

## Mequoda Team

Don Nicholas  
Chief Executive Officer

Mary Van Doren  
Chief Creative Officer

Aimee Graeber  
Chief Technology Officer

Laura Pittman  
Chief Operating Officer

Chris Sturk  
Managing Editor

Norann Oleson  
Analytics Manager

Amanda MacArthur  
Social Media Specialist

Nancy Horan  
Systems Director

Michael Phillips  
Senior Information Architect

Ann-Marie Sullivan  
Member Services Manager

Patrick Hughes  
New Media Producer

Gail Odeneal  
Senior Editor

Lowell Allen  
Senior Information Architect

## Advisory Board

Active Interest Media

American Quarter Horse  
Association

American Society of Pension  
Professionals & Actuaries

Biblical Archaeology Society

Business & Legal Resources

Capitol Information Group  
Inc.

Craft Media Network

DestinAsian Media Private  
Ltd.

Farm Progress Companies

Golf Tailor

Harvard Law School

Haymarket

Hoffman Media LLC

MPL Communications Inc.

Natural Health Advisory  
Institute LLC

Prime Publishing LLC

Psy Broadcasting Corp.

Psychotherapy Networker

The American Ceramic  
Society

The Dark Intelligence Group  
Inc.

The Motley Fool

The Successful Investor Inc.

Vida y Salud Media Group  
Inc.

Copyright © 2013 Mequoda Group LLC

### Report Authors:

Don Nicholas  
Chris Sturk

### Terms of Use

All rights reserved. No part of this report may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, faxing, emailing, posting online or by any information storage and retrieval system, without written permission from the Publisher.

All trademarks and brands referred to herein are the property of their respective owners. All references to Mequoda™ and the seven Mequoda Website Publishing Models™ are trademarks of the Mequoda Group, LLC.

### Legal Notices

While all attempts have been made to verify information provided in this publication, neither the author nor the publisher assumes any responsibility for error, omissions or contrary interpretations of the subject matter contained herein.

The purchaser or reader of this publication assumes responsibility for the use of these materials and information. Adherence to all applicable laws and regulations, both referral and state and local, governing professional licensing, business practices, advertising and all other aspects of doing business in the United States or any other jurisdiction, is the sole responsibility of the purchaser or reader. The author and publisher assume no responsibility or liability whatsoever on the behalf of any purchaser or reader of these materials. Any perceived slights of specific people or organizations are unintentional.

### For More Free White Papers

<http://www.MequodaFree.com>

### Contact Information

Mequoda Group, LLC  
Customer Service  
(866) 713-1005  
40 Warren Street  
Charlestown, MA 02129

## Table of Content

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Digital Content Marketing Trends in 2013 .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Content Marketing Strategy #1: Understand User Needs .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Content Marketing Strategy #2: Use Many Platforms .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Content Marketing Strategy #3: Leverage Organic Media.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Content Marketing Strategy #4: Build User Relationships.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Content Marketing Strategy #5: Maximize Customer Value .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Content Marketing Strategy #6: Empower Your Organization ...</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Content Marketing Strategy #7: Manage By Exception .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Nine Guidelines for Content Aggregators.....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>More Free White Papers.....</b>	<b>28</b>

## Introduction

In the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the online publishing environment is not only changing dramatically, it's changing at a faster rate than we ever could have anticipated.

Digital content marketing systems are replacing other marketing strategies at a pace never before seen.

In a mere 15+ years, since the dawn of the commercial Internet, we've experienced a genuine paradigm shift in content marketing. That's because magazines, newsletters, books, audio and video content now can be digitized and delivered online, as well as marketed on websites and via email.

This fundamental change has had profound economic consequences.

Who could have ever predicted that the most successful strategy for making money online would have publishers recycling and reusing their premium editorial content and making it available for free?

Successful publishers have learned and mastered an entirely different business model that requires them to give away up to 80 percent of their content — a concept that was previously unimaginable.

Now it's become a predictably efficient routine to sell information products by permitting potential consumers to sample a virtual smorgasbord of free digital content. Publishers and content marketers literally give away their stores with the confidence that eventually, a number of these users will convert to paying customers for premium content and experiences. That's where the profits are made.

As I've often said, we did not invent the Mequoda System; we discovered and codified it after modeling the most successful online publishing pioneers. We continue to revise the Mequoda System, as we respond to new media platforms, such as those created by Facebook and Twitter.

But even while we are alert to and welcome making frequent refinements, this we know for certain: The Mequoda System, when practiced with consistency, patience, and attention to detail, succeeds as a business model for content marketers.

Many of the forward-looking publishers who have embraced the Mequoda System have created multi-million dollar businesses from their previously print-only publishing enterprises.

The most financially successful, special-interest Internet publishing companies all follow the Mequoda System — a content marketing strategy of best practices that support and strengthen each other, and are repeated over and over for maximum success.



A Mequoda content marketing system is comprised of seven strategies for using free content to make money online.

