



Using

Content Marketing

to Increase Awareness



Increasing Customer Awareness via Content Marketing

The best kind of content marketing meets customers at their current level of awareness and guides them to the next stage. In that way, content marketing is a powerful supplement to the lead generation and sales process.

Before you can get your customer to appreciate your solution, you must first consider whether they are aware that they have a problem in the first place.

In 1966, Gene Schwartz released a landmark book titled *Breakthrough Advertising*. In it, he outlined a system of categorising prospects into one of five levels of awareness:

The Most Aware

Prospects in the ‘most aware’ category are aware of the problem they face. They are also aware of your specific solution, and they’re convinced that it is the right one for them. Consumers who fall into the ‘most aware’ category are your ideal prospect. They are ready to become paying customers; they just need to know the terms and price.

Product Aware

Prospects in the ‘product aware’ category know the problem they have,

and they know the product that you provide, but they haven’t yet decided that your particular product is the right one for them.

Solution Aware

Prospects in the ‘solution aware’ category are aware they have a problem and know that a solution exists; they’re just not aware that your particular product provides it.

Problem Aware

Prospects in the ‘problem aware’ category understand they have a problem, but they don’t yet realise a solution exists in the market.

Completely Unaware

Prospects in the ‘completely unaware’ category do not yet understand that they have a problem. They are at once unaware of a problem, of any solutions, and are certainly unaware of your solution’s relevance to them.

Here’s An Example

To put this system into practise and show its relevance to content marketing, let’s say your goal is to sell an Apple Watch to two different customers.

Customer 1 is looking for a smartwatch.

Customer 2 doesn't know much about technology, but wants to be able to skip songs in their running playlist without having to stop and take out their phone.

In this example, the customers have different levels of awareness about their problem, and potential solutions.

Customer 1 knows what they are looking to buy and is searching for the best product to solve their requirements – they are **product aware**.

Customer 2 knows they have a problem they'd like to solve, but they aren't aware of products that could meet the requirements – they are only **problem aware**.

You can probably already tell that the content needed to address these prospects and move them to the next stage of awareness is going to be different.

Not only that, but the channels you'll be able to reach these customers on will also differ. For example, a product aware consumer might sign up to your newsletter or visit your product's page directly. A problem aware customer won't know to visit your website, but they might be searching online for solutions, entering keywords related to their problem.

Targeting Completely Unaware Customers

So, how should you target someone who

is completely unaware they have a problem, let alone that you have a solution that outperforms the rest?

Brace yourself for the answer: *you shouldn't*.

It might sound strange, or even defeatist, to discard prospects who fall into this category, but the truth is that the work involved to target, inform, and persuade consumers who lack any awareness of your product and the problem it solves will significantly outweigh the potential of any return.

The cost of undertaking this feat cannot possibly be matched by the benefit; in short, the return on investment simply isn't there.

Target Consumers with Awareness to Achieve Better Return on Investment

Returning to the smartwatch example, you can imagine the ways in which you might convince a product aware customer that your smartwatch is better than the others, leading them into the 'most aware' category.

You can even imagine ways in which you could turn a problem-aware customer into a solution-aware one, by targeting them with content that causes them to realise a smartwatch is a great way to manage a running playlist without touching their phone, for example.

It becomes harder and more time-consuming to address a customer who has no sense of their need for a smart

watch, or any awareness of a problem that could be solved by owning one.

The completely unaware customer has no knowledge of who you are; no clue about the problems they have; and no concept of the solutions that might fit them. In summary, this audience is lost on you.

It is a far better strategy to focus on more aware customers, who can be targeted to achieve a higher and more immediate return on investment.

Showing Consumers Solutions to their Problems with Content

In this section, you'll discover how you can use content marketing to target problem-aware consumers and turn them into solution-aware ones.

Let's remind ourselves; a problem-aware consumer is someone who understands that they have a problem, but doesn't yet know that a solution exists in the market. And that's where you come in.

Step 1: Understand Your Customer - and Your Offering

Let's use that scenario we mentioned earlier.

A potential customer wants to be able to skip songs in their running playlist without having to stop and take out their phone. That's handy, because the Apple Watches that you sell do exactly that. The thing is, this customer is not technically savvy and doesn't even know

smart watches exist, let alone what they do.

