

BUYER'S GUIDE TO **CONTENT MARKETING**

What you need to ask a content marketing agency before signing on the dotted line.





Before you rush out and hire a content marketing agency, it's important for you and your team to answer several questions, including:

Why Do We Want to Do Content Marketing?

What Do We Expect from Content Marketing?

Is this Agency the Best Fit for Our Needs?

How Can We Prepare for Content Marketing?

When it comes to B2B marketing, a content marketing strategy has become essential for establishing thought leadership, getting in front of the ideal audience, educating prospects, strengthening a brand, and attracting new business. For these reasons, it's imperative that you choose the right partner for your content marketing strategy. In this guide, you'll get the resources you need to determine who the right partner is for you and how you can prepare.

BEGINNING: **WHY ARE YOU DOING CONTENT MARKETING?**



There may be a variety of reasons you are considering content marketing, but boiling it down to one or two reasons is a great starting point.

What is content marketing? Content marketing is a strategy for creating blogs, ebooks, guides, infographics, videos, and campaigns that **attract, engage, and convert clients.**

It's important to clearly establish why your firm is looking to establish a content strategy. Determine whether your B2B firm is looking to launch a content marketing strategy to:

Establish your brand as a thought leader

Build credibility with potential clients

Nurture prospects in the sales process

Give the sales team helpful tools

Educate clients on how to use products or services

Drive traffic to your firm's website

Convert website visitors into potential leads

Narrowing down the “why” behind your reason for expanding into content marketing will help you to set expectations for results, select the best content marketing partner, and build the right strategy.

EXPLORING: **HOW WILL YOU MEASURE SUCCESS?**

Once you have determined the goal of your content marketing efforts, you need to set expectations, both for your team and for a potential partner. This is also helpful to ensure the partner you choose can provide the necessary information you need for internal reporting.



Set the main **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)** for your content marketing. Answer the question: What does a successful content marketing plan deliver?

Do you expect the content marketing strategy to:

Increase organic website traffic?

Provide a certain number of leads a month?

Gain visibility in the industry?

Garner trust with prospects?

Secure placements in trade publications?

Attain speaking engagements?

Knowing what you value most will help you measure whether your content marketing efforts are successful.



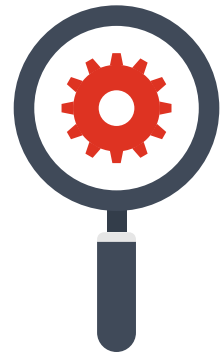
VETTING: **CRITICAL QUESTIONS TO ASK A CONTENT MARKETING AGENCY**



Now that you have established your expectations and goals for content marketing, it's time to find, evaluate and select the right content marketing agency for your firm. Not every content marketing agency is alike. In fact, you should be concerned if a content marketing agency isn't evaluating whether you are the right client for them as well.

BEFORE MAKING CONTACT:

Before you reach out to a content marketing agency, take a few minutes to do a quick credibility check.



1. **Are they actively using content marketing themselves?**

Look at the last time they posted a blog. When was it? See if they have any resources, like ebooks or guides, for download. Do a quick check of their social media to ensure they are actively promoting on their social channels and are engaging with their audience. You want to ensure that the agency is actively practicing what they preach. At Bop Design, we rely heavily on content marketing to drive organic traffic and inbound leads, which you can see in our blogging efforts, downloadable offers, social content curation, and consistent email newsletter.

2. **What is the quality of their content?**

When you looked through their blogs, resources, website, and social media, did you find the content to be helpful, educational, well-written, or thoughtful? If you thought their content didn't relate to you or was not interesting, take note – this could be an indication that they don't understand their target market (and therefore certainly won't understand yours).

3. **What types of services do they offer?**

This is one of the most critical points of evaluations. Not all content marketing agencies are the same and this is where you can separate the good from the bad. Many public relations agencies are looking to expand and content marketing seems like the ideal service to add to their offerings. However, be wary of PR firms-turned-content marketers. PR is very different from content marketing and requires a completely different

approach. Check to see if they only offer content marketing. If they do, it means they likely outsource any website development and any design work. Since most of content marketing has a digital element, it's important to have a partner that can step in and assist with minor web development and provide nicely designed content pieces.

AFTER MAKING CONTACT:

If you determine that a content marketing agency meets the above criteria, there are simple questions you can ask during your discussions with them to dig deeper and see how they match up to your needs.

Here are the main questions you should ask all content marketing partners you interview:



What is your experience with B2B firms?

What does the service team look like?

Do you have writers specific to my industry?

What does the content development process look like?

Tell us about the results you've garnered.

How much experience do you have?

B2B Foundation

As you know, B2B marketing is unique from B2C marketing. For starters, the B2B sales cycle is often longer, involves multiple decision makers, is more complex, leads to a longer-term relationship, and carries a higher price tag. For these reasons, it's essential that your content marketing partner has a thorough understanding of how to speak to a B2B audience.