Whether to launch a new media property or to manage an existing media brand, a content marketing strategy can help turn a special-interest magazine, newsletter, book, website, blog, forum, TV show, podcast or newspaper column into a multi-million dollar media empire.

**The special interest media experience requires publishers and content marketers to reinterpret how users assimilate information.**

Mequoda has been designing and building online content marketing systems since 1995 while concurrently studying those of other publishers to determine the best practices. Every 12-18 months we do a review and revise, as needed, the seven principles of content marketing as they continue to evolve.

Like everyone else who is struggling to fully embrace the Digital Age, we strive to both understand the continuous, ongoing maturation of these concepts, as well as to assimilate the refinements.

For anyone over age 40, content marketing in the Digital Age is nothing like the fundamentals of advertising and direct marketing we studied in college. Today we are challenged to re-examine the old standards of space ads, broadcast advertising and direct response, and to reinterpret them in the new world of content marketing.

Frankly, online content marketing is antithetical to anything we knew prior to 20 years ago — something [Seth Godin](#) terms interruption marketing. Everything I learned in college and during my early career, whether space ads, TV commercials or direct response, employed hardcore, confrontational marketing messages.

These ads were always pushed on the user, with little or no relationship to the environment in which they appeared. Whether a space ad in a magazine, a TV commercial in a news hour, or a direct mail package in a mailbox, they were not contextual, either in terms of media or audience.

# Digital Content Marketing Trends for 2013

## Digital content marketing drives surge in digital product sales for publishers

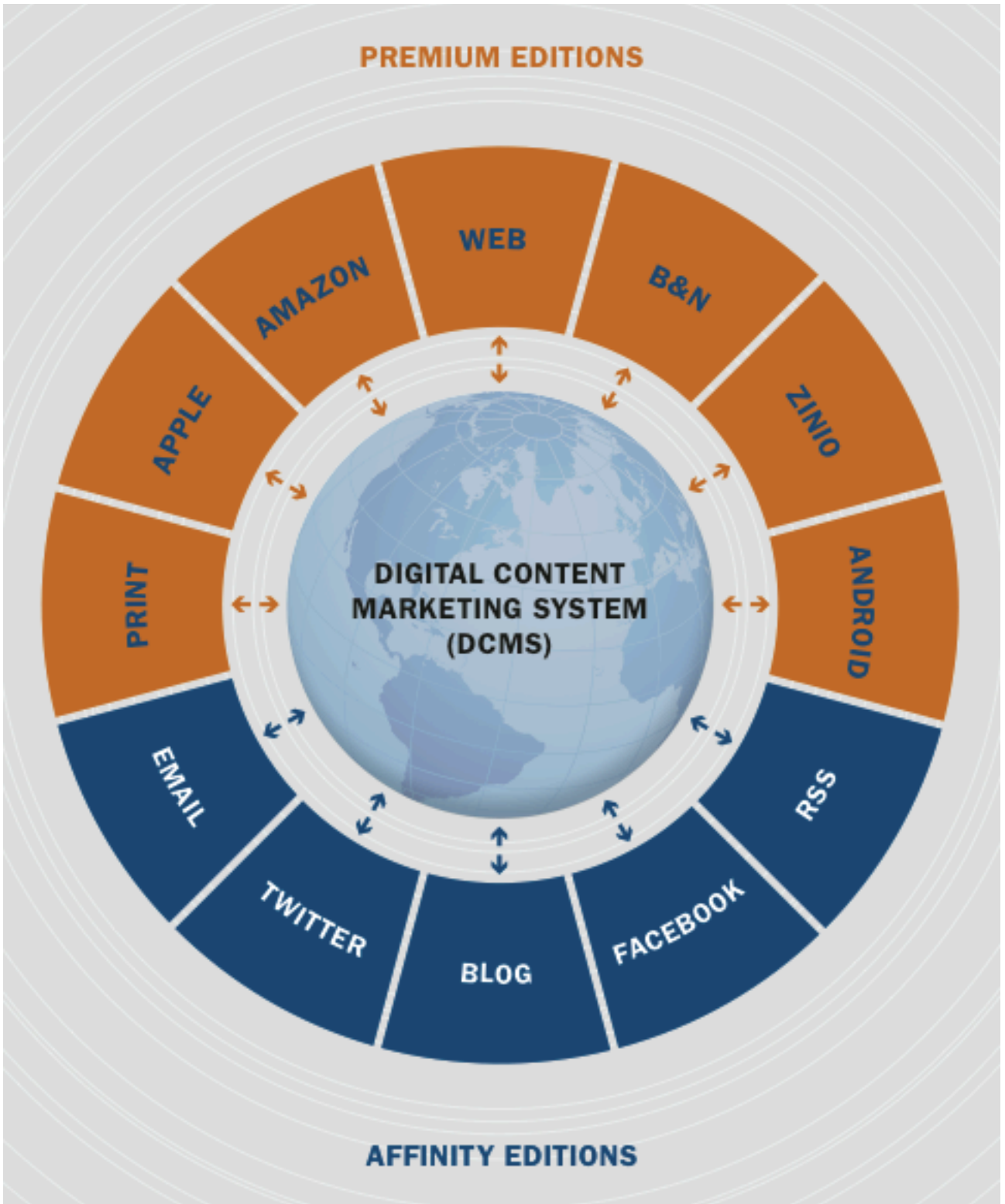
While many organizations have discovered the power of digital content marketing to sell products and services, perhaps no organizations are being impacted like the publishers of books, magazines, newsletters and videos.