But before you can start creating content to begin moving this customer towards buying your product, you need to know that their problem exists.

Did you? Did you know that runners were using their smart watches to skip songs instead of pulling their phones out?

When your product or service fulfils a very specific need, it's easy to identify the pain points that it solves for your customers. However, when your offering has a range of applications or target markets, those pain points can increase exponentially.

In both cases, it pays to take time to understand exactly:

- Who your customer is.
- What tasks or jobs they're trying to achieve.
- The pain points they encounter while trying to do those tasks.
- The areas where they can gain benefits in relation to the tasks.

(Our other guide; How to Understand your Audience With Market Research will help you further with this process)

When you've got that foundation of understanding about your users, only then can you begin to identify how your offering helps solve their problems and add gains.

Using the above example, the Apple Watch you sell could remove the pain for runners of taking their phone out to skip a song. It could also add gains by improving a runner's pace over their chosen distance (thanks to fewer interruptions) and help them retain better focus while doing so.

If you don't take these steps first, then everything that follows is — at best — an educated guess. Take some time on this stage, as it will pay dividends down the line.

Step 2: Help The Customer Find You

When someone is looking for a solution to their problem nowadays, they'll Google it. When that person is problem-aware but not yet solution-aware, they'll be asking questions that start with 'How do I' or something similar.

You need to bear this in mind when creating content for these people, and optimise your content using key words and phrases accordingly, so that it will be ranked higher by Google's algorithms.

Free resources like:

- Google Autocomplete (Use this in incognito mode so it isn't affected by previous search results)
- Google Keyword Planner
- Google Trends
- Keyword Tool

are invaluable in understanding the

types of questions people are asking. When you know what's being asked, then you can decide which questions you want to help people answer through your blog posts and other content output.

When your consumer has discovered their problem, typed their search into Google, and clicked on your page which relates to their problem, it's your time to bring them value with useful, informative content.

Step 3: Educate Your Customer

You might think this is the stage where you can wow your potential consumer with all the features and benefits of your product or service. It's not.

Remember, at this stage you're just trying to take consumers from being aware of the problem to being aware of the solution. This stage is all about education; helping the consumer become well-informed of the options available to them.

So focus on that in your content. Demonstrate that you understand the challenges they face, explain how they can be overcome, and highlight the ways these solutions can also add benefits. Explain the pros and cons.

You need to be objective here; you're the trusted advisor, not the salesperson. If your approach, tool, or methodology is unique or one within a small pool of options then great, set it out for your reader, but in exactly the same way as its alternatives or competitors.

When you're objective in this way, you demonstrate that you have the consumer's best interests at heart and don't have an ulterior motive for attracting them to read your content. This builds trust, and increases the likelihood that the reader will spend more time on your site, visiting multiple pages, and coming back repeatedly.

Use Content to Highlight your Product to Consumers

Here's where we're up to; people who were aware that a solution existed for their problem will now know that your offering is one of the potential solutions they could use.

In this section you'll discover how to target these individuals.

Spoil for Choice

You might be thinking, 'how do I know what problem my customer is trying to solve?'. If your product or service has a lot of applications, there could be a lot of options.

This is where understanding your customer and your offering pays off. Doing preparation at the beginning of your content marketing process means you don't waste time later trying to play catch up.

Revisit the previous section to remind yourself about understanding your consumer — and your offering.

Features & Benefits

At this stage of awareness, your potential customer is trying to understand which solution is right for their needs.

The best way to help them understand this is to explain the features of your offering (what it does) and the benefits (the ways it can help solve their problem) with the content you create and share.

Your customer isn't interested in reading a catalogue, so your content should focus on the benefits of your offering. If you're talking about the features, you always need to follow it up by explaining how those features can benefit the customer.

At this stage, think to yourself; how can I improve the awareness of the customer?

Earlier in the journey you can speak in more general terms, but this stage is a good opportunity to get into the details; as long as it serves your purpose of increasing awareness!

Tell a Story

A great way to increase your prospect's awareness of your offering — and how it can benefit them — is through examples and scenarios.

(We're not talking about case studies here; we'll come onto them in a future guide.)