Who Is Involved

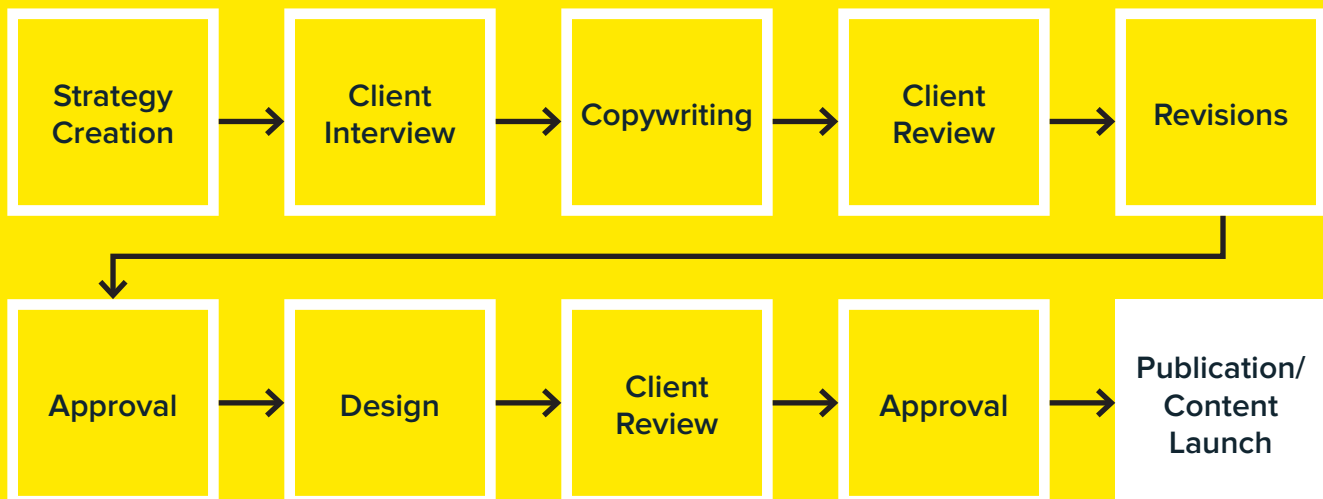
Content marketing requires a variety of different skills to be effective. A complete content marketing team should include a strategist who see the whole picture, professional writers who can synthesize the information from your subject matter experts into interesting copy, an analyst to track metrics, a designer to create attractive content pieces that engage your audience, an SEO specialist to optimize content for search engines and people, a developer to ensure the content is easily accessible, and a pay-per-click specialist to run paid campaigns to support organic campaigns.

Industry Writers

Professional writers can typically adapt to write for a variety of industries, however, many writers find a niche or niches and specialize. The industry jargon and acronyms vary widely across industries but a writer familiar with a certain industry won't be phased by this. Writing copy for the financial industry is different than writing about software, which is wildly different than writing for industrial or manufacturing. Find out if your potential content marketing agency has writers who specialize in your industry since this can create a smoother, more efficient content creation process.

The Content Dev Process

Get the scoop on how the content development process works and where you or your team fits in. At Bop Design, our content development strategy looks like this:



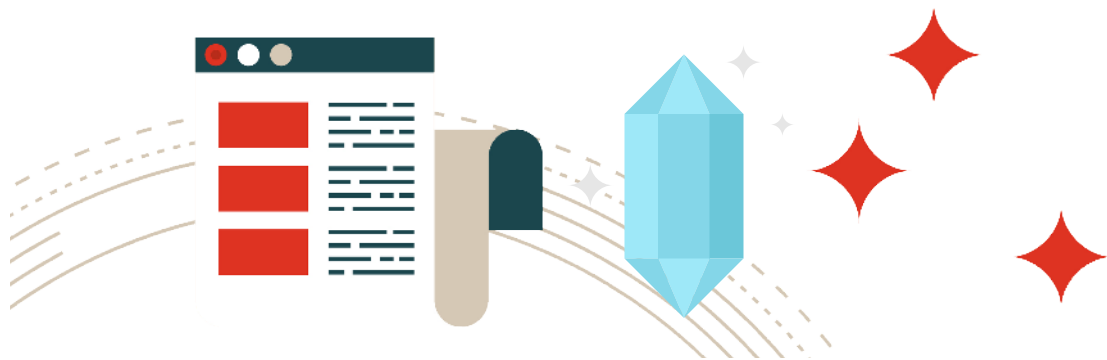
We work with clients to set the strategy and get a client's input via an interview before drafting any copy. We also have built in several steps that allow our clients to review the content and provide feedback. Clients that have worked with us for a few months get into the groove of the process and find it easy to give feedback and provide approvals while allowing us to do the bulk of the work.

See Results

Just like marketing in general, **content marketing must be evaluated on results.** If you don't see ROI, then it's not worth investing in. Ask a potential content marketing agency about the results they have gotten for previous and existing clients. They should be able to provide case studies. Ask to speak with 2 – 3 of their content marketing clients to find out about their results and what it is like to work with that agency. Lastly, don't take their word for it, look at online reviews, especially in places that do third party evaluation of the client experiences (like Clutch.co).

Experience Matters

With the rise in adoption of content marketing, there has been a rise in agencies who “do content marketing.” However, you don't want to work with a partner who is going to learn content marketing on your project. Find out what type of **experience the agency has** and how long they have been doing it. Bop Design was an early adopter of content marketing and has been doing it for our own agency since the beginning (the proof is in how far back our blogs go!).



PREPARING: **HOW TO GET READY FOR CONTENT MARKETING**

Whether you have picked a partner or are still considering the best fit, there are several steps you can take to prepare for content marketing.

GET READY FOR CONTENT MARKETING BY:

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- Assembling your subject matter experts (SMEs)

 - Determining and allocating your budget

 - Ensuring you have access to all social media

 - Gathering all design assets, like logos or brand guides

Typically, the content marketing agency you select will be upfront with the next steps and inform you what they need to get started. However, having all these things prepared will save turnaround time and get your projects started quicker.



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of your content marketing needs.

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