### Digital content marketing for publishers

Publishers, like most marketers, have traditionally used marketing copy and paid media to sell their books, magazines, newsletters, videos and other **premium information products**. It should come as no surprise that digital content marketing is having a profound impact on the publishing industry. For publishers, content marketing has a double meaning. Publishers would tell you they've always been content marketers or marketers of content. Today, content marketing has taken on the additional meaning of using content to sell products and services of all types. Savvy publishers have been quick to figure out that, as producers of premium content, they have a ready source of free content to use for content marketing.

### The digital content marketing system

The attached diagram shows a fully integrated digital content marketing system that might be used by a book, magazine, newsletter, video or multiplatform publisher. It illustrates the simple concept that minimum information units are produced in a variety of formats for distribution as both free and premium content. Premium content channels include legacy print distribution, plus the myriad of retail stores attached to digital tablets and traditional computers. For most publishers of large-format media that's designed to be read, tablets and computers are the primary premium distribution channels. The diagram goes on to illustrate the most prominent channels for free content distribution.



## **The new content marketing**

While our Mequoda Method teaches this integrated strategy to content producers, many other digital content marketing systems exist for producers of non-content premium products, from automobiles to airline tickets and wine to whiskey. The Internet has made content distribution via affinity channels so cheap that everyone is embracing digital content marketing as a core marketing strategy. For publishers, this brings increased pressure to make sure that our free content is better than most. In our experience, being a producer of premium content is both a blessing and a curse. On the one hand, it provides an amazing source of original content from which we can spin free content. On the other hand, it's often difficult to decide what to charge for and what to give away for free.

### **Digital content marketing trends for 2013**

A survey of our 25 gold member clients who sell premium content reveals that digital book publishing and digital newsletter publishing are benefiting most from the trend to digital distribution. While you might be quick to assume that the Kindle was the driving factor here, our publishers report that their digital book publishing efforts are seeing the most success when powered by their own web-based retail stores. Sales from Amazon, Apple and others are lagging behind direct to consumer sales. Our digital newsletter publishers rely almost totally on their own subscription websites for sales as many are just now venturing into the third-party stores run by the major tablet computer manufacturers.

Video sales rank next in terms of digital distribution. Once again, our premium digital video producers tell us that virtually all of their sales are coming from their own web-based retail stores.

While digital magazine publishing is all the buzz, our publishers report that it's a lagging indicator with as little as 10 percent of total sales coming from partners like Apple and Amazon in 2012. Most expect that number to double for 2013 as the tablet base continues to expand and they become more adept at using digital content marketing to drive digital content sales and launch their own subscription websites.

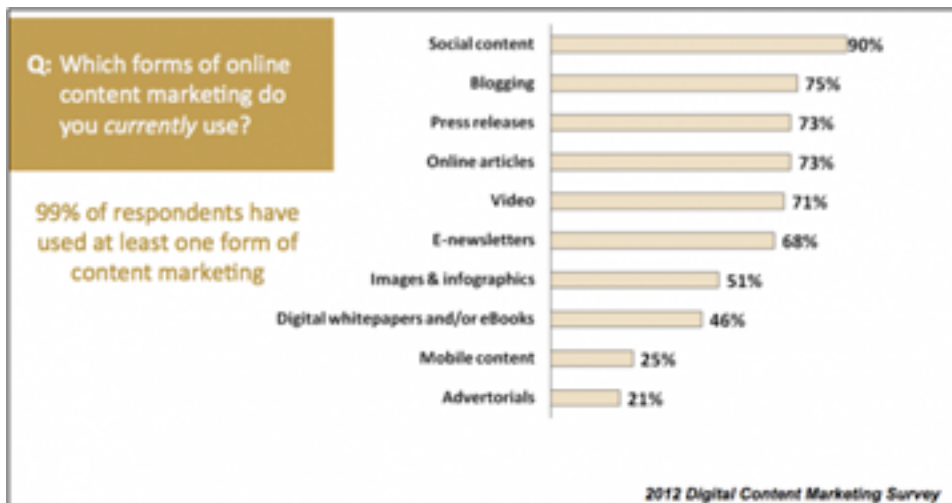


## What is good digital content marketing?

Our colleagues at the Content Marketing Institute published a survey earlier this year that offers some great suggestions on how to create engaging digital content marketing campaigns. Use these tips to power your affinity content programs.

The Content Marketing Institute's [content marketing survey](#) shares the opinions of 389 marketing professionals. Out of all respondents, 99 percent reported using at least one form of content marketing.