Companies often explain the features and benefits of their offerings in abstract ways, which means customers can't build a picture of how their business would benefit, in a practical way, from choosing a certain product or service.

This lack of clarity leads to confusion, and usually results in potential customers disappearing to find someone who's clearer about what working with them will be like.

If you can create a written scenario which resembles your customer's situation, and demonstrate how your offering solves it, it stops the prospect having to think creatively to apply your solution to their situation themselves.

People don't want to have to think creatively when choosing to make a purchase; they want to know that it will fix their problem.

You can create countless scenarios based on the number of different applications for each product or service that you offer.

At every stage, ask yourself the question: is this improving the reader's awareness so that they're more likely to become a customer?

Things to Remember

Your content at this stage should leave your audience clear about what your offering is and how it can help them solve their problem.

You're not trying to persuade them of anything quite yet, so provide them with facts that help them make an informed decision on finding a solution to their problem.

If you find yourself getting tempted to move into 'selling mode' with your content, remind yourself that the focus is to improve awareness, not shout about how great your offering is. If you do, you'll probably be waving goodbye to your potential customer!

Bring Prospects to the Edge of Purchasing

At the start of this stage of awareness, your prospect understands what their problem is, knows that a solution exists, and is aware that your offering is potentially the solution they need.

They will have hopefully begun to form an opinion about that last point, thanks to the content you created on the features and benefits of your offering from the last stage. But there's still a way to go.

Addressing Questions & Objections

Everybody has questions that need answering before they decide to buy something. There are other obstacles to people making a purchase too, like how your offering compares to alternatives or competitors.

These all need to be overcome or answered before you can make a sale. The best way to do this is to answer them in your content, so that your

customer doesn't:

- Have to get in touch with you for an answer.
- Look for an answer elsewhere, which takes them away from your site.
- Give up.

Think about the questions and objections that previous customers or prospects have raised about buying from you. Then find a way to address them in your content.

Let's use the example from the previous blogs in this series, of the Apple Watch being used by runners to skip songs.

In this scenario, you could explain the ways that the Apple Watch's functionality is superior to its competitors, and how that will make the process of skipping tracks easier. This will then allow the runner to have a more focused, enjoyable running experience.

As we mentioned before, refer back to the benefits to the customer.

To FAQ or not to FAQ

Would an FAQ section be suitable for your offering?

This isn't cheating! It can actually help your customer find the answers to their questions quicker than having to read through longer posts.

An FAQ section also keeps the reader on your page and avoids the three actions I

mentioned above that you want to avoid, which risk losing them as a potential customer.

You shouldn't rely on FAQs too much though; by allowing the reader to cherry-pick what sections they read, they can prevent you from creating compelling calls to action.

Produce the Evidence

When you're trying to convince someone about something, what's the thing that's most likely to convince them about the truth?

Proof.

You can build a lot of trust and goodwill with your prospects by creating and sharing valuable content with them, but when you're moving them towards conversion you need to provide the real-life evidence of your capability.

The best way to do that is through case studies and testimonials — hitting hearts and minds with social proof.

Case studies provide the evidence (supported by data where possible) that you can deliver solutions to your customers' problems; with reference to specific examples. Case studies are for the mind.

Testimonials play a part in that too, but what they're best at is providing an emotional hook for your prospects, to show that their peers have benefitted from trusting you, so they can too. Testimonials take care of the hearts.

People don't generally want to be early adopters, so demonstrating that your

offering isn't a risk helps provide reassurance that by choosing you they aren't taking a shot in the dark.

Where do we go from here?

If we imagine a customer being on a linear journey of awareness from being completely unaware, to being ready to make a purchase, this is nearly the end of the line.

You've created content for every stage of the process, and helped your potential customer understand why your offering is the best for them.

All that's left to do is explain the terms of the deal. So that's where we're going next!

Prevent Sales Fails by Framing Your Pricing and Terms with Clear Content

In this section you'll learn how to use content marketing to support the last part of the sales process before a prospective customer decides to buy; making them aware of the price and terms of the deal.

You might think this is a simple step, but it's possible to fall at this hurdle and lose prospects, even if you've prepared them well with your content. It's about framing and — where necessary — explaining your pricing.

