion psychology to gently guide prospects to the desired conclusion.

Before she got into content marketing, Laura wrote for magazines and did a stint as a reporter. She knows how to interview, research, and find those golden nuggets of information that set high-quality content apart.