Social content topped the list, with 90 percent of respondents citing it as a current strategy. With large social networks (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Pinterest) and heavy interactivity, it's not surprising that social content is a priority. With engagement through all age demographics, and the ability to interact with mobile devices, presence on social media has never made more sense to online marketers.



Blogging and press releases were cited as the second and third most used digital content marketing techniques. Both utilize the hybrid approach to content marketing where editorial and promotional content are closely aligned.

## The most important elements of content

The survey's data names six main elements of content desired by marketing professionals. These elements are listed below in order of importance, according to the 84 percent of respondents who outsource content creation:

### Element of engaging content #1: Engaging and creative storytelling

**Element of engaging content #2:** Crafted custom content

**Element of engaging content #3:** Professional-level writing

**Element of engaging content #4:** Well-edited content

**Element of engaging content #5:** Copy written for SEO

**Element of engaging content #6:** Originality

Do these elements of engaging content resonate with your content marketing expectations? Do you focus on these elements while creating content?

## Content Marketing Strategy #1: Understand User Needs

The special interest media experience is not primarily about publishers pushing out editorial content to prospective users.

Oppositely, the special interest media experience is about the self-aware, self-actualized user seeking information from trusted sources. Those specialists range from the foremost experts in any discipline, to respected friends and colleagues. Included are online communities, user-generated content, expert-generated content and curated content.

Curators are experts who use their broader knowledge of a subject to select, arrange, organize and interpret user-generated content. Of course, this is what journalists have always done, especially expert journalists.

When a user conducts research to inform a decision, whether about where to hold a wedding, what car to buy, or how to spice tonight's soup, she may want to consult her peers, or look to the foremost experts for guidance. If searching for medical guidance or other critical information, she may want a second, third or fourth opinion, as well.

Today's online researcher can gather and assimilate information from both other users and experts. The Internet has made the process both easier and more complicated, owing to all the available options.

When searching special interest media, users most highly value a first-person experience from a combination of experts, colleagues and peers. The best high-fidelity user experience is a live event that can be any in-person event, from to a cocktail party, to an industry conference, to dinner with friends. That's the top of the media pyramid.

The most desirable alternative to a live event is an off-line experience such as reading a book or white paper. In the Digital Age, any downloadable media is the best alternative to a personal experience.

Ownership has value. The permanence of a text, photo, video or any tangible medium is an important media attribute.

Finally, the online experience is valuable because it is accessible and searchable, both through Google and on social networks. Facebook and Twitter are beginning to compete with Google as additional online content media where users can search for information from experts, colleagues and peers.

## **The emergence of new entry points makes online content marketing more complicated for publishers.**

Our customers — the consumers of the information you and I publish — now have more options than ever for experiencing our content. The user has come to expect content from us on numerous platforms, and woe to the publisher who ignores any opportunity or entry point.

Users want high fidelity content — both in person and online — and gather the information they seek across many media platforms.

Today, the Worldwide Web, whether via Google, Facebook, Twitter or any of the hundreds of other portals, is the launching point for most information seekers.

Users have favorite portals into the web. Google and Facebook are the most popular, as measured in user time spent, with Facebook taking a slight lead as of August 2010. In terms of time spent searching for information, Google leads in popularity.

Social media experts have begun to question how users specifically spend their time and attention on the Facebook and Twitter websites. The evidence indicates that users don't gather information on those websites in the same way that they use Google.

In practical use, Google functions more like an online substitute for the old, reliable, telephone directory yellow pages. Google has become the go-to website for users seeking specific information or the answer to a clearly articulated question.

Facebook and Twitter can partially fill that requirement, but these social media websites are also sources of entertainment, and serve as a substitute for phoning, texting and emailing.

Users turn to Google to find the source of information they believe exists, when they don't know where it's located. Users turn to social media sites to spend time with people they already know and trust.