If you've followed the steps in our previous blogs, you will have already

created content which explains the benefits to the customer of:

- Solving their problem.
- Using the type of solution you offer.
- Using your specific offering.

As a result, your content should have moved them to a place where they can imagine life free of their particular problem; with your solution to thank!

Who's Reading?

The types of people reading content at this final level could be previous customers, individuals who have been doing research into solutions for a problem which is new to them, or prospects who have already gone part of the way down the sales funnel but not converted.

They know the solution you have to offer. Now the only obstacle is the matter of price and terms.

So, what's the approach to take at this stage with your content?

Value Is the Key

The key word for this stage is 'value'. To make a sale, your customer has to believe that they are receiving value by buying your product or using your service.

We're not going to turn this into a guide on how to price your offering, but here are a couple of main areas where pricing can be an objection and how you

can frame your messaging to reassure your prospects. But if your content contains regular reminders of the benefits they will experience (and the pains they WON'T experience) your prospect will be able to overcome their own objections.

This is all tied into your overall brand and positioning. For example, Belgian beer brand Stella Artois has used the slogan 'Reassuringly Expensive' to justify its cost.

That said, most businesses won't have huge price discrepancies between them and their competitors. And if you are a lot more expensive than your competitors, then your content should explain and justify that discrepancy in a way that makes sense to your prospects. Focus on your world-class expertise, bespoke approach, unbeatable components, or whatever makes you a cut above the rest.

Ultimately, there will be a point for each prospect where they won't be able to justify a higher price, but the effectiveness of your content can raise that barrier significantly.

If your offering is inexpensive: Past a certain point, an extremely inexpensive offering can create worry or suspicion that it is cheap or too good to be true. As the saying goes: 'buy cheap, buy twice'.

You need to avoid the danger of your pricing devaluing your offer in the eyes of your prospects.

If your offering is at risk of this, it's

important to explain in your content how you can offer such an affordable service or product. It might be through operational efficiency, economies of scale, removing intermediaries from the sales process, or something completely different.

The goal is to reassure your prospect they won't be compromising on quality by choosing you, which they might regret at a later date. As with every other stage, by improving your prospect's awareness, you move them closer to becoming a customer.

The Terms: Putting the Customer First

Often, it's not just a company's product or service that is different. With the growth of cloud-based SaaS products and other digital tools, it's increasingly the way customers access products or services which is the real USP for businesses.

Let's look at one of those approaches which can cause objections;

The subscription or retainer model is a key part of many of these offerings, which can put people off due to the level of commitment required for 6 months, 12 months, or longer.

As a business offering a subscription or retained service, the main benefit is obvious: delivering a consistent revenue stream. But this isn't the message that will win over prospects. Instead, focus on writing about how your offering will deliver increasing benefits over time, as opposed to a one-off or repeat business

approach. Here's another example; payment terms.

Lots of businesses offer 30-day, 90-day, or longer payment terms. But what if you're one of those businesses that requires payment upfront? It can be a challenge, especially if your competitors offer more flexibility around payment.

In this case, your messaging could say something like:

'You might think it's unusual that we demand payment upfront. In fact, it's better for your business, because we spend less time chasing late payments and more time delivering a great service for our clients.'

Reframe everything around the benefit to the customer.

Sweeten the Deal

Sometimes your prospects need a little extra encouragement to make that jump and become a customer.

That's why it doesn't hurt to include the occasional offer or promotion in your content. They don't need to be front and centre, but you can mention a discount or trial offer in posts targeting prospects at this stage, to help bring them over the line and strengthening the CTA in the process.

Now, don't issue discounts too often; that will devalue your offering. Ditto, don't include these offerings in your content aimed at raising awareness for prospects at the earlier stages of their

journey! It's not relevant at that stage.

Over to You

Armed with the above information, and with a bit of planning, you'll be able to create a range of content across platforms that moves your prospects along the process of awareness to becoming customers.

So get out there and start winning those prospects!



Thanks for Reading!

We hope you found this guide useful.

If you did, give us a shout-out [@Prize_Content!](#)

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Write us a letter:

PO Box 353, Newcastle upon Tyne NE6 9DA

Let's chat:

020 3920 6347

Send us an email:

hello@prizecontent.com