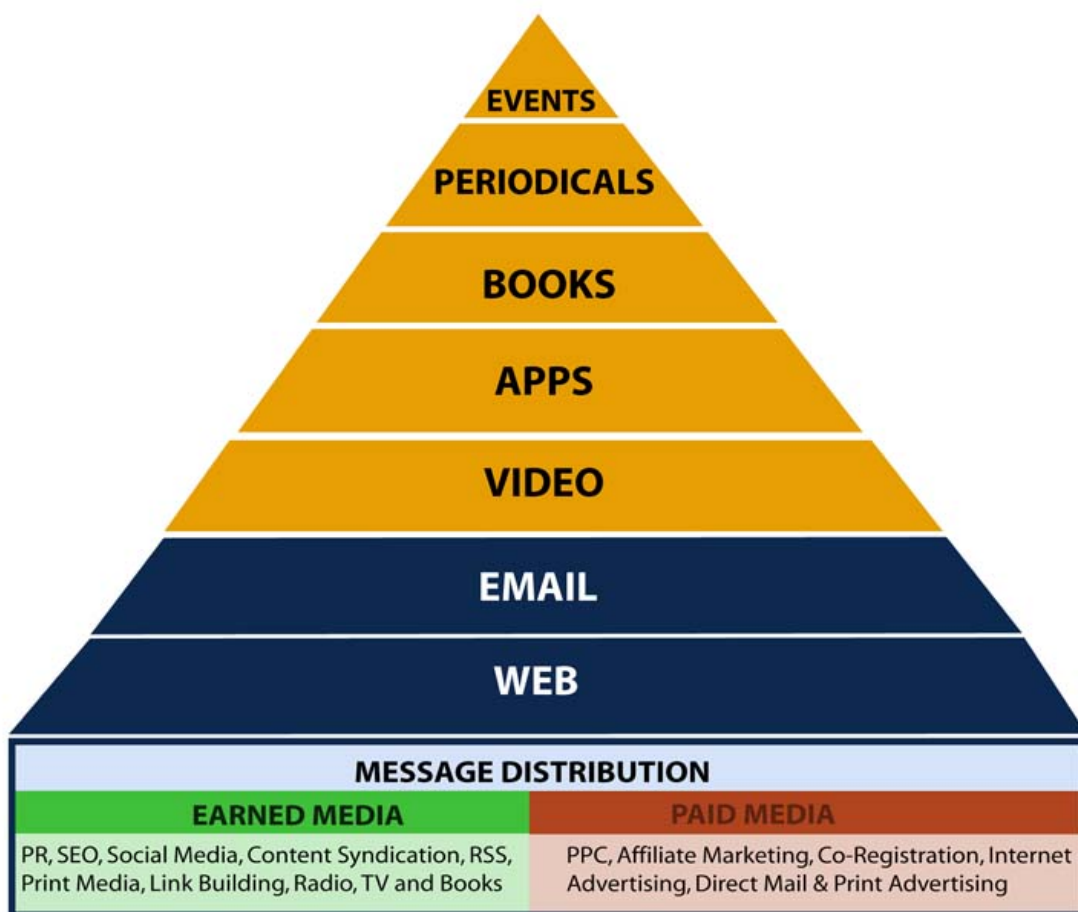
Because social media and search websites create more user entry points to the WWW, the marketing process for publishers has become more complicated. Users can now discover your content through search media, paid media or social media.

Email is still the most widely used Internet application. Fifty-nine percent of the U.S. population uses email every day. Email is the channel by which these users get personal correspondence, bank statements, credit card receipts, and a host of other communications that enable them to manage their multifarious 21<sup>st</sup> Century lives.

## Content Marketing Strategy #2: Use Many Platforms

In order to succeed as publishers, we must address all the media platforms by which users can access our content. Building a base of loyal email subscribers is Job One. A distant second, but still important goal, is building a strong base of fans and followers on social media sites.

A person who subscribes to your email newsletter, allowing you to deliver content to his inbox every day, is far more committed to you and your brand than someone who follows you on Facebook or Twitter.



As we move up the media platform, it's clear that successful, special-interest publishers and content marketers now require additional media competencies, including video, software application development (apps), books and live events.

Video has become the favorite medium for delivering instructional content, with both DVDs and online video growing in popularity.

Apps, or standalone software programs, include entertainment, time and resource management, trading and banking software, and much more. There are currently more than 250,000 apps available from Apple for the iPhone, with the average owner using 16 or more apps regularly.

The growing popularity of Apple's iPad and Amazon's Kindle Reader has boosted book sales and book readership for the first time in decades.

Webinars have become the most popular and highest grossing profit center for many online publishers in some B-to-B sectors.

And live events, with their ability to deliver high fidelity, "high touch" contact and information, are still the preferred content delivery medium for those who can afford "top of the pyramid" experiences.

### **A Mequoda Content marketing System is driven by earned, organic media.**

Since the first time we organized these content marketing tenets (in 2003), the third principle has always been about search -- making certain your website is visible to Google and the other search engines.

Today, we are more aware than ever of the importance of both search media and social media. Additionally, legacy media is a significant factor in organic leverage.

Before a publisher or content marketer invests in pay-per-click, banner ads, or space ads, the goal should be to maximum visibility in search, social media and legacy media.

If you publish magazines or books, or produce TV programs or live events, you need to publicize your website to potential paying customers, produce a daily email newsletter, and give away free content online.

## **Content Marketing Strategy #3: Leverage Organic Media**

The publisher's website awareness process and email signup process should be built into all of the legacy media. You may attract more customers via search and social media, but the customers you make via premium legacy media are more likely to spend more, especially during the first 12 months when they are new additions to your database.

Any user who has bought your book or attended one of your live events is 7-10 times more likely to buy another of your paid information products vs. a user who only subscribes to your free email newsletter.

And a customer who has bought your book can search for the author online via Google or at Twitter – via legacy and social media. That's why your publication must have a presence in both.

At its heart, the Mequoda System is driven by earned, organic media – search, social and legacy. These three sources can have synergy and tend to be interactive. Smart publishers and content marketers know they must integrate all three.

### **A Mequoda content marketing system depends on building user relationships that begin with email capture.**

More than ever before in the history of publishing, the database is king.

Building user relationships starts with the proven strategy of acquiring a potential paying customer's email address and permission to send him valuable free information, as well as your marketing messages.

When I remember the “old days” of marketing print publications via direct mail, and the importance of acquiring (usually renting) SRDS postal mailing lists, it gives me pause. The advent of email changed direct response marketing more than any other Internet application.

The email address is both unique and ubiquitous. It's usually both permanent and portable. And content-rich email is a phenomenally discrete, unobtrusive, economical and efficient medium by which to communicate with your customers, regardless of whether your database comprises thousands or even millions of names.



Your database of users — you may be reluctant to call them customers until they purchase a premium product — can grow to include postal addresses, Twitter handles, first and last names, telephone numbers, the states and regions in which they live, their purchasing patterns — numerous useful data that are demographic, psychographic and behavioral.

The extent to which you build this database will depend, in part, on the price of your premium products and how much your customers trust your brand.

## **Content Marketing Strategy #4: Build User Relationships**

Who is your customer? Why does he buy your product?

Have there ever been two more basic questions about the essential marketing strategy of any business?

Online, as in a brick and mortar store, long-term customer relationships are built on trust. The trusted vendor earns the repeat customer.

Database marketing done well enables personalized marketing. Consider Amazon, and its persistent, personal recommendations for additional purchases based on previous purchases and site searches.

Done well, database/personalized marketing creates happy, valuable, and enthusiastic customers. Done poorly, it makes marketers look inept and antagonizes customers.

Building customer relationships begins with capturing email addresses when users visit your website. Posting valuable free content enables search engines and users to find your website, and sets up what Seth Godin calls permission marketing vs. interruption marketing.

Your free content provides the incentive, and enables users to sample your brand before eventually becoming paying customers. But without the names/addresses in your email database, permission marketing is impossible.

For B2B publishers, your user file may eventually be tied to an Act contact and customer management database, enabling your sales force to record and access every inquiry, purchase and other touch point.

Building user relationships begins with email capture.

### **Have a plan for implementing your content marketing strategy.**

I don't know why you chose a career in publishing, but for me, it has been my mission and my passion. I believe the information we provide our readers/users/customers really makes their lives better, and that conviction both excites and motivates me.

After more than 30 years in the business, having met and worked with literally thousands of journalists and publishers, I truly believe this is a primary motivator for most of my colleagues.

They aren't simply focused on making money. If they were only interested in making money, they would have chosen another career path.

Nevertheless, publishing is not merely a public service. We live in a capitalist society. We recognize and applaud the profit motive.

Publishing, like all businesses, involves some financial risk. The entry stakes can be substantial. By the end of Year Two, the business plan usually requires a publication to achieve economic breakeven or better.

These goals can be more easily attained by embracing the Mequoda System and by marketing your publication online to a targeted audience of enthusiastic users. But if revenue does not exceed expenses, your ability to serve any audience will eventually disappear.

## Content Marketing Strategy #5: Maximize Customer Value

There are two aspects to maximizing subscriber value. The first is contact frequency.

How many times per year will you contact the individuals in your database, via email, or phone, or website post, with a marketing offer that can generate revenue for your organization?

The first result you'll measure is the amount of revenue you generate, per thousand names, either in direct product sales or through sponsorships.

The second result of primary importance is the number of subscriber names that opt out.

For convenience, we count the amount of revenue, and the number of opt-outs generated from any marketing message, in the "per-thousand" unit of measure. It's easier to conceptualize \$100 of revenue per 1,000 emails, than to imagine an average of 10 cents per subscriber name.

Similarly, generating 30 opt-outs per thousand is easier to conceptualize than .03 percent opt-outs per message sent. The values are equal, but the "per-thousand" is a more convenient metric.

How many times did you contact your subscribers during the year? How much revenue did that generate via your own products and through sponsorships, per effort? Multiple those two numbers and the product is the average, per-subscriber value.

Of course, every time you contact your customers, some will unsubscribe, and you will lose your ability and permission to communicate with those names in the future.

So, while every contact generates income, it also diminishes the size of the database. As a result, contact frequency, message targeting, message quality, and message segmentation are all important factors in maximizing customer value.

## **Redefine working relationships for the benefit of all stakeholders.**

In a Mequoda System, a publishing company's owners, managers, and employees all share information, authority and responsibility in a symbiotic relationship that creates value for everyone. Even subscribers play a role by responding to editorial initiatives and contributing content.

We didn't dream up this idea, we discovered and modeled it.

Dr. Henry Mintzberg, Professor of Management Studies at McGill University in Montreal, advocates that managers share power, not only with their direct employees, but also with their business partners, customers, and anyone else in their business ecosystem.

That's a long way from the old school, Theory X, "command and control" business management model.

What exactly is empowerment and how do you empower your publishing company colleagues?

Dr. Mintzberg says it's making certain everyone in your organization knows what they are allowed to do, and rewarding them when their contributions benefit the organization.

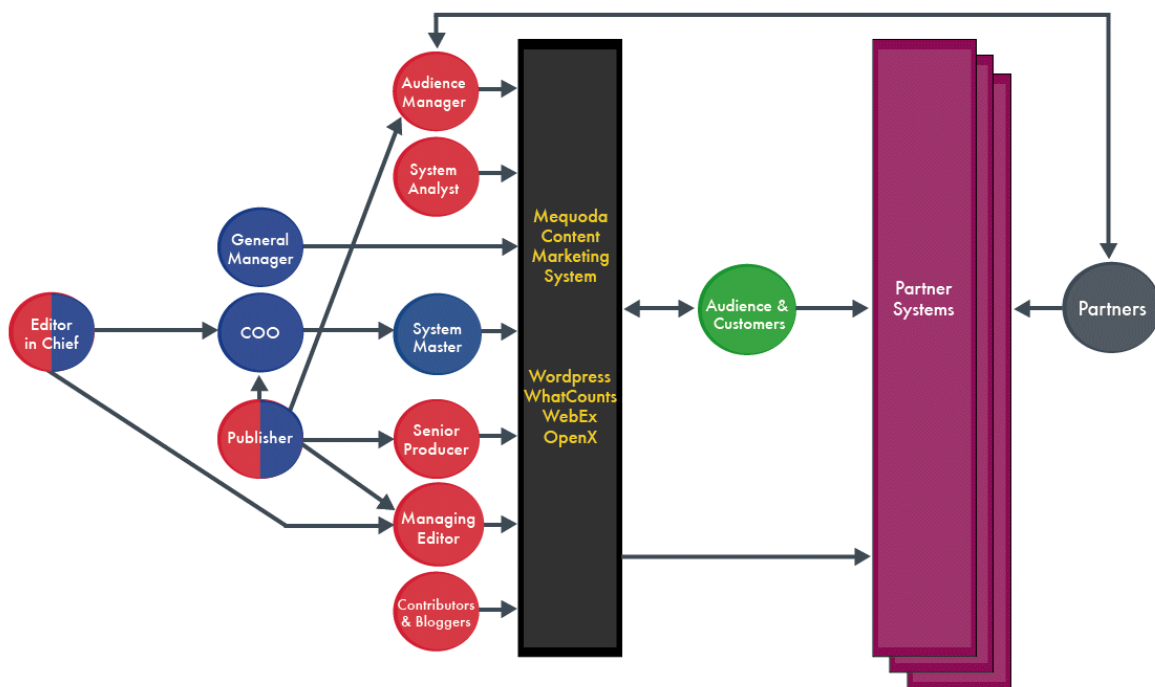
"A leader has to be one of two things. He either has to be a brilliant visionary himself, a truly creative strategist, in which case he can do what he likes and get away with it. Or else he has to be a true empowerer who can bring out the best in others," says Dr. Mintzberg.

Empowerment brings out the best in both individuals and the organization. Organizing for empowerment requires businesses managers to think outside the box and take a new look at how stakeholders interact, using organigraphs.

## Content Marketing Strategy #6: Empower Your Organization

An organigraph combines an organization chart with a business process flow. Organigraphs are graphic representations that depict stakeholder relationships instead of the linear reporting relationships represented by traditional org charts.

The organigraph's purpose is to help employees, managers, vendors and customers to envision all the resources, technology, processes, and activities that are involved in creating products and bringing them to market.



This organigraph illustrates how online editorial team members, partners, customers, technology, and products interface to form a business process system. It depicts the moving of editorial content through a publishing system. Note the number of people involved in the editorial process includes each functionary who touches the content.

The existence of a “boss” is almost antithetical to the organigraph. In Mintzberg’s model, individuals become empowered, not from their immediate supervisor, but by interacting with the entire organization.

The CEO of a publishing company doesn’t bully a Mequoda System; she inspires it. The publisher’s role in a Mequoda System is to be a benign dictator, to

empower others to achieve peak performance (and to protect them from the occasional miscreant).

Key metrics are shared with all the team members, especially those who need them to measure their job performance. Examples from a Mequoda System include:

- A copywriter monitors the revenue per thousand and the opt-out rates off his email efforts.
- A subscriber to a blog or an email newsletter posts a response to another user on a discussion forum.
- An editor gets retweeted by enthusiastic subscribers.
- A computer systems analyst knows an audience development manager's keyword targets.
- All the members of the publishing team are aware of the revenue per subscriber and lifetime value of a customer.

Every empowered Mequoda System publishing team member is clear about the value of his efforts to the overall success of the enterprise. Each gets him regular feedback about the quality of his contribution.

A fully functioning Mequoda System behaves like a biological organism. It grows, breathes, reproduces and behaves in its own best interests because all of the individuals who constitute the Mequoda System behave in their own best interests, which are aligned with the goals of the organization.

### **Use the Mequoda Key Metrics Dashboard to track operating statistics.**

Business management guru Peter Drucker said it first more than 50 years ago. You can't manage what you don't measure.

Today there are an overwhelming number of metrics available to online publishers that can help measure achievement. But to stave off analysis paralysis, it is crucial to focus on the handful of numbers that instantly reflect the health of a Mequoda System.

How much traffic is coming to your website? How many names do you have in your email database? How much money are your subscribers spending (which is a function of how pleased they are with the quality of your messaging)? What is your retention rate?

These are the basic metrics every Mequoda System operator needs on her management dashboard so she can know, at a glance, the status of the system at any time.

While publishers should be also interested in the details of search engine optimization, email performance and website traffic, essentially you need to know the results of only five calculations to manage an online publishing business:

1. Google Visibility Index

This is your estimated search impressions divided by total searches for a given keyword universe at a point in time.

2. Unique conversion rate

Email adds, divided by unique visitors, for a specific period, normally a month. Five percent is a good number.

3. Revenue per M (RPM) emails sent

Email revenue, divided by emails sent, often a single effort.

4. Revenue per M (RPM) impressions

Website revenue, divided by unique visitors, for a specific period of time.

5. Email opt-out rate

Email opt-outs — both voluntary and bounced — divided by average email subscribers, for a given period.



## **Content Marketing Strategy #7: Manage by Exception**

Effective Mequoda System publishers track operating statistics using the Mequoda Key Metrics Dashboard, which immediately alerts them to problems and opportunities in their online businesses.

We call it “managing by exception,” which means regularly reviewing this standard set of metric reports. The idea is to investigate only those situations in which actual results differ significantly from planned results.

The Mequoda System Key Metrics Dashboard provides more than enough data to know, at a glance, what items need immediate attention.

## Nine Guidelines for Content Aggregators

### Aggregating great content is just as valuable as creating great content

Content aggregation is often given a bad name, because it's often done incorrectly.

The best content aggregators approach the process as the valuable art form that it is. Content aggregators recognize the web is all about content aggregation, and their work allows users to reach new depths on the subject matter they care about.

Our Managing Editor, Chris Sturk, first [wrote about content aggregation](#) in 2011. At that time, he had been researching best practices for content aggregation and strategies content aggregators should avoid.

One of the main concepts followed by great content aggregators – adding value to aggregated content – was discussed in *The Rise of the News Aggregator: Legal Implications and Best Practices*, a source Chris particularly enjoyed.

### The rules and guidelines for being great content aggregators

Do you still think content aggregators don't serve a relevant purpose? Think again. Any publisher running a portal knows that being a portal and aggregating content go hand in hand.

The initial distrust of content aggregation came after Google penalized websites for poorly aggregating content. The no-value-add content aggregators were giving portals a bad name. Those doing it post Panda and Penguin were seeing major drops in traffic because additional insight wasn't part of the content.

This is perhaps the reason that Google's Eric Schmidt [referred](#) to the Internet as a cesspool back in 2008.

Of course, publishers, content aggregators, and editors can perform content aggregation correctly. The original list from Chris merits republishing, and I decided to add to it.

## Tips for content aggregators

**Tip #1 for content aggregators:** Add value to aggregated content. This is a key point mentioned earlier. You must supply additional commentary and context to make your content aggregation worthwhile.

**Tip #2 for content aggregators:** Link to original articles. This gives your sources proper credit and gives your readers additional content to read.

**Tip #3 for content aggregators:** Be accurate. Using multiple sources is a staple of great content aggregators. Point out any discrepancies between multiple sources when needed.

**Tip #4 for content aggregators:** Aggregate worthy information. Quality over quantity is important in online publishing. Find the best information to aggregate, or you're wasting your audience's time.

**Tip #5 for content aggregators:** Empower sources and readers. If you can demonstrate great content aggregation skills, news sources and readers might send you content directly, making your job easier.

**Tip #6 for content aggregators:** Provide alternate perspectives. Are you able to provide opposite opinions in your content aggregation efforts? Your audience will appreciate it when you can.

**Tip #7 for content aggregators:** Add anecdotes and personalize stories. Retelling stories in different ways is a valid way of teaching a subject and helps connect with other readers.

**Tip #8 for content aggregators:** Organize content in a way where readers can find it. This method focuses on utilizing multiple sources, which is what the biggest portals in the world do.

**Tip #9 for content aggregators:** Utilize SEO. Not all great content sources understand the framework of the Internet. Search engine optimization may be unfamiliar to them, even if they're experts in other topics. Great content aggregators understand SEO and help content that isn't optimized get found.

The basic rule of content aggregation is exposing content that wouldn't have been found otherwise. That's precisely what Google does, and the search engine giant has a bigger built-in audience because of this approach. Google aggregates a lot of

content, more than anywhere else.

Since publishers don't have the chance to compete with Google, in order to stay relevant as content aggregators we must find content that isn't picked up by search engines and expose it to the right audience. This requires deeper knowledge of domains, a vast array of email newsletter subscriptions, and the ability to research fluently.

When you're unearthing content to aggregate, remember to:

- Restate
- Revalue
- Provide abstracts
- Summarize the information

Do you want to turn your website into a media powerhouse? Contact [Ann-Marie Sullivan](#), our member services manager, to set up a call with me.

**For more free white papers, visit:**  
**<http://www.MequodaFree.com>**